

Al-Mizan – An Exegesis Of The Qur'an – Volume 6

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Tabataba'i**

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SHARES

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

This volume contains the exegesis of the third chapter Surah 'Aal-'Imran, from verse 42 to verse 120.

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

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

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

Foreword

Al-‘Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba’i (1321/1904 – 1402/1981) – may Allah have mercy upon him – was a famous scholar, thinker and the most celebrated contemporary Islamic philosopher. We have introduced him briefly in the first volume of the English translation of *al-Mizan*, which will be published, by the help of Allah, in near future.

Al-‘Allamah at-Tabataba’i is well-known for a number of his works of which the most important is his great exegesis **al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur’an** which is rightly counted as the fundamental pillar of scholarly work which the ‘Allamah has achieved in the Islamic world.

We felt the necessity of publishing an exegesis of the Holy Qur’an in English. After a thorough consultation, we came to choose *al-Mizan* because we found that it incorporated, to a considerable extent, the points that should necessarily be expounded in a perfect exegesis of the Holy Qur’an and the points which appeal to the mind of the contemporary Muslim reader.

Therefore, we proposed to al-Ustadh al-‘Allamah as-Sayyid Sa‘id Akhtar ar-Radawi to undertake this task because we were familiar with his intellectual ability to understand the Arabic text of *al-Mizan* and his literary capability in expression and translation. So we relied on him for this work and consider him responsible for the English translation, as al-‘Allamah at-Tabataba’i was responsible for the Arabic text of *al-Mizan* and its discussions.

We have proceeded to publish the translation of the second volume of the Arabic *al-Mizan* earlier, as it was ready for printing, whereas the first volume is not yet ready for reasons that we do not wish to mention here. So, we saw no reason in delaying its printing. We have included two appendices: one for the author cited in each volume of *al-Mizan*, and the other for the respective volumes cited therein. These two appendices have been attached to the first volume of the English translation. Apart from this, the reader will find two appendices in all the volumes of the translation of *al-Mizan*.

* * * * *

We implore Allah to make us work purely for His pleasure, and to help us to complete this work that we have started. May Allah guide us in proceeding in this step that we have taken, and in future steps, for He is the best Master and the best Helper.

World Organization for Islamic Services

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Tehran – IRAN

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Sura Aali-'Imran: Verses 42 – 60

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ

And when the angels said: “O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds (3:42).

يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ

O Maryam! keep to obedience to your Lord and prostrate and bow down with those who bow” (3:43).

ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلْقُونَ أَقْلَامَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ

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

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

When the angels said: “O Maryam! surely Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him whose name is the Messiah, ‘Isa son of Maryam, worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter and of those who are made near (to Allah) (3:45).

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

And he shall speak to the people when in the cradle and when of mature age, and (he shall be) one of the good ones” (3:46).

قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

She said: “My Lord! how shall there be a son (born) to me and man has not touched me?” He said: “Even so; Allah creates what He pleases; when He has decreed a matter, He only says to it: ‘Be,’ and it is (3:47).

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

And He will teach him the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Injil (3:48).

وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُم إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And (make him) a messenger to the Children of Israel: ‘That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah’s permission, and I heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead ones to life with Allah’s permission, and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses; most surely there is a sign in this for you, if you are believers (3:49).

وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلَأُحِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

And a verifier of that which is before me of the Torah, and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you, and I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, therefore fear Allah and obey me (3:50).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore worship Him; this is the straight path” (3:51).

فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَىٰ مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

But when 'Isa perceived unbelief on their part, he said: "Who are my helpers to Allah?" The disciples said: "We are helpers of Allah: We believe in Allah and be (our) witness that we are submitting ones (3:52).

رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا بِمَا أُنزِلَتْ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

"Our Lord! we believe in what Thou halt revealed and we follow the messenger; so write us down with those who bear witness" (3:53).

وَمَكُرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ

"And they planned and Allah (also) planned, and Allah is the best of planners." (3:54).

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ارْأَيْكَ وَرَأْفَعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

"And when Allah said: "O 'Isa! I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me and purify you of those who disbelieve, and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve to the Day of Resurrection; then to Me shall be your return, so I will decide between you concerning that in which you differed." (3:55).

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَأَعَذُّهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

"Then as to those who disbelieve, I will chastise them with severe chastisement in this world and the hereafter, and they shall have no helpers." (3:56).

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ

"And as to those who believe and do good deeds, He will pay them fully their rewards; and Allah does not love the unjust." (3:57).

ذَلِكَ نَتْلُوهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ

"This we recite to you of the signs and the wise reminder." (3:58).

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

“Surely the likeness of ‘Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: “Be,” and he was.” (3:59).

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ

“The truth is from your Lord, so be not of the doubters.” (3:60).

Commentary

Verse 42

Qur'an: And When The Angels Said: “O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you and purified you...” (3:42).

The conjunctive, “and” joins it to the verse 35: ***“When the woman of ‘Imran said...” (3:35).*** Both verses therefore describe the selection of the descendants of ‘Imran mentioned in the verse 34: ***“Surely Allah chose Adam...” (3:34).*** This verse proves that Maryam was one of “the spoken to”; the angels talked to her, and she heard their speech. It is proved also by the words of Allah in the Chapter of Maryam (Verses 17–21):

“... then We sent to her Our Spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man...” (19: 17).

“She said: Surely I fly for refuge from you to the Beneficent Allah, if you are one guarding (against evil).” (19: 18).

“He said: “I am only a messenger of your Lord...” (19: 19).

“She said: When shall I have a boy and no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste?” (19:20).

“He said: Even so; your Lord says: It is easy to Me: and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us, and it is a matter which has been decreed.” (19:21).

We shall write, at the end of this Commentary, about the persons describe as “the spoken to”.

We have earlier written explaining the Divine Words: ***“So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance and made her grow up a good growing...” (3:37),*** that these sentences answer the pleas of Maryam’s mother: ***“...and I have named her Maryam, and I commend her and her offspring into Thy protection from the accursed Satan” (3:36)***; also it was mentioned that the angels’ words in the

verse under discussion, ***“O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you...” (3:42)***, show the status that Maryam had before Allah. You may refer to that explanation for further details.

Thus, her choosing means that she was accepted a good acceptance for the worship of Allah; and her purification implies that she held fast to the protection of Allah. She was therefore a chosen one who was protected from sin. It has also been said that her purification means that she was a virgin who did not menstruate – thus she was not obliged to go out of the synagogue at any time. There is nothing wrong in this explanation although the meaning given by us is more in conformity with the context.

Qur'an: *“...and chosen you above the women of the worlds.” (3:42).*

We have already described in the Commentary of the verse: ***“Surely Allah chose Adam... above all the worlds” (3:33)***, the connotation of choosing “above” the worlds; “above” shows that the chosen one was given excellence and precedence over other people in something exclusively given to him; and that it is more than mere selection which implies total surrender to the will of Allah. The announcement that Maryam was chosen “above the women of the worlds” thus, means that she was given precedence over them.

Was she given precedence over them in all things? Or only in some matters? Look at the following verses:

“When the angels said: “O Maryam! surely Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him whose name is the Messiah...” (3:45).

“And she who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her of Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign for the worlds.” (21:91).

“And Maryam, the daughter of ‘Imran, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into it of Our Spirit, and she accepted the truth of the words of her Lord, and she was of the obedient ones.” (66: 12).

These verses describe the only distinction which she was granted to the exclusion of all women of the worlds, and that is her miraculously conceiving and giving birth to ‘Isa (‘a). It shows that it was this aspect of her life in which she was given precedence over all the women. The other qualities attributed to her in these verses (her purification, her acceptance of the words of Allah and His Books, her obedience to God and her being spoken to) were not her exclusive virtues – they are found in others too.

It is said that she was chosen above the women of her time. But the verse is unconditional and general, and as such it cannot accept any limitation applied to it.

Verse 43

Qur'an: *O Maryam! Keep to obedience to your Lord and prostrate and bow down with those who*

bow (3:43).

“*al-Qunut*” (الْقُنُوتُ) means keeping to obedience with submission and humility; *as-sajdah* (السَّجْدَةُ = translated here as prostration) is well-known ritual of worship; *ar-ruku'* (الرُّكُوعُ = to bow down; to be humble).

When someone calls another person, the one called looks towards the caller and listens to him. In this verse, Maryam is again called by name. It is as though the angels wanted to tell her: We have brought to you good news and again some more; you should listen to both good tidings. The first concerns the rank and status you have been given by Allah. The second is what you are obliged to do alongside that Divine Favour; in other words, what you are obliged to offer to Allah in terms of duties of servitude; it will show your gratitude for that rank and meet the demands of servitude.

In this light, this verse, “***O Maryam! keep to obedience...***” (3:43), seems to branch out from the preceding one, “***O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you...***” (3:42); that is, because Allah has chosen you, purified you and chosen you over the women of the worlds, you should keep to obedience to Him and prostrate and bow down with those who bow down. Each of the three orders given in this verse may possibly have emanated from one of the three excellences mentioned in the preceding one – although their respective relationship is not clear.

Verse 44

Qur'an: “*This is of the tidings of the unseen which we reveal to you...*” (3:44).

Allah has counted it as a tiding of the unseen as He has done after relating the story of Yusuf (‘a):

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

Of course, the scriptures of the People of the Book contain stories about them. But no credence can be attached to those scriptures because they have not remained safe from alterations, deletions and interpolations. For example, a lot of details and particulars given by the Qur'an concerning the story of Zakariyya are nowhere to be found in the Bible.

It is probably for this reason that Allah goes on to say:

“..and you were not with them when they cast their pens...” (3:44).

Moreover, the Prophet and his people were unlettered; they had not known these stories, nor had they read them in books, as Allah says after mentioning the story of Nuh:

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

But the first interpretation is more in keeping with the context of the verse.

Qur'an: "And you were not with them when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Maryam in his charge" (3:44).

"*al-Qalam*" (الْقَلَمُ) = pen; plural: *al-aqlam* (الْأَقْلَامُ), also means arrow shaft or arrow which was used for casting lot; in this meaning it is synonymous to *as-sahm* (السَّهْمُ). Therefore "**when they cast their pens**" means, when they cast their arrows to decide as to who among them should have Maryam in his custody. This sentence shows that the contention mentioned in the next phrase, "**and you were not with them when they contended one with another**" (3:44), refers to this same conflict that they had had about the guardianship of Maryam, and that they did not stop arguing with each other until they agreed to decide the matter by lot. They cast the lot and it came out in favour of Zakariyya, and he took her charge, as Allah says:

"...and gave her into the charge of Zakariyya..." (3:37).

According to some people, this contention and decision by casting lot probably occurred when Maryam was grown up and Zakariyya had become too weak to look after her. Why did this idea occur to them? Probably it was because this contention and its settlement through casting lot has been mentioned after the story of Maryam's birth and her being chosen by Allah, and because the guardianship of Zakariyya has already been mentioned before. Thus, according to them, this verse refers to another guardianship.

But it is not unusual, while describing an event, to repeat, or to allude to, some of its previously mentioned aspects in order to prove a claim. A similar style has been used in the story of Yusuf, where Allah says at the end:

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

This points to their conspiracy which is mentioned at the beginning of the story:

"When they said: 'Certainly Yusuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we...' (12:8).

"Slay Yusuf or cast him (forth) into some land..." (12:9).

"A speaker from among them said: 'Do not slay Yusuf and cast him down into the bottom of the pit if you must do (it), (so that) some of the travellers may pick him up'" (12: 10).

Verse 45

Qur'an: "When the angels said: "O Maryam! surely Allah gives you good news of a Word" (3:45).

Evidently it refers to the same event that is mentioned in the Chapter of Maryam in these words:

“Then We sent to her Our Spirit and there appeared to her a well-made man” (19: 17).

“She said: ‘Surely I fly for refuge from you to the Beneficent God, if you are pious’” (19: 18).

“He said: ‘I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I should give you a pure boy’” (19: 19).

The good tiding ascribed to the angels in the verse under discussion is thus attributed here to the Spirit.

It is said that the word “angels” refers to Gabriel. He has been described with a plural, “angels”, to show his great honour and high rank. People say: He went on a journey riding horses and sailing in ships while actually he rode one horse and sailed in one ship only. Also, we say: People told him so, while in fact it was only one person who gave him the news. A similar style is seen in the story of Zakariyya, mentioned earlier:

“Then the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: That Allah gives you the good news of Yahya verifying a Word from Allah, and honourable and chaste and a prophet from among the good ones” (3:39).

“He said: ‘My Lord! when shall there be a son (born) to me, and old age has already come upon me, and my wife is barren?’ He said: ‘Even thus does Allah what He pleases’” (3:40).

Others have said that there were other angels with Gabriel and they jointly gave her the good news.

However, if you ponder on the verses that describe the angels, you will see that the angels are of various ranks; some have precedence over others, some are nearer to Allah than others. Those who are behind are mere followers of the orders of those who are in the forefront. The actions and words of the follower are counted as the actions and the words of the leader himself.

It is not different from the activities of our own powers and limbs which are counted as our own activities without there being any duality of doers. We say: My own eyes saw it; my own ears heard it; and the same idea is conveyed when we say: I saw it and heard it. We say: My hand did it; my fingers wrote it; and we also say: I did it, I wrote it.

Likewise, the deeds and words of the angels of higher ranks are counted as the deeds and words of those of lower rank who follow the former’s orders, and vice versa. And similarly, the actions and words of all the angels – the leaders and the followers – are attributed to Allah Himself. Look at the action of giving death: In one place, Allah attributes it to Himself:

“Allah takes completely the souls at the time of their death” (39:42).

Another verse ascribes it to the angel of death:

“Say: ‘The angel of death who is given charge of you shall take you completely’” (32: 11).

And yet another one attributes it to a group of the angels:

“Until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers take him completely” (6:61).

A similar interchange is seen in the following verses:

“Surely, We have revealed to you” (4: 163).

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

“Upon your heart” (26: 194);

Say: “Whoever is the enemy of Jibril – for surely he revealed it to your heart ...” (2:97)

And also these verses:

“Nay! surely it is an admonishment” (80: 11).

“So let him who pleases mind it” (80: 12).

“In honoured books” (80: 13).

“Exalted, purified” (80: 14).

“In the hands of scribes” (80: 15).

“Noble, virtuous” (80: 16).

Now it is clear that the announcement of good news by Gabriel was precisely the announcement by the group of the angels under his authority. And Gabriel is one of the chiefs of the angels, one of those who are nearer to Allah, as these Divine Words show:

Most surely it is the word of an honoured messenger” (81: 19).

“The possessor of strength, having an honourable place with the Lord of the Throne” (81:20).

“One (to be) obeyed, and faithful in trust” (81:21).

We shall explain it further, Allah willing, under Chapter 35.

You may have a glimpse of the above-mentioned reality in the verse:

“He said: ‘Even so; Allah creates what He pleases’ ...” (3:47).

Apparently, the speaker of these words is Allah, while in chapter 19 the same thing has been attributed to the Spirit:

“He (i.e., the Spirit) said: ‘I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I should give you a pure boy’” (19: 19).

“She said: “How shall I have a boy and no mortal has touched me, nor have I been unchaste?”” (19: 20).

“He said: “Even so, your Lord says: ‘It is easy to Me...”” (19: 21).

That the angels and the Spirit talked with Maryam, shows that she was one of “the spoken to”. Not only this; the earlier quoted words of chapter 19 show that in addition to hearing their speech, she even saw an angel: ***“then we sent to her Our Spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man” (19: 17).*** We shall further explain it, Allah willing, under the Traditions.

Qur’an: “A Word from Him whose name is the Messiah, ‘Isa son of Maryam” (3:45).

We have fully explained the significance of the “speech of Allah”, under the verse ***“Those apostles, we have made some of them to excel the others” (2:253).***

al-Kalimah (الْكَلِمَةُ = word) is a collective noun, one unit of which is called *al-kalim* (الْكَلِم), as is the case with *at-tamrah* and *at-tamr* (التَّمْرَةُ، التَّمْر = date). *al-Kalimah* is used for one meaningful word as well as for a sentence (e.g., Zayd is standing); also, it is used with equal validity for a phrase or incomplete sentence (e.g., If Zayd is standing ...). This explanation is according to language. As far as the terminology of the Qur’an is concerned, as for example where it attributes a word to Allah, it means: ‘that which shows the will of Allah’; it may be an order, e.g., the word of creation when He says to a thing, ‘Be’; or it may be a word of revelation and inspiration, etc.

What is the meaning of ‘a Word from Allah’ when it is applied to ‘Isa (‘a)? Some people say: This title was given to ‘Isa (‘a) because the prophets who preceded him (or especially the prophets of Israel) had foretold his advent, giving the good news that he would be the saviour of Israel. We say in similar situations: This is my word which I had said. And it is in the same meaning that this word has been used by Allah in connection with the advent of Musa (‘a):

“And the good word of your Lord was fulfilled in the Children of Israel because they bore up (sufferings) patiently...” (7: 137).

Comment: Although the books of the Bible may support this interpretation, the Qur’an does not subscribe to it. According to the Qur’an, ‘Isa son of Maryam was a prophet who had brought ***“the good news of a Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad” (61:6)***; he was not the one whose good news was given by the others. Moreover, the phrase, ***“whose name is the Messiah” (3:45)***, does not fit this interpretation; because according to this interpretation, ***“a Word from Him” (3:45)***, refers to the advent of ‘Isa, and not to ‘Isa himself; while the phrase “whose name is the Messiah”, says that the Messiah is the name of the word – and not the name of him in whom the word of

Allah was fulfilled.

Another interpretation: The “Word” refers to ‘Isa (‘a) because he explained the Torah giving it the meaning intended by Allah, pointing out the interpolations and alterations made by the Jews, and clarifying the religious matters in which they had differed. Allah quotes him as saying to the Children of Israel:

“... So that I may take clear to you part of what you differ in” (43:63).

Comment: This interpretation justifies application of the “Word” to ‘Isa (‘a); but there is no association or proof in the Qur’an to support it.

Third interpretation: The “Word” refers to the good news itself; Maryam was told that she would conceive ‘Isa and deliver him. Accordingly, ***“Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him,” (3:45),*** means that Allah gives you good news that you will give birth to ‘Isa without the agency of man.

Comment: Obviously, the phrase, ***“whose name is the Messiah, ‘Isa son of Maryam” (3:45),*** does not fit this interpretation.

Fourth interpretation: It refers to ‘Isa (‘a) because he was the word of creation, i.e., the Divine Command, ‘Be’. No doubt every man, nay, everything, comes into being by the creative word, ‘Be’; but every man is conceived and born according to the well-known normal system: the usual course is for the male sperm to fertilize the female ovum – and it requires many main and supporting causes to materialize. That is why conception is attributed to man as its efficient cause – as every effect is attributed to its immediate cause. But the conception of ‘Isa did not follow this course; many usual and gradual causes were simply missing. His existence was just by the creative word, ‘Be’, and no usual causes intervened. And in this way, he became the “Word” itself, as we see in the verse:

“... And His Word which He communicated to Maryam” (4: 171).

It gets support from the verse 3:59, coming at the end:

“Surely the likeness of ‘Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, “Be”, and he was.” (3:59)

Comment: This is the best of the interpretations.

al-Masih (الْمَسِيحُ) = anointed; wiped clean), ‘Isa (‘a) was given this name because he was anointed with success and blessing. Or because he was wiped clean of sins, was purified. Or because he was anointed with holy olive oil, with which the prophets were anointed. Or because Gabriel wiped him with his wings at his birth, so that it should be a protection from Satan. Or because he used to touch and wipe the heads of the orphans. Or because he used to wipe the eyes of the blind and they gained eyesight. Or because whenever he touched and wiped any suffering person, he became whole. These

are the reasons given by the exegetes for this name.

The fact is that this name was included in the good news given by Gabriel to Maryam, as Allah quotes him as saying: **“O Maryam! surely Allah gives you good news of a Word from Him whose name is al-Masih, ‘Isa son of Maryam” (3:45).** This word is the Arabized form of the Meshiha, which is found in the Old and the New Testaments. [1](#)

The Bible shows that when a king was enthroned among the Children of Israel, the priests anointed him with the holy oil, so that he might be blessed in his rule. The king was therefore called messiah. It may be inferred from it that the messiah means either the king or the blessed one.

It appears from their books that ‘Isa (‘a) was called the Messiah because the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament contained the prophecy of his kingdom; it was believed that there would appear in the Children of Israel a king who would deliver them from bondage. The Gospel according to Luke describes the angel’s good news to Maryam in these words:

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail thou that are highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (Luke, 1/28–33).

And that was the excuse offered by the Jews for not accepting ‘Isa’s claim of prophethood. They said that the good news contained the prophecy of his kingdom and it did not materialize at any time during his life. And it was precisely to overcome this objection that the Christians interpreted the promised kingdom as the spiritual, and not the temporal one. Some Muslim exegetes too have taken the same line.

The author says: It is not unlikely that the name *al-Masih* used in the good news [2](#) may have meant “the blessed”. When they anointed a king with the holy oil, it was done to bring blessings on him. This connotation may be supported by the verses: He said:

“Surely I am a servant of Allah, He has given me the Book and made me a prophet” (19:30).

“And He has made me blessed wherever I may be...” (19:31).

‘Isa was originally Yashu‘, which they interpret as deliverer, saviour. Some Muslims’ Traditions say that it means “he lives”. It seems more appropriate in view of the perfect similarity between ‘Isa and Yahya whose name too means “he lives”. [3](#)

The name ‘Isa is qualified with the phrase, son of Maryam, although the good news was being given to

Maryam herself. It was done to emphasize the fact that he would be born without the agency of a father, and therefore would be known with this name; and that Maryam would jointly share this sign with him. Allah says:

“And made her and her son a sign for the worlds” (21:91).

Qur’an: “Worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter and of those who are made near (to Allah)” (3:45).

Al-Wijahah (الْوَجَاهَةُ = translated here as worthiness of regard) means esteem, prestige, eminence and acceptability. ‘Isa’s eminence and acceptability in this world is not a secret; and the Qur’an confers this position to him in the hereafter too. Undoubtedly ‘Isa (‘a) was one of “those who are made near”. He is near to Allah, included in the rank of the friends of Allah and the near angels in the verse:

“The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him” (4: 172).

Allah has explained the importance of being made near to Him, in the chapter 56 (Verses 1 –11). He says:

“When the great event comes to pass” (56: 1).

“There is no belying its coming to pass.” (56:2).

“Abasing (one party), exalting (the other),” (56:3).

“When the earth shall be shaken with a (severe) shaking,” (56:4).

“And the mountains shall be made to crumble with (an awful) crumbling,” (56:5).

“So that they shall be as scattered dust. (56:6).

“And you shall be three sorts” (56:7).

“Then (as to) the companions of the right hand; how happy are the companions of the right hand!” (56:8).

“And (as to) the companions of the left hand; how wretched are the companions of the left hand!” (56:9).

“And the foremost are the foremost” (56: 10).

“These are they who are drawn near (to Allah)” (56: 11).

These verses point to the reality of the nearness to Allah: Man presses forward leaving others behind in

the way that leads one back to Allah, then he comes nearer to Allah. Proceeding on this way is prescribed for every man, nay, everything. Allah says:

“O man! Surely, thou art striving to thy Lord, a hard striving, so that thou art to meet Him” (84:6).

Also, He says:

“Now surely to Allah do all affairs eventually come” (42:53).

There is another aspect to this reality. Nearness to Allah is an attribute of some angels. It means that this nearness is not necessarily a thing to be acquired by one's endeavours; whatever it is a gift from Allah. It may therefore be said that it is a rank it is a gift from Allah. It may therefore be said that it is a rank and status that the angels gain by Divine bestowal, and as for men, by their striving.

The expression: ***“worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter” (3:45)***, is a circumstantial phrase; and so are other words in conjunctive with it, i.e., ***“and of those who are made near” (3:45); “and he shall speak” (3:46); “and one of the good ones” (3:46); “and He will teach him...” (3:48); “and a messenger to the Children of Israel ...” (3:49).***

Verse 46

Qur'an: “And he shall speak to the people when in the cradle and when of mature age...” (3:46).

Al-Mahd (أَلْمَهْدُ) = cradle; bed or cot for infant, especially one on rockers). *al-Kahl* (أَلْكَهْلُ) = one of mature age) is derived from *al-kuhulah* (أَلْكُهُولَةُ) = to be of mature age); it is the middle age between youth and old age, it is the time when the body is at the height of its perfection and strength. That is why it is said that middle age is when white hair mixes with black. Others say that mature age means the age of forty-three.

In any case, it was a prophecy that he would live until he reached middle age; it was another good news for Maryam.

The Gospels say that he did not live on the earth more than thirty-three years. And yet the Qur'an clearly talks about his middle age. It is a point to be pondered upon. It is because of this that some people have said that his middle age speech would occur after his coming down from the heaven – because he was not on the earth till his middle age. Some others have claimed that according to “historical research” ‘Isa (‘a) lived for about sixty-four years, contrary to what the Gospels say. But the expression: ***“when in the cradle and when of mature age” (3:46)***, shows that he would not reach old age – his life on this earth would end in his middle age. In other words, the verse gives us both sides of his age – the infancy and the middle age.

Usually, a child is put in cradle in the beginning of its life when it is in diapers before it starts crawling or walking – generally in its second year or even before; and it is the age when it starts talking. Therefore,

for a child to speak in cradle is not an extraordinary achievement. But the verse obviously has another importance: It means that he would speak to the people, when in the cradle, a complete and thought-provoking speech which men of understanding would listen to, as they listen to the talk of a middle-aged man. In other words, he would talk to them in his cradle in the same manner as he would do in his mature age. Surely such a talk from an infant is extraordinary sign, a miracle.

Apart from that, the story as given in the chapter 19, clearly shows that he had spoken to the people in the very first hour of his life, when Maryam brought him to them soon after his birth. And undoubtedly when a child talks on the day he is born, it must be a miracle. Allah says:

“And she came to her people with him, carrying him (with her). They said: ‘O Maryam! surely you have done a strange thing’” (19:27).

“O sister of Harun! your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman” (19:28).

“But she pointed to him. They said: ‘How should we speak to one who is a child in the cradle?’” (19:29).

“He (‘Isa) said: ‘Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet’” (19:30).

“And he has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakat so long as I live” (19:31).

“And dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed” (19:32).

“And peace on me on the day I was born, and, on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life” (19:33).

Verse 47

Qur’an: “She said: ‘My Lord! how shall there be a son (born) to me while no man has touched me?’” (3:47).

She addressed her talk to the Lord, although it was the Spirit in the form of a well-made man who was talking to her. It was based on the earlier explained reality that the talk of the angels and Spirit is in fact the talk of Allah. She knew that it was God who was talking to her although the talk occurred through the agency of the Spirit or the angels. That is why she expressed her perplexity to her Lord.

Also, it is possible to look at this sentence as a cry for help. In that case, it will be a sentence in parenthesis, somewhat similar to the expression: he says:

“Send me back, my Lord, send me back” (23:99).

Qur'an: “He said: “Even so; Allah creates what He pleases when He has decreed a matter, He only says to it, ‘Be’, and it is” (3:47).

We have described earlier the syntactic position of the word, “Even so”. We have shown that, putting this reply by the side of the verse:

“He said: ‘Even so; your Lord says: ‘It is easy to Me: and that we may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us; and it is a matter which has been decreed” (19:21).

It may be inferred that the word, “Even so”, is a complete sentence, implying: Even so is the matter. That is, what you have been told is a matter which has been decreed; nothing can avert it.

As for her astonishment, it could only be in place if the matter was beyond the power of Allah, or very difficult for Him to do. So far as His power is concerned, it is unlimited, He does whatever He pleases. And as for difficulty it is imaginable only where the matter depends on preliminaries and causes – the more numerous and more formidable the causes and preliminaries, the more difficult that matter. But Allah does not create whatever He creates with the help of the causes;

“...When He has decreed a matter, He only says to it, ‘Be’, and it is” (3:47).

It is thus evident that the word, “Even so”, is a complete sentence meant to remove Maryam’s perplexity; the next sentence: ***“Allah creates what He please” (3:47)***, aims at doing away with the possible misunderstanding about Allah’s power. And lastly, the sentence: ***“when He has decreed a matter, He only says to it, ‘Be’, and it is” (3:47)***, removes the delusion of difficulty and hardship.

Verse 48

Qur'an: “And He will teach him (‘Isa) the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Injil” (3:48).

The definite articles, in “the Book” and “the Wisdom”, denote the genes of the Book and the Wisdom. The Book, as explained earlier refers to revelation that removes the differences among people. The Wisdom is the useful knowledge related to the belief and action. Now the Torah and the Injil themselves were books containing Wisdom. Yet, the Spirit or the angels mentioned them separately after the Book and the Wisdom. Sometimes a particular person or thing is mentioned after description of its genes because that thing is important enough to deserve separate mention. The definite article in “the Book” is not for comprehensiveness. In other words, it does not say that ‘Isa (‘a) was taught all the book, all the revelation. Allah says:

“And when ‘Isa came with clear arguments, he said: ‘I have come to you indeed with Wisdom, and so that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in; so, fear Allah and obey me” (43:63).

Note the word, “part of”; we have written about it earlier.

When the Qur’an mentions the Torah, it refers to the revelation that Allah had sent down to Musa (‘a) inscribed on the tablets when he was on Mount Sinai, as Allah describes in the chapter 7, i.e., “The Battlements”. As for the books presently in the hands of the Jews, they themselves admit a big vacuum and void, a large gap, in its chain of narrators between the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and Cyrus, King of Persia. Nevertheless, the Qur’an confirms that the Torah which was with the Jews in the days of the Prophet (S) was not altogether different from the original Torah – although it had been altered and interpolated to a great extent. The Qur’anic verses clearly show these facts.

As for the Injil – and it means “good news” – the Qur’an says that it was a single book that was revealed to ‘Isa (‘a), it was therefore a revelation sent especially to him. Allah says:

“...And He revealed the Torah and the Injil” (3:3).

“Aforetime, a guidance for the people...” (3:4).

But the present Gospels attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were admittedly written and composed long after ‘Isa (‘a).

The Qur’an also shows that the Law was only in the Torah; the Injil did not bring any new *Shari‘ah*, except that it abrogated some rules of the Torah. Allah says in the verses under discussion:

“And a verifier of that which is before me of the Torah, and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you” (3:50).

Again, He says:

“And We gave him the Injil in which was guidance and light, and verifying what was before it of Torah, and a guidance and an admonition for those who guard (against evil)” (5:46).

“And the people of the Injil should have judged by what Allah revealed in it...” (5:47).

It may be inferred from this verse that there were some affirmative rules too in the Injil.

The Qur’an also shows that the Injil, like the Torah, contained the good news of the advent of the Prophet (S), Allah says:

“Those who follow the Messenger Prophet, the ummi, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Injil” (7: 157).

Verse 49

Qur’an: “And (make him) a messenger to the Children of Israel...” (3:49).

Evidently 'Isa ('a) was sent particularly to the Children of Israel; and the verses concerning Musa ('a) imply the same thing about him. But while writing on the subject of prophethood, under the verse:

“Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets...” (2:213).

We have explained that 'Isa ('a), like Musa ('a), was one of the *'Ul Al-'Adhm* prophets, who were sent to the whole world.[4](#)

This problem may be solved if you look at the difference between a messenger and a prophet written there. It was mentioned that a prophet conveys to his people what is good for them in this world and the hereafter; and an apostle brings to them a special message that decides between the people with truth and finality – either providing them with eternal blissful life or bring to them destruction and perdition, as has been described in the words of Allah:

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

In other words, a prophet is a man who is sent to explain the religion to men, while a messenger is sent to convey a special message whose rejection brings destruction and perdition in its wake, and whose acceptance bestows eternity and bliss.[5](#) This idea gets strengthened if we ponder on the messages given by the messengers (like: Nuh, Hud, Salih, Shu'ayb, and others, peace of Allah be on them) to their nations, and which are quoted in the Qur'an.

This being the case, being a messenger to a particular nation does not necessarily mean that he was sent as prophet to them only. Possibly a messenger sent to a particular nation could have been appointed as prophet to that nation together with other people – as was the case with Musa and 'Isa ('a).

We find in the Qur'an evidence in support of the above views. For Example, Musa ('a) was sent to Pharaoh, as Allah said to him:

“Go to Pharaoh, surely he has exceeded all limits” (20:24).

And the magicians of the Pharaoh's nation believed in Musa ('a); evidently their belief was accepted by Allah although they too were not from the Children of Israel, as Allah says:

“And the magicians were cast down making obeisance; they said: We believe in the Lord of Harun and Musa” (20:70).

Likewise, the call to the Divine Religion was addressed to the whole nation of Pharaoh:

“And certainly, We tried before them the people of Pharaoh, and there came to them a noble messenger” (44: 17).

A similar phenomenon is seen about 'Isa ('a). Before the appearance of the Prophet (S), a multitude of

non-Israelites, like the Romans, the Franks, the Austrians, the Prussians and the Anglo-Saxons in the West, and the tribe of Najran in the East. had entered into the religion of 'Isa. When the Qur'an speaks about the Christians, it does not single out the Israelite Christians. When it says something for or against them, it covers all Christians – Israelites and non-Israelites alike.⁶

Qur'an: “That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah's permission, and I heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead ones to life with Allah's permission” (3:49).

“*al-Khalq*” (الْخَلْقُ = to create; to assemble the parts of a thing). This verse ascribes creation to someone other than Allah; the same idea is implied by the verse:

“...So blessed be Allah, the best of the creators” (23: 14).

al-Akmah (الْأَكْمَةُ = one who is born blind). *ar-Raghib* says that it is sometimes used for one who has lost his eyesight, i.e., as synonymous to blind. It is said: His eyes *kamahat* (كَمَهَتْ = lost their sight until they became white).

al-Abras (الْأَبْرَصُ) means one having *al-bars* (الْبَرَصُ = leprosy, a well-known skin disease).

He said, ***“and bring the dead ones to life” (3:49)***, using the plural. It proves, or at least hints, that he brought to life many dead persons. And he said, ***“with Allah's permission” (3:49)***, to make it clear that these miraculous signs appearing on his hands were actually attributed to Allah, not that 'Isa ('a) had any independent power to do so. He went on repeating this phrase to place utmost emphasis on this aspect.

There was a real danger of people believing him to be a god – because of these miracles. That is why he repeatedly added the proviso, “with Allah's permission”, after every miracle which could confuse and mislead the people, like creation of bird, and bringing the dead to life. And it was because of this very reason that he ended his talk saying:

“Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore worship Him; this is the straight path” (3:51)

The verse ***“that I create for you...” (3:50)***, apparently means that these miracles had actually happened on his hands; it was not just a talk, nor just a challenge. Had he wanted only to tell them that he had that power – just to complete his argument against them – he would have added some proviso like, “if you ask for it”, or “if you so desire”.

Moreover, the talk that Allah will have on the Day of Resurrection with 'Isa clearly shows that these miracles had actually happened: When Allah will say:

“O 'Isa son of Maryam! remember My favour on you and on your mother... and when you created out of clay a thing like the form of a bird by My permission, then you breathed into it and it became a bird by My permission, and you healed the blind and the leper by My permission; and

when you brought forth the dead ones by My permission...” (5: 110).

Some people have said: Utmost that can be proved from these verses is that Allah had given him this power, and that he mentioned that power when he argued with the people. Thus, he completed his proof against them, because he would have shown those miracles, if they had asked for them. But it does not prove that all or some of these miracles did actually happen.

Comment: The explanation we gave and the Divine Speech on the Day of Resurrection make it abundantly clear that all these miracles did actually took place, and that it is absolutely wrong to cast any doubt on them.

Qur'an: “And I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses...” (3:49).

This is news of the unseen that is reserved for Allah and his messengers who knew it by Divine Revelation. It is another miracle, an information of the unseen which was beyond any doubt or confusion. Man, after all, cannot have any doubt about what he has eaten or has stored in his house.

This miracle does not have the proviso, “by permission of Allah”, although no miracle can take place without Allah’s permission. Allah Himself says:

“...And it was not meet for a messenger that he should bring a sign except with Allah’s permission...” (40:78).

The reason of this omission lies in the verb “inform”. ‘Isa (‘a) was to give them those pieces of information; it would be a speech emanating from ‘Isa (‘a). In other words, it was ‘Isa’s action, and as such was not worthy of being attributed to Allah, in contrast to the preceding two signs, i.e., creation and bringing the dead to life, which are really the actions of Allah and cannot be attributed to anyone else except by His permission.

Moreover, these two signs were not like giving those pieces of information. They had more potentiality of leading people astray, when compared to his informing them of what they ate and what they kept in store. Simple-minded people can very easily accept Godship of a creator of birds and resurrector of the dead, rather than the divinity of one who gives them the news of the unseen.

Ordinary people do not think that the knowledge of the unseen is exclusively reserved for Allah; they think that it is not so difficult an art and may be attained to by any magician through training and practice. That is why ‘Isa (‘a) found it necessary, when talking to them, to put the condition of Allah’s permission, on the two signs, and not on this last one.

The same is the case of healing; it was sufficient just to mention, as he did in the beginning, that it was “a sign from your Lord”; and especially when he was talking with the people who claimed to be believers. That is why he ended his talk with the words, ***“most surely there is a sign in this for you, if you are believers” (3:49)***, i.e., if you are truthful in your claim that you are a believer.

Verse 50

Qur'an: "And a verifier of that which is before me of the Torah, and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you" (3:50).

It is in conjunction with **"And a messenger to the Children of Israel..." (3:49).**

Of course, this phrase is in the first person (i.e., spoken by 'Isa, 'a) while the former is in the third person (i.e., spoken by the Spirit); but it makes no difference because the former, i.e., **"and a messenger..." (3:49)**, has been immediately explained by 'Isa ('a) in the following words: **"That I have come to you with a sign from your Lord..." (3:49)**; and this has changed the mode from the third to the first person – and this makes the conjunction perfect.

He came as a verifier of the Torah; he verified the Torah which was revealed before him and which he was taught by Allah, as the preceding verse says. In other words, he verified the original Torah which was given to Musa ('a). This phrase, therefore, does not show that he verified the Torah which was with the Jews in his time, nor does it imply that the Torah of his days was unaltered. The same applies to the verification of the Torah by our Prophet (S).

Qur'an: "...And that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you..." (3:50).

Allah had forbidden them some of the good things, as He says:

"Wherefore for the iniquity of those who are Jews did We disallow to them the good things which had been made lawful for them..." (4: 160).

This talk shows that 'Isa ('a) had endorsed the laws of the Torah with the exception of some tough rules prescribed for them in the Torah, which he abrogated. That is why it is said that the Injil does not contain a new *Shari'ah*.

The phrase, **"and that I may allow you..." (3:50)**, is in conjunction with, the phrase, **"with a sign from your Lord" (3:50)**; the preposition, *li* (لِ = that), describes the purpose; the sentence therefore means: I have come to you for the purpose of abrogating some of the hard rules imposed on you in the Torah.

Qur'an: "And I have come to you with a sign from your Lord..." (3:50).

Apparently, this is to make it clear that the following phrases, **"therefore fear Allah and obey me" (3:50)**, are based on his bringing a sign from Allah, and not on his allowing some of the forbidden things. It is to remove this possible misunderstanding that the phrase, **"and I have come to you with a sign from your Lord" (3:50)**, has been repeated.

Verse 51

Qur'an: *"Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore worship Him..." (3:51).*

'Isa ('a) said it in order to cut off the excuse of those who were to believe in his divinity – either because he ('a) had detected such tendency in them or because he was informed through revelation of these future happenings. It was a sincere attempt to remove all chances of misunderstandings, as he had done when he added the proviso, ***"with Allah's permission" (3:49)***, while talking about creating a bird and bringing the dead ones to life.

But it appears from his talk on the Day of Judgment as quoted by the Qur'an in the verse below that he had said it in pursuance of the order of Allah and His revelation.

"I did not say to them aught save what Thou didst enjoin me with: That serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord, and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die, Thou wert the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things." (5:117).

Verse 52

Qur'an: *"But when 'Isa perceived unbelief on their part, he said: "Who are my helpers to Allah?" (3:52).*

The narration leaves unsaid his life story from his conception to the early days of his mission, because its important milestones had already been mentioned in the good news given to Maryam. That is why this verse picks up the thread of narration from the point when 'Isa ('a), after announcing his mission and showing the aforesaid miracles, faced resistance from his people. It describes how he selected his disciples, how his people planned against him, and how Allah defeated their conspiracy by purifying him, taking him away to Himself and making him to ascend to Him. And thus, the story ends.

The narration throws light on those aspects only which were immediately needed for clarifying the subject matter to the Christians of Najran, whose delegation was then at Medina for discussion and argument. That is why many other points of the story, mentioned in the Chapters of: 'The Women,' 'The Table,' 'The Prophets,' 'The Embellishment' and 'The Ranks,' have been omitted in this one.

The use of the word, perception, or sense, in connection with unbelief – although disbelief is a matter pertaining to heart – implies that their disbelief was so transparent that it could be perceived by external senses. It could alternatively mean that when they, because of their disbelief, planned to harm and kill him, he sensed it and, in this way, perceived their disbelief. The verse therefore means:

When 'Isa perceived, i.e., felt, sensed, and noticed the unbelief of the Children of Israel – whose name was mentioned in the good news given to Maryam – he said: ***"Who are my helpers to Allah?" (3:52).*** He asked this question as he wanted to distinguish and set apart a selected group of his people who

would be solely dedicated to truth; they would strengthen the power of religion and form the nucleus around which the structure of religion would be built – they would be the centre from which the Divine Religion would spread.

We find this phenomenon in every physical, social, and other forces: When a party begins its activities, it finds it necessary to take for itself a core of dedicated cadre, on which it gets its strength. Otherwise, it could not pursue its activity and would become useless. In Islamic history, the same phenomenon is seen in the pledges of allegiance of the mountain pass and the tree. The Messenger of Allah's aim in the two pledges was to concentrate the full strength of Islam, reinforcing its power, in order that the Divine Mission could spread and succeed.

Thus 'Isa ('a) became sure that his mission was not achieving success with the Children of Israel – with a majority of them – and that they were not ready to believe in him no matter what he did. He was afraid that if they succeeded in destroying his life, the mission would fail, and the difficulties would increase. Therefore, he wanted to make arrangements as a safeguard against that eventuality. He sought help of a selected group in proceeding towards Allah. The disciples answered his call and thus were distinguished from among the whole nation by their belief. It paved the way to distinguish belief from disbelief, by making the faith victorious over faithlessness, spreading his mission, and establishing proofs. Allah says:

“O you who believe! Be helpers of Allah, as 'Isa son of Maryam said to (his) disciples: “Who are my helpers to Allah?” The disciples said: “We are helpers of Allah.” So a party of the Children of Israel believed and another disbelieved; then we aided those who believed against their enemy, and they became uppermost” (61: 14).

'Isa ('a) qualified his question, ***“Who are my helpers” (3:52)***, with the phrase, ***“to Allah” (3:52)***. He did so to awaken their longing and arouse their eagerness to proceed towards Allah, to be near Him. And this was the real reason for asking this question. The same was the idea behind the question,

“Who is it that will lend to Allah, a goodly loan... (2:245).

It is the preposition 'to', in ***“my helpers to Allah” (3:52)***, which implies the meaning of going or proceeding, etc. A similar connotation is found in the declaration of Ibrahim ('a) as quoted in the Qur'an:

“Surely I go to my Lord: He will guide me” (37:99).

Some commentators have said that 'to' in the above sentence means 'with'; the question, according to them means: Who are my helpers with Allah? But there is no evidence to support this explanation. Moreover, it is against the manners of the Qur'an to count Allah in line with others. The Qur'an cannot count others as the helpers when it counts Allah as the Helper. Nor is it in conformity with the manners of 'Isa ('a) which shines so brightly everywhere in his narrative in the Qur'an. Furthermore, the reply of the disciples too does not support this interpretation. In case this meaning were correct, the disciples

should have said: 'We are your helpers with Allah.' (Think over it).

Qur'an: "... The disciples said: "We are helpers of Allah: We believe in Allah and be (our) witness that we are submitting ones..." (3:52).

A man's "*al-hawariyy*" (الْحَوَارِيُّ) is the one exclusively attached to him. It is reportedly derived from *al-hawr* (الْحَوْرُ = intense whiteness; marked contrast between the white of the corona and the black of the iris). The Qur'an has not used this word except for the close companions of 'Isa ('a).

The sentence: "***We believe in Allah***" (3:52), is a sort of explanation of their former declaration, "***We are helpers of Allah***" (3:52). This too supports the above exegesis that 'Isa's phrase, "***my helpers to Allah***" (3:52), implies proceeding on the way leading to Allah, because true belief is the prescribed way.

Was it their first entry into the circle of faith? Obviously not. The wordings used in the following verse show that it was a belief after belief.

"... 'Isa son of Maryam said to [his] disciples: "Who are my helpers to Allah?" The disciples said: "We are helpers of Allah." So, a party of the Children of Israel believed..." (61: 14).

And there is nothing strange in it, as we have already explained that the Iman and Islam are of various ranks, one upon the other.

Going a step further, look at the verse:

"And when I revealed to the disciples, saying, "Believe in Me and My messenger," they said: "We believe and be our witness that we are the submitting ones" (5: 111).

It clearly shows that this reply of theirs was based on a revelation from Allah; in other words, they were prophets. Therefore, the belief referred to in their reply was a belief after belief.

Proceeding further, we find them saying:

"...And be our witness that we are submitting ones. (3:52).

"Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed and we follow the messenger; so write us down with those who bear witness" (3:53).

The '*Islam*' or 'submission' to which they have referred, is unconditional surrender and submission to all that Allah demands from them and desires for them. This too implies that it was not the initial belief, but a belief after belief, because such submission is not found except in the sincere believers; it is not within the reach of those who merely bear witness to the Oneness of God and the prophethood of the Prophet.

We have earlier explained in detail that every stage of *Iman* is preceded by a relevant stage of *Islam*. Their words: "***We believe in Allah and be (our) witness that we are submitting ones,***" (3:52) also

point to this very fact: They used the verb for belief (implying a new occurrence) and adjective for submission (implying a sort of permanence). The first stage of Islam is submission and generally bearing witness to the basic of religion.

This is followed by a heartfelt belief in the above testimony in principle. Then comes the second stage of Islam and that is the sincere submission to the meaning of the said belief. When this stage comes, all possibilities are removed of anger or annoyance with what Allah and His messenger has ordered. In other words, the believer puts in practice the tenets of religion. It is followed by the second stage of *Iman*.

This is the stage when deeds become sincere, and the attributes of servitude are deeply ingrained in all actions and activities. This is followed by the third stage of Islam which means surrender to the love of Allah and to His will; such a Muslim does not love anything except because of Allah and does not want anything except for Allah; then nothing happens on his hands except that which Allah loves and desires, and the man's own love and desire are completely forgotten. It is followed by the third stage of Iman, when this servile submission permeates all his actions and deeds.

Keep in view this short description of the stages of Islam and Iman. Then ponder on the call of 'Isa ('a) as he said:

"... Therefore, fear Allah and obey me" (3:50).

"Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore worship Him; this is the straight path". (3:51).

Note that he ('a) first told them to fear Allah and obey himself. And he gave the reason for that order, in these words, ***"Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord" (3:51)***. That is, Allah is your Lord, O people of my nation, and He is also the Lord of His messenger whom He has sent to you. Therefore, it is obligatory for you to fear Him by believing in Him, and to obey me by following me.

In short, you are obliged to worship and serve Him with piety and fear of Him, obeying His messenger, i.e., with belief and following. This much is clearly understood from his words. That is why the fear of Allah and obedience of the prophet have been changed to the phrase, ***"therefore worship Him" (3:51)***; He effected this change to make it clear that this order and this affair is attributed to Allah, and that attribution becomes crystal clear in the worship. Then he said that this worship is a straight path – it is a way that leads the walker to Allah.

After issuing that call, he perceived their disbelief, and he felt that there was no ground for hoping that their general public would accept true faith. Therefore, he said: ***"Who are my helpers to Allah?" (3:52)***. He was seeking helpers for proceeding on this straight path to which he had invited the people. That is the path of servitude – the piety and obedience. The disciples answered his call accepting the same thing he had asked for.

They said: ***“We are helpers of Allah” (3:52)***. Then they proceeded to explain it in these words: ***“We believe in Allah and be (our) witness that we are submitting ones” (3:52)***. The submission here refers to their obedience and following. It was for this reason that when they humbly and beseechingly spoke to their Lord, telling Him what they had promised ‘Isa (‘a), they changed the word ‘submission’ to the following; and expanded the circle of belief to cover all that was revealed by Allah. They said: ***“Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed and we follow the messenger” (3:53)***.

It means that they believed in all that Allah had revealed, and in what He had taught ‘Isa son of Maryam of the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Injil, and they followed the messenger in this matter. You will appreciate that it is among the highest ranks of belief, not its lower ones.

The disciples did not say: We believe in Allah and we are submitting ones. Instead, they asked ‘Isa (‘a) to be their witness regarding their submission and following. They did so in order that they should have a proof when they spoke to their Lord and said: ***“Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed and we follow the messenger” (3:53)***. It was as though they said: Our Lord! This is our condition, and Thy messenger is our witness for it.

Verse 53

Qur’an: “Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed and we follow the messenger; so write us down with those who bear witness” (3:53).

It is direct quotation of what the disciples said – without using an introductory phrase, like, ‘They said.’ This dramatic style of the Qur’an (as we have mentioned somewhere) puts the audience in a position where they seem to hear the words directly from the speakers – not through a narrator. The disciples asked their Lord to write them down with those who bear witness. And they based this prayer on their *Islam* and *Iman* both.

A messenger conveys his message when he explains what Allah has revealed to him – both in words and in practice. He teaches the tenets of religion and he himself acts upon them. Those who shall bear witness that the messenger conveyed the Divine Message to his people shall do so by learning the message from the messenger and following him in the *Shari’ah*. In this way, it will be seen that the messenger himself practises what he tells others to do – he does not ignore it nor does he transgress it.

Apparently, this witnessing refers to their testimony that the messenger had truly conveyed the message, as Allah says in this verse:

“Most certainly then We will question those to whom were sent (the messengers), and most certainly We will question the messengers” (7:6).

As for the witnessing mentioned in this verse below, it refers to bearing witness for the truth of the messengership not for conveying the message. And Allah knows better.

“And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognize; they say: “Our Lord! we believe, so write us down with the witnesses” (5:83).

Another possible explanation: They had asked the messenger to be witness for their *Islam*; thereafter they prayed to Allah to write them down with those who bear witness. Probably they wanted Allah to write them among those who shall bear witness for deeds, as appears from the prayer of Ibrahim and Isma‘il (‘a) quoted in the Qur’an:

“Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion...” (2: 128).

For details, please refer to what we have written relating to that verse.

Verse 54

Qur’an: “And they planned, and Allah (also) planned, and Allah is the best of planners” (3:54).

The planners were the Children of Israel, as appears from the preceding verse, ***“But when ‘Isa perceived unbelief on their part...” (3:52).*** We have explained under the verse 2:26 what ‘planning’ means when it is attributed to Allah.

Verse 55

Qur’an: “And when Allah said: “O ‘Isa! I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me...” (3:55).

“at-Tawaffi” (اَلتَّوَفَّى) is to take something completely. It is for this reason that it is also used for death, because at the time of death Allah takes man’s soul away from his body. See, for example, the following verses:

“... Our messengers take him completely (6:61)”.

I.e., cause him to die.

“And they say: “What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new creation?” (32: 10).

“Say: “The angel of death who is given charge of you shall take you completely⁷ then to your Lord you shall be brought back” (32: 11).

“Allah takes completely the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep, then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed term...” (39:42).

Pondering on the last two verses you will see that the Qur'an has not used *at-tawaffi* in the meaning of death, rather the word gives the idea of taking and preserving. In other words, when *at-tawaffi* is used for death, it is not because it means death; rather it is used to emphasize the connotation of taking and preserving, to show and establish that man's soul does not perish, is not destroyed by death – contrary to what ignorant people think; Allah keeps and preserves it until comes the time to return it to its body for resurrection. At other places where this sense is not involved, Allah uses the word *al-mawt* (الْمَوْتُ = death), and not *at-tawaffi*. For example:

“And Muhammad is no more than a messenger, the messengers have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?” (3: 144).

“... It shall not be finished with them entirely so that they should die...” (35:36).

There are a lot of other verses of this type, including some verses in the story of 'Isa's itself. For example, there are, 'Isa's words about himself:

“And peace be on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life” (19:33).

And Allah's words about him:

“And there is not one of the people of the Book but most certainly shall believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he ('Isa) shall be a witness against them” (4: 159).

It all shows that *at-tawaffi* does not necessarily mean death.

This interpretation is also supported by the words of Allah refuting the claim of the Jews:

“And their saying: ‘Surely we killed the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam, the messenger of Allah’; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like 'Isa); and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture; and they killed him not for sure” (4: 157).

“Rather, Allah took him up to Himself; and Allah is Mighty, Wise” (4: 158).

“And there is not one of the people of the Book but most certainly shall believe in him before his death and on the Day of Resurrection he ('Isa) shall be a witness against them” (4: 159).

The Jews claimed that they had killed the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam, and likewise the Christians think that the Jews had killed 'Isa son of Maryam by crucifixion, and that after he was crucified Allah raised him up from his grave to the heaven, as the Gospels say. But the Qur'anic verses, as you see, unequivocally refute the story of killing and crucifixion both.

It is apparent from the Divine Words, ***“and there is not one of the people of the Book...” (4: 159)***, that

‘Isa (‘a) is alive in a position before Allah and that he will not die until all the people of the Book shall believe in him. Keeping all these factors in view, the word *at-tawaffi*, used in the verse under discussion, would only mean that Allah was to take him away completely from being amidst the Jews. Yet the verse does not say so clearly; it is only its apparent connotation.⁸

Qur’an: “... And cause you to ascend unto Me and purify you of those who disbelieve...” (3:55).

“*ar-Raf’*” (الرَّفْعُ = to raise, to cause to ascend) is opposite of *al-wadh’* (الْوَضْعُ = to put down); *at-taharah* (الطَّهَارَةُ = cleanliness, purity) is opposite of *al-qadharah* (الْقَذَارَةُ = dirtiness, impurity). We have already explained the meaning of cleanliness. The phrase, “cause you to ascend”, is qualified by the word, “unto Me”; and it implies that the ascension was spiritual, rather than physical; because Allah has no place like the physical spaces in which a body or things related to body arrive, stay or settle down, and from which they depart or to which they come nearer.

Accordingly, this phrase will have the same connotation as the words at the end of this very verse do:

“Then to Me shall be your return” (3:55).

This interpretation will be strengthened if *at-tawaffi* is taken to mean “to cause to die”; because in that case, “to cause to ascend to Me” would imply raising his rank and taking him nearer to Allah. Its meaning will, then, be similar to the verse 3:169, wherein Allah says about those who are martyred in His way: they are alive near their Lord; and the verse 19:57, where He says about Idris (‘a):

“And We raised him to a high station” (19:57).

Another interpretation: The ascension refers to his being raised alive with his body and soul together to the heaven; because the apparent meaning of the Qur’anic verses suggests that the heaven – i.e. the physical one – is the place of nearness to Allah, the venue from which the Divine favours and blessings are sent down, and where the honoured angels dwell. Probably, we shall discuss the meaning of *as-sama’* (السَّمَاءُ = sky, heaven) somewhere else, Allah willing.

Purification from the unbelievers, as it is preceded by ascension to Allah, implies spiritual, rather than physical purification. Accordingly, it means that Allah would keep him away from the unbelievers, protect him from association with them, and remove him from their community – the community that is polluted by their unbelief and rejection of truth.

Qur’an: “...And make those who follow you above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection ...” (3:55).

In this verse Allah gives a promise that He will surely make the followers of ‘Isa (‘a) prevail over his adversaries who disbelieved in his prophethood, and that this predominance will continue up to the Day of Resurrection. This verse distinguishes the superior group from the inferior one, saying that the superior ones are those who follow ‘Isa (‘a) and the opposite group is that of the unbelievers – without

mentioning that they were from the Children of Israel, or that they were the Jews who professed to follow the *Shari'ah* of Musa ('a) or pointing to them in any other way.

Of course, looking at the fact that his adversaries have been defined as unbelievers, it appears that the phrase, ***“those who follow you” (3:55)***, refers to the following in the way of truth, a following that is approved by Allah and which He is pleased with. Accordingly, his followers would be those Christians who did not deviate from his straight path before Islam came to abrogate 'Isa's religion; and after the advent of Islam, it is the Muslims who are his followers – because only these two groups are his followers in the path of truth.

If so, then the promised superiority would mean their superiority in their arguments and proofs, not their material domination or their rule over his adversaries. The meaning thus will be as follows: The proof of your followers, i.e., the above-mentioned Christians and the Muslims, shall be victorious over the proof of those who disbelieve in you, i.e., the Jews, up to the Day of Resurrection.

The above was the explanation given and chosen by the exegetes. But I think that the verse does not support this interpretation either explicitly or implicitly. Evidently the whole sentence,

“I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me and purify you of those who disbelieve, and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve to the Day of Resurrection” (3:55).

Is news of what was to happen in the future: His being taken away, his ascension to Allah, his purification from disbelievers and the domination of his followers over unbelievers – all was to happen sometimes after Allah had given him this news.

Moreover, the words,

“And make those who follow you above those who disbelieve” (3:55).

Contain a promise and a good tiding, and good tiding always refer to some future event. And it is known that the proof of the 'Isa's followers is nothing but the proof of 'Isa himself. These are the very proofs which were mentioned in the good news given to Maryam. And those proofs had certainly gained ascendancy over those of the unbelievers, both when 'Isa ('a) was present before his ascension, as well as after his ascension.

It may rather be said that before his ascension those proofs were more decisive and more convincing in face of his adversaries' claims than they were after his ascension. This being the case, what is the meaning of a promise that his followers' proofs would overcome those of his adversaries – in future? Again, why should this dominance be limited “to the Day of Resurrection” only? If a proof is victorious and convincing it should remain so for all times, without any limitation of time or day. Moreover, victory of a true proof over false ones will be even more manifest on the Day of Resurrection, as the Qur'an

informs us in connection with that Day's happenings.

A suggestion: Perhaps predominance of proof means that it would be more popular, more widely accepted – people would heed more to it, would accept it more readily; in this way their number would increase, and their power be more formidable.

Comment: Does it mean that his true followers would prevail over the disbelievers, would rule over them and overwhelm them with their power? But the fact is otherwise. It is no use saying that it may be a good news that would come true in distant future in the last days of the world, because the wordings of the verse do not allow such delay.

Or does it mean predominance in number? That is, his followers – the followers of truth after 'Isa ('a) – would be more numerous than the followers of falsehood? But reality belies this. The followers of falsehood have always been in majority, and the people of truth always in minority, right from the time of 'Isa ('a) up to these days of ours – a long period of two millennia.

Moreover, the wordings of the verse do not support this interpretation either. Look at the context; the verse gives 'Isa ('a) the good news that Allah's displeasure was to descend on the Jews, that they were to be overwhelmed by Divine Anger. In this background, the predominance of his followers conforms more with his followers' hold and dominance over his adversaries – either through convincing proofs or through rule and domination. But in no way does it point to the majority in number.

Let us have a fresh look at this verse: It distinguishes the two groups with two verbs: "those who follow you", and "those who disbelieve". The verb shows that an action has taken or will take place within the framework of a time – past, present, or future. The implication would differ if these phrases were changed to adjectives: 'followers' and 'disbelievers' because adjectives show a rather permanent attribute which transcends time limits, the said attribute is found in its related thing or person at all times.

Suppose there is a group of people who do something good or bad, and the rest of the nation is pleased with it, even the coming generations agree with what their ancestors did, then this much ideological identity and psychological identification are enough to ascribe that action or thing to the whole nation.

For example, the Qur'an admonishes the Jews and condemns them because of their ancestors' actions like hurting and slaying the prophets, their arrogance in face of the commands of Allah and His messengers, their alterations and interpolations in the Book of Allah and many other things like that. In view of the above-mentioned two principles, ***"those who disbelieve" (3:55)***, may be interpreted as the whole Jewish nation; and ***"those who follow you" (3:55)***, may mean all the Christians because their early fathers had believed in and followed 'Isa ('a) – and it was a correct belief and true following – although Allah was not pleased with those among them who believed in the trinity (before Islam), nor was He pleased with the whole nation when they continued to follow 'Isa ('a) even after the advent of Islam.

The sentence therefore means that Allah was to make the Christians – whose ancestors had truly followed ‘Isa (‘a) – dominant over the Jews because they had disbelieved in ‘Isa (‘a) and had planned and conspired against him. The aim is to show that Allah’s wrath has descended on the Jews, and His severe chastisement has engulfed their nation. (We have explained above that the early Christians had truly followed ‘Isa [‘a]; and therefore, the whole Christian nation may be included in the phrase, **“those who follow you” (3:55)**.

Going further, we find the phraseology changed. Instead of saying **“those who follow you” (3:55)**, Allah says: **“And as to those who believe and do good deeds...” (3:57)** This too supports our interpretation that **“those who follow you” (3:55)** covers all the Christians, irrespective of their present belief and behaviour. It does not mean only the Muslims and those Christians who had correct belief and had truly followed ‘Isa (‘a). In short, it is not confined to those who will be saved in the hereafter. Otherwise, Allah would have continued the earlier mode of expression and said: And as to those who follow you, He will pay them fully their rewards.

Another interpretation: **“those who follow you” (3:55)** covers all the Christians and all the Muslims; and the verse foretells that up to the Day of Resurrection the Jews would always remain under the domination of those who believe that it is obligatory to follow ‘Isa (‘a) – and the basis of the explanation is the same as above. And it is the best of the interpretations written for this verse.

Qur’an: “...Then to Me shall be your return, so I will decide between you concerning that in which you differed...” (3:55).

This talk is addressed jointly to ‘Isa (‘a) and those who followed him and those who disbelieved in him. It gives their ultimate result on the Day of Resurrection. And with this verse the story of ‘Isa (‘a) comes to its end – from the time Maryam got the good news to the end of his earthly life.

Verse 56

Qur’an: “Then as to those who disbelieve, I will chastise them with severe chastisement in this world and the hereafter...” (3:56).

Apparently, it branches out from the phrase, **“so I will decide between you” (3:55)**; it gives detail of that preceding general statement, describing the Divine Judgment on the Day of Resurrection – severe chastisement for the Jews who disbelieve, and full reward for the believers.

But the phrase **“in this world” (3:56)** shows that the verse branches out from two preceding sentences: **“and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve...” (3:55)**; **“Then to Me shall be your return...” (3:55)**. Thus, the verse says that as a result of that “making” and that “returning”, the disbelievers shall be severely punished in this world on the hands of those whom Allah has made dominant above them, and in the hereafter with the Fire, and they shall have no helpers.

It is another proof to show that in the preceding verse, making dominant means domination through power and rule, not through proofs.

The sentence, ***“and they shall have no helpers” (3:56)***, proves that they will not be able to avail of any intercession which could protect them from the chastisement. It is a firm decree which cannot change.

Verse 57

Qur'an: “And as to those who believe and do good deeds, He will pay them fully their rewards...” (3:57).

It is an attractive promise of good reward for those who followed 'Isa ('a). But, as mentioned above, the phrase ***“those who follow you” (3:55)*** could be applied to the whole nation even when only a few of them truly followed him. The application of a name is one thing and truly having that attribute personally is something else. Good result and lovely reward are given only to him who truly has that attribute – not to him who is merely included in nomenclature.

Allah says:

“Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaeans, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve” (2:62).

This then is the reward for those who believed and did good deeds from among those who followed 'Isa ('a); Allah will pay them fully their reward. The other group from those followers shall get no reward. Allah has pointed to this fact at the end of the verse:

“And Allah does not love the unjust” (3:57).

It is now clear why this verse – a verse of mercy and paradise – has ended with the phrase ***“and Allah does not love the unjust” (3:57)***. Otherwise, such verses usually end with Divine Names of mercy and forgiveness, or on praise of those for whom the verse is revealed. For example:

“...And Allah has promised good to all; and Allah is aware of what you do” (57:10).

“If you lend to Allah a goodly loan, He will double it for you and forgive you; and Allah is grateful, forbearing” (64:17).

“... And whoever believes in Allah and does good, He will remove from him his evil and cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein for ever; that is the great achievement” (64:9).

“Then as to those who believed and did good, their Lord will make them enter into His mercy;

that is the manifest achievement” (45:30).

We may go on quoting such examples from the Qur’an. However, it is now clear that the phrase ***“and Allah does not love the unjust” (3:57)*** describes the other group from among those who claim to follow ‘Isa (‘a) but are not true believers, nor do they do good deeds.

Verse 58

Qur’an: “This we recite to you of the signs and the wise reminder” (3:58).

It indicates the end of the story. The ***“wise reminder”*** is the Qur’an; it reminds one of Allah and is firm and wise in its verses and descriptions; falsehood cannot enter it, nor can non-serious talk pollute it.

Verse 59

Qur’an: “Surely the likeness of ‘Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: “Be,” and he was” (3:59).

It is the summary of the necessary points described in detail in preceding verses. Such way of summing up after detailed description – especially in arguments and discussions – is a beauty of style. The verses were revealed for arguments with the delegation of the Christians of Najran. It was proper to sum up the basic point of ‘Isa’s creation – after giving the story in detail – to show that the particular circumstances of his birth do not prove anything except that he was a created man like Adam (peace be on them both). Therefore, it is not permissible to say about him more than that which is said about Adam (‘a) – that is, he was a man whom Allah created without the agency of a father.

The verse therefore means: The condition of ‘Isa (‘a) in the eyes of Allah – as Allah knows how He had created ‘Isa – is only that the manner of his creation resembles that of Adam’s creation. How was Adam created? Allah gathered various portions of earth and said to him, “Be”, and he became a human being without any father.

This verse actually contains two independent proofs, either is sufficient to refute the idea of ‘Isa’s divinity.

First: ‘Isa is a creature created by Allah – as Allah knows, and He is never confused in His knowledge. He created him a man, albeit without a father. And such a person is a servant of Allah, not a god.

Second: ‘Isa’s creation is not greater than that of Adam. If ‘Isa’s unusual creation may in any way justify the belief in his godhead, then Adam’s creation will justify the same belief. But no Christian says that Adam was God. Therefore, they should not have such belief about ‘Isa (‘a). After all, both cases are the same.

The verse shows that ‘Isa’s creation, like that of Adam, was physical and of this world, although it happened against the usual manner of conception, because usually a child is conceived through the

agency of a father.

Apparently, *fa-yakun* (فَيَكُونُ = lit: and he is) is used here to describe a past event – that is why we have translated it as “and he was”.

The phrase, **“then said to him, ‘Be’, and he was” (3:59)**, shows instant, not gradual creation, but we know that both Adam and ‘Isa had undergone a gradual process of creation. The fact is that there is no contradiction in these two aspects – because condition changes with the change of context. All things, whether they come into being gradually or instantly, are created by Allah, brought into being by His command, i.e., by the word, “Be”, as He says:

“His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, “Be”, and it is” (36:82).

Many of these things, come into existence gradually – when they are seen in the framework of their gradual causes. But when they are seen in relation to Allah, then there is no gradualness in their existence, no gap between the command, “Be”, and their “being”; Allah says:

“And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye” (54:50).

We shall explain it in detail in a more appropriate place, Allah willing.

The main idea behind the statement, **“then said to him, ‘Be’, and he was” (3:59)**, is as follows: Allah is not dependent on causes when He creates a thing. Things that He intends to create have equal relation with Him. If they were related to Him through causes, their conditions could have differed one with another, some would have looked possible, others impossible; one would have been easy, the other difficult; one nearer, another far away – all depending on the conditions of the relevant causes. But Allah does not need any cause to bring about an effect; whatever He intends, He says to it, “Be”, and it comes into being.

Verse 60

Qur’an: “The truth is from your Lord, so be not of the doubters” (3:60).

It emphasizes the meaning of the preceding verse which was itself emphasized by the use of the particle “surely”. It serves the same purpose as the verse, **“This We recite to you of the signs and the wise reminder” (3:58)**, revealed at the end of the detailed story. It was to set the Prophet’s mind at rest that he was on truth, and to strengthen him in the argument.

The sentence **“The truth is from your Lord” (3:60)** is one of the finest expressions of the Qur’an. It uses the preposition, “from”, which shows the beginning point. The truth starts from your Lord. If you were to change it to some other particle, e.g., “with”, saying, ‘the truth is with your Lord’, it would give a hint of polytheism; and would actually show God as helpless, in need of that truth.

The true maxims and the propositions showing real and unalterable facts are self-evident and impossible to change; for example, four is an even number; one is half of two; and so on. Man finds out these self-evident truths from the things that exist; and existence – all of it – is from Allah. Therefore, the truth – all of it – is from Him. That is why Allah is not questioned concerning what He does, while men are. An action of a creature, if it is correct and right, accompanies the truth, but the action of Allah is existence itself, and therefore, truth itself.

Traditions

The Imam (‘a) said⁹ about the words of Allah, ***“O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds” (3:42)***: (Allah) chose her twice: As for the first, He chose her, i.e., selected her; and as for the second, she conceived without a husband; in this way, He made her excel over the women of the worlds.”¹⁰

Abu Ja‘far (‘a) said about this verse: “It means that He selected you for the progeny of the prophets, and purified you from unchastity, and chose you for the birth of ‘Isa (‘a) without a husband.”¹¹

The author says: The saying of the Imam, “He selected you for the progeny of the prophets”, means that He selected you to be a good offspring worthy of being related to the prophets. The phrase, ***“and purified you from unchastity” (3:55)***, means that He gave you protection from unchastity; this is the best explanation of the Qur’anic words, because she had given birth to ‘Isa (‘a) without a husband. Thus, the tradition describes some concomitants of her selection and purification.

The two Traditions are not in conflict with each other, as may be seen manifestly. And we have explained that the verse implies this meaning.

It has been narrated by Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi (and he said that it is correct), Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Habban, and al-Hakim from Anas, that he said: “Verily the Messenger of Allah (S) said: *“Sufficient are in excellence from among the women of the worlds, Maryam bint ‘Imran, and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, and Fatimah bint Muhammad (S) and Asiyah wife of Pharaoh!”*”¹²

As-Suyuti has said that Ibn Abi Shaybah has narrated it from al-Hasan without connecting the chain of narrators with the Holy Prophet (S).

Al-Hakim has narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas (and has said that it is correct), that he said: *“The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘The most excellent of the women of the worlds are Khadijah, and Fatimah, and Maryam, and Asiyah wife of Pharaoh.’”*”¹³

Ibn Marduwayh narrates from al-Hasan that he said: *“The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘Verily, Allah chose four (women) over the women of the worlds: Asiyah bint Muzahim, and Maryam bint ‘Imran, and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, and Fatimah bint Muhammad (S).’”*¹⁴

Ibn Abi Shaybah and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her!) that she said: *“The Messenger of Allah (S) said to me: “You are the chief of the women of the people of the Garden, (and) not Maryam, The Virgin.”* [15](#)

Ibn ‘Asakir has narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas that he said: *“The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘The chief of the women of the people of the Garden are Maryam bint ‘Imran, then Fatimah, then Khadijah, then Asiyah wife of Pharaoh.’* [16](#)

Ibn ‘Asakir has narrated through the chain of Muqatil from ad-Dahhak from Ibn ‘Abbas from the Prophet (S) that he said: *“Four women are the chiefs of the worlds: Maryam bint ‘Imran, and Asiyah bint Muzahim, and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, and Fatimah bint Muhammad (S); and the most excellent of them in the world is Fatimah.”* [17](#)

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrates from ‘Abdu ‘r-Rahman Ibn Abi Layla that he said: *“The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘Fatimah is the chief of the women of the worlds after Maryam bint ‘Imran, and Asiyah wife of the Pharaoh, and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid.’* [18](#)

As-Saduq narrates through his chains from ‘Ikrimah from Ibn ‘Abbas that he said: *“The Messenger of Allah (S) drew four lines, then said: ‘The best of the women of the Garden are Maryam bint ‘Imran, and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, and Fatimah bint Muhammad, and Asiyah bint Muzahim, wife of the Pharaoh.’* [19](#)

Also, he narrates through his chains from Ab al-Hasan al-Awwal (‘a) that he said: *“The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘Verily Allah, the Mighty, the Great, has selected four from among the women: Maryam, and Asiyah, and Khadijah, and Fatimah...’* [20](#)

The author says: There are numerous traditions of nearly the same meaning, narrated by both sects. The fact that these four are the chiefs of the women does not preclude the difference in excellence as amongst themselves, as may be seen in the sixth tradition quoted from *ad-Durr al-Manthur*, as well as other Traditions. And a similar discourse was written under the verse 3:33.

A point to ponder: The verse talks about selection and choosing, while the above traditions describe their supremacy.

There is a difference between selection and supremacy; the latter being a degree of the former’s perfection.

al-Baqir (‘a) said explaining the words of Allah: *“... **when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Maryam in his charge**” (3:44):* They were drawing the lot about her, when she was orphaned of her father.[21](#)

The Imam (‘a) said about the verse: And when the angels said. *“**O Maryam! surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds**” (3:42):* (Allah) chose her

twice: As for the first, He chose her, i.e., selected her, and as for the second, she conceived without a husband; in this way He made her excel over the women of the worlds.

Then Allah said to His Prophet:

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

When she was born, the family of ‘Imran contended one with another about her; everyone said: ‘We shall have her in our charge.’ So, they went out and cast lot among themselves with the arrows, and the arrow of Zakariyya came out (in the draw)”[22](#)

The author says: The Commentary written above supports this and the preceding tradition. There are numerous traditions giving the details regarding the good news given to Maryam, birth of ‘Isa (‘a), his mission and his miracles. But the general outline of his story, given in these verses is enough for the purpose of exegesis. That is why we have not written them here except the important ones.

Al-Baqir (‘a) said about the words of Allah, ***“and I inform you of what you eat...” (3:49).***

‘Isa (‘a) used to say to the Children of Israel: ***“I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, and I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah’s permission, and I heal the blind and the leper” (3:49).*** [23](#)

They said: ‘We do not think that what you do is anything but sorcery. Show us therefore a sign by which we may know that you are truthful.’ He said: ‘Do you think that you would know I was truthful if I informed you of what you eat and what you store in your houses, i.e., what you had eaten before you came out of your houses and what you had stored at night?’ They said: ‘Yes.’ So, he used to tell them: ‘You ate this and this.’ Some of them confirmed his words and became believers, and other rejected it. And there was for them a sign in it if they were believers.”[24](#)

The author says: The style of the verse when describing the latter two signs differs from that used for the former ones, as we had pointed out in the Commentary. And this difference supports the theme of this tradition.

As-Sadiq (‘a) said explaining the verse, ***“And a verifier of that which is before me of the Torah, and that I may allow you...” (3:50).*** There was (a distance of) four hundred years between Dawud and ‘Isa; and it was the *Shari’ah* of ‘Isa that he was sent with monotheism and sincerity, and with what (Allah) had enjoined on Nuh, Ibrahim and Musa; and He revealed to him Injil; and took from him the covenant that was taken from (all other) prophets; and He ordained for him in the Book establishing the prayer with religion, and enjoining good, and forbidding evil, and prohibiting unlawful, and allowing lawful; and revealed to him in Injil the sermons and the parables, and the panel code which did not have retaliation;

it contained neither (detailed) rules of panel code nor the shares of inheritance; and He revealed to him alleviation of what was (ordained) for Musa in the Torah. And this is (the meaning of) the words Allah quoting what 'Isa said to the Children of Israel: ***“and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you” (3:50)***. And 'Isa ordered those who were with him, from among those who followed him of the believers, to believe in the *Shari'ah* of the Torah and the Injil.”[25](#)

The author says: This tradition is narrated in *Qisas al-anbiya'*, in detail, from as-Sadiq ('a), and there it says that there was a period of four hundred and eighty years between Dawud and 'Isa ('a). But neither of these dates conforms with the history of the People of the Book.

Ar-Rida' ('a) was asked: “Why were the disciples called *al-hawariyyun*?” (الْحَوَارِيُّونَ = companions, disciples; the root word denotes “intense whiteness”). He said: “According to (other) people, they were named *al-hawariyyun*, because they were washer-men, they cleansed the dirt from clothes by washing; and it is a name derived from *al-hawr* (الْحَوْرُ = to bleach, to whiten). But according to us, they were given this name because they were pure in their own selves and cleansed others from filth of sins by sermon and reminder.”[26](#)

The same Imam said that they were twelve men, and the most excellent and most learned of them was Luke.[27](#)

As-Sadiq ('a) said, inter alia, in a tradition: “Allah sent 'Isa son of Maryam; and entrusted to him light, knowledge and wisdom; and (gave him) all knowledge of the previous prophets, and added Injil to it. And He sent him to Baytu'l-Maqdis, to the Children of Israel, (he came) calling them to his Book and his wisdom, and to the belief in Allah and His messenger. But most of them insisted on exceeding (the limits) and disbelieving. When they did not believe (in him), he prayed to his Lord, and adjured on Him (to punish them). So (Allah) transformed (some) satans from among them, in order to show them a sign, so that they might take lesson from it.

But it did not increase in them except (their) transgression and disbelief. Then ('Isa) came to Baytu'l-Maqdis, and continued calling them to, and awakening their interest in, that which is with Allah, for thirty-three years, until the Jews rose in his pursuit. And they claimed that they tortured him and buried him in the earth alive.

And some of them claimed that they killed and crucified him. But Allah was not to give them power over him; but it only appeared to them so; and they were not able to torture and kill him or to kill and crucify him, because if they could do so it would have been a refutation of the words of Allah; but Allah caused him to ascend after taking him away completely.”[28](#)

The author says: The words of the Imam: “Allah transformed (some) satans from among them,” means that He transformed a group of evil persons from among them. “And continued calling them... for thirty-three years”; perhaps it refers to his span of life, as it is well-known that he lived on this earth for thirty-three years. 'Isa ('a) talked to them from his cradle up to his mature age, and he was prophet from his

early childhood, as the Qur'an quotes him saying in the verses:

“But she pointed to him. They said: “How should we speak to one who is a child in the cradle?” (19:29).

“He said: ‘Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet’” (19:30).

“... it would have been a refutation of the words of Allah; but Allah caused him to ascend after taking him away completely”. It is a paraphrase of the Qur'anic words:

“Rather Allah took him, up to Himself (4: 158).

And:

“...I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me...” (3:55).

As this verse mentions taking him away before causing him to ascend, the tradition infers that the events happened in the same sequence.

Al-Baqir ('a) said: “‘Isa ('a) made a promise to his companions, the night when Allah took him up to Himself. So, they gathered near him in the evening, and they were twelve men; and he made them enter into a house. Then he came to them from a fountain that was in the corner of the house, shaking off water from his hair. Then he said: ‘Verily Allah has revealed to me that He is going to take me up just now to Himself and purify me from the Jews. Now who among you (agrees) that my features be put on him, in order that he is killed and crucified (in my place) and he shall be with me in my rank?’ A young man among them said: ‘I, O Spirit of Allah!’ He said: ‘So you are that.’ Then ‘Isa said to them: ‘Why! surely there is one of you who will reject me twelve times before it is morning.’ One of them asked: ‘Am I that? O prophet of Allah!’ ‘Isa said to him: ‘Do you feel it in your heart? Then be you that.’ Thereafter ‘Isa told them: ‘Why! surely you will divide after me in three groups: two groups, forging lie against Allah, (shall be) in the Fire; and one group following Sham’un,²⁹ being true to Allah, (shall be) in the Garden.’ Then Allah caused ‘Isa to ascend to Him from the corner of the house while they were looking at him.”

Then the Imam ('a) said: “The Jews came searching for ‘Isa the same night. And they caught the man about whom ‘Isa had said: ‘Surely there is one of you who will reject me twelve times before it is morning’; and they took the young man who had been given the features of ‘Isa and he was killed and crucified. And he for whom ‘Isa had said that he would reject him twelve times before it was morning, did (indeed) reject him.”³⁰

The author says: Traditions of nearly the same meaning have been narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas, Qatadah, and others. Some people have said that the man who was made to look like ‘Isa was the same person who had guided the Jews so that they could arrest and kill him. There are some other views regarding those details. But the Qur'an is silent on this subject; and we shall write on it in detail under the verse

Ar-Rida ('a) said³¹: "There never was, in the eyes of the people, any uncertainty concerning the affairs of any prophet or Proof of Allah except the affair of 'Isa alone; because he was taken up from the earth alive, and he was given death between the heaven and the earth, then he was taken up to the heaven. And this is (the meaning of) the words of Allah, the Mighty, the Great:

"And when Allah said: 'O 'Isa! I am going to take you away completely and cause you to ascend unto Me and purify you ...' (3:55).

And (also) Allah says quoting the words of 'Isa (which he will say) on the Day of Resurrection:

"...And I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst take me (away) completely, Thou wert the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things." (5:117).

As-Sadiq ('a) said: "'Isa son of Maryam was taken up with a woollen outer garment, spun by Maryam, and woven by Maryam, and sewn by Maryam. But when he reached the heaven, he was addressed: 'O 'Isa! Lay down your worldly embellishment.' "³²

The author says: We shall explain the meaning of the above quoted two traditions, God willing, at the end of the Chapter 4, "The Women."

It is written in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* about the verse: ***"Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah..." (3:59):*** 'Abd Ibn Hamid and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Qatadah that he said: "We have been told that as-Sayyid and al-'Aqib, the two chiefs and bishops of the people of Najran, met the Prophet of Allah (S) and asked him about 'Isa, and said to him: 'Every human being has a father. Then why is it that 'Isa ('a) had no father?' Then Allah revealed this verse about him: ***"Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam..." (3:59).***

The author says: Traditions of nearly the same meaning have been narrated from as-Suddi, 'Ikrimah and others; al-Qummi also has narrated in his *at-Tafsir*, that the verse was revealed on the same occasion.

Some Other Traditions About Al-Muhaddath

Zurarah said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah ('a) about the messenger, the prophet, and *al-muhaddath* (الْمُحَدَّثُ = the one spoken to). He said: 'The messenger is the one who sees the angel (who) brings the message of his Lord to him and tells him: "(Allah) orders you so-and-so." And the messenger is a prophet with (the added rank of) messengership. And the prophet does not see the angel, something comes down to him – the news (comes) to his heart; and he becomes as though he be in a trance, and he sees (the vision) in his dream.' I said: 'Then how does he know that what he saw in his dream was truth?' He said: 'Allah makes it clear to him, so that he knows that it is truth; and he does not see the angel. And al-

Muhaddath is the one who hears the voice and does not see (the speaker) in person.’³³

The Author says: It has been narrated from the same Imam in *al-Kafi* also.

The original word of the Imam at the end of the tradition is *shahidan* (شَاهِدًا = translated here as “in person”); it literally means “at present”; also it may be a conditional phrase related to the subject; in other words, it may mean, “he does not see manifestly”.

Burayd enquired from al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (peace be on both of them), inter alia, in a tradition: “Then what is a messenger, a prophet and ‘the one spoken to’?” He (the Imam) said: “A messenger is one to whom the angel appears and speaks; and a prophet is one who sees in his dream; and possibly the messengership and the prophethood is combined in a single person. The *muhaddath* is the one who hears the voice of the angel but does not see his person.” Burayd said: “I said: ‘May Allah make things right for you! How can he know that what has he seen in his dream is the truth and that it is from the angel?’ He (the Imam) said: ‘He is directed in the right way until he knows it (with certainty). Allah has surely set a seal on the (divine) books with your Book, and on the prophets with your prophet.’³⁴

Muhammad Ibn Muslim said: “I mentioned *al-Muhaddath* in the presence of Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a). He said: ‘Verily he hears the voice but does not see his person.’ I said: ‘May Allah make things right for you! How does he know that it is the speech of the angel?’ He said: ‘He is given tranquillity and dignity so that he knows that it is the angel (speaking).’³⁵

Abu Basir narrates from the same Imam that he said: “ ‘Ali was a *muhaddath*, and Salman was a *muhaddath*.” Abu Basir says: “I said: ‘Then what is the sign of a *muhaddath*?’ He said: ‘The angel comes to him and scratches his heart (i.e., communicates to him) so-and-so.’ ”³⁶

Humran Ibn A‘yan said: “Abu Ja‘far (‘a) said to me that ‘Ali was a *muhaddath*. (When I told this to) our Companions, (they) said: ‘You did nothing when you did not ask him who used to speak to him?’ Then it happened that I (again) met Abu Ja‘far; and I said to him: ‘Did not you inform me that ‘Ali was spoken to?’ He said: ‘Surely.’ I said: ‘Who used to speak to him?’ He said: ‘An angel.’ I said: ‘Then I may say that he was a prophet or a messenger?’ He said: ‘No. But you should say that his likeness was the likeness of the Companion of Sulayman and the Companion of Musa; and his likeness was the likeness of Dhul-Qarnayn. Why! Have not you heard that ‘Ali was asked about Dhul-Qarnayn whether he was a prophet?’ He said: ‘No. But he was a servant who loved Allah, so (Allah) loved him; and he was sincere towards Allah, so (Allah) gave him good advice (i.e., guided him). So, this also is like that.’ ”³⁷

The author says: There are numerous traditions narrated from the Imams of the Ahl Al-Bayt about the meaning of ‘the one spoken to’ found in *Basa’ir ad-darajat*, *al-Kafi*, *Kanz al-fawa'id*, *al-Ikhtisas* and other books. This topic is found in the Sunni traditions too.

As for the distinction given by these traditions, between a prophet, a messenger and ‘the one spoken to’, we have described the difference between a messenger and a prophet. Also, it has been explained that

through revelation Allah speaks to His servant, and it creates by itself firm and certain knowledge, and this knowledge does not require any other proof. Among all Divine messages, revelation has the same position as the self-evident truths have in human knowledge – man does not need any proof or logical deduction to know that it is truth.

As for the dream, you must have noted that the traditions explain it in another way; it is not the vision which one sees normally in sleep; rather it denotes something like a trance, in which the external senses of the prophet are suspended, and then he observes what Allah wants him to see – in the same way as we observe the things while we are awake. Then Allah strengthens his conviction by bestowing on him the certainty that what he has seen is from Allah and not a Satanic manipulation.

As for ‘being spoken to’, it denotes hearing the voice of an angel. But he hears it by his heart, not by the ears, nor is it something like ideas or imaginations occurring in the mind, because idea or imagination is not called ‘hearing the voice’ – except as a far-fetched allegory. That is why the traditions describe it as hearing the voice and also as communicating to the heart; and yet name it as speech and talk. In short, the *muhaddath* hears the voice of the angel and listen to it with his ‘hearing power’ just as we hear and listen to normal talks and voices heard in this material world; but no other person can share in that talk or hear that voice, and therefore it is called a matter of heart.

As for his firm knowledge that what he heard was an angel’s talk and not a Satanic whispering, it happens by the help of Allah, as is explained in the above–quoted tradition of Muhammad Ibn Muslim: “He is given tranquillity and dignity so that he knows that it is the angel (speaking).” The Satanic whispering – surely a falsehood – may come in either of the two ways: It may appear in a form which the believer knows to be false, and then he naturally will know that it cannot be the talk of an angel because angels do not disobey Allah and do not go against His command. Or it may appear wearing a mask of truth and fact – hoping to bring in its wake falsehood and lie. In such case, the Divine Light, which always leads the believer, exposes its reality. Allah says:

“Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people...” (6: 122).

Apart from that, whispering and evil suggestions always create restlessness in soul and turmoil in heart, contrary to the remembrance of Allah and His speech which create gravity, and tranquillity. Allah says:

“It is only the Satan that frightens his friends...” (3: 175).

“... Now surely by Allah’s remembrance are the hearts set at rest” (13:28).

“Surely those who are pious, when a visitation from the Satan afflicts them, they become mindful, then lo! they see” (7:201).

When therefore the heart of the *muhaddath* is blessed with tranquillity and dignity at the time when he

hears the message, it conclusively proves that the message is from Allah. Conversely, restlessness and anxiety would show that it was a Satanic whispering, which brings precipitation, anxiety, anguish, etc., in its wake.

The traditions say that a *muhaddath* hears the voice of the angel and does not see him. It looks at the reality of 'being spoken to' and gives its academic definition. But it does not mean that the *muhaddath* cannot see the angel. A man becomes *al-muhaddath* (الْمُحَدَّثُ = the one spoken to), as soon as he hears an angel's voice, it is not necessary for him to see the angel. And if the *muhaddath* sees the angel, it is not because he is spoken to; it is an added excellence. Many verses clearly show that some of those spoken to had seen the angels when they spoke to them.

For example, in case of Maryam:

"...Then We sent to her Our Spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man" (19: 17).

"She said: "Surely I fly for refuge from you to the Beneficent Allah, if you are pious" (19: 18).

"He said: "I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I should give you a pure boy" (19: 19).

In case of the wife of Ibrahim:

"And certainly, Our messengers came to Ibrahim with good news. They said: "Peace," "Peace," said he..." (11:69).

"And his wife was standing (by), so she laughed; then We gave her the good news of Ishaq and after Ishaq of (a son's son) Ya'qub" (11:71).

"She said: "O woe to me! shall I bear a son (now) when I am an (extremely) old (woman) and this my husband an (extremely) old (man)? Most surely this is an amazing thing" (11:72).

"They said: "Do you wonder at the decree of Allah? The mercy of Allah and His blessings be on you, O people of the house surely, He is Praised, Glorious" (11:73).

However, there may another explanation the above traditions: The statement that a *muhaddath* does not see the angel, may mean that he does not see the reality of the angels, although he might see them in the form which they assume when appearing before him. After all, the above-quoted verses only show that Maryam and the wife of Ibrahim had seen the angels in human form – the assumed form.

Someone has suggested a third interpretation: The statement means that the angel does not bring to him any revelation of the *Shari'ah*; he does not appear before him with a legislative order; and this distinction is meant to protect the dignity of the messengers and the prophets.

But this interpretation is far-fetched.

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1. The original Hebrew mashiah became mashiha in Aramaic; in Greek this became messiah, the form now in common use. (tr.).
 2. Referring to the New Testament [note of al-Islam.org].
 3. See the translator's note in vol. 5, p. 263, under the explanation of the verse 3:39. (tr.).
 4. See al-Mizan, vol.3, p.212. (tr.)
 5. See al-Mizan, vol.3, p.205. (tr.).
 6. This argument seems inconclusive. 'Isa ('a) himself said: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew, 15/23); and when he sent his Apostles to spread the Divine Message, he expressly forbade them to go to non-Israelites: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and unto the city of the Samaritans enter you not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew, 10/5-6). But St. Paul, who had never seen 'Isa ('a) in his life, over-ruled the Apostles who had spent their time with 'Isa ('a) and were privy to his ideas and ideals. Thus, St. Paul took Christianity to non-Israelites; and this transplantation bore out such fruits which could never be palatable to 'Isa ('a) himself. Clearly, we cannot bring as evidence an action of St. Paul (or more precisely, the fruit of that action), which was diametrically opposed to a clear instruction of 'Isa ('a). (tr.).
 7. This means to cause you to die
 8. We shall write in detail on this subject at the end of the fourth Chapter, 'The Women'. (Author)
 9. This is the Commentary of 'Ali Ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi himself and not the saying of the Imam, (See al-Qummi, at-Tafsir, an-Najaf al-Ashraf, ed., vol. 1, p. 102). (ed.).
 10. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
 11. Majma' al-bayan.
 12. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 13. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 14. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 15. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 16. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 17. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 18. ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 19. al-Khisal.
 20. al-Khisal
 21. al-'Ayyashi
 22. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi
 23. al-Akmah (in the Arabic text) means blind
 24. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi
 25. al-'Ayyashi
 26. 'Uyun al-akhbar
 27. Quoted in at-Tawhid.
- Apparently, this phrase is an interpolation by one of the narrators, because Luke was not among the twelve disciples. (tr.)
28. Kamal ad-din.
 29. Simon the Peter, in English. (tr.).
 30. At-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
 31. 'Uyun al-akhbar.
 32. al-'Ayyashi.
 33. Basa'ir ad-darajat.
 34. Basa'ir ad-darajat.
 35. Basa'ir ad-darajat.
 36. Basa'ir ad-darajat.
 37. Basa'ir ad-darajat.

Sura 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 61 – 63

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ ۖ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا ۚ نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَذِبِينَ

“But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: “Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves, then let us pray earnestly and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars” (3:61).

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَصَصُ الْحَقُّ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

“Most surely this is the true story, and there is no god but Allah; and most surely Allah is the Mighty, the Wise” (3:62).

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا ۚ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ

“But if they turn back then surely Allah knows the mischief makers” (3:63).

Commentary

Verse 61

Qur'an: “But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge...” (3:61).

“Fa” (فَ = translated here as “But”) shows that the offer of *al-mubahahah* (اَلْمُبَاهَلَةُ = earnest imprecation) branches out from the Divine teaching explained above so clearly and convincingly about ‘Isa son of Maryam (‘a), and ended so emphatically with the words,

“The truth is from your Lord, so be not of the doubters” (3:60).

“In this”: The pronoun “this” refers either to ‘Isa or to the “truth” mentioned in the preceding verse.

The preceding verses were Divine Revelation in which there could be no doubt at all. Apart from that,

they contained a clear logical proof, that is, the verse: ***“Surely the likeness of ‘Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam....” (3:59).*** Thus, the knowledge emanating from these verses is two-fold: one, because it is a Divine Speech: two, because of its rational proof. That is why this knowledge was not reserved for the Prophet only; others too could understand it. Even if someone did not believe it to be a Divine Revelation, he could not entertain any doubt about the truth of the subject discussed, because it contained rational argument which unbiased mind was bound to accept. Perhaps that is why Allah said: ***“after what has come to you of knowledge” (3:61)***; and did not say, after what We have explained to them.

Another point: By reminding the Prophet of the Divine Knowledge, Allah wanted to assure him that he would overwhelm his adversaries by Allah’s permission and that Allah would surely be on his side supporting him in that dispute.

Qur’an: “Then say: “Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves” (3:61).

The first-person plural pronoun in “let us call” has a different import from the plural pronouns in “our sons” “our women” and “our selves”. The former refers to both parties of the argument, that is, the advocates of Islam and those of Christianity, while the latter refer to the side of Islam only.

Accordingly, the meaning would be as follows: Let us both call the sons, the women and the ‘selves’; we should call our sons, our women and our ‘selves’, and you should call your sons, your women and your ‘selves’. The verse thus has shortened a long sentence in a meaningful and pleasant way.

al-Mubalahah (الْمُبَاهَلَةُ) and *al-mula‘anah* (الْمُلَاعِنَةُ) both have the same meaning: to curse each other. The actual parties to the argument were the Messenger of Allah on one side, and the Christian men on the other. But in the challenge for the imprecation, the call was extended to the sons and women, as it would show more convincingly that the claimant is perfectly sure of the truth of his claim, that he is absolutely right. Allah has put in man the love of his children and family, to such an extent that he places himself in jeopardy to save them, plunges into perilous situations to keep them safe. And precisely for this reason, sons have been mentioned before women, because man loves his sons more than his women.

An exegete has said: “The verse means, let us call your sons, your women and your selves; and you call our sons, our women and our selves.” But the explanation given by us above shows how absurd this meaning is. This meaning does not leave any justification for including the sons and the women in the earnest imprecation.

The detailed description of the invitees is a further proof that the caller (i.e., the Prophet) has absolute confidence in the truth of his claim. The import of the call is as follows: Let my whole group and your whole group enter into earnest imprecation, so that both groups pray earnestly to Allah and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars. In this way, the Divine curse and chastisement shall cover the sons,

women and selves of the liars, and the enemies of truth shall be annihilated completely, they shall be rooted out without leaving any trace.

Consequently, the truth of this speech does not depend on numerousness of the sons, the women or the 'selves'. The main brunt of the challenge is that one party – that which is on wrong – should perish together with all its near and dear ones – male and female, old and young. The exegetes unanimously say – and traditions and history support them – that when the Messenger of Allah (S) came out for the imprecation, the only persons whom he brought with him were: 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn (peace be on them all!). Therefore, the only participants, on the side of Islam, were two 'selves', two sons and one woman – and yet the Prophet did fully comply with the Divine Command.

Moreover, the meaning of a word in a verse is one thing, and it is quite another matter as for whom, or on how many people, could that word be applied in practice. We find numerous examples in the Qur'an where an order, a promise or a threat has been mentioned using plural words, but the circumstances of its revelation show that it was revealed for one person only. For example:

“(As for) those of you who put away their wives by likening their backs to the backs of their mothers, they are not their mothers” (58:2).

“And (as for) those who put away their wives by likening their backs to the backs of their mothers then would recall what they said...” (58:3).

“Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said: “Surely Allah is poor, and we are rich” (3: 181).

“And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: “Whatever can be spared” (2:219).

There are a lot of verses that were revealed with plural words, although the events for which they were revealed concerned only one person.

Qur'an: “then let us pray earnestly and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars” (3:61)

“al-Ibtihal” (الِإِبْتِهَالُ) is derived from *al bahlah* (الْبَهْلَةُ) also pronounced *al-buhlah* (الْبُهْلَةُ = curse). This is its basic meaning; then it was commonly used for earnest prayer.

The words, ***“and bring about the curse of Allah” (3:61)***, are a sort of explanation for the preceding verb, ***“then let us pray earnestly” (3:61)***. The verse said, ***“and bring about the curse of Allah” (3:61)***; it did not say 'and ask from Allah to curse'. It was an indication that that prayer would surely be granted because at that juncture it was the only way to distinguish the truth from the falsehood.

The word, “the liars”, does not refer to all the liars found anywhere in the world, nor does it mean the genes of the liars. It refers to a particular group – that party to the argument (between the Prophet and the Christians) which was wrong in its claim. The Prophet was saying that Allah is One, there is no god

besides Him, and that 'Isa was His servant and messenger; while the Christians said that 'Isa was God, and son of God, and that God had three persons.

This observation leads us to another reality. All those who came out for the proposed imprecation were equal partners in their respective claim. Had the claim and the resulting imprecation been between the Prophet only and the Christians, one party (i.e., the Prophet) would demand singular words, and the other, plural. In such cases, it is necessary to use an expression which would cover singular and plural both. For example, the sentence under discussion could have been written like this: and bring about the curse of Allah on whosoever is lying. But it says: "... **on the liars.**" (3:61) It proves that indeed there were liars (in plural) in one party to the argument, either on the side of the Prophet or on the Christians' side.

Consequently, all those who came out for the imprecation would be partners in the claim – because lie presupposes a claim. Therefore, those who were present on the side of the Prophet for the imprecation – i.e., 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn – were partners in the claim of the Messenger of Allah (S) and his Mission. It is one of the most excellent virtues which were given exclusively to these family members of the Prophet (peace be on them all!). Another exclusive excellence: Allah gave them the names of 'selves', women, and sons of the Prophet to the exclusion of all the men, women, and children of the *ummah*.

Question: You have mentioned above that the Qur'an uses – more often than not – plural words for singular; and even this verse says "our women" while it was only one lady, i.e., Fatimah ('a), who participated in the imprecation. Then why should the plural, "the liars", be not explained in the same way?

Reply: There is a vast difference between the two. There is a situation that may happen again and again, and there is another which is not expected to repeat itself. In the former situation, it is perfectly all right to use a plural in place of a singular, so that the rule or comment would cover even those who would be doing the same act in future. But in the latter situation, it is not allowed to use plural in place of singular, because the event is not to repeat itself and no one else is expected to be included in that order or comment, etc. Look for example at the following verses:

"And when you said to him to whom Allah had shown favour and to whom you had shown favour: Keep your wife to yourself and fear Allah..." (33:37).

"...The tongue of him whom they are inclined to blame (for it) is barbarous and this is clear Arabic tongue." (16: 103).

"O Prophet! surely We have made lawful to you your wives whom you have given their dowries,... and a believing woman if she gave herself to the Prophet, if the Prophet desired to marry her – specially for you, not for the (rest of) believers..." (33:50).

And the order for calling to the imprecation could not be extended beyond that particular situation, that is, the imprecation between the Prophet and the Christians. Therefore, when Allah uses a plural, there should be more than two in both parties which were called; otherwise, the use of the plural “the liars” would be out of place.

Question: All the Christians who had come in the delegation of the Najran were a party to a claim – the claim that ‘Isa was God, and the son of God, and one of the three persons of God. There was no discord among them in this matter, nor was there any difference in this claim between their men and women. Likewise, the claim on the side of the Prophet – that Allah is One, there is no god but He; and ‘Isa son of Maryam was His servant and His messenger – was upheld by all the believers; it was not confined to any one of them – not even the Prophet. Therefore, it is out of place to say that those who were brought by the Prophet for the imprecation had any superiority or excellence over the rest of the believers. In fact, the Prophet had brought them just as examples of the sons, women and selves mentioned in the verse.

Moreover, claim and mission are two different things. Those who participated in the imprecation were party to the claim. How is it that you have made them partners in the Mission too?

Reply: Had the Prophet brought them just as samples, it was necessary for him to bring at least two other men, three women and three sons – to comply with the demand of the plurals. Yet, he did not do so. It proves that only those who came with him were worthy of being called his sons, his women and his selves – to the exclusion of all the others. Only on accepting this fact, we can say that he obeyed the Divine Order given in this verse. In other words, he could not find any one worthy of being included in these categories, except the one man, one woman and two children whom he brought with him. There was no one else whom he could be included in compliance with the plural words of the verse. In these circumstances, he fully complied with the order, although he could not bring three persons in any category.

Moreover, if you ponder on the events, you will see that the only aim of the Christians of Najran in coming to Medina was to confront the Messenger of Allah (S) and to argue with him about ‘Isa son of Maryam. It was the Messenger of Allah who was claiming that ‘Isa was a servant of Allah and His messenger. It was he who called others to believe in this claim, saying that it was based on Divine Revelation – the revelation which, he said, was sent to him. As for the rest of the believers, the Christians had nothing to do with them; nor did they argue with them. That is why Allah has used singular verbs and pronouns in the beginning of this verse, when referring to the Prophet: “But whoever disputes with you (literally: thee) in this after what has come to you (lit.: thee) of knowledge, then say (lit.: say thou)...” The same is the case of this verse:

“But if they dispute with you (lit. :thee), say (lit. :say thou): “I have submitted myself (entirely) to Allah and (so has) everyone who follows me” (3:20).

The above explanation shows that the Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be on him and his progeny!) had not brought those personalities as samples or examples of other believers – because the believers, per se, had no part in that disputation or imprecation; and there was no reason why they should be offered as targets for the curse and punishment which were to come to one of the two parties (the Christians and their adversary, i.e., the Prophet).

The Prophet himself was a party to that argument and it was his obligation to offer himself as the target of the calamity which could come to him in case his claim was (God forbid!) wrong. Now, there was no reason why he should bring ‘Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a) with him, if his claim were not dependent on them also, as it was on his own self. He had come with them for imprecation because they were the only sons, woman and self on whom his claim depended. Surely, he had not brought them as samples or examples. It is now crystal clear that these personalities were his partners in his claim; the claim depended on them as it did on him.

Furthermore, the Christians had come to argue with the Prophet not just because he believed that ‘Isa son of Maryam was the servant and messenger of Allah. They had taken upon themselves to come all the way to Medina because in addition to claiming those things about ‘Isa, he had called and invited them to believe likewise. This call, this mission, was the main reason why they had come in a delegation for argument. Consequently, when the Prophet came to the appointed place of imprecation, bringing with him the four personalities, it was because of that claim and that call together. Thus, these personalities were his partners in his mission, as they had been his partners in his claim.

Question: We accept that the Prophet came with them because they were a part of him; and this attribute was not found in others, it was their exclusive excellence. But it appears – and normal practice confirms it – that when a man brings his near and dear ones, his women and children, in dangerous and frightening places, it shows that he is fully confident of his and their safety and comfort. His bringing them for imprecation proves only that he was absolutely sure of his truth – it does not show anything else. It is quite irrelevant to say that his action proves that they were his partners in the mission.

Reply: It is true that the beginning of the verse does not show more than that which has been mentioned above. But the end of the verse, that is, “*on the liars*” (3:61), shows that there were surely liars (in plural) in one of the two sides of the argument and imprecation. Such expression could only be used if there were several people in each group, all making some claim – be it true or false. Therefore, those who were brought there by the Prophet were indeed his partners, both in the claim and in the mission, as was explained above. It is thus proved that those who were present there with the Prophet – all of them – were parties to the claim and the mission, together with the Prophet, and were his partners in it.

Question: It follows, from what you have said, that they were his partners in the prophethood.

Reply: Not at all. We have explained earlier where we have discussed “Prophethood”¹ that the Call and Propagation are not one and the same with the prophethood, although they are among its conditions and

concomitants, and are parts of the divinely bestowed responsibilities which a prophet takes upon himself. Likewise, we have made it clear in the discourse about the *Imamah* [2](#) that they are not identical with *Imamah* either, although they are in a way among its concomitants.

Verse 62

Qur'an: “Most surely this is the true story, and there is no god but Allah...” (3:62).

The demonstrative pronoun “this” refers to the earlier mentioned stories of ‘Isa (‘a). There is a fine literary transposition in the sentence. What it says is as follows: Most surely the stories We have told you concerning ‘Isa are the truth – not that which is told by the Christians.

There is multiple emphasis in this sentence: *Inna* (اِنَّا = surely), and *la* (لَا = surely) followed by an additional pronoun *huwa* (هُوَ =this) are all combined together to put utmost emphasis on this statement. It was done to cheer the Prophet and to encourage him and strengthen his heart for the coming imprecation, by augmenting his certainty and insight, and fortifying his confidence in the revelation which Allah had sent to him. It is further strengthened by additional emphasis contained in the next sentence which describes an accompanying reality: **“and there is no god but Allah” (3:62)**. This fact once again shows that the preceding stories are truth.

Qur'an: “... And most surely Allah is the Mighty, the Wise” (3:62).

The conjunctive “and” joins it to the first sentence of the verse. The same modes of emphasis have again been used here. It aims at further comforting the Prophet and strengthening his heart. It says that Allah is Mighty: He has power to help the side of the truth. And He is Wise: He cannot neglect or forget this aid, because ignorance or oblivion cannot reach Him. He is not like those false deities whom the enemies of the truth have taken for themselves besides Him.

This explanation shows why these two Divine Names were chosen for concluding this verse. The sentence contains an exclusiveness: Only Allah is the Mighty and the Wise.

Verse 63

Qur'an: “But if they turn back then surely Allah knows the mischief makers” (3:63).

What should be the actual aim of any argument or imprecation? The manifestation of the truth. If so, then it is unthinkable for a seeker of truth to turn back from it. If the Christians really wanted the truth to be manifested – and they knew that Allah was the Guardian of truth and that He would never allow it to be destroyed or invalidated – they would not turn back from the proposed imprecation. And if they did, it would show that their aim by all this argumentation and disputation was not the manifestation of truth; they only wanted apparent victory, preservation of the status they had and beliefs they followed, and continuation of the customs and Traditions with which they were familiar.

Their only goal was that which their desire, lust and greed had made to seem fair to them – and it was not the good life which conforms with truth and happiness; it was but a semblance of life. In other words, they did not want reform and improvement; they wanted to make mischief in the world by corrupting the good life. Their turning back would mean that they were mischief-makers.

The sentence uses a metaphorical device of putting the cause in place of the effect; it mentions their mischief-making instead of saying that they do not want the truth to be manifested.

The second part of the sentence refers to the Divine Attribute of knowledge, and it has been emphasized with addition of *inna* (surely), as it says: ***“then surely Allah knows...” (3:63)***. It was to show that mischief-making and thwarting the manifestation of truth was ingrained in their psyche, and Allah knows that as a result of that deep-rooted trait they will surely turn back from the imprecation. And so they did, and by doing so proved the truth of the Divine Words.

Traditions

As-Sadiq (‘a) said: “When the Christians of Najran came to the Messenger of Allah (S) as a delegation – and their leaders were al-Ahtam, al-‘Aqib, and as-Sayyid – and (the time of) their prayer came, they began to ring hand-bells and prayed. The Companions of the Messenger of Allah said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! This in your Mosque?’ He said: ‘Let them be!’ When they finished (their prayer) they came near the Messenger of Allah and said: ‘To what do you call (us)?’ He said: ‘To bearing the witness that there is no god except Allah, and that I am the Messenger of Allah, and that ‘Isa was a servant created (by Allah), he used to eat, drink and relieve himself.’ They said: ‘Then who was his father?’ Thereupon came the revelation to the Messenger of Allah saying: ‘Say to them, “What do you say about Adam? Was he a servant created (by Allah) who used to eat, drink, relieve himself and cohabit?”’ The Prophet put this question to them, and they replied: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘Then who was his father?’ and they became speechless. Then Allah sent down (the verse):

“Surely the likeness of ‘Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust...” (3:59).

And the verse:

“But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge... and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars” (3:61).

Then the Messenger of Allah said: ‘(If you do not agree with what I say) then enter into earnest imprecation with me; thus, if I am truthful the curse will be sent down on you and if I am a liar, it will be sent down on me.’ They said: ‘You have done justice.’

So, they made an appointment for the imprecation. When they returned to the place they were staying, their leaders as-Sayyid, al-‘Aqib and al-Ahtam, said: ‘If he comes for the imprecation against us with his

nation (i.e., people unrelated to him), we shall enter into imprecation against him, because then he is not a prophet. But if he enters into imprecation against us with only the people of his House, we shall not enter into imprecation against him, because he will not put the People of his House forward unless he is truthful.'

When the morning came, they came to the Messenger of Allah (S) – and there were with him the Leader of the Faithful ('Ali), Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn ('a). The Christians said: 'Who are these?' They were told: 'This is his cousin, *al-wasiy* (الوصى = executor of will) and son-in-law, and this is his daughter Fatimah, and these are his sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn.' So, they were frightened and said to the Messenger of Allah: 'We shall pay you whatever you are pleased with but excuse us from the imprecation.' Thereupon the Messenger of Allah (S) made agreement with them on (the condition of) *al-jizyah* (الجزية = tax); and they went away."³

Ar-Rayyan Ibn as-Salt narrates a talk between ar-Ridha' ('a) with al-Ma'mun and the scholars about the difference between the Prophet's progeny and the rest of the *ummah* and the superiority of the former over the latter, in which he, inter alia, says: "The scholars said: 'Has Allah explained (this) selection in His Book?' ar-Ridha' ('a) said: 'He has explained the selection manifestly in twelve places – apart from the hidden (references).' Then he described those places of the Qur'an, during which he said: 'As for the third (verse, it was) when Allah distinguished His purified creatures and ordered His Prophet to earnestly pray with them for His curse on the liars, in the verse of imprecation. So Allah, the Mighty, the Great, said:

"But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: "Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves" (3:61).

The scholars said: 'our selves means the Prophet himself.' Abu al-Hasan (ar-Ridha') said: 'You are mistaken. He only meant 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. And one of the proofs to show it is the saying of the Prophet (himself): "Banu Wali'ah should give up (their mischief); otherwise, I will surely send to them a man like my own self" – referring to 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. And He meant al-Hasan and al-Husayn with "sons" and meant Fatimah with "women". So this is an exclusive virtue in which no one can precede them, and an excellence in which no man can equal them, and an honour in which no creature can overtake them, because He made 'Ali's person like his (Prophet's) own self (person)...' "⁴

As-Saduq narrates through his chain from al-Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far (peace be on both of them!), that he had a talk with (Harun) ar-Rashid, during which ar-Rashid said to him: "How is it that you say, 'We are the offspring of the Prophet', while the Prophet did not leave any offspring? And progeny is through male, not through female; and you are the children of the daughter, and her child is not (her father's) progeny." The Imam said: "I said to him: 'I ask you by the right of kinship and that of the grave (i.e., of the Prophet) and of him who is therein, that you should excuse me from (replying to) this question.' He said: 'You shall tell me of your proof for it, O son of 'Ali, and you, O Musa! are their leader and their

present Imam – thus I have been informed – and I am not going to excuse you from any question I put to you until you bring me a proof from the Book of Allah; because you claim, O children of ‘Ali! that nothing of it (the Book) comes out from you – not even an *alif* or a *waw* – but you know its interpretation; and you advance the word of Allah, the Mighty, the Great, as your proof; ***“We have not neglected anything in the Book.” (6:38)***, and you are not in need of the opinion of scholars and their analogy.’

“Then I said: ‘Do you permit me to reply?’ He said: ‘Let me have.’ I said (reciting the Qur’anic verse): I seek refuge of Allah from the cursed Satan⁵. In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful....

“....And of his (Ibrahim’s) offspring, Dawud and Sulayman and Ayyub and Yusuf and Musa and Harun; and thus do We reward those who do good” (6:84).

“And Zakariyya and Yahya and ‘Isa and Ilyas; each one was of the good ones” (6:85).

I asked: Who was the father of ‘Isa? O Leader of the Faithful!’ He said: ‘He had no father.’ Then I said: ‘Yet He (Allah) has joined him with the progeny of the Prophets through Maryam; and in the same way Allah, the High, has joined us with the progeny of the Prophet through our mother, Fatimah.’ (Then I said): ‘Should I tell you more? O Leader of the Faithful!’ he said: ‘Let me have.’ I said: ‘(It is) the word of Allah, the Mighty, the Great:

“But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: “Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves, then let us pray earnestly and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars” (3:61).

And nobody has ever claimed that the Prophet – on the occasion of the imprecation with the Christians – made anyone enter under the drape except ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn. So (this) was the interpretation of His Word: “our sons” meant al-Hasan and al-Husayn; and “our women”, Fatimah; and “our selves”, ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib.’ ” ⁶

Al-Ma’mun had asked ar-Ridha’ (‘a) several questions, one of which was as follows:

Al-Ma’mun said: “What is the proof for the caliphate of your grandfather, ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib?”

(The Imam) said: “The verse of our selves.”

He (al-Ma’mun) said: “If there were not our women.”

He (the Imam) said: “If there were not our sons.”

The author says: The Imam argued on the strength of the word, our selves. He meant that Allah had made ‘Ali (‘a) like the person of the Prophet. (And who could have more right to succeed the Prophet than his own person?). Al-Ma’mun said: “If there were not our women.” He wanted to say that the reference to “women” indicates that the word “our selves” means “our men”, and as such it would not

show any excellence. The Imam replied: “If there were not our sons.” That is, if “our selves” referred to the men, then why should the sons be mentioned separately? They would have been included in “our men”.

Hariz narrates from Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) that he said: “The Leader of the Faithful (‘Ali, ‘a) was asked about his excellent virtues. He mentioned some of them. Then they said to him: ‘Tell us (some) more.’ So he said: ‘Verily two Bishops of the Christians of Najran came to the Messenger of Allah, and talked (with him) on the subject of ‘Isa (‘a). Thereupon Allah revealed the verse: “***Surely the likeness of ‘Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam...***” (3:59). Then the Messenger of Allah entered (the house), and held the hands of ‘Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, and Fatimah; then he came out, and raised his palms to the heaven and separated his fingers one from another; and called them (the Christians) to the imprecation.”

(Abu ‘Abdillah, ‘a) then said: “And Abu Ja‘far (‘a) has said: ‘And that is the way of imprecation; one intertwines his hand in one’s (adversary’s) hand raising them to the heaven.’ “Thereupon when the two Bishops saw him, one of them said to his companion: “By God! If he is a prophet, we shall surely perish; and if he is not a prophet his (own) people would save us (from the trouble of confronting him).” So they gave up (the imprecation) and went back.” [7](#)

The author says: This or nearly the same meaning has been narrated in other traditions through the Shi‘i chains. All of them unanimously say that those who were brought by the Prophet for the imprecation were ‘Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn only.

Ash-Shaykh at-Tusi has narrated it in his *al-Amali*, through his chains from ‘Amir Ibn Sa‘d from his father; and also through his chains from ‘Abdu’r-Rahman Ibn Kathir from as-Sadiq (‘a); and also through his chains from Salim Ibn Abi ‘I Ja‘d, raising it to Abu Dharr; and also through his chains from Rabi‘ah Ibn Najid from ‘Ali (‘a).

Al-Mufid has narrated it in his *al-Ikhtisas*, through his chains from Muhammad Ibn az-Zibriqan from Musa Ibn Ja‘far (‘a); and also from Muhammad Ibn al-Munkadir from his father from his grandfather.

Al-‘Ayyashi has narrated it in his *at-Tafsir* from Muhammad Ibn Sa‘id al-Urdunni from Musa Ibn Muhammad Ibn ar-Ridha’ (‘a) from his brother; and also from Abu Ja‘far al-Ahwal from as-Sadiq (‘a); and also from al-Mundhir from ‘Ali (‘a); and also through his chains from ‘Amir Ibn Sa‘d.

Al-Furat has narrated it in his *at-Tafsir* several traditions to this effect, which separately reach to Abu Ja‘far (‘a), Abu Rafi‘, ash-Sha‘bi, ‘Ali (‘a), and Shahr Ibn Hawshab and several other Traditions to the same effect have been narrated in *Rawdat al-wa‘izin*, *l’lam al-wara*, *al-Khara’ij* and other books.

It has been narrated in *at-Tafsir of ath-Tha‘labi*[8](#) from Mujahid and al-Kalbi: “When the Prophet called the Christians for the imprecation, they said: ‘Let us return and think over it.’ When they were alone, they asked al-‘Aqib – and he was a man of good judgment among them: ‘O ‘Abd al-Masih! What is your

opinion?’ He said: ‘By Allah! You are well-aware, O ye Christians! that Muhammad is a prophet, sent by Allah, and that he has brought to you the decisive word about your Companion (‘Isa, ‘a). By Allah! whenever a nation has entered into imprecation with a prophet, their elders have perished, and their youngsters have died. And if you do it, we shall surely perish; but, if you turn down, for the love of your religion and (want) to remain on what you have at present, then make peace with the man and go back to your towns.’

“So they came to the Messenger of Allah; and he had come out in the morning carrying al-Husayn in his lap, holding the hand of al-Hasan, with Fatimah walking behind him and ‘Ali was behind her; and he was saying: ‘When I pray, you say “Amen”’. Then the Bishop of Najran said: ‘O ye Christians! Surely, I see the faces that if they ask Allah to remove a mountain from its place, He would surely remove it. Therefore, do not do imprecation, otherwise you will perish, and there will not remain any Christian on the face of the earth, up to the Day of Resurrection.’

“Then they said: ‘O Ab al-Qasim! We have decided that we should not enter into imprecation against you; and that we leave you on your religion and we remain on our religion.’ He said: ‘Well, if you refuse imprecation, then accept Islam – you will have (the rights) which (other) Muslims have, and on you shall be (the duties) which are on them.’ But they refused. So (the Prophet) said: ‘Then I shall fight you.’ They said: ‘We do not have strength to fight against the Arabs. But we shall make peace with you that you will not fight against us or frighten us; nor will you turn us away from our religion, on the condition that we shall pay to you every year two thousand robes – one thousand in Safar and one thousand in Rajab – and thirty coats of mail, (of) common (quality), made of iron.’ So the Prophet made agreement with them on these conditions. And he said, ‘By Him in Whose hand is my soul! Surely destruction had almost descended on the people of Najran.’ And if they had entered into imprecation they would have been transformed into monkeys and pigs, and there would have erupted in the valley a conflagration of fire engulfing them all; and surely Allah would have annihilated Najran and its inhabitants – even the birds on tree tops; and the year would not have ended for all the Christians but they would have perished.”

The author says: The event, nearly in similar words, has also been narrated in *Kitabu al-Maghazi* from Ibn Ishaq. Also, al-Maliki has narrated it in his *al-Fusul al-muhimmah* from many exegetes; and al-Hammuyi has narrated nearly similar tradition from Ibn Jurayh.

The agreement contains the phrase, “one thousand in Safar;” it means al-Muharram of Islamic calendar, which was the first month of the year in Arabia. In pre-Islamic days it was called “Safar” – the first two months were called Safar al-Awwal and Safar ath-Thani. Arabs in the days of ignorance used to postpone Safar al-Awwal. Then Islam confirmed the sacredness of the Safar al-Awwal; so it was called, “the sacred (المُحَرَّم = al-Muharram), month of Allah;” then it became known as *al-Muharram*.

‘Amir son of Sa’d Ibn Abi Waqqas narrates from his father that he said: “Mu‘awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan ordered Sa’d telling him, ‘What prevents you from abusing Abu Turab (‘Ali, ‘a)?’ He said, ‘As for this matter, as long as I remember three things which the Messenger of Allah (S) has said (about ‘Ali) I will

never abuse him; if even one of them were for me, it would have been dearer to me than red livestock.’

I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying, when he left him (‘Ali) as his Deputy (when going) for one of his battles. ‘Ali said to him, ‘O Messenger of Allah! Are you leaving me behind with women and children?’ Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah (S) said to him: *‘Are you not pleased that you should have the same position with me that Harun had with Musa – except that there is no prophet after me?’* And I heard him saying on the day of Khaybar: *‘Most surely tomorrow I will give the standard (of army) to a man who loves Allah and His Messenger, and whom Allah and His Messenger do love.’* (Sa’d) said: ‘So we held our heads high (hoping to catch the eye of the Prophet).

But he said: ‘Call ‘Ali to me.’ So, he was brought (before him), sore-eyed; and (the Prophet) put (his) saliva in his eyes (and he was cured); and gave the standard to him. And Allah conquered (Khaybar) on his hand. And when this verse was revealed: “... **then say: “Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves, then let us pray earnestly...”** (3:61), the Messenger of Allah called ‘Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and said: ‘O Allah! These are the People of my House.’ ”[9](#)

The author says: This tradition has been narrated by at-Tirmidhi in his *as-Sahih*, Abu al-Mu’ayyad al-Muwaffaq Ibn Ahmad in his *Kitab Fada’il ‘Ali*, Abu Nu’aym in his *Hilyat al-awliya’* (from the same narrator as above), and al-Hammuyi in his *Fara’idu ’s-simtayn*.

Abu Nu’aym narrates through his chains from ‘Amir Ibn Sa’d Ibn Abi Waqqas from his father that he said: “When this verse was revealed, the Messenger of Allah (S) called ‘Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn and said: ‘O Allah! These are the People of my House.’ ”[10](#)

Also he narrates in the same book through his chains from ash-Sha’bi from Jabir that he said: “al-‘aqib and at-Tayyib came to the Messenger of Allah (S), and he invited them to Islam. They said: ‘We are (already) Muslims, O Muhammad! He said: ‘You tell a lie. If you wish, I would tell you what prevents you from (accepting) Islam.’ They said: ‘Then let us have.’ He said: ‘The love of the cross, drinking liquor, and eating the flesh of pig.’ Jabir further said: “Then the Prophet invited them to imprecation, and they promised him to come to him in the morning. When the morning came, the Messenger of Allah held the hands of ‘Ali, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, and Fatimah. Then he sent (someone) to them. But they refused to accept his call (for imprecation); instead, they acknowledged to him (his sovereignty). Then the Messenger of Allah (S) said: *‘By Him Who has sent me with truth! Had they done (the imprecation) the valley would have rained fire on them.’* “Jabir said: “About them was revealed the verse: “.. **let us call our sons and your sons...**” (3:61). Jabir further said: “ ‘our selves’ refers to the Messenger of Allah and ‘Ali; and ‘our sons’ to al-Hasan and al-Husayn; and ‘our women’ to Fatimah.”

The author says: This tradition has been narrated by Ibn al-Maghazili in his *al-Manaqib* through his chains from the same ash-Sha’bi from Jabir; by al-Hammuyi in his *Fara’idu ’s-simtayn*, through his chains from the same narrator; by al-Maliki in his *al-Fusul al-muhimmah* from the same; by Abu Dawud

at-Tayalisi from the same; and by as-Suyuti in his *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from al-Hakim (who has said that this tradition is correct), and from Ibn Marduwayh as well as Abu Nu'aym (in his *Dala'il al-khayrat*) – all from Jabir.

Abu Nu'aym has narrated in his *Dala'il al-khayrat* through the chain of al-Kalbi from Abu Salih from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "Verily a delegation of the Christians of Najran came to the Messenger of Allah (S), and there were fourteen persons of their nobles. Among them were as-Sayyid (and he was the leader) and al-'Aqib, the second in rank and a man of good judgment among them." (Then he has described the event as given above.) [11](#)

Al-Bayhaqi has narrated in his *Dala'il an-Nubuwwah* through the chain of Salmah Ibn 'Abd Yashu' from his father from his grandfather that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) wrote to the people of Najran, before the (chapter of) Ta Sin Sulayman¹² was revealed: *'In the name of Allah, the God of Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub. From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to the Bishop of Najran and the people of Najran. If you accept Islam, then I extol before you Allah, the God of Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub. Now after (the praise of Allah), I call you to the worship of Allah leaving aside the worship of the servants (of Allah), and I invite you to (come under) the guardianship of Allah instead of the guardianship of the servants. But if you refuse (it), then (you should pay) the head-tax; and if you refuse (even this), then I declare war against you. And peace (be on you).'*

When the Bishop read the letter, he was shocked and extremely terrified. So he sent (someone) to call a man of Najran Shurahbil Ibn Wada'ah by name; and gave him the letter of the Prophet and he read it. Then the Bishop said to him: 'What is your opinion?' Shurahbil said: 'You surely know the promise which Allah made to Ibrahim about the prophethood in the progeny of Isma'il. Therefore, how can one be sure that it is not this very man? I would not give any opinion regarding the prophethood. If it were an opinion about a worldly matter, I would have advised you about it and made efforts on your behalf.' Then the Bishop called the people of Najran one after another, but all said as Shurahbil had said. Thereupon, they decided to send Shurahbil Ibn Wada'ah, 'Abdullah Ibn Shurahbil and Jabbar Ibn Fayd, so that they might bring them the (correct) news of the Messenger of Allah (S)

"So, the delegation proceeded until they came to the Messenger of Allah (S). And he asked them (questions) and they asked him, and this questioning between him and them continued, until they said to him: 'What do you say about 'Isa son of Maryam?' The Messenger of Allah (S) said: *'Today, I do not have anything about him; therefore you stay (here), in order that I may tell you tomorrow morning what is to be said about 'Isa.'* Then Allah sent down these verses:

"Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust..." (3:59).

"(This is) the truth from your Lord, so be not of the disputers." (3:60).

"... And bring about the curse of Allah on the liars." (3:61).

“But they refused to agree to that (truth). Thus, when the next morning came after the Messenger of Allah (S) had given them that information, he proceeded for the imprecation to a place thick with trees that belonged to him, carrying al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and Fatimah was walking behind him; and he had many wives those days (but did not take any of them with him). And Shurahbil said to his two companions: ‘Surely, I see a (serious) matter coming (to us). If this man is a prophet sent (by Allah) and we ventured to imprecate against him, there would not remain on the face of the earth any hair or claw of us (i.e., any cattle or bird belonging to us), but it will perish.’ They said to him: ‘What is your view?’ He said: ‘My opinion is that we should leave the judgment to him, because I see (in him) a man who will never exceed the proper limits in his decision.’ They said: ‘You may do as you like in this matter.’ Thereupon, Shurahbil met the Messenger of Allah (S) and said: ‘I have thought (of one thing) better than the imprecation against you.’ He said: ‘And what is it?’ He said: ‘(We give you the authority) to decide (between us) this day up to the night and from the night to the (next) morning. Whatever you will decide will be binding on us.’

“So, the Messenger of Allah (S) returned without doing imprecation, and made agreement with them on the head-tax.” [13](#)

Ibn Jarir has narrated from ‘Ilba’ Ibn Ahmar al-Yashkuri that he said: “When the verse was revealed... then say: **‘Let us call our sons and your sons...’ (3:61)**, the Messenger of Allah (S) sent (someone) to (call) ‘Ali, Fatimah and their sons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn; and invited the Jews to enter into imprecation against them. Then a young Jew said: ‘Woe unto you! Are you not familiar with (the story) of your brothers who were yesterday transformed into monkeys and pigs? Do not enter into (this) imprecation.’ So, they desisted (from it).” [14](#)

The author says: This tradition supports the view that the pronoun “this” in the opening sentence, **“disputes with you in this” (3:61)**, refers to “truth” in the preceding verse, The truth is from your Lord. In this way, the order of imprecation would cover other matters too, besides the controversy about ‘Isa son of Maryam. In that case, it would be another story [15](#) after the events which took place with the delegation of Najran as narrated in numerous traditions supporting each other, a large portion of which has been quoted above.

Ibn Tawus has written in *Sa‘du ‘s-su‘ud*: “I saw in the book *Ma nazala min al-Qur’ani fi ‘n-Nabiyyi wa Ahli baytihi* [16](#) that he has narrated the tradition of the imprecation through fifty-one chains from the companions and others; and some of them are: al-Hasan Ibn ‘Ali (peace be on them both), ‘Uthman Ibn ‘Affan, Sa‘d Ibn Abi Waqqas, Bakr Ibn Sammal, Talhah, az-Zubayr, ‘Abdu ‘r-Rahman Ibn ‘Awf, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas, Abu Rafi’ [17](#) Jabir Ibn ‘Abdillah, al-Bara’ Ibn ‘Azib and Anas Ibn Malik.”

Likewise (Ibn Shahrashub) has narrated this tradition in *al-Manaqib*, from a number of narrators and exegetes. as-Suyuti has done the same in *ad-Durr al-Manthur*.

A very strange thing has been written by an exegete who said:

“The traditions unanimously say that the Prophet selected ‘Ali, Fatimah and their two sons for the imprecation; and they apply the word ‘our women’ to Fatimah, and ‘our selves’ to ‘Ali only. The source of these traditions are the Shi‘ahs, and their motive in this respect is well-known. They have tried as much as they could to propagate such traditions until it has spread among a vast number of the Sunnis too.”

“But those who forged these traditions did not succeed in properly fitting their interpretation on the verse. When an Arab says, ‘our women’ he never means his daughter – especially when he has wives too. Such thing is not known in their language. Even more far-fetched is the claim that ‘our selves’ means ‘Ali. Moreover, the delegation of Najran – concerning whom the verse is said to be revealed – had not come to Medina with their women and children.”

“The only thing the verse shows is that the Prophet was ordered to call the People of the Book (who were disputing with him about ‘Isa) to gather all – men, women and children – together; and he was to gather the believers – men, women and children – together, in order that they might earnestly pray to Allah to curse the party which was in the wrong regarding its claim about ‘Isa (‘a).”

“Such thing would prove that the Prophet had strong conviction in the truth of his claim and had utmost confidence in it. And likewise, the desistence by those who were challenged to imprecation – the Christians or other People of the Book – would show that they had no confidence in their own claim and were disputing not for the purpose of ascertaining the truth; their belief was shaky, and they had no clear proofs. How can a believer in Allah agree to gather such a group – consisting of the truthful ones and the liars – in one place to fix their attention to Allah asking for His curse, to pray to remove the liars from His mercy? Can anyone be more daring than such a person? Can anything be a bigger mockery of the Divine Power and Majesty than this?”

“The Prophet and the believers had full confidence in the truth of what they believed about ‘Isa (‘a). It may be understood from the words of Allah **“after what has come to you of knowledge” (3:61)** because ‘knowledge’ in matters of belief only means ‘certainty’.

“The words of Allah, **“let us call our sons and your sons ...” (3:61)**, may be interpreted in either of the two ways:

“First: Each group should call the other; you should call our sons and we should call your sons and likewise about the other two categories of women and selves.”

“Second: Each group should call his family. We, the Muslims, should call our sons, women, and ourselves, and you should do likewise with your family.”

“There is no difficulty in either case in calling the ‘selves’. The difficulty arises when this phrase is restricted to one person, as the Shi‘ahs and their followers do.”

Comment: This is such a nonsense that no knowledgeable person would ever like to write it in academic

books; and perhaps someone might venture to say that we have wrongly attributed it to such a renowned man! Yet, we have quoted it in full to show how low a man can sink in misapprehension and jaundiced views because of his bias and prejudice. He goes on demolishing what he had earlier built, and reconfirms what he had rejected before, without caring or even knowing what he was doing. Also, we wanted evil to be known to all, so that they could protect themselves from it.

We may comment on this talk in two ways:

First, to show that the verse proves utmost excellence and superiority of ‘Ali (‘a). But it is a subject more appropriate for the books of theology, and is not so much related to our subject, that is, explanation of the meanings of the Qur’anic verses.

Second, to review what the above exegete has written about the meaning of the verse of imprecation and concerning the traditions showing what had happened between the Prophet and the Christians of Najran. This comes within the purview of exegesis, and we shall deal with it here.

You have already seen what the verse means. And the numerous traditions (which support each other), quoted by us, perfectly fit the meaning of the verse. If you ponder on what we have written earlier, you will see where and how his innovated “proof” has gone wrong, and at what points his blinkered vision has made him stumble. Here are some details:

He says: “The source of these traditions are the Shi’ahs, and their motive in this respect is well-known. They have tried as much as they could to propagate such traditions until it has spread among a vast number of the Sunnis too.” This, he says after admitting that the traditions are unanimous! Would that I knew which traditions he speaks about? Does he mean the abovementioned traditions which support and strengthen each other, which the scholars of traditions have unanimously accepted and narrated? They are not one, two or three; they are countless in number. The scholars of traditions have quoted them with one voice; the compilers of traditions have written them in their books, including Muslim and at-Tirmidhi in their collections of ‘correct’ traditions; and the historians have confirmed them by describing the events in a similar way. The exegetes of the Qur’an have unanimously quoted and copied them, without expressing any doubt or levelling any objection against them – and there are among them stalwarts of traditions and history, like at-Tabari, Abu al-Fida’, Ibn Kathir and as-Suyuti etc.

And who were those Shi’ahs who were the source of this story? Does he mean those companions who narrated it in the first place – like Sa’d Ibn Abi Waqqas, Jabir Ibn ‘Abdillah, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas and others? Or the disciples of the companions who took this tradition from them and conveyed it to others? Like Abu Salih, al-Kalbi, as-Suddi, ash-Sha’bi and others? Does he want to say that those companions and their disciples became Shi’ahs – just because they narrated a tradition which he does not like? It is these companions and disciples – together with other like them – who are the final links in the chains of the narrators of the Prophet’s Traditions. Discard them, and you will be left neither with any tradition nor any biography of the Prophet. How can a Muslim – nay, even a non-Muslim researcher – aspire to know

the details of the Prophet's message, if he rejects the traditions? How can he know the teachings and laws brought by the Messenger of Allah? The Qur'an clearly upholds the authority of the sayings and actions of the Prophet; and declares that the religion is based on his life. Reject the authority of the traditions and you have lost the Qur'an as well; there will remain no trace of the Divine Book, nor will there be any fruit of this revelation.

Or perhaps he thinks that the Shi'ahs have interpolated and surreptitiously inserted these traditions in the books of traditions and history? But then the problem, instead of going away, would rather increase and be more overwhelming: the tradition will lose its authority and the *Shari'ah* will be nullified.

He says: "They apply the word 'our women' to Fatimah and 'our selves' to 'Ali.'" Probably he wants to say that according to the Shi'ahs, the words 'our women' and 'our selves' literally mean only Fatimah and 'Ali respectively. Perhaps he got the idea from an earlier quoted tradition in which Jabir said: "Our selves refers to the Messenger of Allah and 'Ali;... and our women to Fatimah." But obviously he has not understood its meaning. The traditions do not say so. They only mean that because the Prophet when acting on the verse, did not bring (any other person for imprecation) except 'Ali and Fatimah, it made it clear that she was the only one worthy of being included in the category 'our women', as he (Ali) was the only one qualified for the category 'our selves'; and likewise al-Hasan and al-Husayn were the only two for the category our sons. The words: 'sons', 'women' and 'selves' taken together meant the family. Therefore, these four were the family of the Messenger of Allah and his closest relatives, as we have seen in some traditions that he (S) said after coming with them at the appointed place: "O Allah! These are the people of my house." The sentence implies: I did not find anyone whom I could call, except these four.

That this is the correct explanation may be seen in the wording of some traditions which say: "'our selves' refers to the Messenger of Allah and 'Ali." It clearly shows that the tradition aims at describing who had come under which category – not at explaining the literal meaning of the words.

He says: "But those who forged these traditions did not succeed in properly fitting their interpretation on the verse. When an Arab says 'our women' he never means his daughter – especially when he has got wives too. Such thing is not known in their language. Even more far-fetched is the claim that 'our selves' means 'Ali.'"

First, he has given an imaginary meaning to the traditions, then he uses it as an excuse to discard all those narrations – despite their numerousness, despite of their great number. Then he discredits its narrators and all those who have accepted them by accusing them of the crime of Shi'ism! Had he been a true seeker of knowledge, he should have studied the books of exegesis, and remembered the vast multitude of the masters of eloquence and authorities on rhetoric, since they have quoted and written these traditions in their books of exegesis and other subjects without any hesitation, without any objection.

Look at the author of *Tafsir al-Kashshaf*. He is a recognized authority on Arabic language, grammar, and literature. He has often pronounced judgment on various recitations of the Qur'an, showing why a certain recitation was not in keeping with the norms of language or usage. And see what he has to say about this verse: "And this verse contains a proof – unsurpassed in strength – of the excellence of the people of the mantle, peace be on them. And there is in it a clear proof of the truth of the prophethood of the Prophet, because nobody – either a supporter or an antagonist – has ever narrated that they (the Christians) answered that call (for imprecation)."

How come that those giants of rhetoric and champions of literature could not realize that these traditions – in spite of their vast multitude and their repeated narrations in the books of traditions – accuse the Qur'an of using incorrect expression by employing a plural (women) for one woman only?

Not, by my life! This exegete is in fact confused; he does not know the difference between the literal meaning of a word and its application. Obviously, his thinking goes like this: "Allah said to His Prophet,

"But whoever disputes with you in this after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: 'Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves...' (3:61).

Now if we admit that the disputers at that time were the delegates of Najran numbering according to some Traditions, fourteen men; and that there were no women or children with them; and if after that we admit that when the Messenger of Allah (S) went for the imprecation, he had with him only: 'Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, then the phrase, 'whoever disputes with you' would literally mean the delegation of Najran; our women would mean one woman; 'our selves' would mean one 'self'; and your sons and your women would become words without meaning because there were neither women nor sons in that delegation!"

I wonder why he forgot to add that it would also mean use of 'our sons' (a plural, meaning at least three sons) for only two sons, because it is more repugnant than the use of plural for singular. Since post-classical period, people have been using plural in place of singular – although such use is not found in the classical Arabic, except when done as a mark of respect. But the use of plural for dual is something unheard of – it has no justification at all.

However, it was this pattern of thought which led him to discard all these traditions, saying that they were forged. But he has completely misunderstood the talk.

The fact is that an eloquent speech conforms with the situation which it is related to and throws light on what is important to explain in a given context. Sometimes the talk is between two strangers, neither knowing the other's life condition. Then they use normal expressions which are applied in general talk.

Suppose two groups are facing each other; one of them wants the other to know that their conflict is deep-rooted, and that the whole tribe – men and women, elders, and youngsters – shall continue the

fight till the last. In such a situation, he will say: We shall fight you with our men, women, and children. Now this sentence is based on the assumption that normally and naturally a tribe does have women and children. The statement aims at making it clear to the enemy that the speaker's tribe is one in its determination to fight against their adversary. On the other hand, if he were to say, 'We shall fight against you with our men, a woman and 'two sons', it would be a superfluous detail, uncalled for in this context – unless there be some good reason for it in a particular situation.

But when the talk is between friends who know each other's family, then it may be couched in general terms. For example, one may say while inviting the other to his home: We are at your service – we ourselves as well as our women and children. Or, he may wish to be more specific and say: All of us will be at your service – the men, the daughter and the two children.

In short, normal way of expression is one thing and its application to real facts is another matter. Sometimes they may coincide, at other times they may be different. If a man speaks in normal and general terms and then it appears that the real situation is different, he is not accused of telling a lie.

This verse is based on the same principle. Accordingly, the words “... **then say: ‘Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves...’**” (3:61), means as follows: Tell them that you are coming with your closest relatives who are your partners in your claim and knowledge, and invite them to come with their closest relatives. Thus, the verse proceeds in the normal way assuming that the Messenger of Allah had in his family men, women and sons, and the Christian delegates had likewise men, women and sons in their families; it was a challenge couched in general and usual terms.

But when the time came to act on that challenge, it was found that the Prophet did not have any men, women, and sons except one man, one woman and two sons, while his adversaries had no woman or son with them – there were only men in their group. But this difference in implementation did not falsify the challenge. That is why when the Prophet came out with one man, one woman and two sons, the Christians did not accuse him of lying or of not fulfilling the conditions; nor did they cover their refusal by saying that the Prophet had told them to bring their women and sons while they did not have with them at that time and therefore they were unable to enter into imprecation. Also, it was because of this that those who heard this story never imagined that it was a forgery.

The above explanation also shows the absurdity of his assertion where he says: “Moreover, the delegation of Najran – concerning whom the verse is said to be revealed – had not come to Medina with their women and children.”

He says: “The only thing which the verse shows is that the Prophet was ordered to call the People of the Book (who were disputing with him about ‘Isa) to gather all – men, women and children – together; and he was to gather the believers – men, women and children – together; in order that they might earnestly pray to Allah to curse the party that was in the wrong in its claim about ‘Isa. How can a believer in Allah

agree to gather such a group – consisting of the truthful ones and the liars – in one place to fix their attention to Allah asking for His curse, to pray to remove the liars from His mercy? Can anyone be more daring than such a person? Can anything be a bigger mockery to the Divine Power and Majesty than this?”

In short, the verse invites both parties to gather with their “selves”, their women, and their sons in one place and then to earnestly pray for Allah’s curse on the liars. Now let us find out what is the meaning of this gathering that he talks about.

Was it a call to gather all the believers and all the Christians? But the believers at that time¹⁸ included all – or almost all – Arabs of the tribes of Rabi’ah and Mudar residing from Yemen and Hijaz to Iraq and beyond. And the Christians included those in Najran (then forming a part of Yemen), Syria and the regions around the Mediterranean Sea, the Romans and the Franks, as well as the people of the Britain, Austria and other places.

Such a vast multitude of people, scattered from the East to the West, must have exceeded millions upon millions, counting men, women, and children all together. There can be no doubt whatsoever in the mind of a sane person that it was almost impossible for all of them to gather in one place. Normal ways and means reject such a proposition altogether.

If the Qur’an had offered this proposal, then it had asked for something impossible. It would mean that the Prophet was offering a conditional proof for the authenticity of his claim – and the condition, on which it depended, was an impossible one! It would have given an excuse – a valid excuse – to the Christians not to accept his call of imprecation. In fact, it would have been more damaging to his claim, rather than weakening the Christians’ case.

Or does he mean that it was a call to gather from both groups only those who were present thereby – the believers of Medina and nearby places, and the Christians of Najran and the places in its vicinity? This alternative – although less absurd than the preceding one – was no less impossible. Who was capable that day of gathering all the residents of Medina and Najran and their neighbouring places – not leaving a single woman and child out – in one place for the intended imprecation? Such proposal would have been an admission that the truth was impossible to prove because the proof depended on an impossible condition.

Or was it a call covering only those who were actively engaged in the disputation and arguments? That is, the Prophet and the believers around him, and the delegation of the Christians of Najran. But then his own objection would boomerang. Moreover, the delegation of Najran – concerning whom the verse is said to be revealed – had not come to Medina with their women and children. So, the problem would not go away.

Further he says: “The Prophet and the believers had full confidence in the truth of what they believed about ‘Isa (‘a). It may be understood from the words of Allah, after what has come to you of knowledge;

because knowledge in matters of belief means certainty only.”

It is true that the knowledge, as used in this verse, means certainty. But would that I knew where does it say that the believers were sure of the truth of their belief concerning ‘Isa? The verse does not speak about anyone except the Prophet in singular pronouns: ***But whoever disputes with you*** (lit. thee) ***in this after what has come to you*** (lit. thee) ***of knowledge, then say*** (lit. say thou). And there was no reason why the verse should have addressed anyone except the Prophet alone; the Christians’ delegation had only one aim before their eyes – to dispute and argue with the Prophet. It was not their intention to meet the believers; they had not argued at all with the believers, nor had the believers spoken to them.

If the verse at all shows that anyone other than the Prophet had attained knowledge and certainty, it does so about those whom the Prophet had brought with himself for imprecation, as we have inferred from the words ***“and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars”*** (3:61).

On the other hand, the Qur’an shows that not all the believers had attained knowledge and certainty. For example:

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

Here Allah announces their polytheism. How can polytheism co-exist with certainty?

“And when the hypocrites and those in whose heart was a disease began to say: “Allah and His Messenger did not promise us (victory) but only to deceive” (33: 12).

“And those who believe say: “Why has not a chapter been revealed?” But when a decisive chapter is revealed, and fighting is mentioned therein you see those in whose hearts is a disease look to you with the look of one fainting because of death. Woe to them then!” (47:20).

“Obedience and a gentle word (was proper); but when the affair becomes settled, then if they remain true to Allah it would certainly be better for them.” (47:21).

“But if you held command, you were sure to make mischief in the land and cut off the ties of kinship!” (47:22).

“Those it is whom Allah has cursed so He has made them deaf and blinded their eyes.” (47:23).

The fact is that certainty was attained by only a few of the followers of the Prophet who had got clear sight. Allah says:

“But if they dispute with you, say: “I have submitted myself (entirely) to Allah and (so has) everyone who follows me” (3:20).

“Say: “This is my way, I invite (you) unto Allah; with clear sight (which) I and he who follows me

(possess).” (12: 108).

He says: **“The words of Allah, let us call our sons and your sons...” (3:61)** may be interpreted in either of these two ways: First: Each group should call the others; you should call our sons and we should call your sons; and likewise, about the other two categories of women and selves.”

You have already seen in the Commentary that this interpretation (which he gives as his first choice) is totally absurd and is not in conformity with the wordings of the verse. So far as the call for imprecation was concerned, it would have sufficed to say: **“Come, let us earnestly pray and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars” (3:61)**. Why then were the remaining phrases – **“Let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our ‘selves’ and your ‘selves’” (3:61)** – added:

These phrases were meant to bind each party to bring for the imprecation those who were dearest and most precious to them, that is, the sons, the women, and the selves. This challenge could be meaningful only if each party was to bring its own sons, women, and selves. It would lose its meaning completely if it was interpreted as he says: You should call our sons, women and selves and we should call your sons, women, and selves.

Moreover, common sense rejects this interpretation. Why should the Messenger of Allah (S) give the Christians power and authority over his sons and women? Because only after getting that power and authority could each party call the other’s sons and women and bring them at the place of imprecation. Surely the aim could be achieved in a better way if each party called its own sons and women.

Further, as we have shown above, such interpretation makes it necessary to add in the verse the idea of giving someone the power and authority over others. But how and on what ground can we do so? The truth is that this interpretation is completely wrong. Only the other interpretation is correct – that each party was to call its own family members.

He says: “There is no difficulty in either case in calling the ‘selves’. The difficulty arises when this phrase is restricted to one person, as the Shi’ahs and their followers do.”

The difficulty, to which he refers, arises from the following objection: How can a man call himself? But this objection has nothing to do with either interpretation. It has been levelled against the explanation that ‘our selves’ means the Messenger of Allah (S) himself. Reportedly during one religious discussion, one group said that ‘our selves’ referred to the Messenger of Allah (S), not to ‘Ali. The opposite party said that it would imply that he called himself, which is manifestly wrong. [19](#)

It will be seen from the above that his claim that “the difficulty arises from the Shi’ahs’ interpretation”, is absolutely wrong. The Shi’ahs say that the word, ‘our selves’ means the men from the family of the Prophet; and when the order was implemented, it was applied to the Messenger of Allah and ‘Ali (blessings and peace be on them!). And there could be no difficulty in their calling one another.

Accordingly, no objection can be directed at the Shi'ahs, even according to the interpretation which he ascribes to them, that 'our selves' means 'All. What difficulty could there be if the Messenger of Allah (S) was to call 'Ali ('a)?

His disciple²⁰ has written in *al-Manar*, after mentioning some traditions: "Ibn 'Asakir has narrated from Ja'far Ibn Muhammad from his father in explanation of the verse, then say: ***"Come let us call our sons and your sons..." (3:61)*** 'Then (the Prophet) brought Abu Bakr and his son, 'Umar and his son, and 'Uthman and his son.'" Then he comments: "Apparently the verse speaks about a group of the believers." Thereafter he has copied the above-quoted writing of his teacher, and then has opined as follows: "As you see the verse orders women to participate with men in national struggles and religious wars. It is based on the principle of equality between men and women even in public affairs – except where an exception has been made. (Then he goes on elaborating the same points).

Comment: As for the tradition which he has quoted, it is an isolated and peculiar one and goes against all the other Traditions on this subject; and it is needless to say that the other traditions are so numerous and so well known. That is why the exegetes have not mentioned it. Moreover, it contains statements which do not tally with the facts: It supposes that all the people mentioned therein had sons, but surely not all of them had sons at that time.

He says: "Apparently the verse speaks about a group of the believers." Probably, he wants to infer from the tradition (quoted by him) that the Messenger of Allah (S) had brought there all the believers and their children; thus, the words that the Prophet, "brought Abu Bakr and his son..." would indirectly imply that he brought all the believers. In this way he wants to support the interpretation of his teacher, discussed above. But you see how isolated, shunned, and discarded this tradition is; and how defective is its text. Apart from that it does not give the meaning he infers from it.

Now look at the principle adduced by him that women should participate in the public affairs just as men do. If his reasoning is accepted, then it would also prove that small children too should participate in those affairs with their elders. This one point alone is enough to show the falsity of his observation.

We have discussed at length the subject of the women's participation, under the verses of divorce in the second volume²¹ ; and we shall be writing some more in a relevant place that there is no need to make such inferences as he has done from this verse.

^{1.} Vide vol. 3 (Engl. transl.), under the verse 2:213. (Author's note).

^{2.} Vide vol. 3 (Engl. transl.), under the verse 2:124. (Author's note).

^{3.} at-Tafsir, alQummi.

^{4.} 'Uyun al-akhbar.

^{5.} Refer to verse 16:98.

^{6.} 'Uyun al-akhbar.

^{7.} al-'Ayyashi.

- [8.](#) The author now gives references from the Sunni books. (tr.).
- [9.](#) as-Sahih, Muslim.
- [10.](#) Hilyat al-awliya’.
- [11.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
- [12.](#) the 27th Chapter, the Ant. The author has proved, while writing the traditions under the next verse, that this particular tradition is false. (tr.).
- [13.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
- [14.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
- [15.](#) This tradition is not supported by other traditions or history. (tr.).
- [16.](#) By Muhammad Ibn al-‘Abbas Ibn Marwan.
- [17.](#) A slave of the Prophet.
- [18.](#) It was the 9th year after Hijrah according to some historians, and the 10th according to others. But both timings are open to question, as we shall describe when writing the “Traditions” related to the subsequent verses. (Author’s Note).
- [19.](#) See the second tradition, quoted from ‘Uyun al-akhbar.
- [20.](#) i.e., Rashid Rida, author of Tafsir al-Manar. (tr.)
- [21.](#) Vide Vol. 4 (Engl. transl.), pp. 61 – 83. (tr.)

[1] [1]

SHARES

Sura ‘Aal-‘Imran: Verses 64 – 78

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا ۚ إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ ۖ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ ۚ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا ۖ فَقُولُوا ۖ أَشْهَدُوا ۚ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

“Say: “O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you, that we shall not worship any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate anything with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah”; but if they turn back, then say: “Bear witness that we are Muslims (Submitting ones)” (3:64).

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَتِ التَّوْرَةُ وَالْإِنْجِيلُ إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِهِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

“O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrahim, when the Torah and the Injil were not revealed till after him? Do you not then understand?” (3:65).

هَآأَنْتُمْ هَؤَآَاءَ حَآَجَّتُمْ فِيمَا لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَآْجُّونَ فِيمَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Behold! you are they who disputed about that of which you had knowledge; why then do you

dispute about that of which you have no knowledge? And Allah knows while you do not know (3:66).

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian. but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists (3:67).

إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe; and Allah is the Guardian of the believers.” (3:68).

وَدَّتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يُضِلُّوكُمْ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“A party of the People of the Book desire that they should lead you astray, and they lead not astray but themselves, and they do not perceive (3:69).

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ

“O People of the Book! Why do you disbelieve in the communications of Allah while you witness (them)? (3:70).

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“O People of the Book! Why do you confound the truth with the falsehood and hide the truth while you know?” (3:71).

وَقَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ءَامِنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ۖ وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَكُفُّوا ۖ ءَاخِرَهُ ۖ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

“And a party of the People of the Book say. “Avow belief in that which has been revealed to those who believe (in) the first part of the day, and disbelieve (at) the end of it, perhaps they go back on their religion (3:72).

وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا ۖ إِلَّا لِمَنْ تَبَعَ دِينَكُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ الْهُدَىٰ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُؤْتَىٰ أَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَا أُوتِيتُمْ أَوْ يُحَاجُّوكُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ

الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَسِعَ عَلَيْهِ

“And do not believe but in him who follows your religion.” Say: “Surely the guidance is the guidance of Allah – that one may be given (by Him) the like of what you were given; or they would contend with you by an argument before your Lord.” Say: “Surely grace is in the hand of Allah, He gives it to whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing” (3:73).

يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ ۖ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

“He specially chooses for His mercy whom He pleases; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace” (3:74).

وَمِنَ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنُ إِن تَأْمَنهُ بِقِنطَارٍ يُؤَدِّهِ ۖ إِلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنُ إِن تَأْمَنهُ بدينارٍ لَا يُؤَدِّهِ ۖ إِلَيْكَ إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَائِمًا
ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا ۖ لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الْأُمِّمِ ۖ نَسِيْلٌ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

“And among the People of the Book there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a heap of wealth, he shall pay it back to you; and among them there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a dinar he shall not pay it back to you except that you remain standing over him; this is because they say: “There is not upon us in, the matter of the unlearned people any way (to reproach);” and they tell a lie against Allah while they know” (3:75).

بَلَىٰ مَن أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ ۖ وَاتَّقَىٰ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“Yea, whoever fulfils his promise and guards (against evil) – then surely Allah loves those who guard (against evil)” (3:76).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَأَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُو۟لَٰئِكَ لَا خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“(As for) those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their (own) oaths – surely they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement.” (3:77).

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلُؤۡنَ ۖ أَلَسِنَتُهُمْ بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ
مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

“Most surely there is a party amongst those who distort the Book with their tongues that you may consider it to be (a part) of the Book, while it is not (a part) of the Book, and they say, “It is from Allah,” while it is not from Allah; and they tell a lie against Allah whilst they know.” (3:78).

Commentary

Now begins the second phase of the exposition of the People of the Book, particularly the Christians, and some related matters.

The preceding verses described the condition of the People of the Book generally, beginning with the verse, ***“Surely the religion with Allah is Islam... (3:19),*** taking a turn at the verse, ***“Have you not considered those who are given a portion of the Book?” (3:23).*** Then it focused its attention on the Christians beginning with the verse, ***“Surely Allah chose Adam and Nuh...” (3:33),*** guiding the believers earlier, in the verse 3:28, not to take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers – ***“Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends rather than the believers...” (3:28).*** This was the first phase.

Now, the same subjects are explained in other words in a different style. First, it comments on the People of the Book in general. Apart from the verses under discussion, it throws light on various other relevant matters in other places, for example:

“Say: O People of the Book! why do you disbelieve in the signs of Allah...?” (3:98).

“Say: “O People of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah...?” (3:99).

Second, it exposes the condition of the Christians and their belief concerning ‘Isa (‘a):

“It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book, and the wisdom and prophethood, then he should say to men: “Be my servants...” (3:79).

Then the talk turns to the matters related to the believers, calling them to submission and unity and warning them against befriending the unbelievers and being intimate with them in preference over the believers. All these things are explained in numerous verses in various places.

Verse 64

Qur’an: “Say: “O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you...” (3:64).

This call is addressed to all the People of the Book in general. The invitation to “come to a word” really means to unite on the meaning of the word by acting upon it. The call to the word is based on the idiom found in Arabic and other languages, as for example, they say: The nation is united on this word. It implies the meanings of belief, acknowledgment, recognition, and propagation. The verse therefore

means: Come let us adhere to this word, co-operating with one another in its propagation and acting on its demands.

As-Sawa' (السَّوَاءُ) is a *masdar*, although it is commonly used as an adjective to denote an object both sides of which are equal. The phrase 'common between us and you' means that you and we both are equally bound to acknowledge it and to act on it. Obviously, the use of this adjective for "word" is metaphorical. What is actually equal is its acknowledgment and the resulting action.

Again, action is related to the import of the word, not the word itself. Moreover, the call for unity about the word in itself has metaphorical connotation. In this way, this sentence has many fine points of rhetoric: Calling to unite on a meaning, then using the "word" for the meaning and then ascribing the adjective "common" to the "word".

Also, it has been said that the "common word" refers to that which the Qur'an, the Torah and the Injil commonly invite to with one voice – and that is the belief of monotheism. If this suggestion is correct then the next words, ***"that we shall not worship any but Allah..." (3:64)***, would serve as the correct explanation of the word common between the Muslims and the People of the Book; it would invite the latter to leave aside their own interpretation of the Oneness of God – the interpretation used to fit this pristine "word" on their own desire; for example, their belief that God was incarnated, took a son, was one but had three persons; their worship of their rabbis, priests and bishops. The meaning in that case would be as follows: Come to a word common between us and you, and that is the belief in One God; and if we unite on it then we would have to discard and reject all that is associated with Allah and would not take others for lords besides Him.

But the ending of the verse, ***"but if they turn back, then say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims (submitting ones)'" (3:64)***, supports the first meaning given by us. In short, the verse calls to this word that "we shall not worship any but Allah...", as it is the demand of Islam, the total submission, which is the religion with Allah. Although submission is also a concomitant of the belief in the Oneness of God, the verse calls the People of the Book not to the theoretical, but practical, monotheism; that is, to discard worshipping anyone but Allah. (Think over it).

Qur'an: "...That we shall not worship any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate anything with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah" (3:64).

It is the explanation of 'the common word', and it is what submission to Allah demands. The words, ***"we shall not worship any but Allah" (3:64)***, reject the worship of any other than Allah; it is not their aim to prove or affirm the worship of Allah. We have already mentioned in the explanation of the "creed" – There is no god except Allah – that the phrase, "except Allah", is not an exception but *al-badal* (الْبَدَلُ = appositional substantive standing for another substantive) of "god"; consequently, the sentence aims at rejecting partners for Allah, not at affirming the existence of Allah.¹ According to the Qur'an, the existence of Allah and His being the Truth needs no proof, it is a self-evident reality.

This sentence calls them not to associate anyone to Allah in worship. But it does not nullify the other types of polytheism emanating from the belief that Allah had a son or the idea of trinity and similar ones. That is why the call continues:

“And (that) we shall not associate anything with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah.” (3:64).

The fact is that merely saying that a worship is meant for Allah does not make it the worship of Allah, unless it is done with pure and sincere faith, unless the heart is purged of all beliefs and superstitions springing from polytheism.

Otherwise, the worship would be for a god who had a partner. And a worship devoted to one of the alleged partners in godhead – even if it is done for him exclusively – would still be a product of polytheism. Why? because such a worship, by its very definition is a share devoted to one of the two or more partners; as such it acknowledges the right of the other partner or partners and is therefore the worship of those partners too.

On the other hand, the Prophet calls them, by order of Allah, to the pure monotheism,

“That we shall not worship any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate anything with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah.” (3:64).

It is this call which combines in itself all the aims and objectives of prophethood; it is this that the prophets taught their men, and which they propagated in the human society.

We have described (while explaining the verse 2:213) that mankind was but one people, and that prophethood is a God-inspired awakening, a true advancement, the purpose of which is to spread the word of religion. The religion, in its reality, is equilibrium in the society's march of life; and a well-balanced society creates well-balanced individual in life. In this way, everyone is accorded his due position that nature has meant for him to have.

Thus, the society gets the freedom and the felicity of natural perfectness based on justice and equity; and likewise, the individual gets complete freedom to enjoy the life in all its aspects, as he thinks fit and as he likes – except when it is likely to harm the society's life. And all these freedoms and enjoyments are conditional to servitude and submission to Allah, subservient to the unseen authority and power.

We may summarize the prophets' message in these words: They want human species – individually and collectively – to march forward according to the dictate of their nature, which adheres to the belief of monotheism. That belief in its turn demands that man should base all his individual and social actions and activities on submission to Allah, and that he should spread justice and equity. In other words, all should be given equal rights in life, and all should have equal freedom of good intention and good deed.

This goal cannot be achieved until and unless the roots of conflict and unlawful transgression are

completely destroyed; so that no strong person exploits or enslaves a weak man, no one dominates another, and no powerless person serves the interests of someone powerful. There is no god but Allah; there is no Lord except Allah; and there is no rule for anyone except Allah.

This is what this verse says: ***“that we shall not worship any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate anything with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah.” (3:64).*** There are many verses of the same connotation.

For example, Allah quotes Yusuf (‘a) as saying:

“O my two mates of the prison! are sundry lords better or Allah, the One, the Supreme?” (12:39).

“You do not worship besides Him but names which you have named, you and your fathers; Allah has not sent down any authority for them; judgment is only Allah’s; He has commanded that you shall not worship aught but Him; this is the right religion.” (12:40).

Also, Allah says:

“They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah, and (also) the Messiah son of Maryam, and they were not enjoined but that they should worship one God only, there is no god but He...” (9:31).

And the same is the importance of many admonitions addressed to their peoples by the prophets like Nuh, Hud, Salih, Ibrahim, Shu‘ayb, Musa and ‘Isa (peace be on them all). For example:

“Nuh said: My Lord! surely they have disobeyed me and followed him whose wealth and children have added to him nothing but loss” (71:21).

“(Hud said): Do you build on every height a monument? Vain is it that you do.” (26: 128).

“And you make strong fortresses that perhaps you may abide.” (26: 129).

“And when you lay hands (on men) you lay hands (like) tyrants.” (26: 130).

“(Salih said): And do not obey the bidding of the extravagant ones.” (26: 151).

“When he (Ibrahim) said to his father and his people: ‘What are these images to whose worship you cleave?’” (21:52).

“They said: “We found our fathers worshipping them” (21:53).

“He said: “Certainly you have been, (both) you and your fathers, in manifest error” (21:54).

“(And Allah said to Musa and Harun): Go both to Pharaoh, surely he has become inordinate” (20:43).

“Then speak to him a gentle word haply he may mind or fear.” (20:44)

“Both said: O our Lord! Surely we fear that he may hasten to do evil to us or that he may become inordinate.” (20:45)

“He said: Fear not, surely I am with you both: I do hear and see” (20:46).

“So go you both to him and say: Surely we are two messengers of your Lord; therefore send the children of Israel with us and do not torment them! Indeed, we have brought to you a communication from your Lord, and peace is on him who follows the guidance” (20:47).

And lastly ‘Isa said to his people:

“... And so that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in; so fear Allah and obey me” (43:63).

The natural religion is that which negates transgression and mischief and eradicates injustice and unlawful dominations – the unjust dominations which destroy the foundation of happiness and uproot the basis of truth and reality. It was this fact which the Prophet alluded to when he said in the last pilgrimage² *“Indeed the time has come full circle to its (original) form (as it was) the day when Allah created the heavens and the earth.”* Perhaps he (S) meant that the men have come back to the rule of nature because the Islamic character had become firmly rooted among them.

The sentence, ***“that we shall not worship any but Allah...” (3:64)***, not only covers all the aims and objectives of prophethood, but also explains the reason of this commandment.

“That we shall not worship any but Allah” (3:64).

Godhead is that which everything worships, is bewildered about and is loved – in every way. God is the origin and fountainhead of every perfection in all things; despite their magnitude in number, they are related to one another, and all are one in that each component looks to God for its needs; He is the source of every perfection desired by these things.

This reality leads us to the oneness of God. As the created things are interrelated, the Creator can be no more than one. He is the Owner in Whose Hand is the management of everything. Therefore, it is obligatory to worship Allah, because He is the One and Only God, there is no partner or colleague for Him. And it is obligatory not to ascribe any partner to Him in worship. In other words, this universe with all that it contains cannot submit except to One Creator. These creatures are joined in a uniform system, they are united in their existence: naturally there cannot be more than one Lord for them, because there is not more than one Creator for them.

“And (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah” (3:64)

Human beings, despite their great number, are parts of one reality, that is, human species and humanity. All those merits and abilities which the hand of creation has placed in them in equal measure demand that they must have equal rights in life and must be accorded equal treatment in all those matters.

On the other hand, there are differences in the conditions of the individuals and in their ability to procure and acquire some advantages and prerogatives of life; they are the gifts of general humanity which are bestowed to some specific individuals or groups here and there; such prerogatives also should be allowed to mankind – but only in the way it demands. For example, sexual intercourse, pregnancy, and medical treatment, all are the affairs of the humanity in general; yet sexual intercourse is the prerogative of an adult human being, male or female, while pregnancy is exclusively reserved for the female; and medical treatment is accorded only to an ill person.

In short, the members of the human society are components of a single reality – the components being similar to each other. No one has a right to impose his will on another, until and unless he takes on himself a similar burden on behalf of the other. And this is what co-operation in acquisition of life's advantages means.

But if the society or individual surrenders to an individual, if the whole or a part of the humanity submits to another part; raising him from the level of equality to that of superiority, giving him domination and arbitrary powers, making him an autocratic despot – he rules as he likes, is obeyed in whatever he says, and is taken as a lord whose will has to be complied with – then it negates the nature and destroys the foundation of humanity.

Moreover, Lordship exclusively belongs to Allah, there is no lord but He. Thus, if a man puts himself under the authority of another man like himself, allowing that master to do with his follower whatever he wants, then it means that the said master has been taken as a lord besides Allah. It is such a proposition which can never be accepted by him who has surrendered himself to Allah.

It is now clear that the words of Allah, ***“and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah” (3:64)***, throw light on two realities: One, human beings are parts of a single reality, the parts being similar to each other. Two, Lordship is the exclusive prerogative of Godhead.

Qur'an: “...But if they turn back, then say: “Bear witness that we are Muslims (Submitting ones)” (3:64).

It is a call to them to witness that the Prophet and his followers are on a religion which Allah is pleased with, and it is Islam. Allah says:

“Surely the religion with Allah is Islam...” (3: 19).

This declaration will cut their argument and objection because no proof prevails against the truth and the people of the truth.

This sentence points to the fact that monotheism in worship is a concomitant to Islam.

Verse 65

Qur'an: "O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrahim, when the Torah and the Injil were not revealed till after him? Do you not then understand?" (3:65).

Apparently, it is governed by the imperative verb, "say", placed in the preceding verse; and so are the verses 70 – 71, coming after four verses. Thus, it will be an order to the Prophet to say these things to the People of the Book. On the other hand, the verse coming two verses after,

"Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe..." (3:68).

Gives an association which shows that the verse under discussion too may be a direct talk of Allah, and not of the Prophet (by Allah's Command).

The People of the Book disputed among themselves about Ibrahim ('a). Probably it was, in the beginning, an argument by which each group wanted to show its veracity. The Jews might be saying: Ibrahim, whom Allah has praised so much, was from us; a claim which the Christians might have countered by saying: Ibrahim was on truth, and the truth has been manifested by the advent of 'Isa. Then the arguments might have degenerated into bigotry and obstinacy.

Then the Jews claimed that Ibrahim was a Jew; and the Christians, that he was a Christian. However, it is a known fact that Judaism and Christianity came on the scene after the revelation of the Torah and the Injil respectively; and these Books were revealed long after Ibrahim ('a). How could it be possible for him to be a Jew (a follower of the religion brought by Musa, 'a)? Or a Christian (a follower of the *Shari'ah* of 'Isa, 'a)?

All that can be said about Ibrahim ('a) is this: He was on truth, sincerely adhering to right, away from wrong, submitting himself to Allah. These verses, therefore, have a connotation similar to this verse:

"Or do you say that Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub and the tribes were Jews or Christians? Are you better knowing or Allah? And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah?....." (2: 140).

Verse 66

Qur'an: "Behold! you are they who disputed about that of which you had knowledge; why then do you dispute about that of which you have no knowledge? And Allah knows while you do not know" (3:66).

The verse affirms that they did possess a particular knowledge in respect of the disputation which they

indulged in; and negates another knowledge and ascribes it to Allah. The exegetes have variously explained the knowledge which they had, and that which they did not. According to them it may mean as follows: 'You had disputed about Ibrahim and you had some knowledge about him, for example, that he existed at a certain time and was a prophet. Why then do you dispute about a matter of which you have no knowledge at all – claiming that he was a Jew or a Christian? The fact is that Allah knows while you do not know.'

Alternatively, the knowledge that has been affirmed may refer to the little knowledge they had about 'Isa. The verse thus says: 'You have disputed about 'Isa while you had some knowledge about him and his affairs. Why do you then dispute about a subject of which you have no knowledge, claiming that Ibrahim was a Jew or a Christian?'

The above two explanations, given by the exegetes, do not conform with the apparent context of the verse. The first is wrong because the People of the Book had never contended with each other about the existence or prophethood of Ibrahim ('a). The second is incorrect because neither party was right concerning their disputation about 'Isa ('a). Both were mistaken in their respective beliefs, making erroneous claims about him. How then can their disputation about 'Isa be called a disputation of which they had knowledge?

In any case, the verse says that they disputed about something of which they had knowledge, and also about that of which they had no knowledge. The question arises as to what was the disputation about which they had had knowledge? Moreover, it apparently shows that both disputes were among the People of the Book themselves. It does not refer to any argument between them and the Muslims; otherwise, the Muslims would obviously have been in wrong in that matter of which the People of the Book had knowledge.

The appropriate explanation would be as follows, and Allah knows better:

It is well known that there was a never-ending dispute between the Jews and the Christians which covered all the subjects in which they differed. The main point of contention was the 'Isa's prophethood and the claims made by the Christians concerning his status – that he was God and son of God, and the belief of trinity. The Christians disputed with the Jews about his being a prophet sent by God – and the Christians had its knowledge. The Jews disputed with the Christians and refuted his godhead, his sonship and the trinity – and they talked with knowledge about it. These were the disputations about which they did have knowledge. As for the disputation about that of which they had no knowledge, it was their contention that Ibrahim was a Jew or a Christian.

When the Qur'an says that they had no knowledge of this matter, it does not mean that they were unaware of the fact that the Torah and the Injil were revealed after Ibrahim – as it was something obvious. Nor that they were oblivious of the fact that a person that lived in an earlier era cannot be a follower of one who come later, because the admonition at the end of the preceding verse, ***"Do you not***

then understand?” (3:65), does not leave room for this suggestion; it shows that it is so obvious that a mere hint is enough to focus attention on it. They knew that Ibrahim preceded the Torah and the Injil, but they were oblivious of its logical corollary that he therefore could not be a Jew or a Christian, that he would be on the Divine Religion, that is, submission to Allah.

The Jews also said: There cannot be more than one true religion and that is the Judaism. Thus, Ibrahim would inevitably be a Jew. The same argument was used by the Christians to ‘christianize’ Ibrahim. The error they committed in this argument sprang from ignorance, not obliviousness. The fact is that the religion of Allah is one – and that is Islam, the submission to Allah. It is one, progressing towards perfection, with passage of time and in keeping with the progress of mankind – as humanity advances to perfection.

Judaism and Christianity are two branches of the perfection of Islam – the root religion. The prophets (peace be on them all!) were the builders of that building, each of them had a hand in it, laying down the foundation and raising such a lofty edifice. No doubt, Ibrahim (‘a) was the founder of Islam – i.e., submission to Allah – and it was the basic and true religion; then the true religion appeared with the name of Judaism and then Christianity; these were two of the branches of its perfection, two of the stages of its completion.

What the Jews and the Christians did not know was that these propositions do not make Ibrahim a Jew or a Christian. He would remain, as before, an upright Muslim; his name would be always linked with that of Islam, the religion which he himself had founded. That Islam is the root of Judaism and Christianity; but it is neither Judaism nor Christianity. The root is not attributed to its branches; it is the branch that should be related to the root.

To say that Ibrahim (‘a) was a Muslim and not a Jew or a Christian does not imply claiming that he was the follower of the Prophet of Islam, acting according to the Qur’anic *Shari’ah*. Nobody should rush to say that as Ibrahim (‘a) had preceded the revelation of the Torah and the Injil and therefore could not be counted as a Jew or a Christian, so had he preceded the revelation of the Qur’an and the advent of Islam, therefore, in a completely identical manner, he should not be called a Muslim.

As a matter of fact, the use of ‘Islam’ for the Qur’anic *Shari’ah* is a terminology which came up after the revelation of the Qur’an, when the fame of the religion brought by Muhammad (S), had spread far and wide. The ‘*Islam*’ that is attributed to Ibrahim means submission to Allah, humbling oneself before His Lordship. The two uses are different, and consequently there is no room for any objection whatsoever.

The People of the Book were unaware of the true meaning of the basic religion; they did not know that it was a reality that had various levels, and which had evolved, passing through stages, to the summit of its perfection. It was this ignorance of theirs to which Allah refers when He says:

“And Allah knows while you do not know. Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian...” (3:66).

This meaning is also supported by the next verse:

“Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe...” (3:68).

as well as the verses 84 – 85 coming later:

“Say: We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma’il and Ishaq and Ya’qub and the tribes, and what was given to Musa and ‘Isa and to the prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit” (3:84).

“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers” (3:85). [3](#)

Verse 67

Qur’an: “Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian, but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists” (3:67).

This verse has been explained above. Some exegetes have explained it as follows: The Jews and the Christians claimed that Ibrahim (‘a) was one of them, on their religion. Likewise, the idol-worshipping Arabs claimed that they were the followers of *ad-din al-hanif* (*الْدِّينُ الْحَنِيفُ* = the upright religion) the religion of Ibrahim (‘a); even the People of the Book came to call them *al-hunafa’* (*الْحُنَفَاءُ*) and thus *al-hanifiyyah* (*الْحَنِيفِيَّةُ* = uprightness; religion of Ibrahim) was misconstrued to mean idol-worship.

When Allah praised Ibrahim (‘a) by saying that “he was upright (*حَنِيفًا* = *hanifan*)”, it was necessary to explain the word, so that people should not take it in the sense of idol-worship. That is why Allah added the words, ***“A Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists” (3:67)***, he followed the religion which Allah is pleased with, and that is Islam, submission to Allah, and he was not a polytheist like the Arabs of the days of Ignorance.

Verse 68

Qur’an: “Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this Prophet and those who believe; and Allah is the Guardian of the believers” (3:68).

This verse gives the reason behind the foregoing talk and explains the reality of the subject matter. The meaning is as follows (and Allah knows better).

If we look at relationship between this great Prophet, Ibrahim, and those who came after him, obviously he cannot be counted as a follower of later generations; rather, we have to decide who among them all is nearest to him. He can only be nearest of all to a prophet – coming with a *Shari’ah* and a Book – who

follows the truth like him and accepts the religion which he brought.

According to this criterion, the nearest to Ibrahim (‘a) is this Prophet (S) and those who believe. They are on the *Islam* for which Allah had chosen Ibrahim. Likewise, those who were his followers were nearest to him – not those who disbelieve in the communications of Allah and confound the truth with falsehood.

The words, **“those who followed him” (3:68)**, are an allusion against the People of the Book, indirectly telling the Jews and the Christians that they were not the nearest to Ibrahim because they did not follow him in submitting to Allah.

The phrase, **“and this Prophet and those who believe” (3:68)**, distinguishing the Prophet and his followers from the followers of Ibrahim (‘a); this was done to show the exalted position of the Prophet; he was too great to be called someone’s follower. The same consideration is reflected in other verses, for example:

“These are they whom Allah guided, therefore follow their guidance” (6:90).

Note that Allah did not say, ‘therefore follow them’.

The sentence **“and Allah is the Guardian of the believers” (3:68)** complete this reasoning and explanation. Ibrahim was a *waliyy* (الْوَلِيُّ = friend) of Allah, and his *al-wilayah* (الْوِلَايَةُ = friendship, guardianship) was a part of Allah’s guardianship; and Allah is the Guardian of the believers, not of the others who disbelieve in His Signs and confuse the right with wrong, the truth with falsehood.

Verse 69

Qur’an: “A party of the People of the Book desire that they should lead you astray, and they lead not astray but themselves, and they do not perceive.” (3:69).

“at-Ta’ifah” (الطَّائِفَةُ = party; lit.: rover, walker about). The people, and especially Arabs, used to live – in the beginning – a nomadic life; their tribes and clans used to wander around with their cattle looking for water and pasture, from season to season; they travelled in groups as a safety measure against attack and assassination. They were then called “a wandering party”; gradually the noun, ‘party’ was dropped, and the adjective *at-ta’ifah* (wanderer, rover, walker about) took its place.

How is it that the People of the Book lead not astray but themselves? The first and foremost human virtue is inclination towards truth and its acceptance. A desire to divert the people away from the truth, to turn them towards falsity (being a psychological trait) is a depravity of soul – and how evil this depravity is! It is a sin, a crime, a transgression against truth; and what is there beyond the truth except lie and error? Thus, when they desire to lead the believers astray (when those believers are on truth), they in fact lead themselves astray although they do not perceive it.

And even if they got hold of a believer and led him astray by planting some doubts in his heart, they

would be leading themselves astray before him. Man does not do anything – good or bad – but for himself. Allah says:

“Whoever does good, it is for his own self, and whoever does evil, it is against himself” (45: 15).

As for those who go astray because of someone’s misguidance, it is not so much a result of the influence of the deceiver, as the misdeed and wrong choice of the straying person himself – by permission of Allah. The Qur’an says:

“Whoever disbelieves, he shall be responsible for his disbelief, and whoever does good, they prepare (good) for their own souls” (30:44).

“And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought, and (yet) He pardons most (of your faults)” (42:30).

“And you cannot escape in the earth, and you shall not have a guardian or a helper besides Allah.” (42:31).

Some details about the effects and characteristics of human actions have been given in the second volume⁴, under the verse:

“... These it is whose deeds are forfeited in this world and the hereafter” (2:217).⁵

This explanation is among those Qur’anic realities which spring from *at-tawhid* (التَّوْحِيدُ = monotheism) of action, and that active belief is in turn based on the realities of Lordship and Kingdom. Only in this way, we can explain the exclusiveness found in the words of Allah: ***“and they lead not astray but themselves, and they do not perceive” (3:69)***, As for the explanation given by others, they do not help in understanding this exclusiveness; that is why we have not mentioned them here at all.

Verse 70

Qur’an: “O People of the Book! Why do you disbelieve in the communications of Allah while you witness (them)?” (3:70).

It has already been explained that disbelieving in communications of Allah is not the same as disbelieving in Allah Himself. Disbelief in Allah entails open rejection of monotheism, as the idol-worshippers and atheists do; while disbelief in communications means rejection of the Divine Knowledge after it is clarified and explained.

The People of the Book do believe that the universe has One God. What they disbelieve in are described in the books revealed to them and to others, like the prophethood of Muhammad (S), the fact that ‘Isa was the servant and the messenger of Allah, that Ibrahim was neither a Jew nor a Christian, that the hand of Allah is open⁶, that Allah is Self-sufficient and other such things.

The People of the Book, in Qur'anic language, are disbelievers in communications of Allah, not in Allah Himself. Of course, there is the verse which goes against it:

“Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, from among those who were given the Book, until they pay the jizyah⁷ with their hands while they are in a state of subjection” (9:29).

It clearly says that those People of the Book did not believe in Allah, i.e., they disbelieved in Allah. But it goes on mentioning their non-prohibition of prohibited things and their deviation from the religion of truth; and it shows that when the verse attributes disbelief to them it really uses a concomitant to allude to the related characteristic. In other words, when they disbelieve in communications of Allah, it follows that they do not believe even in Allah and the latter day although they may not realize it. But it does not speak about open and direct disbelief in Allah.

“While you witness (them)” (3:70)

“ash-Shahadah” (الشَّهَادَةُ = presence; knowledge through external senses; witness). It shows that their disbelief in communications refers to their rejection of the Prophet; they did not accept that the Prophet was the promised Prophet whose advent was foretold in the Torah and Injil although they clearly saw that the signs and descriptions mentioned therein perfectly fitted on the Prophet.

Somebody has said that the word “communications” is general and comprehensive; it covers all the communications and there is no reason why it should be restricted to the signs of the Prophet; the word therefore refers to their rejection of all the true signs and communications.

Comment: The explanation given by us clearly shows the invalidity of this interpretation.

Verse 71

Qur'an: “O People of the Book! Why do you confound the truth with the falsehood and hide the truth while you know?” (3:71).

“al-Labs” (الْلَبْسُ = to create doubt; to confuse; to confound). Why do you manifest the truth in the form of falsehood? The words, “while you know”, show or at least allude, that the confusion and the hiding refer to their confounding and hiding the religious knowledge and realities; and not to the verses of scriptures; that is, it does not speak about the verses which they had altered, hidden or misinterpreted.

These two verses, beginning with, ***“O People of the Book! Why do you disbelieve...” (3:70)***, and ending with, ***“while you know?” (3:71)***, complete the talk which began with the words, ***“A party of the People of the Book desire...” (3:69)***. The whole community has been admonished for the wrongdoings of some of its members because they were all united in race, tribe, and character, and all accepted what

some of them were doing. Such usage is commonly found in the Qur'an.

Verse 72

Qur'an: "And a party of the People of the Book say: "Avow belief in that which has been revealed to those who believe (in) the first part of the day, and disbelieve (at) the end of it, perhaps they go back (on their religion)" (3:72).

"*Wajha 'n-nahar*" (وَجْهُ النَّهَارِ = lit. face of the day) means the first part of the day, because it has been used in contrast with "the end of it"; also the face of a thing is what it appears to others with, and as far as the day is concerned, it is its early part.

The context of this saying shows that something was revealed to the Prophet in the early hours of the day which conformed with tenets of the People of the Book, and another revelation came at the end of the day which was against their belief. And this prompted them to say these words.

Therefore, the clause "***that which has been revealed to those who believe***" (3:72) refers to a particular Qur'anic revelation which agreed with the belief and practice of the People of the Book. The words, "the first part of the day ", are an adverbial phrase of time, and it is related not to "Avow belief", but to "has been revealed" because it is nearer.

The words "***and disbelieve (at) the end of it***" (3:72) mean: disbelieve in that which has been revealed (to those who believe) at the end of the day; it is an allegorical expression putting the adverbial phrase of time in place of the thing which happened at that time; a similar device has been used in the verse where it says:

"Nay, (it was) planning of night and day" (34:33).

Accordingly, it supports what has been narrated from the Imams of the Ahl Al-Bayt('a), relating the circumstances in which this verse was revealed. This idea was propagated by the Jews at the time when the *qiblah* was changed. The Messenger of Allah (S) had prayed the morning prayer towards Bayt al-Maqdis which was the *qiblah* of the Jews.

Then the *qiblah* was changed towards the *Ka'bah* in the noon prayer. Then a group of the Jews said: Believe in that which was revealed to those who believe in the early hours of the day, that is, praying towards Bayt al-Maqdis, and disbelieve in that which has been revealed at the end of it, that is, facing towards the *Ka'bah*.

This explanation is further supported by their assertion which has been quoted in the next verse, "***And do not believe but in him who follows your religion***" (3:73), that is, do not trust anyone who does not follow your religion and does not believe in it, lest you disclose to him some of your secrets and the good tidings which were revealed to you about the promised Prophet – one of the signs foretold of the Prophet

was that he would change the *qiblah* towards the *Ka'bah*.

Another interpretation: Some exegetes have said that the phrase “the first part of the day” is related to the verb “Avow belief”; and “the end of it” is an adverbial phrase, (in which “in” is deleted and understood) and it is related to the verb “disbelieve”. Accordingly, the meaning would be as follows: Some of them should pretend to believe in the Qur'an and attach themselves with the Muslims; then they should renounce Islam at the end of the day saying that they had believed in the morning because they were deceived by apparent signs of truth of Islam but they had to renounce it by the end of the day because they had seen many things which proved its falsity; and because the good tidings of the prophethood and signs of veracity which they were told by the previous prophets did not fit on this Prophet. This was a devious plan to deceive the believers, so that the believers would be overwhelmed by doubts about their religion and become weakened in their conviction; in this way their power would break down and their mission fail.

This meaning itself is not far-fetched especially from the Jews who had left no stone unturned to defeat Islam and to extinguish its light by any possible means. But the wording of the verse does not fit this interpretation. We shall write some related materials under the Traditions, Allah willing.

Someone has explained it as follows: Avow belief in their praying towards the Ka'bah in the first part of the day and disbelieve in it at the end of the day; perhaps they would go back on their religion.

A fourth explanation: Pretend to believe in the first part of the day by agreeing that the signs of the promised prophet were present in the Prophet; and disbelieve at the end of it saying that those attributes did not fit on him; this would put doubts in the believers' minds and perhaps they would renounce their religion. There is no proof for these two interpretations; and whatever the meaning, there is no ambiguity in the verse.

Verse 73

Qur'an: “And do not believe but in him who follows your religion.” Say: “Surely the guidance is the guidance of Allah – that one may be given (by Him) the like of what you were given; or they would contend with you by an argument before your Lord.” ... (3:73).

The context shows that this too is the saying of the People of the Book, completing their talk which started with the words, **“Avow belief in that which has been revealed to those who believe.” (3:72)** And likewise, the words **“that one may be given (by Him) the like of what you were given; or they would contend with you by an argument before your Lord,” (3:73),** are continuation of their speech. And therefore, the sentence **“Say: ‘Surely the guidance is the guidance of Allah’ (3:73),** is a parenthetical sentence in reply of their talk beginning with, **“Avow belief,” (3:72)** and ending with, **“who follows your religion.” (3:73),** The change of style supports this view.

Similarly, the words **“Say: ‘Surely grace is in the hand of Allah...,’ (3:73)** are in reply of their talk, **“that**

one may be given (by Him) the like of what you were given.” (3:73). In this way, all the segments of this talk are inter-woven and the meanings of the two preceding verses inter-related with one another. Also, the two verses stand face to face with the verses describing the Jews’ obstinacy, disputation, and deception.

The meaning is therefore as follows, and Allah knows better:

A party of the People of the Book, that is, the Jews, said one to another: Attest the truth of the Prophet and the believers regarding their prayer towards Bayt al-Maqdis in the first part of the day and do not accept their truth when they prayed towards *Ka’bah* in the afternoon. Do not trust others when you talk with them, lest they inform the believers that the changing of *qiblah* to the *Ka’bah* was foretold as a sign of the truth of the Promised Prophet. For, if you accepted the affair of the *Ka’bah* and disclosed what you knew about it⁸, then you would have to face two dangers: First, the believers would get a *qiblah* of their own, like that of yours; it would destroy your supremacy and neutralize your precedence in the matter of *qiblah*; second, the believers would contend with you before your Lord establishing a proof against you that although you knew about the new *qiblah* and were witnesses of its truth, you did not accept the Islam.

Allah replied to their talk – that they should believe what was revealed in the early part of the day and disbelieve what happened at the end of it and their admonition to one another to hide the matter of *qiblah* so that the believers would not know the truth – that the guidance which the believers needed was the true guidance and it was the guidance of Allah, and not theirs! The believers do not need their guidance; they may follow the believers’ guidance if they like and reject it if they so desire; they may proclaim the truth if they wish and hide it if they want.

Then Allah replies to their fear that one might be given by Allah the like of what they were given.

He says that the grace is in the hand of Allah, He gives it to whom He pleases. It is not in the hands of the Jews’ such that they could reserve it for their own selves blocking the way to the others. Allah has made no comment on their conspiracy to hide the truth so that the believers would be unable to argue with them before their Lord; it was such a conspicuously fallacious presumption that needed no reply.

The same disdainful silence is maintained in another verse exposing the same fallacy:

“And when they meet those who believe they say: “We believe,” and when they are alone one with another, they say: “Do you talk to them of what Allah has disclosed to you that they may argue with you by this before your Lord? Do you not then understand?” (2:76).

“What! Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they proclaim?” (2:77).

The exclamatory “What!” in the sentence ***“What! Do they not know...” (2:77)*** shows that it is not a reply to the Jews; it is just an indication that their talk goes against correct understanding, for they know that

their hiding or proclaiming makes no difference in Allah's knowledge.

It will be seen from the above explanation that the words **"And do not believe" (3:73)**, mean 'do not trust anyone', 'do not expect anyone to keep your secret'. It has the same connotation as this verse:

"And there are some of them who molest the Prophet and say: He is one who believes every thing that he hears; say: A hearer of good for you (who) believes in Allah and believes the faithful and a mercy for those of you who believe; and (as for) those who molest the Messenger of Allah, they shall have a painful punishment" (9:61).

The words, **"him who follows your religion," (3:73)** mean 'the Jews'. Their aim was to prevent the disclosure of what they knew regarding the truth of the change of *qiblah* to the *Ka'bah*. Their knowledge of this truth was also referred to in these verses:

"...turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque... and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord..." (2: 144).

"Those whom we have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons; and a party of them most surely conceal the truth while they know (it) (2: 146).

The exegetes have written various explanations for these verses. One of them says that the whole verse, **"And do not believe... Ample-giving, Knowing" (3:73)**, is a direct speech of Allah, not a quotation of the Jews' talk; and the second person plural pronouns – "And do not believe", "What you were given", "they would contend with you", "before your Lord" – are all addressed to the believers; while the second person singular pronoun in "Say" refers to the Prophet.

Some others agree with this explanation with one difference: They say that the second person plural pronouns in the above-mentioned words are addressed to the Jews, and the speech admonishes and rebukes them. Still others have said that the words **"And do not believe but in him who follows your religion" (3:73)**, are the quotation of the Jews' talk; while the words **"Say: 'Surely the guidance is the guidance of Allah – that one may be given (by Him) ...' (3:73)** are spoken by Allah in reply to what the Jews had said. Likewise, there is a difference about the meaning of "grace" whether it means religion, worldly blessings, dominance, or something else.

These interpretations, despite their bewildering number, are far removed from the connotation given by the context, as we have already shown. That is why we have not spent much time on them.

Qur'an: "...Say: 'Surely grace is in the hand of Allah, He gives it to whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing" (3:73).

"Al-Fadl" (الْفَضْلُ = surplus; that which is in excess). This word is used in commendatory sense, while **al-fudul** (الْفُضُولُ) is used as a derogatory term. *Ar-Raghib* says: Every voluntary gratis benefaction is called *al-fadl*; as Allah says:

“... And ask Allah of His grace..” (4:32)

“... This is Allah’s grace...” (5:54)

“...And Allah is the Lord of mighty grace (2: 105)

“Say: ‘In the grace of Allah’ ” (10:58)

“...And were it not for the grace of Allah...” (4:83).

Accordingly, the sentence, ***“Say: ‘Surely grace is in the hand of Allah’” (3:73)***, is a sort of abbreviated syllogism from which the first premise has been omitted. The full deductive syllogism shall be as follows: Say: This revelation and Divine bestowal (which you are trying to reserve for yourself by pretending to believe and disbelieve and admonishing each other to hide the truth) is not a thing which we mortals can impose on Allah, it is really a grace. Grace is in the hand of Allah (to Whom belong the Kingdom and the Command). Therefore, He has the power to give it to whom He pleases. And Allah is Ample giving, Knowing.

This verse does not leave any room for the Jews to reserve the Divine Grace for themselves (despite their mistaken belief reflected in their words and deeds). Why should some people enjoy the grace of Allah to the deprivation of others (as the Jews wanted to do with religion and *qiblah*)? One may imagine only three ways for that.

The first possibility is that the grace of Allah would fall under the influence of someone else, who then would manipulate the Divine Will, diverting it to one side, preventing it from going in another direction. But the fact is otherwise, as the verse says:

“Surely grace is in the hand of Allah, He gives it to whom He pleases” (3:73).

The second possibility is that the bounty is in short supply and is insufficient to reach all the aspirants. In that case it would need some external factors to select a few and reject others. But the fact is otherwise. Because Allah is Ample giving; All-powerful, Whose grace knows no limit.

The third possibility is that it could be that the grace – even if it was unlimited and is in the hand of Allah – could not reach a certain group because that group was hidden from Allah, was unknown to Him. Thus, the ‘privileged’ group plans devious ways to hide the other groups and keep them concealed from Allah, in order to deprive them of the Divine Grace. But the fact is the opposite because Allah is All-knowing; ignorance cannot reach Him; nothing can be hidden from Him.

Verse 74

Qur’an: “He specially chooses for His mercy whom He pleases; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace” (3:74).

As the grace is in the hand of Allah, He gives it to whom He pleases; and as He is Ample giving, Knowing, it is in His power to choose some of the servants for some of His favours. It is for Him to manage His property as He likes. The fact, that His grace and His bestowal of bounties are unrestricted, or that nobody can place any restraint on Him, does not make it necessary for Him to bestow His grace on each and every person indiscriminately. Otherwise, it would again be a restraint on His absolute power. It is His prerogative to specially choose for His grace whomever He pleases.

The verse ends with the sentence, ***“and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace” (3:74)***. In a way it explains the reason of all that has been mentioned above. The grace is mighty. Consequently, it must be in His hand to give it to whom He pleases. Also, Allah should be Ample giving in His grace, knowing the condition of His servants, well-aware of which type of grace would be more suitable to a given person. And therefore, it should be His prerogative to specially choose for His grace whomever He pleases.

In the sentence, ***“He specially chooses for His mercy whom He pleases” (3:74)***, the word, “grace” has been replaced by “mercy”. It shows that the grace, being a free gift, a discretionary bounty, is a branch of mercy. Allah says:

“And My mercy encompasses all things...” (7: 156).

“...And were it not for Allah’s grace upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have ever been pure...” (24:21).

“Say: “If you control the treasures of the mercy of Lord, then you would withhold (them) from fear of spending...” (17: 100).

Verse 75

Qur’an: “And among the People of the Book there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a heap of wealth, he shall pay it back to you; and among them are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a dinar he shall not pay it back to you except that you remain standing over him, this is because they say: “There is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way (to reproach) and they tell a lie against Allah while they know” (3:75).

The verse points to the glaring differences seen in the characters of various People of the Book, for example, in keeping the trust and fulfilling the agreements. Their dishonesty and breach of trust is in itself a national disgrace; this characteristic has permeated their society as a well-accepted feature. Unfortunately, it is based on their ideology which is reflected in the statement:

“There is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way (to reproach)” (3:75).

They called themselves the People of the Book and called others, gentiles, unlearned people. The above-quoted statement means that no gentile (non-Israelite) can have any way against an Israelite.

Even more disturbing was their claim that that behaviour was approved by religion. It is to this aspect that the next sentence refers:

“And they tell a lie against Allah while they know...” (3:75).

They believed – as they do even today – that they were the chosen people; Divine Grace was their exclusive property; others had no share in Allah’s favour; Allah had given them Prophethood, the Book and the Kingdom; therefore, they had precedence and excellence over all races, and had a right to subjugate the others. This misconception gave rise to various misunderstandings.

For example, they came to believe that the sociological and financial rights and obligations (like prohibition of interest, of devouring others’ property and usurping people’s rights) were applicable within their own circle only. A Jew should not unjustly devour the property of another Jew; an Israelite should not usurp the rights of his own people.

In short, only the People of the Book had a way to reproach against the People of the Book. As for the gentiles, the non-Israelites, they had no way of reproach against the People of the Book. The Jews thought they could deal with non-Israelites anyway they liked; they could do with others whatever they wanted. In their eyes the gentiles were no better than animals and they dealt with them as they did with animals.

Of course, the conception was not found in the books that are said to be revealed, like the Torah, etc. They had taken this idea from their rabbis and blindly followed them. Moreover, the religion of Musa was meant for the Children of Israel only; others were neither invited nor allowed to enter it. Thus, it became a racist religion.

This gave rise to a belief that this excellence and Divine Grace was something based on race, for which the Children of Israel were exclusively chosen. Being born of Israel parents was the essence of dignity, the root of excellence, the basis of supremacy. The one who was related to Israel had absolute precedence over all others. When such arrogant spirit governs the structure of a nation, it incites them to create mischief on the earth, and to annihilate the essence of humanity found in a society.

Of course, sometimes it becomes necessary in a human society to deprive some individuals or groups of some common rights. But what should be the criterion for such treatment? A healthy society believes that whoever tries to negate others’ rights or to damage or destroy the society itself, should be deprived of his own rights. From Islamic point of view the only criterion of rights is acceptance of Islam or coming under the protection of Islamic State. One who is neither a Muslim nor a *dhimmi* (الذِمِّي = one under the protection of Islamic State), has no right in the life. This criterion conforms with the dictate of nature; and you have seen that the human society also recognizes such test in a general way.

Now, we come back to the verse under discussion, ***“among the People of the Book” (3:75).***

Apparently, it should have been ‘among them’. Why was the noun used in place of the pronoun? It was

done to remove a possible misunderstanding: the preceding two verses had spoken about: **“A party of the People of the Book” (3:72)**; if these verses had said, ‘among them’, it could give the impression that it was speaking about a group of the previously mentioned in **“A party of the People of the Book” (3:72)**. You will see that after removing this possible cause of misunderstanding, the next verse uses pronoun when it says:

“Most surely there is a party amongst those who distort the Book with their tongues” (3:78).

Also, mentioning of the attribute – i.e., their being the People of the Book – points to a sort of reason. That is, such words and deeds – their saying that there is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way to reproach, and their swallowing the people’s wealth in this way – would not have looked so strange if they had been uttered by unlearned people, who did not know anything about prophethood and revelation.

But these were the People of the Book; they had the Book which contained God’s Commandments; and they knew very well that the Book did not give them any such latitude, nor did it allow them to take other people’s wealth and property just because they were gentiles, non-Israelites. Such statements and deeds were more strange and more disgraceful because they were uttered and done by the People of the Book. Therefore, they deserved more severe condemnation and rebuke.

“al-Qintar” (100 = الرِّقْطَارُ *ratl*; figuratively used for huge amounts); *“ad-dinar”* (الدِّينَارُ = a coin). Apart from their rhetorical beauty,⁹ their parallel setting in the context of trustworthiness shows that these words have been used for large and small amounts respectively. The verse means that there are some among them who faithfully keep the amount entrusted to them, no matter how large and valuable it may be; while there are others among them who would embezzle it even if it is a trivial and worthless thing.

The second person singular pronoun in the phrase, **“if you entrust one (of them) with a heap of wealth, he shall pay it back to you” (3:75)**, does not refer to any specific person; it is a sort of indefinite pronoun showing general applicability of the statement. In other words, the sentence means: If someone – anyone – gives him something in trust he shall pay it back to him, no matter how great the amount may be.

“illa ma dumta ‘alayhi qa’Iman” (إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَائِمًا): It is said that *“ma”* (مَا) has changed the verb into *al-masdar* (الْمَصْدَرُ = infinitive verb); and the sentence means “except that you remain standing over him.” The word, “standing”, points to urgency and insistence; when the claimant remains standing on his feet without sitting, it shows his impatience and inability to wait. Someone has said that *“ma”* is an adverb of time; but it makes no sense.

“This is because they say: ‘There is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way (to reproach)’” (3:75).

Apparently, the context shows that the pronoun, “this”, refers to the whole description written before, that

is, the fact that some of them keep their trust even if it is a huge amount, and others do not pay it back even if it is a small thing; this difference has arisen from their belief that there is on them no way to reproach in the matter of the unlearned people. This idea has created among them a great disparity in ethical and spiritual standard although they know that Allah has not ordained any such thing in His Book, nor is He pleased with such practices of theirs.

Alternatively, it may be referring to the second group only, which is mentioned by the sentence:

“And among them there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a dinar he shall not pay it back to you” (3:75).

In this case, the first (i.e., trustworthy) group may have been mentioned here just to give the complete picture, to fulfil the demand of justice. Consequently, the plural pronouns in, “they say”, and “they know”, may refer to, “the People of the Book”, or to, “some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a dinar”. In the latter case, the first-person pronoun in “upon us” may refer to all “the People of the Book”, or to a certain group of them. The translation will differ in each case, but all the possibilities are correct and credible. (Think it over.)

Qur’an: “...And they tell a lie against Allah while they know ...” (3:75).

It refutes their claim that there was not upon them any way to reproach in the matter of the unlearned people. Also, it proves that they used to justify their behaviour on religious grounds, claiming that it was a Divine Revelation, as we have mentioned earlier.

Verse 76

Qur’an: “Yea, whoever fulfils his promise and guards (against evil) – then surely Allah loves those who guard (against evil)” (3:76).

It answers their argument and affirms what they wanted to negate with their statement that there was no way to reproach upon them regarding the non-Israelites. Fulfilment of promise means acting on it and guarding against its breach. “*at-Tawfiyah*” (التَّوْفِيقُ) = to give completely); “*al-istifa*’” (الِاسْتِيفَاءُ) = to take completely).

The promise refers to the covenant which Allah had taken from His servants that they would believe in Him and worship Him. This meaning is supported by the next verse which says:

“(as for) those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their (own) oaths” (3:77).

Or it may mean all promises in general, including the covenant of Allah.

The sentence “***then surely Allah loves those who guard (against evil)” (3:76)*** is a syllogism from which a premise has been omitted for brevity. Its completed form would be as follows: then surely Allah

loves him, because he guards against evil, and Allah loves those who guard against evil. The idea is that Allah bestows honour and dignity on His pious servants by loving them, and not by giving them licence to deceive, exploit and oppress His other servants.

The verse indicates that the divinely bestowed dignity is not so easily obtainable; it is not a commonplace thing which could be attained by just verbal expression of belonging, or which may be used for racial or national supremacy by crafty and wily persons. The important condition for attainment of Divine Dignity is piety and fulfilment of the covenant made with Allah.

When these conditions are fulfilled, the said dignity is achieved. That dignity means Allah's love, friendship, and guardianship, which are not given except to His pious servants. It results in Divine help and happy life, which in its turn brings them prosperity and betters their condition in this world and raises their rank in the hereafter.

This is the meaning of dignity which Allah bestows. It does not give rise to imposition of a certain race or nation on the shoulders of His servants, good and bad alike, giving the supposed "master race" freedom to do whatever they want and to say whatever they like. Thus, one day they would claim ***"there is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way (to reproach)" (3:75)***; saying next day that they were the friends of Allah to the exclusion of the other people;¹⁰ and yet another day, that they were the sons of Allah and His beloved ones.¹¹ Thus, it leads them to create mischief in the earth and to destroy the tilth and the stock.

Verse 77

Qur'an: "(As for) those who take a small price for covenant of Allah and their (own) oaths... (3:77).

It explains the reason of the preceding statement. The Divine Dignity is exclusively reserved for those who fulfil the covenant of Allah and guard against evil – are pious; because the others – those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths – have no honour, no dignity at all.

The fact is that whoever breaks the covenant of Allah and forsakes piety – not guarding himself against evil – does so just for the enjoyment of the vanities of this world, giving preference to immediate desires over everlasting happiness. He exchanges the covenant of Allah and the piety with a few worldly trinkets. That is why it has been likened to a trade deal: Covenant of Allah is the item sold; and insignificant worldly provision, its small price. *"al-Ishtira'* " (الِإِشْتِرَاءُ = to sell); "they take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their (own) oaths", that is, they exchange the covenant and oaths for provisions of this world.

Qur'an: "Surely they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them... they shall have a painful chastisement" (3:77).

“*al-Khalaq*” (الْخَلْقُ = portion, share); “*at-tazkiyah*” (التَّزْكِيَةُ = to make grow, good growing; to purify). The descriptions of this group stand face to face with the attributes of the first group, “***Yea, whoever fulfils his promise and guards [against evil].***” (3:76); and the consequences of their behaviour are all negative. Keeping it in view, we find that:

First: The verse points to them with the demonstrative pronoun, *ula’ika* (أُولَئِكَ = those, they), which is used for a distant object. It shows that they are far removed from nearness to Allah. Conversely, the pious ones who fulfil their covenant are brought nearer to Allah because He loves them.

Second: When Allah loves someone, he is given a portion in the hereafter; Allah will speak to him and look upon him on the Day of Resurrection, will purify him and forgive him, that is, will remove chastisement from him. Allah has mentioned three traits for those who break the covenant of Allah and their own oaths.

The first trait: They shall have no portion in the hereafter. “*al-Akhirah*” (الْآخِرَةُ = the hereafter); it stands for *ad-dar al-akhirah* (الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ = the abode in the hereafter; the everlasting abode); it is used for life after death. In the same way, *ad-dunya* (الدُّنْيَا = the world) stands for *ad-daru’d-dunya* (الدَّارُ الدُّنْيَا = worldly abode), which is used for the life before death.

They shall have no portion in the hereafter because they themselves had preferred the share of this world. It shows that “a small price” refers to this world. Of course, we have explained it above as the worldly provision; it was done because Allah has used adjective “small” for it and the same adjective has been used for the worldly provision in the verse:

“Say. ‘The provision of this world is small’” (4:77).

In other word, the provision of the world is the world (itself).

The Second trait: Allah will not speak to them, nor will he look upon them on the Day of Resurrection. It stands vis-a-vis the love which Allah has for His pious servants; in love, the lover wants to enjoy nearness to the beloved, by looking at him and talking to him when they are together. As Allah does not love this group, He will not speak to them nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, the day when they will be brought in His presence. The verse first mentions not speaking and then not looking upon; the description is in descending order; speaking shows more intimacy than looking upon; it is as though the verse wants to say: Allah shall not confer upon them any honour, neither great nor small.

The third trait: Allah will not purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement: The statements are unrestricted and unconditional. It implies that they shall remain unpurified and in chastisement both in this world and in the hereafter.

Verse 78

Qur'an: "Most surely there is a party amongst those who distort the Book with their tongues that you may consider it to be (a part) of the Book, while it is not (a part) of the Book, and they say, "It is from Allah," while it is not from Allah; and they tell a lie against Allah whilst they know" (3:78).

"al-Layy" (الَلْيُ = to spin, to entwine); when used with the head or tongue as its object, it means inclining, bending or tilting it. Allah says:

"...They turn back their heads..." (63:5).

"...Distorting (the word) with their tongues..." (4:46).

Apparently, it means that they recite the lies which they have invented against Allah in the same tone and style which they use for the Book, in order to confuse the people, making them believe that it was a part of the Book while it is not so.

The word "Book" has been repeated thrice in this sentence, in order to remove all possible ambiguity. The first "Book" refers to that which they wrote with their own hands and attributed to Allah; the second refers to the "Book" which was revealed by Allah; the third refers to the same Divine Revelation but the word was repeated to remove ambiguity and to indicate that the "Book", being the Book of Allah, was too high and sublime to contain such forgeries – it is because the word "Book" has a connotation that points to sublimity.

The same was the cause of repeating the Divine Name, Allah, in the sentence, **"and they say, it is from Allah, while it is not from Allah" (3:78)**. It means it is not from Allah Who is the true God and Who does not say except truth, as He Himself says:

"...And the truth do I speak" (38:84).

The verse ends with the words,

"And they tell a lie against Allah whilst they know" (3:78).

It is refutation after refutation of their ascribing their forgeries to Divine Revelation. They were confusing the people by their distorted recitation; Allah refuted it and said, **"while it is not (a part) of the Book" (3:78).**

Then they used to say, **"it is from Allah" (3:78)**; Allah refuted them first by saying, **"while it is not from Allah" (3:78)**; and then by declaring that **"they tell a lie against Allah" (3:78)**. This repeated denial points to two new factors: First, telling lies is their ingrained habit and persistent trait. Second, it is not because of any confusion or ignorance that they have told such lies; they know that it is a lie and yet they say it.

Traditions

As-Suyuti writes in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* under the verse: **Say: “O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you...” (3:64)**: “Ibn Jarir has narrated through his chains from as-Suddi that he said: ‘Then the Messenger of Allah (S) called them – that is, the delegation of the Christians of Najran – and said: “O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you...”’ ‘ “

The author says: The same book quotes another tradition of the same meaning through Ibn Jarir from Muhammad Ibn Ja’far Ibn az-Zubayr. The tradition apparently means that this verse was revealed about the Christians of Najran. We have written a tradition in the beginning of the chapter [12](#), that its early part (up to eighty odd verses), was revealed about the Christians of Najran; and this verse is included in that number.

Some Traditions say that the Messenger of Allah (S) invited the Jews of Medina to a common word, until they accepted to pay *jizyah*. However, it is not in conflict with its revelation about the delegation of Najran.

Al-Bukhari narrates through his chains from Ibn ‘Abbas from Abu Sufyan a long hadith in which he, inter alia, mentions the letter sent by the Messenger of Allah (S) to Heraclius, the Roman emperor. Abu Sufyan says: “Then he (i.e., Heraclius) asked for the letter of the Messenger of Allah (S) and read it; and it was written therein: *‘In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to Heraclius, the emperor of Rome. Peace be on him who follows guidance. After this, I invite you to Islam. Accept Islam, and you will be saved (in the hereafter). Accept Islam and Allah will give you double reward. But if you turn back, then the sin of your people also will be on your shoulders.*

‘O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you, that we shall not worship any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate anything with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah’; but if they turn back, then say: ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims (3:64)’ [13](#)

The author says: It has also been narrated by Muslim in his *as-Sahih*; and by as-Suyuti in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from an-Nasa’i, ‘Abdu’r-Razzaq and Ibn Abi Hatim, all from Ibn ‘Abbas.

And it has been said that also the letter sent by the Messenger of Allah (S) to Muqawqis, the Chief of the Copts, contained these very words of Allah, ***“O People of the Book! come to a word, common between us and you...” (3:64)***. There is a Cufic writing reputedly the original letter of the Prophet, its text conforming with his letter to Heraclius; and its photos are easily available throughout the Muslims world. [14](#)

However, the historians say that the Messenger of Allah (S) wrote the letters which he sent through various envoys to many kings and rulers (like: Heraclius, *Kisra* and *an-Najashi*) in the sixth year of *hijrah*. It proves that this verse was revealed in the sixth year or even earlier. On the other hand, the historians (like at-Tabari, Ibn al-Athir and al-Maqrizi) have written that the delegation of the Christians of Najran had come to the Messenger of Allah (S) in the tenth year of *hijrah*, while others (like Abu al-Fida' in *al-Bidayah wa 'n-nihayah* and al-Halabi in *as-Sirah al-Halabiyyah*) say that it was in the ninth year. If so, then the verse would have been revealed in the ninth or tenth year of *hijrah*. Sometimes, it is said that it was revealed in the early years of *hijrah* as the traditions written hereafter will show. Others say that it was revealed twice, as al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar has reported.

Nevertheless, the verses of the chapter are connected to each other in a single context, as we had pointed out in the beginning of the chapter; and it supports the view that the verse was revealed long before the ninth year. Consequently, the delegation must have come in the sixth year of *hijrah* or even earlier.

It is difficult to believe that the Prophet would write letters to rulers of Rome, Egypt and Fars and ignore the people of Najran who were nearer.

There is a point to note in the above quoted tradition. The letter begins with the formula, "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful". Keeping this in view, we may know the worth of the tradition copied earlier (in the story of Najran's delegation), from al-Bayhaqi's *Dala'il an-nubuwwah*. He narrates: "The Messenger of Allah (S) wrote to the people of Najran, before the (chapter of) '*Tasin Sulayman*' (i.e., the Ant) was revealed: '*In the name of Allah, the God of Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub. From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to the Bishop of Najran and the people of Najran. If you accept Islam, then I extol before you Allah, the God of Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub. After that I call you to the worship of Allah leaving aside the worship of the servants (of Allah), and I invite you to (come under) the guardianship of Allah instead of the guardianship of the servants. But if you refuse (it), then (you should pay) the head-tax; and if you refuse (even this), then I declare war against you. And peace (be on you).*'"

Now, the chapter of 'The Ant' is a Meccan one; and its textual evidence almost clearly proves that it was revealed before *hijrah*; how can that period be juxtaposed with the event of Najran? Apart from that, the purported letter contains some other things which cannot be explained, like the demand of *jizyah* and ultimatum of war and other such things. And Allah knows better.

at-Tabarani narrates from Ibn 'Abbas: "Verily the letter of the Messenger of Allah to the unbelievers was: 'come to a word common between us and you...' [15](#)

It is written in the same book about the words of Allah "***O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrahim...***" (3:65). Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir and al-Bayhaqi (in his *Dala'il an-nubuwwah*) have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: 'The Christians of Najran and rabbis of the Jews came to the Messenger of Allah (S) and disputed with one another near him. The rabbis said: "Ibrahim was but a Jew"; and the

Christians said: "Ibrahim was but a Christian".

Thereupon, Allah revealed about them: ***O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrahim, when the Torah and the Injil were not revealed till after him? (3:65) until the verse "and Allah is the Guardian of the believers" (3:68).*** Then Abu Rafi' al-Qurazi (a Jew from Banu Qurayzah) said: "Do you demand from us, O Muhammad! that we should worship you as the Christians worship 'Isa son of Maryam?" And one of the Najranites said: "Is it what you wish, O Muhammad?" And the Messenger of Allah (S) said: *"I seek protection of Allah that I should worship other than Allah or enjoin worship of other than Him. Not for this He has sent me or enjoined me."* Then Allah revealed concerning their talk:

"It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book and Judgment and Prophethood, then he should say to men: "Be my servants rather than Allah's"; but rather (he would say): "Be worshippers of the Lord because of your teaching the Book and your reading (it yourselves)" (3:79).

"Or that he should enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for lords; What! would He enjoin you with unbelief after you are Muslims?" (3:80).

Thereafter Allah mentioned the covenant He had made with them and their forefathers that they should believe in the Prophet when he came to them, and to their acceptance of this fact; so, He said: [16](#)

"And when Allah made a covenant through the prophets: "Certainly what I have given you of the Book and Wisdom - then an Apostle comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him." He said: "Do you affirm and accept My compact in this (matter)?" They said: "We do affirm." He said: "Then bear witness, and I (too) am of the bearers of witness with you" (3:81).

The author says: According to the text and context of the verses ***"It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book and Judgment and Prophethood..." (3:79)***, that are applicable to 'Isa son of Maryam ('a) is more meaningfully and in an easier way than to the Messenger of Allah (S). We shall explain when writing on these verses. Perhaps what the tradition says concerning the revelation of these verses about the Messenger of Allah (S) is just an inference of Ibn 'Abbas. Moreover, when the Qur'an deals with such talks, it invariably always brings it in the form of question and answer or as a quotation with its refutation.

Al-Kalbi has narrated the story of the *hijrah* to Abyssinia through Abu Salih from Ibn 'Abbas; and it has also been narrated by Muhammad Ibn Ishaq from Ibn Shahab through his chains, that he said: "When Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib with a group of the Companions of the Prophet migrated to Abyssinia and settled there; and the Prophet migrated to Medina and there happened in Badr what happened, the Quraysh assembled in *Daru'n-Nadwah* (the Town Hall) and said to each other: 'You may avenge those who have been killed at Badr with those Companions of Muhammad who are with *an-Najashi* (Negus). Collect some money and send it as a present to *an-Najashi*; perhaps he would hand over your tribesmen to

you; and there should go two of your wise men as your envoys to him.'

"They sent 'Amr Ibn al-'As and 'Umarah Ibn Abi Mu'ayt¹⁷ with presents (of) leathers, etc. They sailed the sea and arrived at Abyssinia. When they came to *an-Najashi*, they prostrated before him and greeted him; and said: 'Our people are sincere and thankful to you, and they love your courtiers. They have sent us to you to warn you against these people who have come to you for, they follow an imposter who has stood up, claiming to be a Messenger of Allah; and none of us has followed him except a few simpletons.

And we made life difficult for them and compelled them to take shelter in a narrow mountain valley of our land, with nobody visiting them, until hunger and thirst (nearly) destroyed them. When the situation became too tough for him, he sent his cousin to you, in order to create mischief here – in your religion, kingdom and subjects. Therefore, beware of them and hand them over to us; it will save you the trouble of dealing with them.' Also, they said: 'And it is a sign (of their mischief) that when they come here, they will not prostrate before you, nor will they greet you in the way the people greet you; (it is because of their) disliking your religion and customs.'

"Then *an-Najashi* called them (i.e., the Muslims). When they came, Ja'far called at the door: 'The party of Allah ask permission to come before you.' *An-Najashi* said: 'Tell this caller to repeat his words.' Ja'far did, and *an-Najashi* said: 'Yes; let them enter with safety of Allah and His protection.' 'Amr looked at his colleague and said: 'Do you not hear how they jabbered about the party of Allah and how the King responded to them?' And they were displeased with it.

"Then (the Muslims) entered and did not prostrate before him. 'Amr Ibn al-'As said: 'Do you not see that they deem themselves too great to prostrate before you?' *An-Najashi* said to them: 'What prevents you from prostrating before me and greeting me in the way all those do who come to me from furthest regions?' They replied: 'We do *sajdah* (prostration) to Allah Who created you and gave (this) kingdom to you. Of course, we were using the customary greeting when we were idolaters; then Allah raised among us a truthful Prophet, and he taught us the greeting which Allah is pleased with, and that is, "Peace", the greeting of the people of the Garden.' *An-Najashi* knew that it was true and that it was in the Torah and Injil. Then he said: 'Who among you had called, "The party of Allah asks permission to come before you?"' Ja'far said: 'I did'

Then he (Ja'far) said: 'You are a king from the People of the Book, and it is not proper to talk much before you, nor to do any injustice. I would like to answer on behalf of my companions; therefore, order these two people that one of them should speak and the other should just listen; and you should listen to our talk.' 'Amr said to Ja'far: 'Speak.' Ja'far said to *an-Najashi*: 'Ask these two people whether we are slaves or free people. If we are slaves (and) have fled from our masters, then you should return us to them.' *An-Najashi* said: 'Are they slaves or free people?' He ('Amr) said: 'Nay; (they are) free and noble people.' *An-Najashi* said: 'They are saved from slavery.' Ja'far said: 'Ask them if we have shed any blood unjustly, so that they want its requital from us?'

‘Amr said: ‘No; not a single drop.’ Ja‘far said: Ask them, if we have taken other people’s property without right, so that we have to repay it?’ An-Najashi said: ‘Even if it is a heap of money, I shall repay it.’ ‘Amr said: ‘No; not even a small amount.’ *An-Najashi* said: ‘Then what do you want from them?’ (‘Amr) said: ‘We and they were together on one religion, the religion of our forefathers; and they have left it and followed another religion. Therefore, our people have sent us so that you may hand them over to us.’ *An-Najashi* said: ‘What was the religion you followed and what is that which they have now accepted?’

Ja‘far said: ‘As for the religion we followed before, it was the religion of the Satan; we disbelieved in Allah and worshipped the stone. And as for the religion to which we have turned, it is the religion of Allah, the Islam; it has been brought to us from Allah by a Messenger, coming with a Book like the Book of the son of Maryam and conforming to it.’ *An-Najashi* said: ‘O Ja‘far! you have spoken a very great thing.’

“Then *an-Najashi* ordered the gong to be rung. It was done and every priest and monk gathered near him. When all were assembled, *an-Najashi* said: ‘I adjure you by Allah Who revealed the Injil to ‘Isa, do you find (any news of) a prophet messenger between ‘Isa and the Day of Resurrection?’ They said: ‘By God! Yes. He has given us the good news of him and said: “Whoever shall believe in him shall believe in me, and whoever shall disbelieve in him shall disbelieve in me.”’ *an-Najashi* said to Ja‘far: ‘What does this man say to you? What does he enjoin you to do? And what does he forbid you from?’ (Ja‘far) said: ‘He recites to us the Book of Allah and enjoins us to do good and forbids us the evil; he enjoins us to be good to our neighbours and relatives and to the orphans, (and) tells us that we should worship Allah, the One, (Who) has no partner.’

(*an-Najashi*) said to him: ‘Recite to me from what he recites to you.’ Then (Ja‘far) recited to him the Chapters of ‘The Spider’ and ‘The Romans’. The eyes of *an-Najashi* and his companions overflowed with tears, and they said: ‘Recite to us some more from this good talk.’ Then Ja‘far recited to them the Chapter of ‘The Cave’. (At this stage) ‘Amr, intending to incite (the anger of) *an-Najashi* against them, said: ‘These people abuse ‘Isa and his mother.’ *an-Najashi* said (to Ja‘far): ‘Well, what do you say about ‘Isa and his mother?’ Then he (Ja‘far) recited the Chapter of ‘Maryam’. When he came to the story of Maryam and ‘Isa, *an-Najashi* raised his tooth-stick just a small bit (enough to disturb one’s eyes) and said: ‘By God! The Messiah did not say more than what you have said.’

Then he said, turning towards Ja‘far and his Companions: ‘Go, you are free in my land; you are safe from ill-treatment, and it will be a crime to give you any trouble.’ Again, he said: ‘Be of good cheer; do not be afraid; there is no downfall today for the party of Ibrahim.’ ‘Amr said: ‘O *an-Najashi*! and who are the party of Ibrahim?’ (*an-Najashi*) said: ‘This group and their companion (i.e., the Prophet) whence they have come here, and those who follow them.’ The polytheists denied it and claimed (themselves to be on) the religion of Ibrahim. Then *an-Najashi* gave back to ‘Amr and his companion the presents they had brought (to him) and said: ‘Surely your present is just a bribe; you take it back because God gave this kingdom to me, and He did not take any bribe from me.’

Ja'far said: 'Then we returned (from the court), and we were under the best protection.' And Allah revealed to the Messenger (S) (who was in Medina) the verse about their dispute about Ibrahim: ***"Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed him and this prophet and those who believe; and Allah is the Guardian of the believers."*** (3:68) [18](#)

The author says: This story has been narrated with other chains, and also from the Ahl Al-Bayt('a). We have copied it here despite its length, and although it has nothing to do with the circumstances in which the verses under discussion were revealed, because it contains important information about the trials of the first migrants among the Muslims.

It has been narrated from as-Sadiq ('a) about the words of Allah ***"Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian..."*** (3:67), that he said: "The Leader of the Faithful, said: 'Neither a Jew praying to the West nor a Christian praying to the East; but he was an upright Muslim on the religion of Muhammad (S).'" [19](#)

The author says: We have explained in the Commentary the meaning of his being on the religion of Muhammad, blessing of Allah be on them and their progeny! This tradition looks at the direction of prayer when the *qiblah* was changed to the Ka'bah (and the Ka'bah is almost to the south of Medina). The Jews and the Christians denied its validity; and felt themselves obliged to turn towards the west (where Bayt al-Maqdis is situated), or the east (to which the Christian face). This has been counted as a deviation of these two groups from the middle course. This aspect is supported by wordings of the verse:

"And thus We have made you a medium nation." (2: 143).

However, it is just an interesting and fine literary inference, and nothing more.

Explaining this verse, as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Pure, sincere, totally free from idol-worship." [20](#) The Leader of the Faithful said explaining the verse: ***"Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim are those who followed..."*** (3:68), "Surely the nearest of the people to the prophets is he who practises most faithfully what they have brought." Then he recited this verse and said: "Surely the friend of Muhammad is he who obeys Allah, even if his relationship is far from him; and surely the enemy of Muhammad is he who disobeys Allah, even if he has a near relationship with him." [21](#)

As-Sadiq ('a) said: "They are the Imams and their followers." [22](#)

'Umar Ibn Udhaynah narrates from the same Imam that he said: "You, by Allah, are from the progeny of Muhammad." I said: "From themselves? May I be your ransom!" He said: "Yes, by Allah, from their own selves." He said it three times; then he looked at me and I looked at him and he said: "O 'Umar! surely Allah says in His Book: ***"Most surely the nearest of people to Ibrahim..."*** (3:68) [23](#) "

There is a tradition narrated from al-Baqir ('a) that he said about this verse: ***"And a party of the People of the Book say: "Avow belief..."*** (3:72): "Verily, when the Messenger of Allah (S) came to Medina he was praying towards Bayt al-Maqdis, (and) the people (i.e., the Jews) were pleased with it. When Allah

turned him from Bayt al-Maqdis towards His Sacred House, the Jews were annoyed. And the change of *qiblah* had happened during the noon prayer. So, they said: ‘Muhammad prayed the morning prayer facing towards our *qiblah*; therefore, believe in that which was revealed to Muhammad in the first part of the day; and disbelieve the latter part’; they meant (disbelieve in) the *qiblah* when the Messenger of Allah (S) faced towards the Sacred Mosque.”[24](#)

The author says: As you see, the tradition takes the adverbial phrase, ‘(in) the first part of the day’ as related to the verb, was revealed; and not to the verb ‘Avow belief’. And we have explained it in the Commentary.

Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated through al-‘Awfi from Ibn ‘Abbas, that he said about the verse: ***“And a party of the People of the Book say: ‘Avow belief...’ ” (3:72):*** “A party of the Jews said: ‘Avow belief when you meet the Companions of Muhammad in the first part of the day; and when it is the end of it then pray (according to) your own prayer; perhaps they, that is, the believers, would say: “These are the People of the Book and they are more knowledgeable than us.” Perhaps they would then turn away from their religion.’ ”[25](#)

The author says: This meaning has been narrated in the same book from as-Suddi and Mujahid also.

Al-Baqir (‘a) said about the verse, it has been revealed about the covenant:

“(As for) those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths – surely they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the Day of Resurrection nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement” (3:77).

And ‘portion’ means share. So, he who shall have no share in the hereafter, with what will he enter the Garden?”[26](#)

Ash-Shaykh at-Tusi narrates through his chains from ‘Adiyy Ibn ‘Adiyy from his father that he said: “Imra’ al-Qays and a man from Hadramawt brought their dispute concerning a land to the Messenger of Allah (S). (The Prophet) said: ‘Do you have a proof?’ He said: ‘No.’ (The Prophet) said: ‘Then (it will be decided) by his (i.e., the opposite party’s) oath.’ He said: ‘Then, by Allah, he will take away my land.’ (The Prophet) said: ‘If he takes your land by his (false) oath, he shall be among those that Allah will not look upon him on the Day of Resurrection nor will He purify him and he shall have a painful chastisement.’ (Hearing this) the man was frightened and gave the land back to him.”[27](#)

The author says: As you see, the tradition does not show that the verse was revealed about this event. Several traditions have been narrated through Sunni chains that it was revealed about this event. But those traditions give conflicting reports. Some, like the above, say that the dispute was between Imra’ al-Qays and a man from Hadramawt; others say that the conflict was between al-Ash‘ath Ibn al-Qays and a Jew concerning a land; yet, another tradition says that it was revealed about an unbeliever, who

had offered in the market a merchandise for sale, and in order to deceive a Muslim customer, swore by Allah that he was offered for it a price which in reality he was not offered. Then the verse was revealed.

You have seen in the Commentary that obviously the verse explains the reason of the preceding verse. In this background the utmost that is possible is to take these traditions as an application of the verse on that event; but they cannot be accepted as an account of the circumstances in which the verse was revealed.

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- [1.](#) Vide al-Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 2, 2:163. (tr.).
 - [2.](#) Al-Mas'udi has mentioned it in his Muruju 'dh-dhahab, in the events of the year 10 of Hijrah
 - [3.](#) We shall explain these verses later when we get there.
 - [4.](#) Of the Arabic text.
 - [5.](#) See al-Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 3, pp. 245 – 274. (tr.).
 - [6.](#) An Arabic expression referring to the generosity of Allah [Note of al-Islam.org].
 - [7.](#) Tributary tax.
 - [8.](#) That it was a sign of the Prophet's truth.
 - [9.](#) Like rhyme and similarity of paradigm. (tr.)
 - [10.](#) Say: "O you who are Jews, if you think that you are the friends of Allah to the exclusion of other people..." (Qur'an, 62:6). (Author's note).
 - [11.](#) And the Jews and the Christians say: "We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones" (Qur'an, 5:18). (Author's note).
 - [12.](#) See al-Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 5, p. 21. (tr.).
 - [13.](#) as-Sahih, al-Bukhari. It is to be note that the word 'Muslimun' in the verse means 'submitting ones'.
 - [14.](#) The first such letter discovered was that sent to Muqawqis. Its photo was published in the al-Hilal of November 1904. It is now in Istanbul (Turkey). A third letter sent to the co-rulers of Oman, 'Abd and Jayfar, sons of Julanda, was discovered not very long ago. (tr.).
 - [15.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [16.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [17.](#) The right name of this person is 'Umarah Ibn 'Uqbah Ibn Abi Mu'ayt. But the real person who accompanied 'Amr Ibn al-'As to Abyssinia, in the first journey, was 'Umarah Ibn al-Walid Ibn al-Mughirah al-Makhzumi, the brother of Khalid Ibn al-Walid; and in the next journey 'Amr was accompanied by 'Abdullah Ibn Abi Rabi'ah Ibn al-Mughirah al-Makhzumi. (ed.).
 - [18.](#) at-Tafsir, al-Khazin.
 - [19.](#) at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
 - [20.](#) al-Kafi.
 - [21.](#) Majma' al-bayan.
 - [22.](#) al-Kafi; at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
 - [23.](#) at-Tafsir, al-Qummi; at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.
 - [24.](#) at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
 - [25.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [26.](#) al-Kafi.
 - [27.](#) al-Amali, ash-Shaykh.

Sura 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 79 – 80

مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا ۖ عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّانِيَ ۖ نَبَا ۖ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۖ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ

“It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book and the Judgment and Prophethood, then he should say to men: “Be my servants rather than Allah’s;” but rather (he would say): “Be worshippers of the Lord because of your teaching the Book and your reading (it yourselves)” (3:79).

وَلَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا ۖ الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ أَرْبَابًا ۖ أَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْكُفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“Or that he should enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for lords; what! would he enjoin you with unbelief after you are Muslims (Submitting Ones)?” (3:80).

Commentary

The verses come after those related to the affairs of ‘Isa (‘a); it implies that it is the second stage of the argument exonerating ‘Isa from the responsibility of what the Christians believe about him. We may summarize the whole argument as follows:

‘Isa (‘a) was not as you think about him. Neither was he Lord nor had he claimed Lordship for himself. First, he was not Lord, because he was a mortal creature; was conceived in his mother’s womb who gave birth to him and brought him up in a cradle. Of course, just like Adam (‘a), he had no father, thus his likeness was with Allah as the likeness of Adam. Second, nor had he claimed to be Lord, because he was a prophet, and was given the Book, the Judgment and Prophethood; and a prophet, having that status, cannot transgress the limit of servitude, nor can he divest himself of submission to Allah.

How can a prophet tell people: Take me as your Lord, be my servants rather than Allah’s? Or how can he allow it for any other creature of Allah? A prophet would never enjoin men to take the angels or the prophets for lords. He would not give to any servant of Allah more than his due, nor would he deny prophethood of any prophet of Allah divesting him of his status and dignity.

Verse 79

Qur’an: “It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book and the Judgment and Prophethood, then he should say to men: ‘Be my servants rather than Allah’...” (3:79).

“al-Bashar” (الْبَشَرُ = man) is synonymous with *“al-insan”* (الْإِنْسَانُ); it is used for singular as well as plural; one man is *al-bashar* and also a group of men is *al-bashar*.

Ma kana li basharin (مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ = it is not meet for a man); *li* (لِ) in *li-basharin* (لِبَشَرٍ) denotes ownership; that is, it does not belong to him; it is not meet for him; he has no right to it. The same expression has been used in some other places, for example:

“...It does not beseem us that we should talk of it” (24: 16).

“And it is not attributable to a prophet that he should act unfaithfully...” (3: 161).

The clause, ***“that Allah should give him the Book and the Judgment and Prophethood” (3:79)***, is the subject of *kana* (كَانَ = was; is). It prepares the ground for the next statement; ***“then he should say to men; ‘Be my servants rather than Allah’s.’” (3:79)***. Apparently, the sentence could be shortened by omitting the introductory clause, ***“that Allah should give him the Book...” (3:79)***; yet it was inserted to give a new connotation to the phrase, ***“It is not meet for a man” (3:79)***.

Let us see what happens if the sentence is rewritten, omitting the introductory clause; then the verse would run as follows: It is not meet for a man that he should say to men. The meaning then would be as follows: He was not given that right, although possibly he could say so if he transgressed the limit and became insolent. But there is no room for such inference in the sentence as it now stands.

The verse in the present form means as follows: When Allah gives a man knowledge and gnosis of reality, and brings him up with Divine Care, that man can never transgress the boundary of servitude; nor does he feel free to interfere in what does not belong to him, or to dispose what he has no right to; as Allah describes the declaration of ‘Isa (‘a), in the verse:

“And when Allah will say: O ‘Isa son of Maryam! did you say to men, ‘take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah’, he will say: “Glory be to Thee, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to (say)” (5: 116).

The verse says ***“that Allah should give him...” (3:79)*** instead of saying: a man whom Allah gave the Book and the Judgment and Prophethood. The reason for that is clear from the above explanation. The latter wording points only to the basic legislative prohibition of such transgression. On the other hand, the present construction, ***“that Allah should give him....” (3:79)***, shows that such behaviour is definitely impossible. The Divine Guidance and upbringing cannot fail to attain its goal, as Allah says:

“These are they whom We gave the Book and the Judgment and the Prophethood, therefore if these¹disbelieve in it, We have (already) entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it” (6:89).

In short, the verse says that it is not possible for a man to join these Divine Favours with calling the men to his own worship. It is not possible when he is given a Book, the Judgment and Prophethood that he

should say to men: Be my servants rather than Allah's. In this context the verse resembles to a certain extent these verses:

“The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him, and whoever disdains His service and is proud, He will gather them all together to Himself” (4: 172).

“Then as for those who believe and do good, He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace; and as for those who disdain and are proud, He will chastise them with a painful chastisement. And they shall not find for themselves besides Allah a guardian or a helper” (4: 173).

The implication is that the Messiah and the angels who are near to Allah are too high in prestige and too great in status to disdain the worship of Allah; because disdaining His worship brings painful chastisement on the culprit; and far be it from Allah to chastise His honoured prophets or the near angels.

Objection: The verse uses the word, *thumma* (ثُمَّ = then) in the phrase, ***“then he should say to men”*** (3:79); this conjunctive denotes some delay; and the delay does not conform with the joining you have mentioned.

Reply: What we have said about joining the Divine Favours with calling men to disbelief gives the gist of the matter. Togetherness and combination can happen with simultaneous things as well as with two things appearing consecutively – that too is a sort of combination.

“Be my servants rather than Allah's” (3:79): *al-‘ibad* (الْعِبَادُ) like *al-‘abid* (الْعَبِيدُ) is plural of *al-‘abd* (الْعَبْدُ = slave; servant); the difference between the two plurals is in usage; *al-‘ibad* is mostly used in relation to Allah, for example, *‘ibadu’l-lah* (عِبَادُ اللَّهِ = slaves/servants of Allah); while *al-‘abid* is generally used when related to man; they say, *‘abid an-nas* (عِبِيدُ النَّاسِ = slaves/servants of men), and not *‘ibad an-nas* (عِبَادُ النَّاسِ)

The proviso “rather than Allah's” has been added after the words, “my servants”, as a matter of necessity. Allah does not accept any worship unless it is purely for His own person. Allah says:

“Now, surely, sincere religion (obedience) is for Allah (alone); and (as for) those who take guardians besides Him, (saying), “We do not worship them save that they may make us nearer to Allah”, surely Allah will judge between them in that in which they differ; surely Allah does not guide him aright who is a liar, ungrateful” (39:3).

Thus, Allah has rejected outright the worship of those who join worship of others with His worship, even if the others are worshipped merely as intercessors and intermediaries, and only with intention of reaching nearness to Allah through them.

Moreover, the reality of worship does not come into existence until some independence is admitted for the worshipped even in polytheism. The partner, per se, has some independence; while in reality it is only to Allah that absolute Lordship and Godhead belongs. Therefore, His Lordship cannot be complete, nor can His worship be correct except with negation of independence from every other thing in every possible way. The worship of someone else is worship of other than Allah, even if Allah is worshipped with him.

Qur'an: "...But rather (he would say): "Be worshippers of the Lord because of your teaching the Book and your reading (it yourselves)" (3:79).

"ar-Rabbani" (الرَّبَّانِيُّ = translated here as worshippers of the Lord) is derived from ar-Rabb (الرَّبُّ = the Lord), to which "a" and "n" (أَنْ) have been added for augmentation of meaning; as for example, they use: al-lihyani (الْلَحْيَانِيُّ) for one having a luxuriant beard. Thus ar-rabbani means the one having special relationship with the Lord and spending his life in His servitude and worship. Bi (بِ) in bi-ma (بِمَا) is causative, and means "because"; while ma (مَا) is for al-masdar (الْمَصْدَرُ) and has changed the past tenses into infinitive verbs; that is why we have translated it in the following way: **"but rather (he would say): 'Be worshippers of the Lord because of your teaching the Book and your reading (it yourselves)'" (3:79).**

ad-Dirasah (الدِّرَاسَةُ = to study) is more specific than at-ta'allum (التَّعَلُّمُ = to learn; to study), as the former is generally used for studying from book by reading and reciting. ar-Raghib says: "Darasa 'd-dar (دَرَسَ الدَّارُ = vestiges of the house remained); it implies that the house itself was obliterated; and for this reason ad-durus (الدُّرُوسُ) is translated as obliteration. Likewise, darasa 'l-kitab (دَرَسَ الْكِتَابُ) (or, darasa 'l-'ilm = دَرَسَ الْعِلْمُ) means, he got trace of book (or, knowledge) memorizing it; he grasped its meaning. As it is attained by regular recitation, such recitation is called memorization. Allah says:

"..And they have read what is in it..." (7: 169).

"And We have not given them any books which they read, nor did We send to them before you a warner" (34:44).

The theme is that a man having such a high status will call you only to attainment of faith and to believe in the teachings of the Book which you learn and teach – the Book that contains the fundamental Divine Knowledge; he will enjoin you to acquire noble character and good traits found in the Book; and to practise and do good deeds to which you call the people. He will do so, in order that you attach yourselves exclusively to your Lord, and thus become divine scholars.

Bi-ma kuntum (بِمَا كُنْتُمْ = lit., because you were), being a past tense, shows that the action had already taken place; that the audience was already teaching and reading the Book. It gives a hint that, possibly, it is an allusion to the Christians, who said that 'Isa had told them that he was the son of God and His Word (with all the differences in the meaning of sonship).

The fact is that the Children of Israel had been given a revealed Book which they taught and read; then they differed in it – a difference that was accompanied by textual changes and alterations. ‘Isa (‘a) was sent only to explain to them a part of what they differed in and to allow them part of that which was forbidden to them; in short, to call them to fulfil their obligations concerning the learning and teaching – that they should attach themselves exclusively to their Lord in reading and teaching His Book.

Although the verse may somehow be applied to the Messenger of Allah (S) – because his mission covered the People of the Book too, who used to teach and read the Book of Allah – but ‘Isa (‘a) was before the Prophet and the verse applies to him in a more befitting manner; also because he was sent exclusively to the Children of Israel, unlike the Messenger of Allah (S).

So far as other ‘*Ul Al-’Adhm* prophets (who came with a Book), i.e., Nuh, Ibrahim and Musa are concerned, the verse obviously cannot be applied to them.

Verse 80

Qur’an: “*Or that he should enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for lord...*” (3:80).

The verb “*aw ya’murakum*” (أَوْيَأْمُرُكُمْ = or that he should enjoin you), because of the vowel “a” after *ya’mur* (according to the well-known and common recital), is in conjunction with “he should say”.

A group of the People of the Book had taken the angels for lords. For instance, the Sabaeans worshipped the angels and attributed that custom to the authority of religion. Likewise, the Arabs, while claiming to follow the religion of Ibrahim (‘a), said that the angels were Allah’s daughters.

As for taking the prophets for lords, the Jews, for instance, said that ‘Uzayr was the son of Allah – as the Qur’an quotes them – although Musa (‘a) had not allowed it to them, nor was there in the Torah anything other than monotheism. Had Musa (‘a) allowed it to them he would be enjoining it – far be it from him!

The style of the verse, “***then he should say to men: ‘Be my servants rather than Allah’s’*” (3:79), differs in two ways from that of the next verse, “***Or that he should enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for lords*” (3:80). First, the subject matter in the former is worship of other than Allah, and in the latter it is taking them for lords. Second, the people enjoined in the former are described in third person, “men”, while the latter addresses them directly in second person. Let us look at both changes:****

First: The former verse adversely alludes to the Christians concerning their worship of ‘Isa. As is known, they believe in his godhead literally, saying that he had invited them to the worship of his own self. Thus, they have clearly ascribed this call to ‘Isa that he said to them: ‘Be my servants’. On the other hand, taking the angels and the prophets for lords (in the meaning used in the case of others than ‘Isa) is opposed to the belief of monotheism only by implication, not directly. That is why the latter verse uses

the word, “lords”, instead of gods.

Second: Both expressions (‘Be my servants’ and ‘that he should enjoin you’) deal with a subject which was relevant to the audience of these verses, that is, the People of the Book and the Arabs. The first verse has used the word, “should say”; and “saying” implies a face-to-face talk. But the people present at the time of the Prophet were not present at the material time, that is, when ‘Isa was supposed to say it.

It is for this reason that the verse says, **“he should say to men” (3:79)**, instead of saying ‘he should say to you’. On the other hand, the second verse uses the word “enjoin”; enjoining does not necessarily require face to face talk; it may be done even when the person enjoined is absent. An order given to, or a matter connected with the ancestors, is also applicable to the later generations if the latter identify themselves with the former. As for “saying” – because it employs transmission of voice – it denotes oral conversation and presence of the audience (except when it is used simply in the meaning of instruction).

It is therefore evident that basically these verses require second person plurals – as in **“or that he should enjoin you...” (3:80)** – but exception was made in the first verse owing to special reasons.

Qur’an: “...What! Would he enjoin you with unbelief after you are Muslims (Submitting Ones)?” (3:80).

Apparently, the question is directed to all who followed a prophet like the People of the Book or those who claimed to do so like the Arabs of the days of Ignorance who believed that they were on the religion of Ibrahim. The talk is based on a hypothetical proposition and the meaning is as follows: If it is true that you do follow this man who was given the Book, the Judgment and Prophethood, then you have already submitted to Allah, acquiring the characteristics of Islam; then how will it be possible for that prophet to enjoin you with disbelief, diverting you from the very path to which he had guided you by the order of Allah?

It is clear from the above explanation that in this verse, Islam refers to the religion of monotheism; the religion which Allah sent all the prophets with. This view is supported by other verses preceding and following this verse, in which the word, “Islam”, has been used in this very meaning:

“Surely the religion with Allah is Islam...” (3:19).

“Is it then other than Allah’s religion that they seek (to follow)...” (3:83).

“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter, he shall be one of the losers” (3:85).

An exegete has said that the two verses under discussion refer to the Messenger of Allah (S). His view is based on a tradition (quoted earlier) describing the circumstances of its revelation which says that Abu Rafi‘ al-Qurazi and a Najranite Christian said to the Messenger of Allah (S): “Do you want us to worship

you? O Muhammad!” Then Allah revealed: ***“It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him...”*** (3:79) and ***“... after you are Muslims?”*** (3:80). Then the said exegete has argued by the last phrase, ‘after you are Muslims’; “because Islam is the religion brought by Muhammad (S).”

Comment: He has confused the *Islam* of Qur’anic terminology (the religion of monotheism which was preached by all the prophets) with the Islam of the Muslims’ terminology – a term which came into use after the time of revelation. (We have explained this earlier).

Conclusion – Seven Parts

1. The Story Of ‘Isa and His Mother In The Qur’an

Maryam, daughter of ‘Imran, was the mother of the Messiah. When her mother was pregnant with her, she made a vow that she would release what was in her womb to be devoted to the service of the Temple. She believed that she was pregnant with a male child; but when she brought it forth and came to know that it was a female, she was disappointed and dejected. Then she named her Maryam, that is, servant.

Maryam’s father, ‘Imran, had died before she was born; so, the mother brought her to the Temple for handing her over to the priests – Zakariyya was one of them. They contended one with another to get the privilege of her custody; then they agreed to decide it by lot, in which Zakariyya’s name was drawn; and he became her guardian. When she reached the age of puberty, Zakariyya made for her a partition to protect her from men’s eyes.

She used to worship Allah therein and nobody entered that sanctuary except Zakariyya. Whenever Zakariyya entered the sanctuary to see her, he found with her food. He said: “O Maryam! whence comes this to you?” She said: “It is from Allah, and surely Allah gives sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure.”

Maryam was a truthful woman, and was sinless by Allah’s protection; purified, chosen, and spoken to; the angels spoke to her and purified her. She was obedient to the Lord and a sign of Allah for the worlds.[2](#)

Then Allah sent to her His Spirit when she had hidden herself behind a curtain, and he appeared to her as a well-made man. He said to her that he was a messenger of her Lord so that he should give her, by permission of Allah, a pure boy without a father. He also gave her good news of the manifest miracles which were to happen on the hand of her son; and informed her that Allah would surely strengthen him by the Holy Spirit, and would teach him the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah and the Injil. He also told her that her son would be a messenger to the Children of Israel and would have clear signs. After informing her of the boy’s status and story, he breathed into her the Spirit and she became pregnant with ‘Isa (‘a), as a woman conceives her child.[3](#)

Then she withdrew herself with him to a remote place. And the throes of childbirth compelled her to betake herself to the trunk of a palm-tree. She said: "Oh, would that I had died before this, and had been a thing quite forgotten!" Then (the child) called out to her from beneath her: "Grieve not; surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you: And shake towards you the trunk of the palm-tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates: So eat and drink and refresh the eye. Then if you see any man, say: 'Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent God, so I shall not speak to any man today.' "And she came to her people with him, carrying him (with her).⁴ His conception, birth, speech, and all related affairs were not similar to those of other ordinary men.

When her people saw her in such a condition, they were enraged, and blamed and taunted her – as was natural in case of an unmarried woman conceiving and bringing forth a child. They said: "O Maryam, surely you have done a strange thing. O sister of Harun! your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman." But she pointed to him. They said: "How should we speak to one who is a child in the cradle?" He said: "Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet: And he has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakat so long as I live: And dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed: And peace on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life."⁵

This talk of 'Isa ('a) was a sort of prologue which pointed to his future mission – that he would rise against oppression and injustice, revive and reform the *Shari'ah* of Musa ('a), renovate what was obliterated from the revealed knowledge and make clear to them what they had differed in.

'Isa ('a) grew up and became a young man. He and his mother used to eat and drink in normal way with all the necessary concomitants and accidents of human life up to the end.

Then 'Isa ('a) was made a messenger to the Children of Israel. He stood up calling them to the religion of monotheism and told them: "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that I create for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird, with Allah's permission, and I heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead to life, with Allah's permission, and I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses. Most surely there is a sign in this for you. Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore, worship Him only."

He called them to his new *Shari'ah*, which verified the Law of Musa ('a); but he abrogated some parts of it, allowing them certain things which were forbidden in the Torah as a punishment to the Jews. 'Isa ('a) used to say: "Surely, I have come to you with wisdom, so that I may make clear to you a part of what you differ in. O Children of Israel! Surely, I am the messenger of Allah to you, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad."

He showed the miracles which he had mentioned, e.g., creation of bird, raising the dead to life, healing the blind and leper, and giving the news of the unseen – all by Allah's permission.

He continued like that calling them to monotheism and his new *Shari'ah* until he was convinced that they would not believe in him. Seeing their insolence, enmity and hatred, and the arrogance of their priests and rabbis, he turned away from them and selected his apostles (from the small band that had believed in him) to be his helpers to Allah.

Then the Jews rose against him with the intention to kill him. But Allah took him away completely and raised him. The Jews were put in confusion: some thought that they had killed him, others thought that they had crucified him; but in fact, it was made to appear to them like that.⁶

This is in short, the story of 'Isa (son of Maryam) and his mother as given in the Qur'an.

2. Position Of 'Isa Before Allah and In His Own Eyes

'Isa ('a) was a servant of Allah and a prophet⁷; a messenger to the Children of Israel⁸; was one of the five '*Ul Al-'Adhm* prophets, bringing a new *Shari'ah* and a Book, i.e., Injil⁹; Allah named him the Messiah, 'Isa¹⁰; he was the Word of Allah and a Spirit from Him¹¹; an Imam¹²; one of the witnesses of deeds¹³; he brought the good news of the Messenger of Allah (S)¹⁴; was worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter, and one of those who are made near to Allah¹⁵; was one of the chosen progenies¹⁶; one of the selected and righteous ones¹⁷; was made blessed wherever he might be, and purified; was a sign to the people, a mercy from Allah, and dutiful to his mother; greeted himself with peace¹⁸; and was among those whom Allah taught the Book and the Wisdom.¹⁹

These twenty-two characteristics, from the stations of *al-wilayah* (الْوِلَايَةُ = friendship and guardianship of Allah), give the gist of the attributes which Allah has used to praise this honoured prophet and to raise his rank. These may be divided in two categories:

(1) The acquired ones, like servitude, righteousness, and nearness to Allah.

(2) Those bestowed by Allah as His special grace.

We have explained each characteristic in relevant places of this book according to our understanding. Any reader seeking for more details should look up in those volumes.

3. What 'Isa Said, And What Was Said About Him?

The Qur'an says that 'Isa ('a) was Allah's servant and messenger; and that he did not claim for himself what the Christians ascribe to him, nor did he tell them anything other than conveying the Divine Message. Allah says:

“And when Allah will say: “O 'Isa son of Maryam! did you say to men, ‘Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah’ “, he will say: “Glory be to Thee, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to (say); if I had said it, Thou wouldst indeed have known it; Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I do not know what is in Thy mind; surely Thou art the great Knower of the

unseen things” (5: 116).

“I did not say to them aught save what Thou didst enjoin me with: That worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord, and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst take me (away) completely, Thou wert the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things” (5: 117).

“If Thou shouldst chastise them, then surely they are Thy servants; and if Thou shouldst forgive them, then surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise” (5: 118).

“Allah will say: This is the day when their truth shall benefit the truthful ones; they shall have gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide in them for ever: Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Allah; this is the mighty achievement” (5: 119).

This wonderful reply contains the essence of servitude and shows outstanding manner; it is a mirror of ‘Isa’s attitude and behaviour towards his Lord; it shows how he looked at himself in relation to his Creator and what he thought of the people and their deeds. He says that he looked at himself just as a servant of his Lord, who had nothing to do other than obeying the Lord; he does not proceed except when directed to and does not stop unless told to. And he was not ordered except to call people to the worship of Allah, and he did not tell them except what he was enjoined with: **That worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.**

And so far as his relationship with his people is concerned, he shall be the witness for their deeds, and that is that; it is none of his business what Allah does with them and about them – whether He forgives them or chastises them.

Question: If so, then how would you justify what you had written in the topic of intercession that ‘Isa shall be among the intercessors on the Day of Resurrection, he shall intercede, and his intercession will be honoured and accepted?

Answer: The Qur’an says expressly – or almost expressly – that he is an intercessor. Allah says:

“And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth, and they know” (43:86).

“...And on the Day of Resurrection he (‘Isa) shall be a witness against them” (4: 159).

“...And when I taught you the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Injil ...” (5: 110).

And we have already written extensively on the subject of intercession.

This intercession is something quite different from the atonement which the Christians believe in. The theory of atonement invalidates the system of reward and punishment, and consequently negates the

absolute sovereignty of Allah – as we shall explain later. It is the idea of atonement which the above-mentioned talk of ‘Isa (‘a) refutes.

But this verse has nothing to do with intercession – it neither confirms it nor rejects it. Had the verse wanted to confirm it – despite its inconsistency²⁰ with the context – it should have said: If Thou shouldst forgive them, then surely, Thou art the Forgiving, the Merciful. And if it wanted to refute intercession, it should not have mentioned his being a witness for the people. We shall describe in detail this topic later, Allah willing.

Looking at what the people said about ‘Isa (‘a), we find that they were divided after him into various sects and disintegrated into perhaps more than seventy denominations. This number looks at fundamental and major divisions only, because minor differences are too numerous to count.

Nevertheless, the Qur’an concerns itself only with what they say about ‘Isa (‘a) and his mother, because it affects the foundation of monotheism which is the only goal to which the Qur’an calls and the natural straight religion leads. The Book of Allah is not concerned with other relatively minor points, e.g., the problem of alteration of the Book and that of atonement.

The beliefs which the Qur’an ascribes to them (or quotes them) are as follows:

“...And the Christians say: “The Messiah is the son of Allah” (9:30).

“And they say: “The Beneficent God has taken to Himself a son”...” (21:26).

“Certainly they disbelieve who say: “Surely Allah, is the Messiah, son of Maryam”...” (5:72).

“Certainly they disbelieve who say: “Surely Allah is the third of the three” ...” (5:73).

“...And say not, Three...” (4:171).

Apparently, these verses contain different phrases, describe different beliefs. (That is why some people ²¹ apply various verses to various sects, for example, the Melkites²² who believe in real sonship; the Nestorians²³ who explain ancestry and sonship as radiance of light on a transparent body like crystal; and the Jacobites,²⁴ who explain it in the terms of change and transformation, that is, the God was transformed into flesh and blood.)

But evidently the Qur’an does not look at the peculiarities of their diverse sects. It is concerned only with one belief which is common between all of them – that ‘Isa is the son of God and of one substance with God, with the resulting belief of trinity – although they differ very much in its explanation (which has led to extreme conflicts and discords). That this explanation is correct is supported by the fact that the Qur’an brings one and the same argument to refute the views of all of them.

It may be explained as follows:

The present Torah and Gospels all together clearly mention the Oneness of Allah; on the other hand, the Gospel clearly mentions the sonship declaring that the Son is the Father and none else.

They do not interpret the postulated sonship in the terms of distinction, honour, and excellence, although many verses of the Gospels clearly give this meaning. For example:

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matt., 5/44 – 48)[25](#)

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt., 5/16)

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt., 6/1)

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” (Matt., 6/9)

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” (Matt., 6/14)

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” (Luke, 6/36)

Also he said to Mary Magdalene: “go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God.” (John, 20/17)

These and other similar sentences of the Gospels refer to Allah as the Father of ‘Isa as well as of others, all in the sense of distinction and honour.

There are some sayings in the Gospels which allude to the union of the Son with the Father. For example:

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” (John, 17/1)

Then he went on praying for his disciples and finally said: *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them,*

and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” (John, 17/20 –23).

However, there are other verses that apparently cannot be explained in the terms of distinction and excellence. For example:

“Thomas saith unto him (i.e., Jesus), Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.” (John, 5/11)

“For I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.” (John, 8/42)

“I and my Father are one.” (John, 10/30)

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing [26](#)them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matt., 28/19)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was light of men.” (John, 1/1 – 4)

These and similar other statements of the Gospels have led the Christians to the belief of trinity in unity. The belief of trinity is an attempt to reconcile the belief that the Christ is the Son of God with the belief in one God which the Christ himself had taught. For example, Mark, 12:29 quotes him as saying: *“The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.” (Mark, 12/29)*

The believers in the trinity say (although it does not impart any intelligible meaning): God is one substance with three Persons. The word Person denotes an attribute with which a thing appears to others; and the attribute is none other than the thing itself. The three Persons are: The Person of existence, the Person of knowledge, i.e. the Word, and the Person of life, i.e. the Spirit.

These three Persons are the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The first is the Person of existence; the second, the Person of knowledge (the Word); and the third, the Person of life. The Son who is the Word and the Person of knowledge descended from his Father (i.e. the Person of existence) accompanied by the Holy Ghost (i.e. the Person of Life) that gives light to all things.

Then they differ among themselves in explanation of this vague statement; and ever-occurring conflicts

have divided them to more than seventy sects and denominations. We shall mention some of them to the extent that is necessary in the framework of this book.

Think over the above description; then look at what the Qur'an ascribes to the Christians, or quotes them as saying:

“And the Christians say, “The Messiah is the son of Allah” (9:30).

“Certainly, they disbelieve who say: “Surely Allah, He is the Messiah, son of Maryam” (5:72).

“Certainly, they disbelieve who say: “Surely Allah is the third (Person) of the three” (5:73).

“And say not, “three”; Desist” (4: 171).

Then you will realize that all these statements point to a single idea, i.e. the trinity in unity which is the common factor of all the sects that sprang up in the Christianity (as we have said above).

Why did the Qur'an focus on this common factor? It was because the same objections apply to all their beliefs regarding 'Isa ('a) – despite their diversity and numerousness. The arguments put forward by the Qur'an are applicable to all their interpretations with equal force, as will be explained later.

4. Argument of The Qur'an Against The Belief Of Trinity

Coming to the belief of trinity, the Qur'an refutes it in two ways:

First: The general method, i.e. showing that it is impossible for Allah to take a son for Himself, no matter whether the presumed son be 'Isa or someone else.

Second: The particular method, i.e. describing that 'Isa son of Maryam was neither a son of God nor God; that he was but a servant created by Allah.

First Method: What is the quiddity of sonship and birth? What do these words really mean? A living material thing (like man, animal, or plant) separates from itself a portion of its own matter, then gradually develops it until it becomes another individual of the same species similar to its parent; the offspring has the same characteristics and traits as the parent body does. An animal separates semen from its body, or a plant removes a seed from itself, then it preserves and grows the semen or seed gradually until it becomes another animal or plant that is similar to its parent. This is what sonship and birth mean. It is no secret that such a thing is impossible for Allah for a few reasons.

The first reason is that such process needs a physical material body; and Allah is far above matter and its concomitants without which matter cannot exist like motion, time, space, and other such things.

The second reason is that to Allah belongs absolute Divinity and Lordship; consequently, He has absolute authority over all things, and total management of all things is in His hand. Everything is in

need of Him to bring it into existence and everything depends on Him for its continued existence. It is just impossible to imagine a thing similar to Allah in “species” – a being having the identity, attributes and characteristics similar to those of Allah and independent of Him.

The third reason is, if Allah begets or gives birth to a son, it entails graduality of action for Allah. In other words, He would be governed by the laws of matter and movement; and it is a contradiction in term, because whatever takes place by His Will comes into being at once without delay, without graduality.

The above explanations are inferred from the words of Allah:

“And they say: “Allah has taken to Himself a son.” Glory be to Him; rather, whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His, all are obedient to Him” (2: 116).

“The Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, “Be”, and it is” (2: 117).

As we have explained above, the words ***“Glory be to Him” (2: 116)*** are a complete proof; the clause, ***“whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His; all are obedient to Him” (2: 116)*** is another proof; and the verse ***“The Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, “Be”, and it is” (2: 117)*** is a third proof.[27](#)

It is also possible to take the clause ***“The Originator of the heavens and the earth” (2: 117)*** as an allegorical expression in which the attribute of the object has been transferred to the subject. In other words, the clause may denote that the heavens and the earth are original in their creation and design; Allah has created them without any previous model. Therefore, He cannot beget anyone, otherwise it would be a creation on His own model. (After all, the Christians believe that the Son is one with the Father). In that case this clause would be an independent proof by itself.

The Christians generally use the sentence, ‘the Messiah is the Son of God’, in a somewhat allegorical sense, and not in its literal meaning. They expand the meaning of sonship. Probably, it means separation of a thing from another of similar quiddity without physical and material division and without graduality. This interpretation may remove the problems of body, materiality and graduality. Yet, the problem of similarity will remain unsolved.

The problem of similarity may be described thus: Evidently, to believe in God the Father and God the Son is to believe in number, in real plurality, even if we suppose that the Father and the Son are one in “species” or quiddity. A human father and his son are one because both have the same quiddity, both belong to the homo sapiens species; but they are in fact more than one because they are two individual human beings. Now, if we suppose that God is one, then all other things (including the Son) would be “non-God”; they would be owned by God and dependent on Him; consequently, the putative son would not be a God like Him. On the other hand, if we suppose a son similar to God, that is free of, not dependent on Him, then it would invalidate and negate the Oneness of God.

This exposition is found in the following words of Allah:

“...And say not, ‘Three’. Desist, it is better for you; Allah is only one God; far be it from His glory that He should have a son; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; and Allah is sufficient for a Protector” (4: 171).

Second Method: ‘Isa son of Maryam could not be a son of God sharing Godhead with Him, because he was a human being having all the concomitants of humanity.

The Messiah (‘a) was conceived by Maryam and grew up in her womb; then she brought him forth as women give birth to their children, and brought him up, as a child is brought up by his mother. He grew up proceeding through normal stages: from infancy to childhood, from youth to the middle age. All this time, his condition was like any other normal human being in his march of life. He was governed by all normal accidents and conditions undergone by other men. He was hungry and satiated; felt joy and sorrow; was pleased and displeased; affected by delight and pain, comfort, and discomfort; he ate and drank, slept, and woke up, was tired and rested etc.

This was the condition of ‘Isa (‘a) when he was among the people. Doubtlessly a person having such characteristics is just a mortal man like any other member of his species. As such he, like all other human beings, was a creature made by Allah. Now, let us look at the miracles and supernatural things that happened on his hand, like giving life to dead bodies, creating the birds, and healing the blind and leper.

Also, there are extraordinary signs related to his birth, that is, his conception without father. All these things are supernatural, against the normal custom which people are familiar with; yet they are unfamiliar because of their rarity, not because they are impossible. There was Adam who by evidence of the heavenly Books was created from dust and had no father. And here are the prophets, for example: Salih, Ibrahim and Musa (peace be upon them) on whose hand so many miraculous signs had appeared (which are mentioned in revealed scriptures). But nobody thinks that those miracles negated their humanity or proved their divinity.

This method has been used in these verses:

“Certainly, they disbelieve who say: Surely Allah is the third (person) of the three; and there is no god but the one Allah, and if they desist not from what they say, a painful chastisement shall befall those among them who disbelieve” (5:73).

“Will they not then turn to Allah and ask His forgiveness? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (5:74).

“The Messiah, son of Maryam is but an apostle; apostles before him have indeed passed away; and his mother was a truthful woman, they both used to eat food. See how We make the signs clear to them, then behold how they are turned away” (5:75).

Eating food has been specially selected for mention in preference to other activities because it rather more forcefully proves his materiality and shows his neediness and wants, which cannot be joined with Godhead. Obviously, a person who by his nature feels hunger and thirst and satisfies it with a morsel of food and a cup of water, is nothing but an embodiment of poverty and need – a need that cannot be removed without the help of some extraneous agent.

How can such a man be God? What is the meaning of such divinity? A man surrounded by needs, depending for their fulfilment on something outside his own being, is deficient in himself, and managed by some other than himself. He cannot be a self-sufficient god; rather he shall be a creature who is looked after by the Lord Who has His creatures' affairs in His Own Hand. The verse 5:17 may possibly be explained in this light.

“Certainly, they disbelieve who say: “Surely Allah He is the Messiah, son of Maryam”. Say: “Who then could control anything as against Allah when He wished to destroy the Messiah son of Maryam and his mother and all those on the earth?” And Allah’s is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them; He creates what He pleases; and Allah has power over all things” (5:17).

The same is the case with the verse (coming after 5:75 quoted above) addressing the Christians:

“Say: “Do you worship besides Allah that which does not control for you any harm, or any profit?” And Allah – He is the Hearing, the Knowing” (5:76).

The basis and theme of such arguments is this: ‘Isa (‘a), as is seen from his condition and affairs, lived according to, and was governed by, the natural law which permeates a man’s life. He had all the attributes, did all the deeds, and underwent all the conditions which a human being does; like eating, drinking, fulfilling all other human needs, showing all characteristics of the human race. Also, this material involvement, these physical attributes were real, not merely an illusion or imagination.

‘Isa (‘a), was a real man who had those natural attributes, conditions, and actions. The Gospels contain many verses in which he calls himself man and son of man; are full of the stories of his eating, drinking, sleeping, walking, travelling, tiring, speaking and many such things which cannot be explained away, nor can they be interpreted otherwise. This being the case, the position of the Messiah would be the same as that of other human beings; he did not own or control any affair of the others, and he could be destroyed like others.

The same is the implication of his prayers and invocations; no doubt that he worshipped Allah, his intention being to reach nearer to Allah, with humbleness and humility to the sublimity and majesty of Allah; certainly, it was not for the purpose of teaching others how to pray or for any other such aim.

The verse 4:172 argues against ‘Isa’s supposed divinity points to his prayer. Allah says:

“The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him, and whoever disdains His worship and is proud, He will gather them all together to Himself” (4: 172).

‘Isa’s service and worship is the first and foremost proof that he was not God and that he had no share in Godhead which is reserved for the One other than him. How can a man put himself in the position of servitude to himself? How can he be the slave of himself? How can a being be self-sufficient in the same framework in which it is dependent on someone else? The answer is clear: In no way.

Likewise, the worship of God by the angels clearly shows that they are not Allah’s daughters. Nor is the Holy Ghost a God because they all are worshippers of Allah and obedient to Him. Allah says:

“And they say: “The Beneficent God has taken to Himself a son.” Glory be to Him. Nay! they are honoured servants” (21:26).

“They do not precede Him in speech and (only) according to His commandment do they act” (21:27).

“He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves, and for fear of Him they tremble” (21:28).

Moreover, the Gospels contain verses showing that the Spirit or Ghost is obedient to Allah and His messengers, following their commands, acting on their orders. There is no sense in saying that a being orders itself or obeys itself, or that it accepts and acts on the orders of its own creatures (i.e., messengers).

In the same way as ‘Isa’s worship of Allah proves that ‘Isa was not Allah, his call to the people to worship Allah also proves it, as the verse points out:

“Certainly, they disbelieve who say: “Surely Allah, He is the Messiah, son of Maryam “; and the Messiah said: “O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord, surely whoever associates (others) with Allah, then Allah has forbidden to him the garden, and his abode is the fire; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust” (5:72).

The method of argument used in this verse is self-evident.

Although the Gospels do not contain such comprehensive sentence as, “worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord”, they are full of his sayings calling people to Allah and to His worship; he repeatedly declares that Allah is his Lord in Whose Hand is the management of his affairs; he openly says that Allah is the Lord of the people; and never invites them to his own worship – in spite of his reported saying: ***“I and my Father are one” (John, 10:30)***. If we accept that it is a correct reporting, then, all things taken together, it must mean: my obedience is Allah’s obedience; thus, it shall have the same connotation as the verse of the Qur’an:

“Whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allah...” (4:80).

5. ‘Isa Is an Intercessor, Not a Redeemer

The Christians believe that Jesus Christ atoned for their sins with his blood; and that is why they call him the Redeemer, the Saviour. They explain this belief as follows:

“Adam disobeyed Allah by partaking of the forbidden tree; it was a sin that remained with Adam, and it is inherited by his progeny who come into this world burdened with that original sin; and the recompense of sin is punishment in the next world, the eternal perdition, the everlasting ruin – which cannot be warded off. And Allah is Merciful and Just – both at the same time.

“This situation created a knotty problem which defied all solutions: If Allah were to punish Adam and his progeny for their sin, it would have been against the mercy for which He had created them; and if He were to forgive them, it would have been against His Justice. Justice demands that a sinner should be punished for his sins and errors, just as a good-doer and obedient person should be rewarded for his good deeds. [28](#)

“This problem remained unsolved until Allah solved it through Christ. Christ – the Son of God who was Himself God – entered the womb of a descendant of Adam, that is, the Virgin Maryam, and was born from her as a human being is born. In this way, he was a complete man, because he was a son of man; and at the same time, was a complete God, because he was the Son of God.

“And the Son of God, being God Himself, was sinless and protected from every sin and error.

“He lived among his people for some time, mixing and dealing with them; he joined them in eating and drinking, talked and walked with them and befriended them. Thereafter he surrendered to his enemies enabling them to kill him the worst killing – killing by crucifixion, because one who is crucified is, according to the Divine Scriptures, cursed by God.

“He took upon Himself the Divine curse and crucifixion, with all the condemnations, sufferings, and chastisement which it entails. In this way he redeemed the people through his sacrifice, in order that they might be saved from the chastisement of the hereafter and the eternal perdition. Thus, he is the atonement for the sins of the believers, nay, for the sins of the whole world.” [29](#) This is what the Christians believe.

The Christians have made this theory (i.e., the crucifixion and atonement) the foundation of their religion. It is the Alpha and Omega of their call and mission – in the same manner as the Qur’an has founded the Islam and its mission on monotheism, as Allah says addressing His Messenger (S):

“Say: “This is my way: I invite (you) unto Allah: with clear sight (are) I and he who follows me; and glory be to Allah; and I am not of the polytheists” (12: 108).

It is the Christians' belief despite the fact that Christ (as the Gospels clearly say, and we have mentioned earlier) used to admonish them first of all to believe in one God and to love Him.

The Muslims as well as many non-Muslims have shown the Christians the defects and invalidities of the above-mentioned belief of Christianity. Countless books and booklets have been written and numerous pamphlets and articles published, showing that this theory is not only contrary to logic and reason, but is also contradictory to the Books of the Old and the New Testaments. What we are concerned with here – and what comes within the purview of this book of ours – is to show how this idea is opposed to the basic Qur'anic teachings, and to explain the difference between intercession (as confirmed by the Qur'an) and atonement (as claimed by the Christians).

Moreover, the Qur'an clearly says that it speaks to the people explaining things in such a way as to bring it to the level of their understanding, to make it easier for them to grasp the realities. It explains what helps them to distinguish truth from falsehood, so that they may accept that and reject accordingly. It enables man to differentiate between virtue and evil, between the beneficial and the harmful, so that he may take one and leave the other. The fact that the Qur'an keeps in view a healthy level of reason and understanding is abundantly clear to all who study the Divine Book.

Now let us take a critical look at the above-mentioned Christian theory of atonement:

First: They say that Adam committed a sin by eating from the forbidden tree. The Qur'an refutes this idea in two ways:

1. The said prohibition was not like a binding order given by a master to his servant. It was only an advisory counsel intended for the good of the person so advised, in order that he may live more comfortably. Such an advice does not bring any judicial reward or punishment whether one acts upon it or ignores it. It is not different from the order or prohibition of an advisor to the one who seeks his advice, or the directions given by a physician to his patient. What happens in such situations is this. If the person concerned acts upon the advice, he achieves what is good and beneficial to him in this life; and if he neglects such advice, he may come to harm in this world. When Adam ate from the forbidden tree, the only harm he suffered was his removal from the Garden, and thus he lost the comfort and happiness he had been enjoying there. But there was no question at all about any punishment of hereafter because he had not disobeyed any compulsory legislative order which could have resulted in "punishment".[30](#)

2. Adam ('a) was a prophet: The Qur'an clearly says that the prophets were sinless; they were protected by Allah from committing sins and transgressing the "orders" of Allah. Logical reasons support this belief, and the Qur'an proves it.[31](#)

Second: They contend that the said sin remained with Adam. But the Qur'an rejects this idea when it says:

"Then his (Adam's) Lord chose him, so He turned to him (with mercy) and guided (him)" (20: 122).

“Then Adam received (some) words from his Lord, so He turned to –him mercifully; surely He is Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful” (2:37).

Reason also supports, nay, proves this. Retribution of sin is a frightening and formidable thing that reason – or the master – deems as necessary for him who disobeys the command or shows obstinacy. It is from fear of punishment that legislations and laws are obeyed. Had there been no reward and punishment, the authority of the master could not be enforced, and no order or prohibition would be obeyed.

The master has the right and power to punish the sinners for their sins as well as reward the obedient ones for their obedience. Likewise, it lies within his power to exercise his discretion in a way he thinks fit, within the jurisdiction of his authority. He has every right to pass over and overlook the disobedience and mistakes of wrongdoers by forgiving and pardoning their sins and wrongs.

This power of forgiveness is a part of management and rule as much as is the authority to mete out punishment. There is no doubt in any mind that forgiveness and pardon, in certain cases, is good and commendable when the forgiver has full power to punish; even today reasonable persons practise it and put it into effect. In this background, there is no reason why a wrong done by a man should remain attached to him forever. Otherwise, forgiveness and pardon would have no meaning at all.

One forgives and pardons to erase a mistake and nullify the effect of a sin; and if we say that the mistake and sin remains attached and cannot be removed, then forgiveness and pardon are meaningless. Moreover, the Divine Revelation is full of descriptions of forgiveness and pardon; also, the Old and New Testaments speak of it. Not only that, even the afore-mentioned “Christian dogma” speaks about it.

In short, the claim that a certain sin or mistake had been attached to a man, which could not be erased or forgiven even after repentance and expression of sorrow, even after returning to the Lord with sincerity, is something that no reason would accept, nor would any straight-thinking person agree with.

Third: They say that the sin of Adam has remained attached not only to him but even to his progeny up to the Day of Resurrection. It means that the punishment of the crime of one person was extended to the others too – those who had no hand in that sin. In other words, a slave commits a sin, and the master widens the circle of punishment to include even those who were in no way connected with that sin! [32](#)

What the Christians say places the burden of sin on those who had nothing to do with that supposed sin. And the Qur’an rejects it when it says:

“That no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another” (53:38).

“And that there is not for man (aught) except what he strives for” (53:39).

Sound reason supports this dictum, because it is an evil to penalize someone for a sin he has not

committed.)[33](#)

Fourth: Their argument is based on a misconception that every mistake and sin – without any exception – throws the man into eternal perdition. In other words, sins do not differ in size and magnitude – all are great and capital. But the Qur'an teaches us that sins and errors are of various categories: some are major, others minor; some may be forgiven while others like polytheism shall not be forgiven except after repentance. Allah says:

“If you avoid the great sins from which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your (small) sins and cause you to enter an honourable (place of) entering” (4:31).

“Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases” (4:48).

Thus, Allah has taught us that some of the forbidden things, that is, sins and mistakes, are major, and others are, by implication, minor; some are not forgivable while others are forgiven. In any case, sins vary in their seriousness, and not every sin places the sinner in eternal perdition or ever-burning fire.

Reason also refuses to lump all sins together, to put all mistakes in one category. A slap on face is different from murder; a lustful eye and fornication are not the same; and so on. Never in the long human history have people treated all sins and errors alike. Sane persons in every age have prescribed different punishments for different crimes. How can it be possible to bracket all sins together without any discrimination, when there is so clear difference among them?

In view of this accepted difference, only a few of them may cause eternal perdition, never-ending chastisement (for example) associating others with Allah, as the Qur'an has said. Obviously, going against the prohibition of partaking of a tree cannot be put in the category of disbelief in Allah or polytheism or things like that. Thus, there is no reason why it should cause an eternal punishment.[34](#)

Fifth: Let us look at what they have said about the problem of the conflict between the Divine attributes of mercy and justice; how a plan was devised to overcome that difficulty; and how Christ came down and then ascended to heaven to effect that scheme, with all the ramifications they have mentioned.

Ponder on this statement and its concomitants, and see what type of god they believe in. Here you will find a Creator God Who is the beginning and the end of this created universe and all its components. But all His actions emanate from a will and a knowledge that are found in Him; and His will depends on an academic preference – in the same way as a man opts for a course of action after weighing its pros and cons according to his knowledge.

Likewise, God ponders on the positive and negative sides of a thing and then decides whether to do it or not. Sometimes He makes a wrong choice and repents for it;[35](#) at other times He meditates upon a problem without finding its correct solution; often He remains unaware of many affairs. In short, in their

eyes, God in His attributes and actions is not different from a man. Whatever He does, He does it after thinking and meditating over it, directing His endeavours to the advantages of that action. His decision is thus governed and controlled by some extraneous factors, that is, the said advantages.

He may find His way to the correct decision; also, He may take a wrong decision; there may be error, misunderstanding or forgetfulness in the course He has taken. Sometimes He knows, at other times He does not; often He overpowers, and frequently is Himself overpowered. His power, like His knowledge, is limited. When the belief about Him is such, then it should be equally possible for Him to be subjected to all the conditions that prevail in a human being who decides to do a work after pondering on its pros and cons: God will thus experience joy and grief, vainglory and shame, happiness and sorrow – and things like that. Needless to say that such a being would be a physical and material one, governed by the laws of movement, change and gradual completion. A being having these attributes must be a transient being, a created being; it cannot be the Self-existing God Who is the Creator of all things.

If you study the Old and New Testaments, you will know that all that we have said above is true; and that they believe in a god who has a body and has all the attributes found in a body, and especially in a man.

As for the Qur'an, it declares the Lord's glory in all these matters, showing that He is far above such myths and superstitions, as it says:

“Glory be to Allah (being free) from what they describe” (37: 159).

We have many incontestable rational proofs to show that Allah is One in Whom all the attributes of perfection are united. His are the existence without any hint of inexistence, absolute power without any shade of weakness, all-encompassing knowledge without any taint of ignorance, absolute life without any possibility of death or destruction. This being the case, there can never come any change in His existence, power, knowledge, or life.

Consequently, He cannot be a body or a being related to physical body, because body and the things connected to it are surrounded by change and alteration, subdued by incorporeality, neediness and shortcomings. As He is not a body, nor related to body, He is not subjected to varying circumstances or changing conditions; He is far above forgetfulness or obliviousness, mistake or repentance, undecidedness or uncertainty, reaction or despondency, weakness or defeat – and things like that. We have fully explained the rational arguments (related) to these topics in this book in relevant places; those who want a thorough study should look for them under the relevant verses.

A discerning reader may easily judge between the two beliefs: Here is the Qur'an, declaring the glory of the Lord of the universe; it affirms for Him every attribute of perfection, and asserts His freedom from every imperfection; and declares that He is too great to be comprehended by our understanding – beset as it is by limitations and imperfections. And there are the Old and New Testaments describing God in terms which can only be found in the Greek, Indian and Chinese mythologies of the ancient times; and ascribing to Him such things which primitive man imagined and those his superstition led him to believe.

Sixth: They say that Allah sent His Son, Christ, and told him to enter the womb of a woman – in order that he could be born a man while he was a god. It is the same unintelligible theory which has been strongly refuted by the Qur'an; there is no need to repeat here the earlier-explained Qur'anic arguments against it.

Also, reason does not support this theory. First, look at the attributes which are essential for the Self-existing Being. His existence is eternal, without beginning or end; there can be no change in Him; His existence knows no limit; He encompasses everything, but Himself is above the limits of time, space, and their concomitants. Then think over the creation of man from the time he was a sperm to the stage when it is a foetus in a womb.

No matter which interpretation you accept for this human birth of god: that of the Melchites, or the Nestorians, or the Jacobites, or some other groups, in the end you will have to admit that there is no relationship between a being that has a physical body with all its accidents and concomitants and a Being that has neither a body nor any of its concomitants or accidents (like time, space, movement etc.). How can one even think of unity between the two in any way?

The fact is that this theory does not agree with self-evident rational propositions. That is why St. Paul and other leaders of Christianity hold philosophy in contempt and spurn and disdain rational arguments. St. Paul writes: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?... For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified."[36](#)

We find a lot of pronouncements – in similar vein – in his writings as well as in those of others. This line was adopted only for propagation of their ideas and missionary activities. Anyone pondering on these epistles and books and studying the way they address the people may easily understand the motive behind it.

The above discourse also exposes the flaw in their statement that: "God is sinless and protected from sins and errors." The God they have imagined is not safe from errors at all; He errs in His perceptions, and He errs in His actions. Of course, He does not disobey anyone because none is superior to Him. That is why the question of sin and disobedience does not arise at all, so far as God is concerned. Consequently, it is irrelevant, nay, unimaginable, to say that He is "protected from sins".

Seventh: They say that God became man and then lived with his people as a man live in society until he surrendered to his enemies.

It means that the Self-existent God may acquire for Himself some properties especially reserved for transient and incorporeal creatures – only then He can be God and man all at the same time. If so, then He can also become any of His other creatures; He may acquire for Himself the reality of any of the species created by Him. One day He may appear as a man, the next day as a horse, sometimes as a

bird, at other times as an insect, and so on. He may even acquire more than one reality at a time, that is, He may come to this world as a combination of several species, for example, He may appear as perfect man and perfect horse and perfect insect, all at the same time.

Likewise, He may act in the same way as His creatures do – because He may appear as a certain species and then would act in manners reserved for that species. Going a step further, it would be possible for Him to do two opposite things together like justice and injustice, or to acquire opposite attributes for Himself, for example, knowledge and ignorance, power and weakness, life and death, want and freedom from want. Glory be to Allah Who is far above such absurdities! (This snag is different from the one explained in the Sixth Objection.)

Eighth: They say that he suffered until he was crucified and took upon himself the curse, because a crucified person is cursed. What do they really mean when they say that he took the curse upon himself? What is the meaning of curse? In common usage and language curse means removal from Divine Mercy and Honour. Does that supposed curse imply the same meaning? Or is it something else? If it has the same meaning which is known to the language and common usage, then how can God remove Himself from His own mercy? Or how can anyone else remove Him away from His own mercy? What is mercy? It is a positive bestowal, a grant of favours and bounties, a bequeathal of specialities of existence.

When one is cursed – taken away from Divine Mercy – it results in poverty, disgrace, or similar effects – in this world or the next or in both. This being the case, what is the sense of saying that God was affected by curse? Choose any meaning for curse, it cannot apply to God – the God Who is Self-sufficient and fulfils the needs of everything.

The Qur'anic teaching is diametrically opposed to this truly amazing theory of the New Testament. Allah says:

“O men! you are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah is He Who is Self-sufficient, the Praised One” (35: 15).

Also, the names and attributes of Allah mentioned in the Qur'an make it clear that it is impossible for any type of need or want, shortcoming or defect, loss or extinction, evil or abomination, disgrace or stigma to reach the sublime majesty of Allah.

Poser: God suffered disgrace and took the curse upon Himself only because He became one with man. Otherwise, He in His own Self is too high to be affected by such things.

Reply: Did God, by becoming one with man, take upon Himself that curse and those sufferings in real sense of the word? Or was it all just a metaphor, only an allegory? If it was in real sense, our objection stands. And if it was only in a metaphorical sense, then the original “problem” would remain unsolved; the birth of Christ would not solve the conflict between Divine Mercy and Divine Justice. If it was not God

– but someone else – who suffered all those indignities and curse, the so-called scheme of atonement would remain unfulfilled. Obviously, the said plan was based on the idea that God Himself should be the ransom for human beings.

Ninth: They say that ‘Isa atoned for the sins of the believers, nay, for the sins of the whole world. This talk shows that they do not understand the real meaning of sin and error, nor do they comprehend how the sins bring the punishment in next world, or how that punishment is effected. Also, they have not grasped the relationship between sins and errors on one side and Divine Legislation on the other. Nor do they know the stand of the *Shari‘ah* about it.

But the Qur’an clearly describes all these things and teaches us these realities – as we have explained in the Commentaries these verses, “***Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable..***” (2:26) and “***Mankind was but one nation..***” (2:213). We have described therein that the orders and laws (which might be the subject of disobedience) and the sins and errors all are mentally posited things based on subjective consideration.

They have been made for the protection of society’s well-being; and the punishment for disobedience is the unpleasant result which has been prescribed with a single aim in view – to discourage and prevent a responsible man from indulging into sin, from disobeying the law. This is the view of the sages who have laid the foundation of human society.

But the Qur’anic teaching leads us to a still higher level in this respect (and the rational reasoning supports it, as we have explained). It says that when a man obeys the *Shari‘ah* prescribed for him by Allah, his psyche acquires some noble and praiseworthy inner traits; and if he disobeys the said *Shari‘ah*, he acquires unworthy, hideous and evil traits. It is these deeply ingrained traits and characteristics which prepare for him the rewards or punishments of the next life, respectively. That reward and punishment is represented by the Paradise and the Hell, respectively – and their respective reality is nearness to Allah or distance from Him. Thus, the merit and demerit of deeds are based on things that actually exist and have a system. Unlike our social laws they are not based on any imaginary thing emanating from subjective consideration.

Also, it is not a secret that the Divine Legislation perfects and completes the Divine Creation. It brings the creative guidance to its final destination. In other words, Allah brings everything to the perfections of its existence, to the final goal of its being. And among the perfections of human existence are a good social system in this world, and a happy, bounteous life in the hereafter.

The way to that perfection is religion that enacts and promulgates laws for society’s reform and development and contains directions for reaching nearer to Allah (and these directives are called acts of worship). When a man follows the laws of religion, his life and livelihood are improved, and his soul becomes ready to receive Allah’s bounties; and he is qualified – in his self and in his actions – for the Divine Honour in the hereafter. All of these emanate from the light put in his heart, and the purity that is

found in his self. This in short is the reality.

Man gets nearer to Allah or strays far away from Him. This nearness and distance are the foundations of his eternal happiness and unhappiness respectively and determine his social development (or otherwise) in this life. And religion is the only factor that brings about his nearness and distance. All these are real things, not based on imaginary assumptions or subjective considerations.

Now suppose that one putative sin of Adam – his partaking of the forbidden tree – brought eternal perdition on him, and not only on him, but on all his descendants also; and that there was no remedy for it, no relief from that ruination – except atonement through Christ. Then what was the use of sending religion – any religion – before Christ? And what was the use of ordaining it with Christ? And what is the use of promulgating it after Christ?

Let us put it this way: Eternal perdition and punishment in hereafter was a firmly decreed fate of man – because of the said sin; it could not be removed or averted from him either through good deeds or through repentance; the only effective remedy was the atonement through Christ's suffering and crucifixion. Then why did Allah promulgate the laws, revealed the books, and sent the prophets and messengers? What was the logic behind all this exercise? Were not all those promises and threats, all those good tidings and warnings devoid of truth? What could all those endeavours avail mankind when the whole species was doomed to perdition, and when eternal punishment was their firmly decreed fate?

Also, suppose there were people who perfected themselves by sincerely following the previous *Shari'ah* (and there were countless prophets and also men of God in previous *ummah* who were like that, for example, the honoured prophets Ibrahim, Musa and others); they lived perfectly and died before the time of atonement. Now what would you say about them? Did they end their life in infelicity and perdition? Or in felicity and happiness? What did they face when they met death and went to the next world? Did death bring them to chastisement and ruination? Or to Divine bounties and happy life?

Moreover, Christ clearly says that he was sent only to save the sinners and wrong-doers, and that good-doers and righteous have no need of such help.[37](#)

Frankly speaking, no valid reason can be given for promulgating the Divine Laws, for ordaining the religious values – before the supposed atonement was affected through Christ; it was but a vain, senseless, and aimless exercise. Nor can any good and correct reason be advanced for this “strange” action of God. The only thing that can be said is this:

God knew very well that unless the problem of Adam's sin was solved, no law promulgated by Him would do any good. Yet He went on promulgating those laws just to be on the safe side, hoping that one of these days He would get a chance to solve this problem and then He would be able to harvest the fruits of those legislations! Thus, He legislated the laws and promulgated them through the prophets – hiding the truth from the prophets and their people alike. He did not tell them that there was a big problem which – if it remained unsolved – would nullify all the efforts of the whole group of the prophets

and the believers, and which would render all the laws ineffective and useless. On the contrary, He pretended that the legislations and the prophetic missions were very serious, very important and very real things.

Thus, God deceived the people, and deceived Himself too. He deceived the people by promising that their safety and happiness was guaranteed if they faithfully followed the *Shari'ah*. And He deceived Himself because, once the atonement was effected, legislation of the *Shari'ah* would become irrelevant, without having any effect on the people's felicity – in the same way as it was without any effect as long as the problem of Adam's sin was not solved. This was the case before effectuation of the said atonement.

Coming to the time when atonement was effected – and to the later days – the ineffectiveness and futility of the *Shari'ah* of prophetic mission and of Divine Guidance is much more self-evident. What is the use or benefit of believing in divinely sent realities and performing good deeds now that the problem of the original sin has been solved, and the atonement has brought about forgiveness and mercy to all men – believers and unbelievers, righteous and unrighteous, all alike – without any difference between the most impeccable righteous one and the most incorrigible impious one? Both were to suffer eternal perdition when the original sin was not redeemed, and both are to share in the Divine Mercy now that it has been redeemed through the said atonement. (Remember that no good deed could remove that stigma if there were no atonement.)

Objection: The atonement would benefit only those who believe in Christ. Therefore, the prophetic mission did have its use and benefit, as Christ has said in the Gospel.[38](#)

Reply: First, it contradicts the saying of St. John referred to earlier. Second, it destroys all the edifice built so far, because nobody – right from Adam to the Last Day – would enter the sanctuary of safety and deliverance except a very small group, that is, those who believe in Christ and the Holy Ghost; and not even all the Christians but only a certain group from among all those widely differing denominations – all other denominations would be thrown into eternal perdition. I wish I knew what would happen to the honoured prophets (who came) before Christ, and to the believers of their *ummah*! What would be the status of their mission, of the books they brought and of the wisdom they taught? Was it true? Or just a lie? The Gospels verify the Torah and its mission, and there is no mention at all of the Ghost and the atonement in the Torah. Does the Gospel verify a true book? Or does it verify a pack of lies?

Poser: As we know, the previously revealed books give the good tidings of Christ. This was a sort of a general call by them towards Christ, although they did not give any detail about his coming and atoning the sin. God was always telling His prophets about the advent of Christ in order that they might believe in him and be happy with what he would do.

Reply: First, to make such claims about the prophets before Musa is to shoot in the dark, to venture into *terra incognita*.[39](#) Moreover, if there was any good news, it was not an invitation to believe in, and follow,

him. Second, that good tiding does not solve the problem of the futility of the *Shari'ah*; if Christ delivered all those who believed in him, then was it not useless and futile to invite people to follow the laws of the *Shari'ah* and to practise good ethics and morality? Even Christ exhorted people to follow the rules of religion and be of good conduct; and the Gospels are full of his sermons to this effect. Third, the basic problem remains. They had talked about the original sin and the non-fulfilment of the Divine Purpose, and that purpose is still unfulfilled. God had created mankind to bestow His mercy on all of them, to cover all of them with His favour and bounties, felicity, and happiness. But what is the result? Almost all of them – exception for a small group – are going to be punished, suffering under the wrath of God, thrown into eternal perdition.

These are just a few of the rational reasons showing the absurdity and invalidity of this theory. The Qur'an too supports these reasons. Allah says:

"...Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal)" (20:50).

He has made it clear that everything is guided to its goal and to what its existence demands. The guidance is of two kinds: creative and legislative. It is the established way of Allah to bestow every relevant guidance on everything, and it includes the religious guidance bestowed on man.

Then Allah says – and it is the first religious guidance given to Adam and those who were sent down with him from the Garden:

"We said: "Get down you therefrom all together; if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve" (2:38).

"And (as to) those who disbelieve in and belie our signs, they are the inmates of the fire, in it they shall abide." (2:39).

It gives, in a nutshell, what various laws were to promulgate in detail up to the Day of Resurrection; it contains legislation as well as promise and threat – all in clear terms without ambiguity. Again, He says:

"...And the truth do I speak" (38:84).

"The word is not changed with Me, nor am I in the least unjust to the servants" (50:29).

Allah declares that He has no hesitation or misgiving about what He decides, He does not break what He has joined; whatever He decides, He enforces; and what He says, He enacts; His action does not deviate from the line He has prescribed for it. He does not waver or hesitate when He wills; nor is it befitting to His knowledge that He should intend a thing and then some demerit should appear in that course of action which He did not know before and thus He should decide not to do it. Nor can anyone else hinder His plan: It is not that He should will a thing, deciding to do it and then some rational defect should prevent Him from doing it, or some snag should appear in its execution and He should abandon the plan – because all such things, if they ever happened, would show helplessness of God. Allah says:

“...And Allah is predominant over His affairs...” (12:21).

“...Surely Allah attains His purpose...” (65:3).

And Musa is reported as saying:

“The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a book: errs not my Lord, nor does He forget” (20:52).

And Allah says about the Day of Judgment:

“This day every soul shall be rewarded for what it has earned; no injustice (shall be done) this day; surely Allah is quick in reckoning” (40:17).

These and similar other verses clearly show that Allah, after creating His creatures, has not neglected to look after their affairs, nor is He ignorant of what they would do, nor is He sorry for what He has done. As He is constantly looking after their well-being, He has ordained for them His laws – a serious and important legislation which He has ordained not because He is afraid of something or expects to gain something through it.

He shall reward every doer for his action – if good, then good; and if evil, then evil. In all these affairs nobody can overpower Him, nor can anyone impose his will on Him – because He has no partner or colleague. There will be neither any ransom nor any redemption to save anyone; nor can anyone intercede for someone without Allah’s permission. Because all such propositions are against His absolute ownership which He has over His creatures.

Tenth: Let us look at the story of atonement. What is atonement or ransom? A man – or a thing related to him – is involved in some crimes or sin. As a result of that he faces the possibilities of harm or destruction of life or valuable property; and therefore, he offers something less important in order to save his life or the more valuable property. A man taken prisoner redeems himself with offer of some money; crimes are redeemed with money paid as fine. The thing given for this purpose is called ransom, fine or redemption. Atonement, in short, is a deal which transfers the right of the claimant from the person so redeemed to the thing given in ransom or redemption – and thus the redeemed one is saved from captivity or from the evil consequences of the crime he had committed.

This description shows that atonement and redemption is simply unimaginable in the matters related to Allah. The Divine Authority – unlike human authority, which is merely an abstracted idea and a subjective consideration – is the real authority which cannot be changed or transferred. Things, in their species and with their effects, actions and reactions, have been created by Allah and continue to exist because of Him.

It is a reality, a fact; and reality and fact cannot change into non-reality, non-fact. Such a proposition cannot be imagined – let alone its ever coming into being. Allah’s ownership, authority and rights are not like those of us human beings. We are bound with social norms and laws. Our social rights, authority

and ownership are merely subjective considerations, abstracted ideas based on our imaginations; their status and worth are in our own hands; we may establish a right today and abolish it tomorrow – as our interest and outlook change concerning our life and livelihood.[40](#)

Allah has specifically refuted the idea of atonement in the following verse:

“So today ransom shall not be accepted from you nor from those who disbelieved; your abode is the fire.” (57: 15).

And as explained earlier, the same is the import of the words of the Messiah quoted by Allah in the Qur’an:

“And when Allah will say: “O ‘Isa son of Maryam! did you say to men, ‘Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah’ “, he will say: “Glory be to Thee, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to (say)...” (5: 116).

“I did not say to them save that what Thou didst enjoin me with: ‘That worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord’, and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst take me (away) completely, Thou wert the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things” (5: 117).

“If Thou shouldst chastise them, then surely they are The servants; and if Thou shouldst forgive them, then surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise.” (5: 118).

His words: ***“and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them...” (5: 117)***, have the following import: ‘I had nothing to do with them except what Thou hadst entrusted me to do, that is, conveying Thy message to them and being a witness over them ***“as long as I was among them” (5: 117)***; whether Thou shouldst chastise them or shouldst forgive them, entirely depends on Thy discretion; I have nothing to do with it. I do not have any authority on Thy will, with which I could save them from Thy chastisement or sentence them to punishment.’

It clearly refutes the idea of ransom and atonement. Had there been any ransoming or redeeming, it would have been wrong for him to wash his hands of the fate of his ummah, telling Allah that it was His (Allah’s) discretion whether to punish them or forgive them, and that he (‘Isa – ‘a) had nothing to do with it.

Of similar connotation are the following verses:

“And be on your guard against the Day when one soul shall not avail another in the least, neither shall intercession on its behalf be accepted, nor shall any compensation be taken from it, nor shall they be helped” (2:48).

“... before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor

intercession...” (2:254).

“The day on which you will turn back retreating; there shall be no saviour for you from Allah...” (40:33).

Obviously, the “compensation” (in the first verse), the “bargaining” (of the second) and the “saviour” (of the third) all apply to the idea of atonement and redemption; the verses in refuting these things refute the belief of atonement.

Of course, the Qur’an accepts the Messiah as one of the intercessors – but not as an atonement. We have explained about “Intercession” under the verse ***“And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another...” (2:48).*** [41](#) We have explained therein that intercession shows the nearness of the intercessor and his good standing with the master, without there being any transfer of authority from the master to the intercessors; without affecting in any way the ownership or power of the master; without nullifying or abrogating the master’s commandment which the sinner had disobeyed; and without negating the system of recompense, reward and punishment.

Intercession is but a sort of prayer and request by the intercessor that the master – in this case, the Lord – manage the affairs of His creature with mercy. The intercessor accepts the Master’s right to punish the sinner (because he had sinned and the law of recompense makes him liable to punishment), but asks the Master to exercise His power of forgiveness – because He has the right to forgive as He has the right to punish.

The intercessor thus requests the Master to exercise His right of pardon and forgiveness, when the sinner has become liable for punishment, without in any way affecting the Master’s ownership or authority. But atonement is something else; it is a deal, a bargain, which transfers the Master’s authority from the sinner to the ransom given in his place, and removes the sinner from the Master’s power as soon as the Master accepts the ransom in his place.

That the Messiah is an intercessor is proved by the following verse:

“And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth, and they know” (43:86).

It clearly says that the people excepted would have the authority to intercede. ‘Isa (‘a) is among those whom they call besides Allah. But he has the authority of intercession because he is included in the exception: Allah confirms in the Qur’an that He had taught him (‘Isa) the Book and the Wisdom, and that he (‘Isa) shall be among the witnesses on the Day of Judgment. Allah says:

“And He will teach him the Book and the Wisdom” (3:48).

And Allah quotes ‘Isa as saying:

“...And I was a witness of them so long as I was among them” (5: 117).

He also says:

“...And on the Day of Resurrection he shall be a witness against them” (4: 159).

All these verses read together prove that ‘Isa (‘a) is one of the intercessors. We have described it in detail under the following verse 2:48.

6. The Origin of These Beliefs

The Qur’an rejects the idea that these theories and beliefs were started or propagated by ‘Isa (‘a). The fact is that the Christians blindly followed their leaders, leaving all affairs in their hands; and the leaders transplanted the myths of ancient idolators into Christianity. Allah says:

“And the Jews say: “Uzayr is the son of Allah”; and the Christians say: “The Messiah is the son of Allah” these are the words of their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before; may Allah destroy them; how they are turned away!” (9:30).

“They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah, and (also) the Messiah son of Maryam, and they were not enjoined but that they should worship one God only, there is no god but He; far from His Glory be what they set up (with Him)” (9:31).

Who are the unbelievers whom Allah refers to when He says: they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before? Surely it does not refer to the idolaters of pre-Islamic Arabia, who said that the angels were the daughters of God. Because the People of the Book believed God to have a son long before they came into contact with the Arabs – and especially so the Jews; while the words, who disbelieved before, apparently refer to the unbelievers who were before the Jews and the Christians. Moreover, the Arabs themselves were not the originators of idol-worship – it was brought to them from abroad.[42](#)

Moreover, the idolaters of Rome, Greece, Egypt, Syria, and India were nearer to the People of the Book (who lived in Palestine and its neighbourhood), and it was easier for the Jews and the Christians to adopt those people’s beliefs and rituals, and the influencing factors were more conducive to it.

Therefore, the unbelievers of earlier times (whose ideas concerning sonship of God, the People of the Book imitated) referred to by the Qur’an were the ancient idolaters of India and China, as well as those of Rome, Greece, and North Africa. The history shows close resemblance of such Jewish and Christians beliefs with the myths of those nations – like sonship, fathership, trinity, as well as the stories of crucifixion and atonement etc. These are the historical facts to which the Qur’an has drawn our attention.

Similarly, the following verse points to this historical fact:

Say: “O People of the Book! be not unduly immoderate in your religion, and do not follow the low desires of the people who went astray before and led many astray and went astray from the right path” (5:77).

This verse shows that their immoderation in religion – their excessive love of some personalities which led them to raise them to godhead – had come to them from some previous nations who had gone astray before them, and in whose footsteps the Jews and the Christians were following.

The phrase: the people who went astray before, does not refer to their scholars or monks. The phrase is unrestricted and unconditional; it does not say, ‘the people among you’. or ‘led many among you astray’. Nor does it point to the Arabs of the days of ignorance – as we have explained earlier.

Moreover, it describes those people as having led many people astray; in other words, they were leaders of falsehood, whose words were listened to and whose directions were followed. Arabs did not have such a position in those days; they were just a small group of unlettered people, and did not have any knowledge, civilization, and development in which – or because of which – other people could follow them. But the case of Iran, Rome, and India etc., was different; they were highly civilized and developed nations.

Clearly the verse points to the idol-worshippers of China, India, and the western countries, as we have explained.

7. Which Book The People Of The Book Belong To? What Is Its Condition?

Although traditions count the Zoroastrians among the People of the Book (and it means they must have had a special Book of their own, or should have belonged to one of the Books mentioned by the Qur’an, for example, the Book of Nuh, the Scriptures of Ibrahim, Torah of Musa, Injil of ‘Isa and Zabur of Dawud), but the Qur’an does not make any reference to them, nor does it mention any book of theirs; the Avastha which they have is not mentioned in the Qur’an at all, and they do not acknowledge any of the other Books.

When the Qur’an uses the term, the People of the Book, it means the Jews and the Christians, because of the Books which Allah had revealed to them.

The Jewish Scripture contains 35,^{[43](#)} Books: five are together called the Torah of Musa^{[44](#)}; twelve are called the Kings;^{[45](#)} then there are the Books of Job and Psalms of Dawud; then come three Books of Sulayman;^{[46](#)} and last seventeen Books called the Prophets.^{[47](#)}

The Qur’an has not mentioned any of them except the Torah of Musa and the Zabur of Dawud.

The Christians’ Scriptures are as follows: The four Gospels (of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John); the Acts of the Apostles, and several Epistles,^{[48](#)} and lastly the Revelation of John.

The Qur'an does not mention any of these Christians' Books. But it says that there was a Divine Book revealed to 'Isa son of Maryam, which was named Inji¹; it was a single Book, not many. Although the Christians do not know it, nor do they acknowledge its existence, there are sentences in the writings of their leaders that contain admission that 'Isa did have a Book, Injil by name.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the Qur'an gives a hint that a portion of genuine Torah is still preserved in the Scriptures of the Jews, as is a part of genuine Injil still extant in the Scriptures of the Christians. Allah says:

“And how do they make you a judge and they have the Torah wherein is Allah’s judgment?...” (5:43).

“And of those who say: “We are Christians”, We did take their covenant, but they forgot a portion of what they were admonished with...” (5: 14).

Both verses clearly imply what we have said.

Judaism And Christianity from Historical Point Of View

Judaism And Christianity From Historical Point Of View ⁵⁰

1. The History of The Present Torah

The Israelites were descendants of Israel, that is, Ya'qub. In the beginning they lived a nomadic tribal life; then the Egyptian rulers⁵¹ brought them into Egypt, where they treated them as captive slaves. This continued until Allah delivered them through Musa from the Pharaoh and his deeds.

During Musa's time they followed the line of their Leader, that is, Musa ('a), and thereafter Yusha' ('a) (Joshua). For some time thereafter their affairs were in the hands of the judges like Ehud and Gideon etc. Then began the era of the Kings; the first of the Kings was Saul (Talut of the Qur'an); and then came Dawud and Sulayman ('a).

After Sulayman the Kingdom was divided⁵², and their power weakened. Still there came on throne more than thirty Kings like Rehoboam, Abijam, Jeroboam, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and others.

The division continued to sap the nation's strength until they were vanquished by the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, who subdued Jerusalem, that is, Bayt al-Maqdis around 600 B.C. Later the Jews revolted; so, he sent his army which besieged them, and on reconquering the city, ransacked it, plundering the King's treasures as well as those of the Temple. The Babylonians gathered the Jews and took about ten thousand souls – wealthy people, strong youths, and artisans – in captivity to Babylonia, leaving only weak persons and beggars in Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah (the last Israelite King) to govern them as his vassal.

Ten years passed, Zedekiah gathered some strength and established some contact with the Pharaoh of

the time. Then he revolted against Nebuchadnezzar. This enraged the latter who himself led his army against the Jews and besieged their towns. They fortified themselves and the siege continued for about one and a half year; the besieged population faced famine and epidemic.

Still the siege continued until Nebuchadnezzar conquered all the forts in the year 586 B.C.; he massacred the Jews, turned their towns into ruins, demolished the Temple and destroyed every religious symbol. When he left, the Temple was only a mound of dust and rubble; and the Torah and the Ark in which it was kept were irretrievably lost.

Things continued like that for about fifty years. The Jews were captives in Babylonia; their Book (Torah) was lost and there was nowhere any trace of it; their Temple was a ruin, their towns middens of rubble.

Then Cyrus, the Persian King, appeared on the scene. He vanquished Babylonians, conquered Babylonia, and stayed there for a short time. He released the Israelite captives, and appointed Ezra as their leader; Ezra was authorized by him to rewrite the Torah for them, rebuild their Temple and re-establish their original rites and rituals. Ezra led the Israelites back to Jerusalem in 457 B.C.[53](#) Thereafter he compiled and edited the books attributed to Musa – and it is what is known today as the Torah.[54](#)

If you think over these events, you will see that the chain of narrators of today's Torah is broken and is not connected all the way to Musa ('a) – except through a single person, that is, Ezra. But first of all, we do not know who Ezra was; second, we do not know how much he knew of the Torah or how deep his knowledge was; third, we do not know how honest and trustworthy he was; fourth, we do not know from where he collected what he compiled as the books of the Torah; and last, we do not know with which authentic source he compared his collection to correct the mistakes which might have crept into the text.

This unfortunate episode has given rise to another disturbing theory. Some western scholars now deny the existence of Musa ('a) and the events related to him. They say that he is a mythical being who never existed. (The same theories have been advanced about 'Isa son of Maryam. But we the Muslims cannot entertain such ideas because the Qur'an in very clear terms confirms his existence (peace be on him).

2. The Story Of 'Isa and The Gospel

The Jews pay particular attention to their history. They have recorded the main events through which they have passed. Nevertheless, if you hunt through their books and literature, you will not come across any mention of 'Isa son of Maryam. Jewish literature throws no light on his birth or mission, nor does it say anything about his character and life story.

It is silent about the miracles appearing on his hand; and does not say how his life on the earth ended – did he die a natural death? Was he killed or crucified? Or was there something else? Why this silence? Why had his affairs remained hidden from them? Or why did they keep it hidden?

The Qur'an mentions that the Jews had falsely accused Maryam and calumniated her regarding the birth of 'Isa, and that they claimed to have killed 'Isa. Allah says:

“And for their unbelief and for their having uttered against Maryam a grievous calumny.” (4: 156)

“And their saying: “Surely, we killed the Messiah, 'Isa son of Maryam, the messenger of Allah”; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like 'Isa); and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they killed him not for sure.” (4: 157).

Was this claim of theirs based on some oral tradition which was never put to writing? Every nation does have such folklores – some facts, some myths – which should not be taken seriously unless they are based on correct, reliable sources.

Or was it that they heard the Christians talking about the Messiah and his birth and mission; and taking the story from them, they accused Maryam of indecency and claimed to having killed the Messiah? No definite answers can be found to these questions. As far as the Qur'an is concerned, it clearly ascribes to them only the claim of killing, not of crucifying; then it says that they are in confusion and there is a difference of opinion among them about the whole matter.

As for the Christians, the story of the Messiah is based on their Scriptures, that is, the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; as well as the Acts of the Apostles (by Luke) and several Epistles of Paul, Peter, Jacob, John and Jude. The authenticity of all depends on genuineness of the four Gospels; therefore, let us have a look at them.

The Gospel of Matthew: It is the first and earliest of the Gospels so far as compilation and publication is concerned. Some say that it was written in 38 C.E.; others that it was compiled between 50 and 60 C.E.[55](#) In any case, it was written after the Messiah.

The ancient and modern Christian scholars are of the opinion that it was originally written in Hebrew; and then translated into Greek and other languages. But the original Hebrew version is lost; and as for the translation, its condition (correctness, etc.) cannot be verified, nor is it known who had translated it.[56](#)

The Gospel of Mark: Mark was a disciple of St. Peter; he was not one of the twelve disciples of Christ. It is often said that he wrote his Gospel on Peter's orders, and that he did not believe in divinity of Christ.[57](#) Accordingly some people say that he had written his Gospel for the tribes and villagers, and that was why he introduced Christ as a messenger of Allah who brought and conveyed the *Shari'ah* of Allah.[58](#) He wrote this Book in 61 C.E.

The Gospel of Luke: Luke was neither one of the disciples nor had he seen Christ. He learnt Christianity from Paul. Paul was a Jew who hated the Christians and Christianity; he oppressed those who believed in Christ and used to hinder their activities and disturb their affairs. Then all of a sudden, he came to them and claimed that he had been seized by an epileptic fit in course of which Christ appeared to him

and admonished him for his bad treatment of the Christians; according to his claim, he believed in Christ in the same trance and Christ in the same vision appointed him as his apostle to propagate the Christ's Gospel.

It was St. Paul who laid the foundation of Christianity, as it is today.^{[59](#)} He taught that mere belief in Jesus the Christ was enough for salvation; there was no need of acting on it. Accordingly, he allowed them to eat pork and dead animals; and forbade circumcision and a lot of the *Shari'ah* of the Torah.^{[60](#)} This was despite of the fact that Injil was revealed just as a verifier of the Torah, and had made lawful only a few things that were forbidden in Torah. 'Isa ('a) had come to re-establish the *Shari'ah* of Torah, and to bring the deviators and transgressors back to it; he had not come to abrogate the *Shari'ah* or to build the eternal felicity based on a belief devoid of action.

Luke wrote his Gospel after that of Mark, and it was after the deaths of St. Peter and Paul. Some people have firmly opined that the Gospel of Luke is not a revelation like other Gospels, as may be understood from his Prologue.^{[61](#)}

The Gospel of John: Many Christians say that the John who wrote it was John the son of Zebedee, the fisher, one of the twelve disciples, and the one whom Jesus loved.^{[62](#)}

They say that as Cerinthus^{[63](#)} and Ebionites^{[64](#)} and their followers thought that Jesus was nothing more than a created human being whose existence did not precede his mother's existence, the bishops of Asia and others visited John in 96 C.E. and urged him to write what others had not written in their Gospels so that he could particularly describe the divinity of the Christ. John had to comply with their request and wrote this Gospel.^{[65](#)}

There is a difference of opinion as to when it was written: Some say, in 65 C.E., some say, in 96 C.E., and others say, in 98 C.E. Another group says that it was not written by John the disciple: Some say that it is the work of a student of Alexandria^{[66](#)}; others say that this Gospel as well as the Epistles of John were authored in the beginning of the 2nd Century by an unknown person who attributed them to John so that the writings might gain credence in people's eyes^{[67](#)}; yet others think that the Gospel of John originally contained twenty chapters and after his death the Church of Ephesus added the twenty-first.^{[68](#)}

This is then the condition of the four Gospels. What is certain is that all these narrations depend on seven persons: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul and Jude; and they rely on the four Gospels, which in their turn rely on the earliest one, that is, the Gospel of Matthew. And we have already seen that it is a translation whose original is lost; nobody knows who had translated it. What was the theme and teaching of the original? Did it teach messengership of Jesus? Or was it his divinity?^{[69](#)}

The present Gospels show that there had appeared among the Children of Israel a man named 'Isa son of Yusuf, the carpenter; he began calling towards Allah; he claimed that he was a son of God, born without agency of a human father, and that his Father had sent him to atone for the sin of the people through him being killed by crucifixion; that he gave life to the dead, healed the blind and the lepers, and

restored the possessed to health by removing devil from them; that there were twelve disciples with him, one of them being Matthew the Evangelist; he blessed them and sent them to propagate his religion.

This is the gist of the Christianity and its mission – despite its having been spread to every corner of the world. It all boils down to a report by one person whose name and particulars are unknown, whose identity and character is shrouded in obscurity.

This curious weakness just in the initial stage has compelled some independent minds of Europe to claim that Christ, 'Isa son of Maryam, is a mythical being, invented by some religious movements for or against the government of the time. This view has been strengthened by another mythical character which it resembles in every detail, and that is the character of Krishna: The idol-worshippers of India believe that Krishna was the son of God, who descended to earth from his divine abode, and atoned for the people by being crucified in order to deliver them from their sins and mistakes. It is the same belief which the Christians have about Christ 'Isa. (Details are given below.)

Other scholars have found it necessary to say that there were in fact two Christs, one uncrucified, the other crucified, who came more than five centuries after the former.

The Christian Era (which at the time of writing is 1956 C.E.) does not correspond with any of the above-mentioned two dates. The former (uncrucified) Christ had preceded it by more than two hundred and fifty years (and lived for sixty years), while the latter (crucified) Christ came more than two hundred and ninety years after the beginning of the said Era (and lived for about thirty-three years)[70](#)

However, the difference of the Christians Era with the actual birthdate of Christ is a fact which is not denied even by the Christians – and it is a historical disjunction.[71](#)

Moreover, there are some other matters that give rise to doubts and mistrust. They have written that during the first two centuries many more Gospels, including the four now used, were written and their number exceeded a hundred. Then the Church banned all of them except the four which were canonized because they corresponded with the views of the Church.[72](#)

Among the discarded ones was the Gospel of Barnabas, a copy of which was found years ago, and which has been translated into Arabic and Persian. The story of Christ, 'Isa son of Maryam, as given in this Gospel, generally corresponds with that given in the Qur'an.[73](#)

Strangely enough, even the non-Jewish historical records are silent about what the Gospels present as the Christ's mission – sonship, atonement, and other related matters. The famous American historian, Hendrick Willem Van Loon has given in his book, Story of Mankind, a letter of a Roman physician, Aesculapius Cultellus, which he wrote in 62 A. D. to his nephew, Gladius Ensa, who was a soldier in Syria.[74](#)

In that letter, he says:

A few days ago, I was called in to prescribe for a sick man named Paul. He appeared to be a Roman citizen of Jewish parentage, well-educated and of agreeable manners...

A friend of mine... tells me that he heard something about him in Ephesus where he was preaching sermons about a strange new god. I asked my patient if this were true... Paul answered me that the kingdom of which he had spoken was not of this world and he added many strange utterances which I did not understand...

His personality made a great impression upon me, and I was sorry to hear that he was killed on the Ostian Road a few days ago. Therefore, I am writing this letter to you. When next you visit Jerusalem, I want you to find out something about my friend Paul and the strange Jewish prophet, who seems to have been his teacher.... I would like to know the truth about all these rumours...

Six weeks later, Gladius Ensa, the nephew, [a captain of the VII Gallic Infantry], answered as follows:

[I received your letter and I have obeyed your order. Two weeks ago, our brigade was sent to Jerusalem...]

I have talked with most of the older men in this city, but few have been able to give me any definite information.[75](#)

A few days ago, a peddler came to the camp. I bought some of his olive and I asked him whether he had ever heard of the famous Messiah who was killed when he was young. He said that he remembered it very clearly.... He gave me the address of one Joseph, who had been a personal friend of the Messiah and told me that I had better go and see him if I wanted to know more.

This morning, I went to call on Joseph. He was quite an old man. He had been a fisherman on one of the freshwater lakes. His memory was clear, and from him at last I got a fairly definite account of what had happened during the troublesome days before I was born.

Tiberius, our great and glorious emperor, was on the throne, and an officer by the name of Pontius Pilatus was governor of Judaea and Samaria... In the year 783 or 784 (Joseph had forgotten when) Pilatus was called to Jerusalem on account of a riot. A certain young man (the son of a carpenter of Nazareth) was said to be planning a revolution against the Roman government. Strangely enough our own intelligence officers, who are usually well-informed, appear to have heard nothing about it, and when they investigated the matter, they reported that the carpenter was an excellent citizen and that there was no reason to proceed against him. But the old-fashioned leaders of the Jewish faith, according to Joseph, were much upset. They greatly disliked his popularity with the masses of the poorer Hebrews. The "Nazarene" (so they told Pilatus) had publicly claimed that a Greek or a Roman or even a Palestinian, who tried to live a decent and honourable life, was quite as good as a Jew who spent his days in studying the ancient laws of Moses. Pilatus does not seem to have been impressed by this argument, but when the crowds around the temple threatened to lynch Jesus, and kill all his followers,

he decided to take the carpenter into custody to save his life.

He does not appear to have understood the real nature of the quarrel. Whenever he asked the Jewish priests to explain their grievances, they shouted “heresy” and “treason” and got terribly excited. Finally, so Joseph told me, Pilatus sent for Joshua (that was the name of the Nazarene, but the Greeks who live in this part of the world always refer to him as Jesus) to examine him personally. He talked to him for several hours. He asked him about the “dangerous doctrines” which he was said to have preached on the shores of the sea of Galilee. But Jesus answered that he never referred to politics. He was not so much interested in the bodies of men as in Man’s soul. He wanted all people to regard their neighbours as their brothers and to love one single God, who was the father of all living beings.

Pilatus, who seems to have been well-versed in the doctrines of the Stoics and the other Greek philosophers, does not appear to have discovered anything seditious in the talk of Jesus. According to my informant he made another attempt to save the life of the kindly prophet. He kept putting the execution off. Meanwhile the Jewish people, lashed into fury by their priests, got frantic with rage. There had been many riots in Jerusalem before this and there were only a few Roman soldiers within calling distance. Reports were being sent to the Roman authorities in Caesarea that Pilatus had “fallen a victim to the teachings of the Nazarene”. Petitions were being circulated all through the city to have Pilatus recalled, because he was an enemy of the emperor. You know that our governors have strict instructions to avoid an open break with their foreign subjects. To save the country from civil war, Pilatus finally sacrificed his prisoner, Joshua, who behaved with great dignity and who forgave all those who hated him. He was crucified amidst the howls and the laughter of the Jerusalem mob.

That is what Joseph told me, with tears running down his old cheeks. I gave him a gold piece when I left him, but he refused it and asked me to hand it to one poorer than himself. I also asked him about your friend Paul. He had known him slightly. He seems to have been a tent maker, who gave up his profession that he might preach the words of a loving and forgiving God, Who was so very different from that Jehovah of whom the Jewish priests are telling us all the time. Afterwards, Paul appears to have travelled much in Asia Minor and in Greece, telling the slaves that they were children of one loving Father and that happiness awaits all, both rich and poor, who have tried to live honest lives and have done good to those who were suffering and miserable...[76](#)

This is the main theme of this letter as far as the subject of our present discussion is concerned.

On pondering over this letter, one may easily understand which direction Christianity had taken – among the Israelites – soon after ‘Isa (‘a). Clearly it was a prophetic mission of a messenger sent by Allah – not a claim of divinity calling people to believe that God had taken a human form and descended to the earth to deliver mankind by offering an atonement for their sins.

Then some disciples of ‘Isa and/or those claiming connection with him, like Paul, and the disciples of disciples journeyed – after the said crucifixion – to various regions of the world, like India, Africa, Rome,

etc., and spread the message of Christianity. But soon after that, in the wake of those missionary activities, they differed among themselves about the basic teachings of the new religion. Was Christ a God? Was belief in Christ enough for salvation without any need of following the Mosaic Law? Was the religion of the Gospel an independent one which had abrogated the Mosaic Law? Or was it a part of the Mosaic religion sent merely to perfect it? In this way they divided into various sects and groups.[77](#)

We should keep in mind the fact that all the nations where Christianity was propagated in the beginning – like Rome and India, etc. – were at that time idol-worshippers, the Sabaeans, the Hindus or the Buddhists, etc. Also, there was some mystic influence on one side and the hold of Brahmanic philosophy on the other.

All these systems and religions believed, to a great extent, in incarnation and appearance of gods and deities in human form. Also, the beliefs of trinity in unity, a deity descending in human body, and its suffering and being crucified[78](#) to atone sins of mankind was very much prevalent among ancient idol-worshippers of India, China, Egypt, Chaledonia, Assyria and Iran. The same was the situation among ancient western idolators like Romans, Scandinavians, and others – as may be seen in the books written about ancient religions and beliefs.

Doane writes in his *Bible Myths and their Parallels in Other Religions*:

“If we return to India, we shall find that one of the most prominent features in the Indian theology is the doctrine of a divine triad, governing all things. This triad is called *Tri-murti* – from the Sanskrit (sic.) word *tri* (three) and *murti* (form) – and consists of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. It is an inseparable unity, though three in form.”[79](#)

Then he goes on to explain that Brahma is the Father; Vishnu, the Son; and Siva, the Holy Spirit. [80](#)

Then he writes [in the footnote] about Vishnu, the Son that he is “the Lord and Saviour Chrishna[81](#) The Supreme Spirit, in order to preserve the world, produced Vishnu. Vishnu came upon earth, for this purpose, in the form of Chrishna. He was believed to be an incarnation of the Supreme Being, one of the persons of their holy and mysterious trinity, to use their language, ‘The Lord and Saviour – three persons and one god.’ [82](#)

He writes that like the Christians, the Hindus too use the dove for the emblem of the third person of their trinity.[83](#)

[Doane further writes:]

“Mr. Faber, in his *Origin of Heathen Idolatry*, says: ‘Among the Hindoos, we have the Triad of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva; so, among the votaries of Buddha, we find the self-triplicated Buddha declared to be the same as the Hindoo Trimurti. Among the Buddhist sect of the Jainists (sic.), we have the triple jiva, in whom the Trimurti is similarly declared to be incarnated.’ [84](#)

[Doane further quotes from the same book of Mr. Faber:]

“Among the Chinese, who worship Buddha under the name of Fo, we find this God mysteriously multiplied into three persons... “ [85](#)

Doane now turns to Egypt:

“The priests of Memphis, in Egypt, explained this mystery to the novice, by intimating that the premier (first) monad created the dyad, who engendered the triad, and that it is this triad which shines through nature.

“Thulis, a great monarch, who at one time reigned over all Egypt, and who was in the habit of consulting the oracle of Serapis, is said to have addressed the oracle in these words:

“‘Tell me if ever there was before one greater than I, or will ever be one greater than me?’ ”

“The oracle answered thus:

“‘First God, afterward the Word, and with them the Holy Spirit, all these are of the same nature, and make but one whole, of which the power is eternal. Go away quickly, mortal, thou who hast but an uncertain life.’ ” [86](#)

Doane quotes Bonwick:

“Some persons are prepared to admit that the most astonishing development of the old religion of Egypt was in relation to the Logos or Divine Word, by whom all things were made, and who, though from God, was God.” [87](#)

It should be noted that these are the very words with which the Gospel of St. John begins. [88](#)

Doane quotes from Higgins’ *Anacalypsis* that: “Mithras, the Mediator, and Saviour of the Persians, was called the Logos.” [89](#)

Doane has proved that the ancient pagans used to believe in one god with three persons. He has extensively shown that the pagan belief of ‘trinity in unity’ was prevalent among the Greeks, Romans, Finns, Scandinavians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Phoenicians. [90](#)

[On the question of atonement], he writes:

“The idea of expiation by the sacrifice of a god was to be found among the Hindoos even in Vedic times.” [91](#)

Then giving the references, he, inter alia, writes.

“Crishna, the virgin-born, “the Divine Vishnu himself’ [92](#), ‘he who is without beginning, middle or end’, [93](#)

being moved 'to relieve the earth of her load',[94](#) came upon earth and redeemed man by his suffering – to save him."[95](#)

"In the earlier copies of Moor's *Hindu Pantheon* is to be seen as representations of Chrishna (as *Wittoba*) with marks of holes in both feet, and in others, of holes in the hands. [In Figures 4 and 5 of Plate II (Moor's work) the figures have nail-holes in both feet. Figure 6 has a round hole in the side;] to his collar or shirt hangs the emblem of a heart (which we often see in pictures of Christ Jesus). Instead of the crown of thorns usually put on the head of the Christians Saviour, it [Figure 7] has the turreted coronet of the Ephesian Diana..."[96](#)

Doane quotes Huc that among the Hindus, "the idea of redemption by a divine incarnation, who came into the world for the express purpose of redeeming mankind, was 'general and popular.'" [97](#)

"A sense of original corruption,' says Professor Monier Williams, 'seems to be felt by all classes of Hindoos, as indicated by the following prayer used after the Gayatri by some Vaishnavas.

"“I am sinful, I commit sin, my nature is sinful, I am conceived in sin. Save me, O thou lotus-eyed Heri (Saviour), the remover of sin.” ’ [98](#)

Rev. Geo. W. Cox remarks on two opposite conceptions of Krishna's character, in one of which he is described "as a self-sacrificing and unselfish hero", who is, "filled with divine wisdom and love, who offers up a sacrifice which he alone can make."[99](#)

"P. Andrada la Crozius, one of the first Europeans who went to Nepal and Thibet (sic.), in speaking of the god whom they worshipped there – Indra – tells us that they said he spilt his blood for the salvation of the human race, and that he was pierced through the body with nails. He further says that, although they do not say he suffered the penalty of the cross, yet they find, nevertheless, figures of it in their books." [100](#)

"The monk Giorgi in his *Tibetinum Alphabetum* (p. 203), has given plates of a crucified god, who was worshipped in Nepal... He calls it the god Indra." [Figure 9 of these plates] shows a cross having arms of equal length fixed much high on the stem; Thus, the head portion is shorter and the body portion longer – no one would think that it represented a man except for the image of face on it. [101](#)

What the Buddhists narrate about Buddha fits even more perfectly on what the Christians believe about Jesus Christ. The Buddhists call Buddha, the Messiah, the Only Begotten, the Saviour of the World, the God who sacrificed his life to wash away the offences of mankind, and thereby to make them partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven. [102](#)

This subject has been explained by many orientalists, like Bell,[103](#) Huc, Muller,[104](#) and others. [105](#)

This was a sample of the belief of deities taking human form, and of crucifixion and atonement as it was found in ancient religions prevalent in the nations among which Christianity was propagated in the very

beginning. The new religion very much attracted the people in all these places where the Christian missionaries went. And the reason was clear: The Christian Fathers took the fundamentals of Christianity and remoulded them in the moulds of idolatry, and in this way had the people attracted to their call and made it easier to them to accept their teachings.

This view is strengthened when we see how Paul and others disparage the wisdom and philosophy of the philosophers, and how they look down with disdain at rational argument, declaring that the Lord God prefers the foolishness of the fools to the wisdom of the wise.

The fact is that they presented their teaching to the schools of logic and philosophy, and the intellectuals rejected it saying that there was no way of even understanding, let alone accepting it. To overcome this difficulty, they started talking of revelation, apocalypse, and vision; and claimed that they were filled of the Holy Ghost. In this, they followed the life of the ignorant mystics who claim that their way is beyond the reach of reason and intellect. Thereafter, their missionaries went to various cities and regions (as described in the Acts of Apostles and the history books) and propagated Christianity.

Wherever they went, the masses welcomed them. The main reason of their success – and especially within the Roman Empire – was the simmering discontent and disgruntling despair which had spread everywhere because of the never-ending oppression and injustice; the ruling class treated the masses as their slaves and serfs; there was a yawning gap between the lives of the rulers and the subjects, an unbridgeable chasm between the high and the low classes; the extravagant life-style of the rich was sustained by the sweat and blood of the poor and slaves. In this social structure, the Christian missionaries called the people to brotherhood, love, equality, and good neighbourliness; they exhorted them to discard this world and its transient painful life and to concentrate on the pure and happy life that was in heaven. It was this theme which the ruling classes – the kings and emperors – found advantageous to themselves, and they thought that it was in their interest to turn a blind eye to the missionaries' activities; as a general rule this tacit understanding saved the new group from punishment, torture and banishment.

Their number kept increasing, and so did their power. A great multitude embraced Christianity within and outside the Roman Empire; it reached Africa and even India. Invariably, opening of a church heralded the closure or destruction of a temple. With number and power, their attitude changed. Not only that they disregarded the resistance of the pagan leaders (as they went on undermining idol-worship) they even refused obeisance to the rulers and emperors. Their refusal to obey imperial decrees in this respect resulted in their punishment, imprisonment and even murder. Many were tortured and killed; others imprisoned or banished.

This continued until Emperor Constantine came on throne. He accepted Christianity and recognized it as the State religion. Churches were built in Rome and throughout the empire. It was in the second half of the fourth century of Christian Era [106](#).

From then on, the Church of Rome became the centre of Christianity. Bishops and missionaries were sent to all regions and countries within the Roman Empire. Countless churches, monasteries, and seminaries (to teach Christianity) were built.

There is an important point which the reader should ponder on: All their talks and discussions begin on some evangelical postulates, like the theme of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the scheme of crucifixion and atonement, and similar other principles. They base their talks on these ideas as though they were self-evident truths – and then go on building their edifice on them. They do not realize that it is their first and basic weakness. No matter how strong and lofty a structure may be, it cannot make up for the weakness of the foundation. And the foundation on which they have built their edifice – the three-in-one theology and the crucifixion and atonement – is simply incomprehensible.

Many Christian scholars agree that it is an idea that cannot be understood. Still, they say that it is a religious tenet, therefore, it must be believed without asking for reason – after all, there are many things in religion which the reason says are impossible.

But it is one of the invalid ideas which spring from that invalid base. How can there be an impossible principle in the religion of truth? As far as we are concerned, it is through reason and understanding that we accept a religion and discern its truth and validity. How can a true belief contain something which reason invalidates? Is it not a contradiction in term?

Of course, religion accepts validity of miracles – the things which are possible in reason but abnormal; but an idea impossible in reason can never happen.

However, the above-mentioned way of “argument” led their thinkers and scholars into conflicts, discords, and disagreements in the very early days when the students gathered to learn Christianity in Alexandria, Rome, and other places.

The church increased its watchdog role to preserve the unity of creed. Whenever a differing view was expressed or new idea raised its head, the church called a council of the bishops and presbyters to convince the party concerned to leave their ideas and beliefs; and if they persisted, they were anathematized, banished, or even killed.

The first such council was held in Nicaea, to counter the views of Arius,[107](#) who said that the Son was not like the Father, that only God was eternal while Christ was a created being.

The bishops, and presbyters assembled at Constantinople, in presence of Emperor Constantine; they were three hundred and thirteen in number. They adopted the following creed:

We believe in one God, the Father, almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages,

light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into existence, who because of us men and because of our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnated from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father and will come again with glory to judge living and dead, of whose Kingdom there will be no end;

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is together worshipped and together glorified, Who spoke through the prophets; in one holy Catholic and apostolic church. We confess one baptism to the remission of sins; we look forward to the resurrection of the dead^{[108](#)}, and the life of the world to come^{[109](#)}. Amen!

That was the first Council; after that numerous Councils were held to anathematize newly appearing schisms, like the Nestorians, Jacobites, الالبيانية Ilyanites [?], اليليارسية Yalyarsites ^{[110](#)} [?], Macedonians,^{[111](#)} Noetus,^{[112](#)} Sabellians,^{[113](#)} Paulianists^{[114](#)} (or Paulicians),^{[115](#)} and many others.

The Church was ever vigilant in guarding what in its eyes was the true faith. The missionary work continued in full force, until by the end of fifth century all European governments (except Russia) were parts of Christendom: France, England, Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, etc., were all converted to Christianity by 496 C.E.

The Church continued to progress becoming stronger day by day. On the other hand, the Barbarians of the North were attacking the Roman Empire every now and then. The wars and internal strives and unrest weakened the Empire – until a time came when the people of Rome together with the victorious tribes decided to hand over the affairs of the State to the Church. Now the Pope of the time, Gregory the Great,^{[116](#)} had in his hand the reins of the temporal as well as the spiritual powers. It was in 590 C.E.

Consequently, the Church of Rome acquired absolute power over the Christians world. But by that time the Roman Empire had divided in two parts: the Western Roman Empire with its capital at Rome and the Eastern Roman (i.e. Byzantine) Empire with its capital at Constantinople. The Byzantine Emperors claimed for themselves the headship of Church within their domain, without accepting the authority of the Church of Rome. This led to the division of Christianity between the Catholics – the followers of the Church of Rome and the Orthodox, i.e., others.

Things continued in this manner, until the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople, and Palaeologus, the last Byzantine Emperor and Head of the Eastern (i.e. Orthodox) Church, was killed in the Cathedral, Hagia Sophia.^{[117](#)}

The Tzars of Russia now claimed the headship of the Church – as a legacy of the Byzantine Emperors to whom they were related by marriage. (Russia had been Christian since the tenth century.) The Russian Emperors thus became the Heads of the (Orthodox) Church in their land, independent of the (Catholic) Church of Rome. It was in 1454 C. E.

Things continued in this way for about five centuries, until the last Tzar, Nicholas, was killed, with all his family, in 1918, by the Communists. Thus, the Church of Rome almost returned to the condition that prevailed before the division.

Meanwhile, during the Middle Ages when the Vatican had reached the highest point of its glory and the Popes controlled every aspect of the people's lives, a lot of good Christians revolted against the Vatican in order to free themselves from the shackles which the Church had put on them.

One group refused to follow the Church of Rome or to obey the Popes, but they continued to accept the religion as interpreted by the Councils and agreed upon by their scholars. They are called the [Greek] Orthodox. Another group discarded the Roman Church altogether; they neither accept the Roman Church's interpretation of religion nor do they recognize the Pope's authority in any religious matter. They are the Protestants.

In this way, the Christians world is mainly divided into three sects: the Catholics who follow the Vatican and its teachings; the Orthodox, who accept the Catholic teachings but do not recognize the authority of the Vatican. As described above, this group resulted from the division of the Church [on the line of the Western and Eastern empires] and especially after the transfer of the Patriarchate from Constantinople to Moscow; and the Protestants, who recognize neither the authority of Vatican nor its teachings – they became independent in the fifteenth century of the Christian Era.

This is, in a nutshell, the history of the Christian Church of the last two millenniums. Those who know the main theme of our book, will understand why we have written here this short account of their history. Our goal was three-fold:

First: To provide to a research scholar an insight into various changes taking place in the religion of the Christians; and to make them aware as to how alien ideas have been implanted in their beliefs and rituals; how pagan superstitions and idolatrous thoughts have crept into Christianity – by hereditary influences, or social concession, or wilful adoption, or just because of die-hard old habits.

Second: The power of the Church – and especially the Church of Rome – gradually increased until it reached its zenith in the Middle Ages; the Popes had taken both temporal and spiritual powers in their hands, and the kings and emperors in Europe had to submit to the Papal decrees and pay homage to the Popes. The Popes placed on throne whomsoever they wished and removed from it whoever they wished. [118](#)

It is narrated that the Pope once ordered the German emperor to stand barefoot on the door of the Papal Palace for three days (in winter) – for expiation of some mistakes which he beseeched the Pope to forgive. [119](#)

On another occasion, the Pope kicked with his foot the crown of a king who had approached him kneeling down to seek Papal pardon. [120](#)

Those church leaders had described the Muslims to their followers in a way that the Christians were bound to regard Islam as a religion of idol-worshippers. You will see it in the slogans and poems which were written to incite and arouse the Christians against the Muslims during the Crusades which raged between the two powers for long years.

The Christians were led to believe¹²¹ that the Muslims worshipped idols; that they believed in three gods: (1) Mahom (who is also called افوميد Afomed [?]) and Mahound, he is the first among gods and he is Muhammad; (2) Apollo who is the second; and (3) Termagant who is the third. Others added two more to this list: مارتوان to Maratwan [?] and Jupiter; but their rank was below the first three. They said that Muhammad's religion was based on his claim of divinity – that he claimed to be god. Sometimes the “information” was added that Muhammad had taken for himself an idol made of gold.

Richard composed poems to incite the Franks against the Muslims, in which he, inter alia, says: “Arise and dislodge Mahound and Termagant and throw them into fire, so that you may get near your God.”

Roland described Mahom, the “god of Muslims”, in a poem, in which he says: “It is made of gold and silver; if you see it, you will know that no artisan can even imagine a more beautiful face, let alone make it; big in size, admirable in workmanship, majesty radiating from its features, Mahom is made of gold and silver, its brilliant splendour dazzles the eyes to blindness; it has been placed on an elephant which is the finest work of art; its stomach is hollow, and an onlooker may find lustrous light glowing from it (because) it is set with precious brilliant gems, (it is transparent, and) its inside may be seen from outside; its fine workmanship is matchless.

“The gods of Muslims used to inspire them at times of trouble and turmoil. The Muslims were once defeated in a battle; so, their commander sent someone to call their god who was in Mecca (i.e., Muhammad, S). An ‘eye-witness’ says that the god (i.e., Muhammad, S) came to them; a huge mob of his followers surrounded him; they were beating drums, playing lutes, and blowing pipes and bagpipes made of silver; singing and dancing around him they brought him to the battleground, they were full of joy and happiness, making merry. His deputy was waiting for him; when he arrived (the deputy) stood up and began worshipping him with humbleness and humility.”

Richard explains the revelation sent by the god, Mahom, in this manner: “The sorcerers captured a genie and put it in the stomach of that idol. That genie used to thunder and hammer inside and then speak to the Muslims, who listened to him with rapt attention.”

Such droll flippancies are found in a lot of their books written during, or about, the Crusades. Our readers will, no doubt, be astounded and scandalized to read such accounts of their pure religion – may be some would even doubt the authenticity of these quotations. After all, they have ascribed such things to Islam that no one has ever seen in his life, nor has any Muslim imagined them or even dreamt of them.¹²²

Third: A deep thinker may easily recognize the changes that have occurred in the Christianity during the

past twenty centuries. The idolatrous beliefs crept imperceptibly into Christianity: first it was excessive reverence for Christ; then his message was cast into the mould of trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), which was further developed in the theory of crucifixion and atonement, which in its turn gave rise to the belief that law and obedience to it was not needed at all, the faith was sufficient for salvation.

At first it appeared in religious garb; the Church insisted on some religious rites like prayer, fast and baptism. But opposite trends continued to grow, and various ideas raised their heads, until the Protestantism appeared on the scene; the political turmoil and unrest gave way to formal secular laws based on the principle of freedom in the matters which were not covered by those laws. In this way, the teachings of religion became weaker and weaker, and continued to give ground to anti-religion forces, until moral values and virtuous conduct could not stand the onslaught of materialism which “the unrestricted freedom” had let loose on humanity.

Then appeared socialism and communism, based on Dialectic Materialism; belief in God and adherence to moral virtues and religious rites and deeds were discarded. Spiritual humanism was succeeded by materialistic animality composed of only two instincts: greed to gain for oneself whatever one desires and impulse to crush down whoever comes in one’s way. Today the world is speeding to that animalistic goal, to its doom.

Various new religious revival movements that have lately appeared everywhere are, but political games invented and played by political groups, who want to attain their goals through them. We know that politics, as a profession, now knocks at every door and uses every conceivable device to realize its aims.

According to Dr. Joseph Sittler, of Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, the underlying weakness of the current U. S. religious revival is that it seeks to give divine sanction to the cultural values modern man lives by. ‘We make God say amen to what we believe, instead of saying amen to God.’ The greatest danger, he feels, is that this pious self-flattery may immunize Americans against any desire to join in a genuine religious revival if one should arise. [123](#)

According to Dr. Georges Florovsky, the ‘foremost U. S. spokesman for Russian Orthodoxy’, Christian teaching, which reaches most Americans through sentimental literature, consoles them instead of awakening them through deeply felt or ‘witnessed’ experience. [124](#)

Whence the caravan of religion started from, and where has it arrived? The message began in the name of revival of religion (i.e., belief), morality (i.e., virtuous character) and the *Shari’ah* (good deeds); and ended up by repudiating and abolishing all of it, replacing it with animalistic enjoyment.

This has happened because of the first deviation affected by St. Paul the Apostle and his disciples. We are living in a civilization that admittedly threatens mankind with extinction. Some people say that Christ is the leader and standard-bearer of the modern civilization. But it would be nearer to truth to call it the Paulian civilization.

Traditions

Al-Qummi narrates about the verse: ***It is not meet for a man that Allah should give him the Book and the Wisdom and Prophethood, then he should say to men, "Be my servants rather than Allah's" (3:79).*** "Surely 'Isa did not say to men: 'I have created you, therefore you should be my servants rather than Allah's', rather he said to them: 'Be worshippers of the Lord', that is, having true knowledge." [125](#)

The author says: The context and associations given in the Commentary support this explanation. "Surely 'Isa did not say to men: 'I have created you.' " It is a sort of a proof to show that he had not said it. Had he told them to worship him, it would have been necessary to tell them that he was their creator; but he had not said it, nor had he created them.

The same exegete narrates about the verse: ***Or that he should enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for lords.*** (3:80), There were people who worshipped the angels; the Christians thought 'Isa was the Lord; and the Jews said that 'Uzayr was the Son of God. Allah therefore said that no prophet would enjoin you that you should take the angels and the prophets for Lords." [126](#)

The author says: It has been explained in the Commentary.

It is narrated in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* from Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Bayhaqi (in his *Dala'il an-Nubuwwah*) from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "When the Jewish scholars and Christians of Najran gathered near the Messenger of Allah (S) and he invited them to Islam, Abu Rafi' al-Qurazi said: 'Do you wish, O Muhammad, that we should worship you as the Christians worship 'Isa son of Maryam?' Thereupon a Christian of Najran said: 'Well, do you want this from us, O Muhammad?' The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'I seek refuge in Allah that we should worship other than Allah, or that we should enjoin worship of someone else; He has neither sent me with it nor has He enjoined me this.' Therefore, Allah, revealed the verses (because of their question): It is not meet for a man... after you are Muslims (submitting ones)?" [127](#)

It is reported in the same book: " 'Abd Ibn Hamid has narrated from al-Hasan that he said: 'I have been told that a man said: "O Messenger of Allah! We greet you (exactly) as we greet each other. Should not we prostrate before you?" He said: "*No. But you should honour your Prophet and recognize the right of the ones having that right; because prostration should not be done for anyone other than Allah.*" Then Allah revealed the verses: It is not meet for a man... after you are Muslims (submitting ones)?"' [128](#)

The author says: Also, other events have been narrated concerning revelation of these verses. Obviously, all of them are based on academic inferences: and we have discussed in detail about them. Also, it is possible for various reasons to combine in relation to one verse. And Allah knows better.

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- [1.](#) i.e., the tribesmen of the Messenger of Allah (S).
 - [2.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verses 3:35– 44; 19:16; 21:91; 66:12.
 - [3.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verses 3:33–50.
 - [4.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verses 19:20–27.
 - [5.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verses 19:27– 33.
 - [6.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verses 3:45 – 58; 4:157 – 158; 5:110 – 111; 43:63 – 65; 61:6 – 14.
 - [7.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verses 19:30.
 - [8.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verse 3:49.
 - [9.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verses 5:46; 33:7; 42:13.
 - [10.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verse 3:45.
 - [11.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verse 4:171.
 - [12.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verse 33:7.
 - [13.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verses 4:159; 5:117.
 - [14.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verse 61:6.
 - [15.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verse 3:45.
 - [16.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verse 3:33.
 - [17.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verses 6:85 – 87.
 - [18.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verses 19:19–33.
 - [19.](#) Refer to Qur'an, verse 3:48.
 - [20.](#) Because the situation demands self-abasement, not relaxedness. (Author's note).
 - [21.](#) Like ash-Shahristani in his *al-Milal wa 'n-nihal*. (Author's Note).

The author has taken these descriptions from ash-Shahristani (vide *al-Milal wa 'n-nihal* [Egypt, 1381 A.H. = 1961 C.E.] vol. 1, pp. 220 – 228). But ash-Shahristani's information is superfluous and apparently based on hearsay; and his comments on Christianity remind us one of his flight of fancy regarding Shi'ite faith and its various imaginary branches.

The fact is that almost all the splits in the early Christian Church were centred around the nature and substance of the Christ. It is not the place to go into historical details. Suffice it to say that gradually four groups had come into being about the nature of Jesus Christ:

Homoousians who believe that the Son was of one substance with the Father; they are called the Orthodox;

Homoeans who believed that the Son was like the Father; they are called the Arians;

Homoiousians who believed that the Son was of like substance with the Father; they are called the Semi-Arians;

Anomoeans who believed that the Son was unlike the Father; they are called Ultra-Arians.

Ultimately the Orthodox (Homoousians) prevailed. They say that the Son was of one substance with the Father, and that the Incarnate Christ was a single Person of a double nature – Divine and human – at one God and man.

All the sects are united on the "sonship", although they differ in its interpretation. That is why the Qur'an rejects sonship – and the resulting trinity – to refute the Christians' belief in general. (tr.).

[22.](#) Melkites (or Melchites) were those Christians of Syria and Egypt who, refusing the doctrine of Monophysitism (the doctrine that in the Person of the Incarnate Christ there was but a single, that is, Divine, nature, as opposed to the orthodox belief of a single person of double nature), and accepting the definition of faith of the Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.), remained in communion with the Imperial See of Constantinople; hence their name that means "Emperor's men". (ash-Shahristani thinks that Malka was some individual who started this sect!) They like other Orthodox Christians, believe that the Logo (Word) of God being conjoined with the man Jesus – together called the Christ – was begotten in a non-literal sense by God. They do not believe in physical human-like sonship. Today there are about a million Melkites, most of them belonging to the Patriarchate of Antioch, whose headquarters are at Damascus. (tr.).

[23.](#) Nestorians: Followers of Nestorius (cir. 380 – 451 C.E.), who was the Patriarch of Constantinople (428 – 431 C.E.). He believed that there were two separate Persons in the Incarnate Christ – that the physical nature of Jesus was separate from his divine one, as opposed to the orthodox doctrine. According to him, it was Jesus the man, who was born of the Virgin Mary. Consequently, he rejected the term, Theotokos, (lit., God-bearer; usually translated as "Mother of God"), that was used to refer to Maryam. For this heresy he was anathematized by the Council of Ephesus (431 C.F.). (ash-Shahristani

says that Nestorius lived during the reign of al-Ma'mun – 813 – 833 C. E.) (tr.).

[24.](#) Jacobites: The body of the Syrian Monophysites who rejected the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.) on the Person of the Christ. Monophysitism was the doctrine that in the Person of the Incarnate Christ there was but a single, that is, Divine, nature, as opposed to the orthodox belief of a single person of double nature. They were named after Jacob Baradaeus through whom they became the national Church of Syria. They flourished despite recurring Imperial persecutions, which led them to welcome the Muslim army when it attacked Syria. Although there were many converts to Islam (cir. 640 C.F.), the Jacobite Church continued. The Mongol invasions in 13th and 14th centuries caused their real decline. (tr.).

[25.](#) The quotations of the Old and New Testaments, here and elsewhere, are from King James version, because the Arabic version (printed in 1811 C.E.) used by the author, conforms to it. (tr.).

[26.](#) Baptism is a Christian sacrament of initiation into Church by immersing in water or sprinkling water on the head. (Author's note).

[27.](#) The three proofs point to the above-mentioned three arguments respectively. (tr.)

[28.](#) That is what most of the Christians believe. But some of them, like Bishop Mar Ishaq, say that there is no difficulty if one refrains from inflicting a threatened punishment. In other words, it is all right not to fulfil a threat, although one is not allowed to break a promise of reward. (Author's Note).

Bishop Mar Ishaq's view has been taken from ash-Shahristani's al-Milal wa an-nihal, pp. 223 – 224. (tr.).

[29.](#) "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ – the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John, 2/1–2) (Author's Note).

[30.](#) For details, see the Commentary of the verses 2:35–39 Vide al-Mizan [Engl. transl.], Vol 1, pp. 178 – 213. (pub.)

[31.](#) See our discourse on the sinlessness of the prophets given in the Commentary of the verse 2:213 Vide al-Mizan [Engl. transl.], Vol 3, pp.195 – 204. (pub.).

[32.](#) We are not talking about a situation whereby someone had committed a sin and his descendants were pleased with his action, because in that case all would be counted as sinners.

[33.](#) See discourse on the "Deeds", under verses 2:216 – 218. Vide al-Mizan [Engl. transl.], vol. 3, pp. 239 – 278. (tr.).

[34.](#) Refer the above-mentioned discourse on Deeds.

[35.](#) "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." (Gen., 6/6). (Author's Note).

[36.](#) Epistle of Paul, chapter 1, I Corinthians, 1/19 – 23. (tr.).

[37.](#) "But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying: why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them: they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke, 5/30 – 32) (Author's Note).

[38.](#) "Also, I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." (Luke, 12/8 – 9) (Author's Note).

[39.](#) The phrase means 'unknown territory' [Note by Al-Islam.org].

[40.](#) For details see Commentaries of the verses 1:4 (the Master of the Day of Judgment), Vide al-Mizan [Engl. transl.], vol. 1, pp. 29 – 31. (pub.) and verse, Say: 'O Allah, Master of the Kingdom...' (3:26), vol. 5, pp. 193 – 202. (pub.).

[41.](#) Vide al-Mizan [Engl. transl.], vol.1, pp.221 – 265. (pub.).

[42.](#) It is said that the first man to place idols in the Ka'bah and to call the people to their worship was 'Amr Ibn Luhayy, a contemporary of Shapur Dhu'l-Aktaf. He became the chief of his people in Mecca and took over the management of the House. Then he journeyed to the Syrian city, al-Balqa', and found the people there worshipping idols. He enquired about it. They said: "These are the Lords, we have made them in the images of the celestial deities and human sages; we seek help from them and we get help; we pray to them for rain and we get rain." 'Amr requested them to give him one of the idols; they gave him the Hubal. He brought it to Mecca and putting it on the Ka'bah, he invited the Meccans to worship it. He also had with him Asaf and Na'ilah in the image of a couple; he called people to them too in order to come nearer to Allah through them. This has been written by ash-Shahristani in his al-Milal wa 'n-nihal, as well as by others. It is very

interesting to see that the Qur'an uses names of some idols of Arabia in the story of Nuh ('a), where it quotes his complaint against his people: "By no means leave your gods, nor leave Wadd, nor Suwa'; nor Yaghuth, and Ya'uq and Nasr" (71:23). (Author's Note).

[43.](#) The Hebrew Old Testament contains 39 Books, as the list given by the author himself shows. Roman Catholic Church follows the Greek O. T. which includes some more books and passages. (tr.).

[44.](#) Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. (Author's Note).

[45.](#) Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. (Author's Note).

[46.](#) Proverbs, Ecclesiastics and Song of Solomon. (Author's Note).

[47.](#) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. (Author's Note) .

[48.](#) There are fourteen Epistles of Paul, one of James, two of Peter, three of John and one of Jude. (Author's Note) .

[49.](#) Paul writes to Galatians: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ." (Gal., 1/6 – 7)

an-Najjar has given in his Qasas al-Anbiya', this and similar other quotations from the Epistles of Paul to prove that there was there a book – other than the four Gospels – which was called the Injil of the Messiah. (Author's Note)

[50.](#) The author in this section has given a lot of references from the Christian and western writers. He had to rely on Arabic translations of English or other languages, given in Tafsir al-Manar (ed., Rashid Rida, Egypt, 4th ed., 1380/1961, vol. 6, pp.31 – 36 and 88 – 92), and some other books and Encyclopaedias. I tried to get hold of original sources, so that in my translation I could include those quotations in their original wordings – it would have been odd to retranslate into English an English passage through its Arabic rendering. Unfortunately, oriental authors generally do not give the original spellings of the names of western writers or their work, nor do they put vowels on them to help in pronunciation. To compound the difficulty, there were some printing mistakes in al-Manar which were faithfully copied in al-Mizan. For example, Anacalypsis of Higgins appears as الانگلساكسن (al-Anglo-Saxon) in Arabic, and Monier Williams has become Morifore Lims! After spending more than a month in various sections of the British Library, London, I was able to get many sources – and then it transpired that a large portion of quotations given in al-Manar was not taken directly from the original books, but from Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions (by Doane, Thomas William).

There are still some names which I could not ascertain. While writing such a name in English I have given first the Arabic rendering, then its English transliteration followed by question mark within brackets [?]. I shall be obliged if any reader could help me in finding their correct spellings. (tr.).

[51.](#) This happened before the time of Musa. At that time the rulers of Egypt had not yet adopted the title 'Pharaoh' [Note of al-Islam.org].

[52.](#) There appeared two Kingdoms, Judah in the south and Israel in the north. (tr.).

[53.](#) Modern scholars think that it happened in 397 B.C. (tr.).

[54.](#) Vide Qamus al-Kitabi 'l-Muqaddas (Dictionary of the Bible) by هاكس Mr. Hawks [?], and other books of history. (Author's Note).

Translator's Note: The first five books of the Old Testament, commonly known as the Torah, are also called Pentateuch. In the 18th Century, some Christian scholars started what is now known as the "Higher Criticism". Their views are now accepted by a great part of Christianity. They have proved that it contains writings of unknown number of people right up to 1000 years after the death of Musa. I append below the time table and sequence of its editing (in short) as given by Rev. William Kemp Lowther Clarke, in his Concise Bible Commentary (S.P.C.K., London, 1952): He says that by the end of the 19th Century, it was generally recognized "that there are four main sources in the Pentateuch, to be assigned to the 9th, 8th, 7th and 5th or 4th Centuries (B.C.) respectively."

"The first look at the Pentateuch shows three characteristic styles illustrated by Genesis:1, Genesis:2 and Deuteronomy, and the documents marked by these styles were first to be noticed."

"The obviously early source begins in Gen. 2/4. This source is called 'J', after the J of Jehovah (pronounced Jahweh). 'J' is generally thought to have been put into written form about 850 B.C.

“Another source is ‘D’, so-called from the book of Deuteronomy, which was the book of law discovered in Josiah’s reign. The third source is called Priestly document, P for short. A large part of P is believed to have been composed in Babylonia and brought to Jerusalem by Ezra in 397 B.C. How much of P was omitted in final compilation of Pentateuch we have no means of knowing. There was a subordinate source, known as the Code of Holiness, H for short. Opinions differ whether it was written before 586 B.C. or after the fall of Jerusalem. It is found in Lev. 17/28.

“Now comes the fourth source. After taking P, D and J from the Pentateuch a considerable amount of material remains, parallel to J, but in Genesis using Elohim for God and not Yahweh. This non-P Elohim matter begins in Gen. 20/1 – 17 ... Altogether E is more mature religiously and is thought to have reached written from about 750 (B.C.).”

How were these four main sources compiled to form the Pentateuch? ‘The first step was to combine J and E. This must have been done after the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. The two were combined in a document which is called JE. Then in 621 Deuteronomy was discovered, or at least a large part of it.

The next stage was to put JE, and D together. This will have taken place during the exile. A perceptible amount of editing of JE took place. P was written in Babylonia and brought to Jerusalem by Ezra in 397 B.C. Later, editors used it as a framework and incorporated JED, thus producing the Pentateuch ... in about 300 B.C.”

Rev. Clarke sums it up in these words: “Probably a multitude of persons have combined to give us Genesis (etc.), covering in their lives a span of 1,000 years.”

Even that minority of the Christian scholars which still holds fast to the theory of “Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch has to admit that it must have been rewritten by the subsequent generations to modernize the language. This concession has to be given because “it is hardly probable that the Hebrew of Moses’ day was like that of Biblical Hebrew.” See the Westminster Dictionary of Bible, under “Pentateuch”.

[55.](#) [هاكس Hawks \[?\]](#), Dictionary of Bible, under “Matthew”. (Author’s Note).

This Book is referred to hereafter as Dic. of Bib. (tr.).

[56.](#) Vide Mizan al-haqq; Dic. of Bib., too admits it with some reluctance. (Author’s Note)

[57.](#) ‘Abd al-Wahhab an-Najjar, Qasas al-anbiya’, [p.400, 2nd ed., Cairo, n.d.], quoting from [بطرس قرماج Batrus Qarmaj \[?\]](#) Maruj al-akhbar fi tarajimi ‘l-abrar [Beirut, 1880]. (Author’s Note).

As described in the Dic. of Bib. It says: “Although the early fathers unanimously say that St. Mark had written his Gospel in Rome and that it was published after the deaths of Sts. Peter and Paul, but this is not very credible, because it appears from his Gospel that he had written it for the tribes and villagers, not for the (civilized) people leaving in cities – and especially Rome.” Ponder on this statement. (Author’s Note).

[58.](#) As described in the Dic. of Bib. It says: “Although the early fathers unanimously say that St. Mark had written his Gospel in Rome and that it was published after the deaths of Sts. Peter and Paul, but this is not very credible, because it appears from his Gospel that he had written it for the tribes and villagers, not for the (civilized) people leaving in cities – and especially Rome.” Ponder on this statement. (Author’s Note).

[59.](#) Vide Dic. of Bib., under the heading “Paul”. (Author’s Note).

[60.](#) See the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul. (Author’s Note).

[61.](#) Luke begins his Gospel with these words:

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word. It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.” (Luke, 1/1 – 3)

It clearly shows that it is a book based on human understanding, not on revelation. This view has also been attributed to [كډل Mr. Cadell \[?\]](#) in the booklet, Revelation. St. Jerome has said that some early Fathers had doubts about the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke, and that they were missing from the version of the Marcionites*. Eichhorn** declares in his book (p.95) that verses 43 to 47 of the 2nd chapter of the Luke’s Gospel are an interpolation. Also, he says on p. 61 of his book: “Fictitious narratives have been mixed up in description of miracles mentioned by Luke; and the writer has included them as poetic exaggeration. But it is difficult at this point of time to separate truth from falsehood.” And an-Najjar quotes in Qasas al-anbiya’ (p. 401) the saying of [كلي مي شيس Mr. Clemesious \[?\]](#) that: Matthew and Mark differ in their narration; and when they identify, their report would be given preference over that of Luke (Author’s Note).

* Marcionites, followers of Marcion (d. cir. 160), who rejected the Law and believed in Gospel of Love only. He rejected the Old Testament and believed that the twelve Apostles and the Evangelists were blind to this reality and only St. Paul understood it. For them the only Canonical Scriptures were ten of the fourteen Epistles of Paul. (tr.).

** Eichhorn, Johann Gottfried (1752 – 1827) was Biblical scholars and orientalist. He was among the first to make comparison between the Biblical Books and other Semitic languages; and one of the earliest critics who laid foundation of the High Criticism of the Bible. (tr.).

[62.](#) Vide Dic. of Bib., under John. (Author's Note).

[63.](#) Cerinthus, who flourished around 100 C.E., was a Gnostic “heretic”. Among other things, he taught that Jesus began his earthly life as a mere man; at his baptism ‘the Christ’, a “higher divine power”, descended on him, only to depart from him again before the crucifixion. He seems to have had connections both with the Ebionites and Alexandrine Gnosticism. (tr.).

[64.](#) Ebionites, literally ‘poor men’, were a sect of Christian Jews that flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era. Apparently, two of their principal tenets were: (i) belief in humanity of the Person of Christ, to the effect, for example, that Jesus was the human son of Joseph and Mary, and that the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove lighted on him at his baptism; and (ii) emphasis on the binding character of the Mosaic Law. (tr.).

[65.](#) an-Najjar, Qasas al-anbiya’, quoting Jirjis Zuwayn al-Futuhi of Lebnon. (Author's Note).

[66.](#) an-Najjar, op. cit., quoting from the Catholic Herald, 1844, vol.7, p. 205 quoting استادلن Ostadelane [?]; also Dic. of Bib. points to it, under ‘John’. (Author's Note).

[67.](#) It is the view of Bretschneider, as an-Najjar has written in his Qasas al-anbiya’, quoting from al-Faruq., vol. 1. (Author's Note).

Bretschneider, Karl Gottlieb (1776 – 1848) had written a treatise on the Gospel of John in 1820. (tr.).

[68.](#) It is the view of Bretschneider, as an-Najjar has written in his Qasas al-anbiya’, quoting from al-Faruq., vol. 1. (Author's Note).

Bretschneider, Karl Gottlieb (1776 – 1848) had written a treatise on the Gospel of John in 1820. (tr.).

[69.](#) Traditionally, the Gospel of Matthew is held to be the oldest of the four. But modern scholars commonly hold that it is Mark which is the oldest. There occurs a large amount of common subject matter in the three Synoptic Gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark and Luke) and often similar phrasing in more than one Gospel. That this parallelism, of varying degree of closeness, must be accounted for by their literary interdependence is nowadays almost universally held by scholars. There is also wide, but less complete, agreement that

(1) Mark is the earliest of the three Gospels and was used as a framework by both Matthew and Luke;

(2) the non-Markan material common to Matthew and Luke is derived from a single lost source known to critics as ‘Q’ (from German ‘Quelle’ = source); and

(3) the authors of Matthew and Luke used further sources for the matter peculiar to them. In view of the fact that Matthew drew extensively on Mark, which he expanded with the aid of ‘Q’, the early tradition that the Gospel was written in Hebrew is untenable.

The chief objection to its ascription to St. Matthew is the unlikelihood that an Apostle, who was an eyewitness of the events, would have taken as his principal source of the work of St. Mark, whose material is in any case second-hand. Vide The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2nd ed., 1974 (OUP). See also the Concise Bible Commentary (by Rev. W. K. L. Clark; pub. by S. P. C. K., London, 1952) and the Westminster Dictionary of Bible.

It is not only the Gospel of Matthew whose author is unknown; the Gospel of John suffers from the same fate. Many scholars believe that its author was some disciple and follower of the Apostle John the son of Zebedee. “His name is either unknown to us, or more likely, was John the Presbyter, or Elder.” (tr.).

[70.](#) This subject has been described in detail by the scholar Behruz, in a book he recently wrote on the Prophetic foretelling. I hope to quote some parts of it at the end of the Commentary of Chapter Four “The Women”. What is certain (and with which we are concerned here) is the incorrectness of the Christians Era. (Author's Note).

[71.](#) Vide the Dic. of Bib., under Christ. (Author's Note).

[72.](#) Celsus, the 2nd Century's philosopher, admonished the Christians, in his book, Logos Alethes (The True Word) for their manipulations of the Gospels – that they erase by tomorrow what they had written yesterday. [He wrote this book about 176

– 180 C.E. It was the first notable polemic against Christianity. The book itself has perished, but fragments of high interest occur as quotations in Origen’s *Contra Celsum*].

*In 384, Pope Damasus ordered a new Latin translation of the Old and New Testaments to be prepared for the Church – Emperor Theodosius had become tired of the polemics and controversies raging among the bishops. That translation, called Vulgate, was completed; it covered only the four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The editors wrote: “After comparing various old Greek copies, we edited them, that is, we discarded what was contradictory, and left the remaining parts as they were.” That version was confirmed by the Trent Council held in 1546, that is, some eleven centuries later. In 1590, Pope Sixtus V declared that it contained errors and mistakes, and ordered a new version to be published. Pope Clement VIII found fault with the second version too and ordered, in 1592, publication of a new revised version – which is used by the Catholic Church today. (Tafsir al-Jawahir, 2nd ed., vol. 2, p.121) (Author’s Note)

* Note: The material given within the brackets, here and elsewhere in the text or within the Author’s Notes, has been added by the Translator for deeper understanding or greater clarity. (tr.).

[73.](#) This Gospel in Italian had been discovered some time ago. Dr. Khalil Sa’adah of Egypt translated it into Arabic, and the well-known scholar Sardar Kabuli, into Persian in Iran. (Author’s Note).

The said manuscript was found in the Imperial Library, Vienna. Lonsdale and Laura Ragg edited the Italian text and translated it into English, which was published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, in 1907. It was from that version that the above-mentioned Arabic version was prepared. Strange as it may seem, now only two copies of the 1907 edition are known to exist, one in the British Library, London, and the other in the Library of Congress, Washington. Within the last two decades Begum Aisha Bawany Waqf, Karachi, has printed it several times and distributed it widely throughout the Muslim World.

Understandably, the Christians, including the translators (Lonsdale and Laura Ragg) themselves claim that the Vienna manuscript is spurious, not genuine. Their arguments deserve careful consideration. (tr.).

[74.](#) It appears in the book, under the heading “The Story of Joshua of Nazareth, whom the Greeks called Jesus.” I have copied verbatim a part of the physician’s letter which the author of *al-Mizan* has given only a gist of it. (tr.).

[75.](#) This, when it was 62 C.E., and they were older men! Strange, isn’t it? (Author’s Comment).

[76.](#) Van Loon, Hendrick Willem: *The Story of Mankind*, London, 1922, pp. 119 – 123. (tr.)

[77.](#) It is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul; also, it is admitted by the Christians themselves. (Author’s Note).

[78.](#) Killing by crucifixion is one of the oldest methods. They used to crucify the hardest criminals who had committed very heinous crimes, because crucifixion was the most torturous way of killing and left the blackest stigma on the name of the one so executed. The cross was made by joining two wooden logs at an angle with each other [like T, t or X] as we see the crosses nowadays; it was done in a way that a man could be placed on it. The criminal was attached to it with outstretched hands and arms; his palms were fixed on the horizontal piece with nails, and the legs nailed to the upright post – sometimes they were tied to it and not nailed. Then the cross was erected vertically in the earth, leaving a space of about a yard between the earth and the victim’s feet. He was left on the cross for a day or more; then his legs were broken, and he was killed on the cross, or was brought down from the cross and then killed. The victim, before being put on cross, was tortured, whipped, or mutilated. It was an indelible disgrace for a family or clan if one of them was crucified. (Author’s Note).

[79.](#) Doane, Thomas William: *Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions; being a comparison of the Old and New Testament myths and miracles with those of heathen nations of antiquity, considering also their origin and meaning*; New York, 1883, p. 369. (tr.)

[80.](#) Doane, Thomas William: *Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions*.

[81.](#) The author of *al-Mizan*, like many others, opines that the word ‘Krishna’ has been taken in European languages as Christ, to mean the Anointed Saviour. (tr.).

[82.](#) Doane, Thomas William: *Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions*, p. 370 (tr).

[83.](#) Doane, Thomas William: *Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions*, footnote no. 4 (tr).

[84.](#) Doane, Thomas William: *Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions*, p. 371 (tr).

[85.](#) Doane, op cit., p. 372 (tr).

[86.](#) Doane, op. cit., p.373, quoting from Higgins, Godfrey: *Anacalypsis: An Enquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations,*

and Religions; London, vol. 2, p. 14. (tr.).

[87.](#) Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions quoting Bonwick, James: Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought; London, 1878; p.402. (tr.).

[88.](#) Doane op cit., says on p.375: “The celebrated passage: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,’ is a fragment of some Pagan treatise on the Platonic philosophy, evidently written by Irenaeus.” And he writes a footnote on it: “The first that we know of this Gospel [i.e., John] for certain is during the time of Irenaeus, the great, Christian forger.” (tr.).

[89.](#) Doane, op cit., p.373, footnote no. 5, quoting Higgins: Anacalypsis, vol. 2, p. 102. (tr.).

[90.](#) Doane, op. cit., Vide his chapter, ‘The Trinity’, pp. 368 – 383, where he mentions some other ancient nations too, having such beliefs. (tr.).

[91.](#) Doane, op. cit., p. 181.

[92.](#) Vishnu Purana, A System of Hindoo Mythology and Tradition, translated by H.H. Wilson; London, 1840; p. 440. (tr.).

[93.](#) Vishnu Purana, A System of Hindoo Mythology and Tradition, translated by H.H. Wilson; London, 1840; p. 440. (tr.).

[94.](#) Vishnu Purana, A System of Hindoo Mythology and Tradition, translated by H.H. Wilson; London, 1840; p. 440. (tr.).

[95.](#) Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions. p. 185, quoting Edward Moor: Plates Illustrating the Hindu Pantheon; London, 1816; and Higgins: Anacalypsis, vol. 2. (tr.).

[96.](#) Doane, Thomas William: Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions, p.185, quoting Edward Moor: Plates Illustrating the Hindu Pantheon; London, 1816; and Higgins: Anacalypsis, vol. 2. (tr.).

[97.](#) Doane op. cit., quoting M. l’Abbe Huc: Travels (Christianity in China, Tartary and Thibet); London, 1857, vol. 1, pp. 326 – 327. (tr.).

[98.](#) Doane op. cit., quoting Monier Williams: Hinduism, London, 1877, p. 214. (tr.).

[99.](#) Cox, George William, The Mythology of the Aryan Nations; London, 1870, vol. 2, p. 132. (tr.).

[100.](#) Doane, op. cit., pp. 187 – 188, quoting Higgins: op. cit., p.118. (tr.).

[101.](#) Doane, op. cit., pp. 187.

[102.](#) Doane, op. cit., pp. 18–189.

[103.](#) John Bell, New Pantheon, or Historical Dictionary of Gods, Demi-Gods, Heroes and Fabulous Personages of Antiquity... in two volumes, London, 1790. (tr.).

[104.](#) Max Muller, A History of Ancient Sanscrit Literature, so far as it illustrates the Primitive Religion of the Brahmins; London, 1860. (tr.).

[105.](#) Vide chapter XX (The Crucifixion of Christ Jesus) of the Doane’s Book. (tr.)

The author of al-Mizan writes: “The reader will find these quotations in Tafsir al-Manar (vol. 6, under the Chapter of ‘The Women’), various encyclopaedias and the book, al-‘Aqa’id al-wathaniyyah fi ’d-diyanati ’n-Nasraniyyah, and others.” The last-named book is authored by Muhammad Tahir fandi. (tr.).

[106.](#) It happened in the first (not the second) half of the fourth century. Constantine I (the Great) established Christianity as State religion in 324; Nicaean Council was held in 325; his new capital at Byzantium was inaugurated in 330 (hence Byzantine Empire) which was renamed Constantinople (City of Constantine); he died in 337. (tr.).

[107.](#) Arius was Presbyter of Bancalis. A follower of Origen, he believed that Christ was a created being, not of the substance of God but created from “nothing”; he had a beginning and was thus not eternal. Although he was defeated at the Nicene Council (held in 325), subsequent Councils held at Arles, Milan and Sirmium (held in 353, 355 and 357, respectively) upheld his views. But it was again defeated in the Constantinople Council held in 381. Christian scholars say that Arians’ ‘temporary triumph’ “had been made possible by imperial interference.” But so was the case with the “original Nicene success” and its later victories. (See Williston Walker, A History of Christian Church, Edinburgh, 1970, pp. 107 – 117.) (tr.).

[108.](#) Many have commented on the last sentence that it affirms physical resurrection, while the Christians believe in spiritual resurrection only as the Gospel shows. But I think that the Gospel only indicates the absence of physical worldly enjoyments in the next world; it does not say that man will be resurrected in spirit only without his body. It rather says that man in the resurrection will become like angels, and there will be no sexual enjoyment among them. On the other hand, the Bible shows that even God and angels have bodies, let alone the man after resurrection. (Author’s Note).

[109.](#) The author has taken these details from ash-Shahristani's al-Milal wa 'n-nihal. Ash-Shahristani is confused when he says that the "first Council held at Nicaea" assembled "at Constantinople". The Nicene Council had assembled in 325 at Nicaea, and another Council was held at Constantinople in 381 C. E. The actual Nicene Creed is now only a matter of surmise. Probably it ended with the sentence, 'And in the Holy Spirit'.

However, the Constantinople Council reconfirmed and enlarged it. That is why scholars refer to it as, "the so-called Nicene Creed", and sometimes with its technically correct name, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. But in spite of all that, its first appearance was at the Council of Chalcedon (451 C.E.); it was signed on 25/10/451, in presence of the Emperor Marcian. (See J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, Longman, London, 3rd ed., 1972, pp. 296 – 297; and *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, 2nd ed., O.U.P., 1977).

In ash-Shahristani's book, the number of participants of the first Council is given as 318 and not 313. (tr.).

[110.](#) The author has taken these names from ash-Shahristani. I could not find the names, الاليانية and اليليارسية in the books I referred to ash-Shahristani, however, it gives the following details:

Ilyanites: A sub-sect of the Jacobites, found in Syria, Yemen, and Armenia. They believed that 'Isa was not a body in reality; all the sufferings, killing and crucifixion happened only on an illusion (or illusory being).

Yalyarsites: They believed that people, on arriving at the heaven, would enjoy eating, drinking and sexual relations for a thousand years; thereafter, they would proceed to the bounties promised by Arius. (tr.).

[111.](#) Macedonians: Named after Macedonius (died c. 362), Bishop of Constantinople. He strongly supported the semi-Arian cause in Council of Seleucia (359). From end of the fourth century, he is regarded as the founder of Pneumatomachi who are called Macedonians after him. They denied the full Godhead of the Holy Ghost. See *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*; also W. Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, p. 118. (tr.).

[112.](#) Noetus: In Arabic text this name is mentioned the last. I have put it before the Sabellians, etc., as it would facilitate understanding. Noetus, probably of Smyrna, taught in his native region in 180 to 200 "that Christ was the Father Himself, and the Father Himself was born and suffered and died". His views were called Modalistic Monarchianism. (W. Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, p.69). Another name for that belief was Patripassion doctrine; Noetus also rejected Logo doctrine. (*The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*). (tr.).

[113.](#) Sabellians: Sabellianism is an alternative title for the Modalistic Monarchianism. Named after Sabbellus, who was teaching in Rome cir. 215. His theology was essentially that of Noetus, but much more carefully wrought out, especially in that it gave a definite place to the Holy Spirit, as well as to the Son. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all one and the same. They are three names of one God, Who manifests Himself in different ways according to circumstances. (W. Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, p. 69). (tr.).

[114.](#) Paulianists: Followers of Paul of Samosata; he became Bishop of Antioch cir. 260. He taught a form of Dynamic Monarchianism in which Godhead was a closely knit trinity of Father, Wisdom and Word, and until creation formed a single hypostasis. He was a precursor of Nestorius, holding that from Incarnation the Word rested upon the human Jesus as one person upon another, and that the Incarnated Christ differed only in degree from the prophets. (*The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*). (tr.).

[115.](#) Paulicians: A sect of the Byzantine Empire. Their name may have been derived from St. Paul, or more probably from Paul of Samosata. Endlessly persecuted, many of them assisted the Muslims in their wars against the empire and adopted Islam. Apparently, they ceased to exist as an independent sect in the twelfth century. (ibid.) (tr.).

[116.](#) Gregory I (590 – 604) established the temporal power of the Papacy in that period of unrest in Italy. However, it was Pope Innocent III who during his Papacy (1198 – 1216) made several European Kings and Emperors to pay homage to him, accepting him as their overlord. (tr.).

[117.](#) Constantine XIII Palaeologus (1394 – 1453) was killed on 29th May 1453. (tr.).

[118.](#) al-Futuhāt al-Islamiyyah. (Author's Note).

[119.](#) al-Futuhāt al-Islamiyyah. (Author's Note).

[120.](#) al-Futuhāt al-Islamiyyah. (Author's Note).

[121.](#) This and the following descriptions have been taken from هنري دو كاستري Cite Henry de Castries; ad-Diyanat al-Islamiyyah, chapter I. (Author's Note).

[122.](#) Many such astonishing "revelations" have been quoted by Norman Daniel in his, *Islam and the West. The Making of*

an Image, Edinburgh University Press, 1960. (tr.).

[123.](#) The Life (New York edition), John Knox Jessup, in the article, The World, the Flesh and the Devil, 26th December, 1955, p. 143. (tr.) .

[124.](#) The Life (New York edition), John Knox Jessup, in the article, The World, the Flesh and the Devil, 26th December, 1955, p. 143. (tr.).

[125.](#) Tafsir Qummi.

[126.](#) Tafsir Qummi.

[127.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[128.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]

SHARES

Sura 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 81 – 85

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْنُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ ۖ وَلَتُنصُرُنَّهُ ۚ قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي ۚ قَالُوا ۖ أَفَرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا ۚ وَأَنَا ۖ مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

“And when Allah made a covenant with the prophets: “Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom – then a Messenger comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him.” He said: “Do you affirm and accept My compact in this (matter)?” They said: “We do affirm.” He said: “Then bear witness, and I (too) am of the bearers of witness with you” (3:81).

فَمَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

“Whoever therefore turns back after this, these it is that are the transgressors” (3:82).

أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ اللَّهِ يَبْغُونَ وَلَهُ ۖ أَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ

“Is it then other than Allah’s religion that they seek (to follow), and to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him shall they be returned?” (3:83).

قُلْ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَىٰٓ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَإِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَإِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ ۖ مُسْلِمُونَ

“Say: “We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma’il and Ishaq and Ya’qub and the tribes, and what was given to Musa and ‘Isa and to the prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit”” (3:84).

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers” (3:85).

Commentary

The verses are not disjointed from the preceding ones; they have been revealed in the same context. Earlier, Allah had described that the People of the Book transgressed the limits by indulging in alteration of the Books they were given, creating doubts and confusion among the people, discriminating the prophets, and rejecting the signs of the truth of the Messenger of Allah (S); then He showed how impossible it was for a prophet like Musa, or ‘Isa (peace be on them both) to tell the people to take him or some other prophets or the angels as their lords – as the Christians openly claimed and the Jews implied.

Now He puts more emphasis on the impossibility of such an idea. How can any prophet give such an order to his people, when Allah has made covenant with the prophets that they must believe in, and help every prophet regardless of whether he preceded them or came after them? They were to fulfil that promise by confirming the truth of the preceding prophets and giving good news of those who were to come after them – as ‘Isa (‘a) verified the prophethood of Musa (‘a) and his laws and foretold the advent of Muhammad (S). Likewise, Allah made a covenant with them that they should make a similar covenant with their people and made them witnesses over them; and then declared that it was the Islam – submission – which dominates all those who are in the heavens and in the earth.

Then Allah enjoins His Prophet (S) to adhere to that covenant: he is to believe in Allah and all that was sent to His prophets – without making any distinction between them, and to surrender to Allah. He was to enter into the covenant on his own behalf, and also on behalf of his *ummah*. That is why it is said that the covenant was made with him directly, and with his *ummah* through him, as we shall explain later.

Verse 81

Qur’an: “And when Allah made a covenant with the prophets: “Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom – then a Messenger comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him...” (3:81).

The verse speaks of a covenant that was made. “*Mithaqa’n-nabiyyin*” (مِيثَاقُ النَّبِيِّينَ = translated here as “covenant with the prophets”), literally means ‘covenant of the prophets’. This covenant was taken for the prophets as the clause, “**then a Messenger comes to you... you must aid him**” (3:81), points to, as well as “with the prophets” as the clauses, **He said: “Do you affirm...”** (3:81), and, **“Say: “We believe in Allah...”**” (3:84), show. The covenant was therefore made for the prophets and with the prophets – although it was made with the prophets’ people too, through the prophets.

The phrase, “covenant of the prophets”, may therefore refer to the covenant made “with” them and to that “for” them, while in fact it is the same covenant looked at from different angles. In other words, “the prophets”, may refer to those prophets “for” whom the covenant was made and also to those “with” whom it was made. However, the import of the preceding two verses “**It is not meet for a man**” (3:79) and “**... after you are Muslims...**” (3:80) which were revealed in the same context, gives rather more weight to the idea that, “the prophets”, refers to those “with” whom the covenant was made.

Looking in this context the verses have the following connotation: ‘It was not possible for the prophets, after Allah gives them the Book, the Wisdom and Prophethood, to call the people to take someone other than Allah as their lord or to worship him. How can it be possible while Allah has made covenant with them to believe in, and help, other prophets of Allah – who enjoin their peoples to believe in one God.’ It is for this reason that this verse begins with mention of the covenant – focusing our attention to it.

“*lama ataytukum min kitabin wa hikmah*” (لَمَّا أَتَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ = Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom): ‘*lama*’ (with the vowel ‘a’ after ‘l’, and without putting emphasis on ‘m’) is in accordance with the well-known recital (of all the reciters except *Hamzah*). Accordingly ‘*ma*’ (مَا) is relative pronoun meaning, “what” or “whatsoever”; “*ataytukum*” (أَتَيْتُكُمْ = I have given you) is its “*as-silah*” (الصِّلَةُ = antecedent). Its other recital is “*ataynakum*” (أَتَيْنَاكُمْ = We have given you). The objective pronoun that should come here is omitted because the phrase “of Book and Wisdom”, points to it. The whole phrase is the subject, and “you must believe in him, and you must aid him”, the predicate. ‘*la*’, in ‘*lama*’, denotes beginning of the sentence, while in “*latu’minunna bihi*” (لَتُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ = you must believe in him) it is for emphasis and oath.

The whole sentence describes the covenant that was made, which would be as follows: ‘That which I have given you of Book and Wisdom, then a Messenger comes to you verifying that which is with you, you should believe in that Messenger and aid him without fail.’

There is another syntactical possibility: ‘*ma*’ in ‘*lama*’ may be a conditional pronoun, meaning “when”; and “you must believe in him”, its answer. The meaning, in this case, would be like this: ‘When I have given you of Book and Wisdom and then a Messenger comes to you... you must believe in him, and you must aid him.’ This explanation is rather more appropriate (because it is more common to add ‘*la*’ of oath on the “answer” of a conditional sentence), and the meaning in this case is clearer; also, it is more usual to put conditional clauses in covenants.

A reciter has recited *'lima'* using the vowel 'i' (instead of 'a') for 'l'. In that case 'li' would denote reason, and *'lima ataytukum'* would mean 'because of that which I have given you'. But the first recital has more weight.

The second person plural pronoun "you" in "have given you" and "comes to you", apparently refers to "the prophets". But the speech, 'Do you affirm and accept my compact in this?' indicates that it includes the people of the prophets too; that is, the talk is directed to the prophets only but the order (i.e., covenant) covers their people too. The people are as much obliged to believe in and help the coming Messenger as are the prophets themselves.

The conjunctive "then" in the clause "then a Messenger comes to you", obviously shows a delay in time; in other words, it was incumbent on a preceding prophet to believe in and help a prophet who would come after him. On the other hand, the verse:

"Say: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Ibrahim..." (3:84).

Implies that the covenant was made with each of the preceding and the following prophets for the other – the following prophets too were required to believe in and help the preceding ones. But it is only an inference; the words are silent about this matter – as we shall explain later, God willing.

There are two third person singular pronouns in the clauses, ***"you must believe in him, and you must aid him"*** (3:81). Both may refer to the "Messenger" who was to come later; there is no difficulty in the idea of one prophet believing in another, as Allah says:

"The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers; each of them believes in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers (2:285).

Nevertheless, it appears from the verse: ***Say: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Ibrahim..." (3:84)***, that the first pronoun refers to the Book and the Wisdom that was revealed, and the second one to the Messenger.

The meaning therefore would be as follows: 'You must believe in what I have given you of the Book and the Wisdom, and you must aid the Messenger who comes to you verifying that which is with you.'

Qur'an: "...He said: "Do you affirm and accept my compact in this (matter)?" They said: "We do affirm"... " (3:81).

The question was put for confirmation. *"al-Iqrar"* (الْإِقْرَارُ = affirmation; acknowledgement); *"al-isr"* (الْإِصْرُ = compact, covenant), it is the object of the verb, "accept". Literally, the clause means, 'and take my compact in this'. The prophets were to take or make God's covenant; obviously there should be a second party there to enter into covenant with them, and it could be none except their own *ummah*. The

verse therefore means: ‘Do you affirm this covenant, and have you made this compact of mine with your people? They said: “We do affirm.”

An exegete has said: Taking God’s compact means that the prophets accepted that covenant for themselves. If so, then, “(Do you) take my compact in this (matter)”, would be an explicative apposition of the preceding clause, “Do you affirm?” This explanation is strengthened by their response, as they only said, “We do affirm”, without saying anything about taking the compact.

Accordingly, the covenant would be restricted to the prophets; their *ummah* would not be included in it. On the other hand, the next directive, Then, bear witness, goes against this explanation; obviously one bears witness for or against other than oneself. Also, the next directive in the verse: **“Say: “We believe in Allah...” (3:84)** uses plural pronoun, We, and not, I, apparently, it is a declaration of faith by the Messenger of Allah (S) for himself and on behalf of his *ummah*. Therefore, “taking of compact” would mean making the compact with the *ummah*. Although, it may be said that it is these two sentences, Then, bear witness, and, We believe in Allah, which prove the participation of the *ummah* with the prophets in this compact, while, “take my compact in this”, is not related to this matter.

Qur’an: “... He said: “Then bear witness, and I (too) am of the bearers of witness with you” (3:81).

Obviously, the witness, as explained above, is borne for or against someone else; therefore, it is concerned both with the prophets and their people. As mentioned above, also the next directive, **“Say: “We believe in Allah” (3:84)**, proves it. And the context too supports this meaning: The verses were revealed to reprove the People of the Book for their rejecting the message of the Messenger of Allah (S) and for ascribing falsehoods to ‘Isa, Musa and some other prophets (peace be on them all); and it is in this background that they have been rebuked: Is it then other than Allah’s religion that they seek (to follow)?

Some exegetes have said that the order, “Then bear witness”, refers to the prophets bearing witness for one another; others have written that this order was given to the angels who were to bear witness, and that it is not concerned with the prophets.

Comment: These two meanings, although possibly correct in themselves, cannot be inferred from the verse without an association; and you have seen that the association goes against it.

One of the fine points in this verse deserves special attention. Read the words, Allah made a covenant with the prophets, in conjunction with the clause, then a Messenger comes to you. You will see that the covenant was made with the prophets for the Messenger. And we have described in the Commentary of the verse: **“Mankind was but one people...” (2:213)** that messengership is more particular than prophethood, that every messenger is a prophet but not every prophet is a messenger. The verse therefore obviously means that the covenant was made with the rank of prophethood for the rank of messengership – but not vice versa.

Keeping this connotation in view, we may question the comprehensiveness of the explanation given by an exegete that the covenant was made with the prophets that they would believe in each other and would tell one another to believe in each other – the religion is one which all the prophets invite to.

The meaning in fact should be as follows: Allah made a covenant with the prophets and their people that if Allah gave them Book and Wisdom and then a messenger came to them, verifying that which was with them, they would surely believe in what he would bring to them and help him; a prophet coming later would help a preceding (or contemporary) messenger by affirming his truth, and a preceding prophet would foretell the coming of a later messenger and enjoin his *ummah* to believe in him (the coming messenger), affirm his truth and help him in his cause. This covenant thus implies and affirms the Oneness of Divine Religion.

Another exegete has explained the verse as follows: “Allah made a covenant with the prophets that they would affirm the truth of Muhammad (S) and give their people the good tidings of his advent.” This meaning is correct in itself; but it cannot be discerned from the wording of the verse. Of course, we may infer it from the context, as we have explained earlier: The verse is among the ones that argue against the People of the Book, admonishing and rebuking them for their tendency of altering the Books, hiding the signs foretold of the Holy Prophet of Islam, transgressing the limit, and turning away from the clear truth.

Verse 82

Qur'an: “Whoever therefore turns back after this, these it is that are the transgressors” (3:82).

It places emphasis on the above-mentioned covenant. The meaning is clear.

Verse 83

Qur'an: “Is it then other than Allah's religion that they seek (to follow), and to Him submits...?” (3:83).

The question arises from the preceding verses. Well, Allah's religion is one; it was about that religion that the covenant was made with the prophets and their people; it was incumbent upon the preceding prophets and their people to foretell the advent of the Messenger who was to follow, and they had to believe in his message and help him.

Well, is it not strange – with this background – the way the People of the Book are behaving? What do they want when they deny your truth? They show the desire to follow the religion. If so, then do they seek a religion other than Islam which is the only Divine Religion? There can be no other explanation why they do not accept your truth, why they do not hold fast to the religion of Islam. Undoubtedly, it was incumbent upon them to accept and follow Islam, because it is the religion which is based on nature – a religion should not go against nature. Do they need a proof? Then see how all those inhabitants of the

heavens and the earth (who have been endowed with sense and intelligence) submit to Allah – on the level of creation – then let them also submit to him on the level of legislation.

Qur'an: "...And to Him submits whoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly..." (3:83).

This is the Islam – submission – that encompasses all who are in the heavens and the earth, including the People of the Book, who it says, are not Muslims. The word used here is "*aslama*" (أَسْلَمَ) = he submitted), in past tense, which shows that the action has already taken place; in other words, they have already submitted to Allah.

Obviously, it can only refer to their submission in creative affairs – they cannot go against His decree in matters of creation. It does not refer to Islam in the sense of religion, or in the meaning of belief and worship. The words, "willingly or unwillingly", support, nay, prove this explanation.

Keeping the above explanation in view it appears that the words, "to Him submits", gives a proof, a reason, without mentioning, for the sake of brevity, its result and conclusion. The complete talk would be as follows: 'Do they seek to follow a religion other than Islam? But it is the religion of Allah; whoever is in the heavens and the earth submits to Him and obeys His order. If these People of the Book would accept it, their submission would be done willingly; if they disliked what Allah has decreed for them and tried to seek something else, the Divine Decree would nevertheless be enforced, however they might dislike it.'

It appears from it that the conjunctive '*wa*' (وَ = or) in "willingly or unwillingly", denotes division. The alternatives point to their willing acceptance of what Allah has decreed for them of the things they like; and their resentment of Divine Decrees in matters they dislike, for example, death, poverty, and sickness, etc.

Qur'an: "...And to Him shall they be returned" (3:83).

It is another reason why they must seek Islam as religion. They are bound to return to Allah, their true Lord; they would not be able to hide from Allah or to go to what their disbelief and polytheism leads them to rely on.

Verse 84

Qur'an: "Say: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us" (3:84).

Allah enjoins the Prophet to adhere to the covenant which was made with him and the others. He should declare as follows, for himself and on behalf of the believers from his *ummah*: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed..."

It is a proof, as we have said above, that the covenant was made with the prophets and their people

together.

Qur'an: "...And what was revealed to Ibrahim and Isma'il... and to Him do we submit" (3:84).

All those mentioned here were prophets from the progeny of Ibrahim. The verse implies that the word, "the tribes", refers to the prophets from the progeny of Ya'qub – from the Children of Israel – like Dawud, Sulayman, Yunus, Ayyub and others. Then comes the phrase, **"the prophets from their Lord" (3:84)**; it makes the declaration comprehensive, as it covers Adam, Nuh and all the others. Then a reference is made to the whole group, saying,

"We do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him do we submit" (3:84).

Verse 85

Qur'an: "And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam... shall be one of the losers" (3:85).

It negates and nullifies all that is outside the purview of the said covenant. It further emphasises the obligation of following the terms of the covenant.

Traditions

The Leader of the faithful ('Ali, 'a) said: "Verily, Allah made covenant with the prophets (who came) before our Prophet that they should inform their people of his advent and his characteristics, give them good news about him and enjoin them to affirm his truth."^{[1](#)}

Ibn Jarir has narrated from 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said: "Allah did not send any prophet – Adam and those who came after him – without making a covenant with him about Muhammad (S): If he (Muhammad, S) was sent when that prophet was alive, he must believe in him and help him; and He enjoined him to make a (similar) covenant with his people." Then the Imam recited the verse,

"And when Allah made a covenant with the prophets: Certainly what I have given you of Book and Wisdom" (3:81).^{[2](#)}

The author says: These two Traditions explain the verse keeping both the words and the context in view, as we have written above.

as-Sadiq ('a) explained this verse as follows: "When Allah made a covenant with the people of the prophets – (with) every *ummah* – for affirming the truth of its prophet and following what they (the prophets) would bring to them; but (the people) did not fulfil it (i.e., the covenant) and neglected much of their laws and altered (it) to a great extent."^{[3](#)}

The author says: The above tradition applies the verse to a particular situation; it therefore does not

conflict with the explanation given in the Commentary that the verse refers to a covenant made with the prophets together with their people.

The Leader of the faithful ('a) said explaining the words: He said: "Do you affirm..": **"He (Allah) said: 'Do you affirm? (3:81) And have you made this compact with your people?' They (i.e., the prophets and their people) said: 'We do affirm what Thou hast enjoined us to affirm.' Allah said: *"Then bear witness over your people in this respect, and I too am one of the bearers of witness with you, over you and your people."* (3:81)**[4](#)

Ibn Jarir narrates from 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib that he said about the words 'Then bear witness...': "Allah said: 'Then bear witness over your people in this respect; and I too am one of the bearers of witness with you, over you and them.'" Then whoever turns away from you, O Muhammad, after this covenant taken from all the people, these it is that are the transgressors, they are the disobedient ones, (steeped) in disbelief.' " [5](#)

The author says: Its explanation has been given earlier.

as-Sadiq ('a) said: "(Allah) said to them (when they were) in (the state of) participle: 'Do you affirm and accept my compact in this matter?' They said: 'We do affirm.' Then Allah said to the angels: 'Then bear witness.'" [6](#)

The author says: The wording of the verse is not in conflict with this explanation, although, as we have said earlier, it is not inferred from its apparent meanings.

It is written in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* concerning the verse **"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam ..."** (3:85): 'Ahmad and at-Tabarani (in his *al-Mu'jam al-awsat*) have narrated from Abu Hurayrah that he said: *'The Messenger of Allah (S) said: "The deeds shall come on the Day of Resurrection. So, the prayer will come and say, 'O Lord, I am prayer,' and He will say, 'Surely you are on good.' And the alms will come and say, 'O Lord I am alms,' and He will say, 'Surely you are on good.' Then the fast will come and say, 'I am fast,' and He will say, 'Surely you are on good.' Then the deeds will come (one after another) and Allah will go on saying, 'Surely you are on good.; (until Islam will come and Allah will say:) 'With thee shall I take today and with thee shall I give.' Allah says in His Book: **"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers"** (3:85).'*'

As-Sadiq ('a) said about this verse: "It (i.e., Islam) means their believing in the Oneness of Allah, the Mighty, the Great." [7](#)

The author says: The belief in monotheism requires that the servant should accept, and submit to, whatever Allah wants him to do. It therefore implies the same thing which has been written in the Commentary. If on the other hand it is explained just as "not ascribing anyone or anything to Allah", then the willingness and unwillingness (mentioned in a preceding verse) would imply voluntary and

compulsory guidance.

There are several other Traditions narrated by al-‘Ayyashi and al-Qummi (in their books) and others, in explanation of the verse **“And when Allah made a covenant with the prophets...” (3:81)** . In those Traditions the words **“you must believe in him, and you must aid him” (3:81)** have been explained as follows: You must believe in the Messenger of Allah, and you must aid the Leader of the faithful – blessings and peace be on them. Obviously, these traditions refer the former pronoun, him, to the Messenger of Allah (S) and the later, him, to the Leader of the faithful (‘Ali, ‘a), without there being any proof or association for it in the wording of the verse.

Nevertheless, a tradition given by al-‘Ayyashi may solve this problem. He narrates from Salam Ibn al-Mustanir, from Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) that he said:

“They have taken for themselves a name, that Allah named no one with it except ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib – and there has not come its interpretation yet.” I said: “May I be your ransom! When will its interpretation come?” He said: “When it comes, Allah shall gather before Him the prophets and the believers, so that they should help him. And it is the words of Allah **‘And when Allah made a covenant with the prophets... and I (too) am of the bearers of witness with you.’ (3:81)**

This tradition solves the problem. The problem arises if we take those Traditions as an exegesis or explanation of the verse [but this tradition shows that they do not purport to give the exegesis; they aim at pointing at its interpretation]. And we have described earlier that interpretation is not meaning of the word, nor a thing related to word. For detailed discussion, please refer to discourse under the verse 3:7.[8](#)

[1.](#) Majma‘ al-bayan

[2.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur

[3.](#) Majma‘ al-bayan; al-Jawami.

[4.](#) Majma‘ al-bayan.

[5.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[6.](#) at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.

[7.](#) at-Tawhid; at-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi.

[8.](#) See al-Mizan (Engl. Transl.), vol. 5, pp. 26 – 129. (tr.).

Sura 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 86 – 91

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوا ۚ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوا ۚ أَنَّ الرَّسُولَ حَقٌّ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

“How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing, and they have borne witness that the Messenger was true and clear arguments had come to them? And Allah does not guide the unjust people.” (3:86).

أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ أَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةَ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

“(As for) these, their reward is that upon them is the curse of Allah and the angels and of men, all together.” (3:87).

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ

“Abiding in it; their chastisement shall not be lightened, nor shall they be given respite.” (3:88).

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا ۖ مِنْ ۚ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا ۚ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Except those who repent after that and amend, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (3:89).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ أَزْدَادُوا ۚ كُفْرًا لَّنْ تُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الضَّالُّونَ

“Surely those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in unbelief, their repentance shall never be accepted, and these are they that have gone astray.” (3:90).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ وَمَاتُوا ۚ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِلءُ الْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ افْتَدَىٰ بِهِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

“Surely, those who disbelieve and die while they are unbelievers, the earth full of gold shall not be accepted from one of them, though he should offer to ransom himself with it; these it is who shall have a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helpers” (3:91).

Commentary

The verses may possibly be connected to the preceding ones dealing with the People of the Book; but apparently, they are separate and revealed in another context.

Verse 86

Qur'an: "How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing, and they have borne witness that the Messenger was true and clear arguments had come to them? And Allah does not guide the unjust people" (3:86).

The question shows the improbability of the situation; that it is impossible for them to get guidance. The verse ends with the sentence, ***"and Allah does not guide the unjust people" (3:86)***. We have explained somewhere earlier that in such sentences the adjective explains the reason, that is, Allah does not guide them because they are unjust, and as long as they persist in injustice, they will not get Divine Guidance. Of course, they could not be debarred from that guidance if they repented and returned to Allah.

The clause ***"and they have borne witness that the Messenger was true" (3:86)***: If the verse refers to the People of the Book, then the 'bearing of witness' would refer to their realization that the signs foretold of the awaited prophet perfectly fit the Messenger of Allah (S); and the next clause, ***"and clear argument had come to them" (3:86)***, would refer to that reality.

If, on the other hand, it refers to those who apostatized after professing Islam, then the "witness" refers to their affirmation of the truth of the Prophet – not only a ritual affirmation resulting from ignorance or tribal influence, but the one based on clear understanding, as the clause ***"and clear arguments had come to them" (3:86)*** indicates.

In any case, as the verse contains the clause ***"and they have borne witness that the Messenger was true" (3:86)***, it shows that the disbelief refers to their rejection of Faith after the truth was made clear to them, after the proof was completed against them. They had disbelieved only because they hated the truth, because they haughtily wrangled with the believers and transgressed the limit unjustly. It is this injustice which does not let its people find their way to safety and deliverance.

There is another syntactic explanation given for the clause, ***"and they have borne witness" (3:86)***. It has been said that it is in conjunction with the word '*Imanihim*' (أَيْمَانِهِمْ = their belief) and it means 'who disbelieved after they had believed and after they had borne witness.' Yet another explanation: The conjunctive, "and", in the clause, "and they have borne witness", has a circumstantial connotation, and the sentence means, 'while they have borne witness'. In this case it would be a circumstantial clause.

Verses 87 – 88

Qur'an: "(As for) these, their reward is that upon them is the curse of Allah and the angels and of men, all together" (3:87).

Qur'an: "Abiding in it; their chastisement shall not be lightened, nor shall they be given respite" (3:88).

We have earlier explained how all the curse returns to such people. For detail see the Commentary of the following verse 2:159. [1](#)

Verse 89

Qur'an: "Except those who repent after that and amend, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (3:89).

"Aslahu" (أَصْلَحُوا = amended, changed to better); it points to sincerity of repentance; that they repent with true heart, by which the impurity of disbelief is removed and their soul is purified by true belief. This word does not refer to doing good deeds; of course, good deeds follow the sincere repentance and are inseparable from it, yet they are not a part of repentance.

The clause, ***"then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (3:89)***, puts the reason to point to its unspoken result. Its connotation is as follows: then Allah forgives them and has mercy on them, because Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Verses 90 – 91

Qur'an: "Surely those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in unbelief, their repentance shall never be accepted, and these are they that have gone astray" (3:90).

Qur'an: "Surely, those who disbelieve and die while they are unbelievers, the earth full of gold shall not be accepted from one of them, though he should offer to ransom himself with it; these it is who shall have a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helpers" (3:91).

The two verses together explain the reason of the verse in the beginning, ***"How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing."*** (3:86). It applies a general rule to a particular case. A man, who disbelieves after truth has been made manifest to him and proof completed against him, and who then does not sincerely return to Allah, belongs to either one of the two categories:

Either he is an apostate who disbelieves after believing, then increases in unbelief and goes on transgressing without ever thinking of amending his ways; Allah shall not guide such a person nor will He accept his insincere repentance, because he does not turn to God with sincerity; he is totally lost, and there is no hope at all of his returning to the right path.

Or he is an unbeliever who dies in his disbelief, in his aversion to truth, without ever repenting; Allah shall not guide him in the hereafter to the Garden, because he himself never tried to return to his Lord; and there is no substitute for this returning to Lord, for repentance. He therefore will have nothing to offer as ransom, nor will any intercessor or helper intercede on his behalf or help him.

In this context, look at the sentence:

“And these are they that have gone astray” (3:90).

In Arabic it is a “nominal sentence”, because its predicate is a *nomen agentis*, ‘ad-dallun’ (الضَّالُّونَ = lit: strayers); such a sentence indicates permanence. Then there is the demonstrative pronoun ‘ula’ika’ (أُولَئِكَ = lit: those) which is used for distant objects; and it shows that they are removed far from mercy of Allah. Thus there are three modes of emphasis which have been combined here: addition of a separate personal pronoun, “they”, use of a noun (*nomen agentis*) for predicate; and the definite article ‘al’ (الْ = the) before the said predicate – all these together prove that they are hardened wrongdoers and transgressors for whom there is no hope of guidance.

Likewise, the last sentence, ***“and they shall have no helpers” (3:91)***, proves that they will not get benefit of intercession – it is the intercessors who shall be the helpers on the Day of Resurrection. We have earlier explained that the use of plural, e.g., intercessors, in the verse ***“So we have no intercessors” (26: 101)*** proves that there shall be intercessors on the Day of Judgement, but the unbelievers shall not be able to avail themselves of their intercession.² The same is the import of the plural, “helpers”, in this place.

The second verse says that no ransom shall be accepted from them, nor will they get any helper. It is because these things are substitutes, which are used when the original thing is not available. They lost their chance of repentance in this life and there is nothing that can be a substitute for repentance in the hereafter.

It also shows that the clause ***“and die while they are unbelievers” (3:91)*** implies that they died without repentance. As such, there is no conflict between this apparently exclusive statement and the following verse:

“And repentance is not for those who go on doing evil deeds, until when death comes to one of them, he says. “Surely now I repent “; nor (for) those who die while they are unbelievers. These are they for whom We have prepared a painful chastisement” (4: 18).

In this verse ‘when death comes’ means, when the death approaches and man see the signs of the next world and his ties with this world are cut off. Obviously at this point of time the door of repentance is closed on him.

‘al-Mil’ (الْمِلَّةُ = a quantity that fills a pot); ‘mil’ al-ardi dhahaban’ (مِلَّةُ الْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا) = a quantity of gold

that would fill the earth); in this phrase, the earth is taken for a pot that is filled by gold. It is an imaginative *'al-isti'arah bi 'l-kinayah*, (الِإِسْتِعَارَةُ بِالْكِنَايَةِ = extended metaphor).

Traditions

It is reported in *Majma' al-bayan* about the verses ***'How shall Allah guide a people...'* (3:86)**. It is said that the verses were revealed about a man from the Ansar, al-Harith Ibn Suwayd Ibn as-Samit by name; he had treacherously killed al-Mujadhdhar Ibn Dhiyad al-Balawi, fled (from Medina), renounced Islam and reached Mecca. Thereafter he felt remorse and sent a message to his people to ask the Messenger of Allah (S) whether he would be allowed to repent. They asked (the Messenger of Allah); so the verses were revealed: How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing... Except those who repent after that and amend... A man from his clan took these verses to him. (Hearing them) he said: 'I surely know that you are truthful, and the Messenger of Allah is truer than you, and Allah is the most truthful of the three.' So, he returned to Medina, repented and his Islam was good. It is reported from Mujahid and as-Suddi; and the same is narrated from Abu 'Abdillah ('a)."

Ibn Ishaq and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "Verily al-Harith Ibn Suwayd killed al-Mujadhdhar Ibn Dhiyad and Qays Ibn Zayd (from Banu Dubay'ah) during the Battle of Uhud, and then went over to Quraysh, and remained at Mecca. Thereafter he sent message to his brother, al-Julas, expressing his desire of repentance, so that he could return to his people. Thereupon, Allah sent these verses about him: How shall Allah guide a people..." (Then the story continues as above.)³

The author says: This story has been narrated through other chains, and there are many differences among them: For example, 'Ikrimah says that it was revealed about Abu 'Amir ar-Rahib, al-Harith Ibn Suwayd Ibn as-Samit and Wahwah Ibn al-Aslat (among twelve persons) who had renounced Islam and went over to Quraysh. Later they wrote to their families whether their repentance would be accepted. Then these verses were revealed.

Another example is found in *Majma' al-bayan*, that the verse, Surely those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in unbelief..., was revealed about the eleven companions of al-Harith Ibn Suwayd. When al-Harith returned (to Medina), they said: 'We shall remain in Mecca in our disbelief as long as we wished; later on, if and when we wanted to return (to Medina) we would return, and there would come for us too what had been revealed about al-Harith.' When the Messenger of Allah (S) conquered Mecca, some of them re-entered into Islam and their repentance was accepted. And it was revealed about those of them who had died in disbelief, Surely, those who disbelieve and die while they are unbelievers... (This report has been attributed to some exegetes.)

There is a third view that it was revealed about the People of the Book. Others say that the verse, Surely, those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in unbelief..., was revealed particularly for the Jews, because at first, they believed (in Musa), then disbelieved in 'Isa, then increased in unbelief by rejecting Muhammad (blessings of Allah be on him and his progeny and the two prophets).

There are other explanations given by other people.

If you ponder on these views, explanations, and traditions, you will realize that all are based on personal opinions of the ancient exegetes – as some later ones have remarked. As for the tradition attributed to as-Sadiq (‘a), it is *al-mursal* and weak. Moreover, it is possible for a verse to have more than one cause for its revelation; and Allah knows better.

1. See al-Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 2, pp. 254 – 261.

2. See the details in the discourse of “Intercession” under the verse 2:48. al-Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 1, pp. 226 – 265. (tr.).

3. ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[1] [1]

SHARES

Sura ‘Aal-‘Imran: Verses 92 – 95

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا ۖ مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

“Never shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love; and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it.” (3:92).

كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حَلَالًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ إِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَءِيلُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ ۚ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تُنَزَّلَ التَّوْرَةُ ۚ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِالَّتَّوْرَةِ فَاتْلُوهَا ۚ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

“All food was lawful to the Children of Israel – except that which Israel had forbidden to himself – before the Torah was revealed. Say: “Bring then the Torah and read it, if you are truthful.” (3:93).

فَمَنْ أَفْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ مِنْ ۚ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

“Then whoever fabricates a lie against Allah after this, these it is that are the unjust.” (3:94).

قُلْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ فَاتَّبِعُوا ۚ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Say: “Allah has spoken the truth; therefore, follow the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one; and he was not one of the polytheists.” (3:95).

Commentary

The connection between the first verse with the preceding ones is not clear; possibly it was not revealed with the remaining verses (which are clearly connected to each other). We had encountered a similar difficulty in deciding the revelation date of the verse 3:64.

Someone has tried to show its connection to the other verses. He says: The verse like the rest of the speech is addressed to the Children of Israel. Previously they were admonished and rebuked because they loved this world, and preferred wealth and riches to the Divine Religion. Now it says to them: You tell a lie when you claim a special relationship with Allah and His prophets, and when you say that you are pious and righteous ones. See what the truth is; you love your good property and sit on it refusing to spend from it in Allah’s way. You only spend from undesirable things which you do not care about. But man can never attain to righteousness unless he spends out of what he loves, that is, from good properties; and if you spend out of these Allah shall preserve it for you and give you its reward in the hereafter.

That is the gist of what he has written; but, as you see, it is stretching the point too far.

As for the rest of the verses, their connection with the preceding one is quite clear.

Verse 92

Qur’an: “Never shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love...” (3:92).

an-Nayl (النَّيْلُ = to reach, to attain); ‘*al-birr*’ (الْبِرُّ) means comprehensive good-doing. ar-Raghib says: ‘*al-bar-r*’ (الْبَرُّ = land) is opposite of ‘*al-bahr*’ (الْبَحْرُ = sea); it led to the idea of spaciousness, and from that is derived ‘*al-barr*’ = spaciousness (or comprehensiveness) in good-doing.”

“Good-doing” is used in an unrestricted sense. It covers the action of heart (like true belief and pure intention) as well as the action of body (like worship of Allah and spending in His way). (We have used the word “righteousness” in translation to convey this comprehensive goodness.) And it is this very sense in which this word has been used in the following verse:

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah and the Last Day, the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keeps up prayer and pays the zakat; and the performers of their promise when they make a

promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts...” (2: 177).

Reading this verse in conjunction with the one under discussion, one may clearly understand that spending wealth out of love for Allah is an essential part of righteousness; and making righteousness dependent on this spending shows the utmost importance attached to it particularly.

It is because man by nature has too much attachment with the wealth he has accumulated; he thinks that it is a part of his being, if it goes then a portion of his life is gone. There is no such difficulty in other acts of worship and good deeds where nothing seems to be lost.

It is not difficult, in view of the above discourse, to see the weakness of an exegete's explanation that 'righteousness is spending from what you love.' Perhaps he thought that the verse is framed in the style of the sentence, 'You cannot get rid of hunger until you eat!' The verse 2: 177 is enough to show inaptness of this explanation.

The same verse (2: 177) also makes it clear that '*al-birr*' has been used in its literal sense, that is, comprehensiveness in good-doing, because it explains it by enumerating all-encompassing good of faith and deed. And it shows the inappropriateness of an explanation that '*al-birr*' means bounty and favour of Allah; or of someone else's interpretation that it means the Garden.

Qur'an: “..And whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it” (3:92).

It strengthens and gladdens the spenders' hearts. They should know that what they have spent from their cherished wealth and property is not wasted, has not gone unnoticed, because Allah Who has enjoined them to do so, knows their spending and what they spend.

Verse 93

Qur'an: “All food was lawful to the Children of Israel – except that which Israel had forbidden to himself – before the Torah was revealed ...” (3:93).

at-Ta'am (الطَّعَامُ = whatever is eaten); the people of Hijaz [in whose language the Qur'an was revealed] use this word particularly for wheat, and it is this meaning they understand when the word is used without any association. '*al-Hill*' (أَلْجِلُّ = lawfulness) is opposite of '*al-hurmah*' (الْحُرْمَةُ = unlawfulness, prohibition); probably it is derived from '*al-hall*' (أَلْحَلُّ = to open) which is opposite of '*al-'aqd*' or '*al-'aql*' (أَلْعَقْدُ أَلْعَقْلُ = to tie, to bind) – thus lawfulness has a connotation of openness, unrestrictedness.

Israel was (the acquired name of) the Prophet Ya'qub; he got this name because he endeavoured hard in the way of Allah; the People of the Book say that it means 'one who vanquished God and prevailed against Him'. The Torah says that he wrestled with God in a place called Peniel and vanquished Him¹ But the Qur'an rejects this, and reason says that such thing is impossible.

The clause, “***except that which Israel had forbidden to himself***” (3:93), is exception from the above–

mentioned “food”. The next clause, **“before the Torah was revealed” (3:93)**, is related to the verb “was lawful”; it means: Allah had not forbidden any food to the Children of Israel before the Torah was revealed, except that which Israel had forbidden for himself.

The following sentence, **“Say: ‘Bring them the Torah and read it, if you are truthful,’ ” (3:93)**, indicates that the Jews were not admitting that every food was lawful to them before the Torah was revealed. They had to say so because they did not accept that Divine Laws could be abrogated. **2“Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it” (2: 106)**. No wonder, they disputed the words of Allah where He says:

“Wherefore for the iniquity of those who are Jews did We disallow to them the good things which had been made lawful to them” (4: 160).

Likewise, the last verse **“Say: ‘Allah has spoken the truth; therefore follow the religion of Ibrahim...” (3:95)**, indicates that they were trying to create doubts in the minds of the Muslims through these denials. They did not admit that every food was lawful to them before the revelation of the Torah; nor that many lawful things were forbidden to them because of their iniquity; and through these denials they disputed the claim of the Messenger of Allah (which was based on Divine Revelation) that his religion was that of Ibrahim, and that it was the natural religion free from excess and shortcoming. The Jews said: “How can it be true, when Ibrahim was a Jew in religion, on the *Shari’ah* of Torah? How could religion of Ibrahim allow what was forbidden in the Torah, when abrogation is not allowed?”

It is clear now that the verse intends to answer the questions which the Jews had put about, and by which they had tried to confuse the Muslims. Obviously, they had not put these questions directly to the Messenger of Allah (S), but to the believers during their social contacts. This inference is supported by the fact that the Qur’an has not mentioned here their objection or question at all, unlike many occasions where it has quoted their sayings before replying. For example, these verses:

“And the Jews say: “The hand of Allah is tied up” (5:64).

“And they say: “Fire shall not touch us but for a few days” (2:80).

“And they say: “Our hearts are covered” (2:88).

There are several such verses.

Moreover, the verses 3:99 and 3: 100 – coming soon after this talk – clearly show that the Jews were trying to mislead the believers through such insidious propaganda:

“Say: “O People of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah?... (3:99).

“O you who believe! if you obey a party from among those who have been given the Book, they

will turn you back as unbelievers after you have believed” (3: 100).

In short, the Jews objected as follows: How can your Prophet be true as he accepts validity of abrogation? He says that God had disallowed many lawful things to the Jews because of their iniquity. But it entails abrogation of a previously ordained law, which is not acceptable in case of Allah. What is unlawful will remain unlawful forever; it is not possible for a Divine Law to change.

Allah directed His Prophet to answer them as follows: The Torah says that every food was lawful to the Children of Israel before the revelation of the Torah. Therefore, bring the Torah and read it if you are truthful in your claim. (All food was lawful... if you are truthful.) But if you refuse to do so, then you must admit that you have fabricated a lie against Allah and that you are unjust. (Then whoever fabricates a lie against Allah after this, these it is that are the unjust.) It will prove to you that I am truthful in my mission. You should therefore follow my religion which is the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one; as stated in the verse:

“Say: ‘Allah has spoken the truth; therefore, follow the religion of Ibrahim, the upright one; and he was not one of the polytheists” (3:95).

The exegetes have variously explained these verses – each in his own way. But all have said that the verses aim to refute the objection of the Jews concerning abrogation – as we have said above.

The strangest explanation (given by one of them) is as follows:

“The verse replies to a Jewish objection regarding abrogation. It appears that the Jews had said: ‘O Muhammad! If you are, as you claim, on the religion of Ibrahim and the succeeding prophets, then how is it that you have allowed, for example, camel meat that was forbidden to him and them? And now that you have made lawful what was unlawful to them, you should not claim that you affirm their truth and are on their religion; nor should you especially mention Ibrahim.’

“The reply runs as follows: ‘Every food was lawful to all people including the Children of Israel. But the Children of Israel had forbidden some things to themselves by indulging into sins and evils, as Allah says:

“Wherefore for the iniquity of those who are Jews did We disallow to them the good things which had been made lawful for them...” (4: 160).

Therefore, the word, ‘Israel’, refers to the whole nation, to all the Children of Israel, not to Israel (Ya‘qub) alone. And such usage in tribes’ names is common.

The clause ***“Israel had forbidden to himself” (3:93)*** actually means that the Children of Israel indulged in injustice and committed sins, as a result of which Allah forbade it to them. The clause, ***“before the Torah was revealed” (3:93)***, qualifies the preceding verb, ***“Israel had forbidden to himself” (3:93)***; that is, what the Israelites had forbidden to themselves before the revelation of the Torah. If we take,

‘Israel’, to mean Ya‘qub alone, then this clause (before the Torah was revealed) would be superfluous, because everybody knows that Ya‘qub had preceded the revelation of the Torah.”

This is the gist of what he has written. Someone else has given the same explanation with one difference. He writes: “The clause, **“that which Israel had forbidden to himself” (3:93)**, means that the Children of Israel had themselves forbidden those things to themselves, making laws of their own, without any revelation from God; in the same way as the Arabs of pre-Islamic days were doing and which Allah has mentioned in the Qur’an.”

Both exegetes have stretched the words to an intolerable limit, which no knowledgeable person would agree with. They have diverted the whole talk from its proper line. Actually, they were misled in this way because they thought that the clause **“before the Torah was revealed” (3:93)** was related to the clause **“Israel had forbidden” (3:93)** – while in fact it qualifies the words in the beginning, **“All food was lawful” (3:93)**; and the exception clause, **“except that which Israel had forbidden to himself” (3:93)**, is just a parenthetical clause.

Consequently, there is no reason why “Israel” should be interpreted as “the Children of Israel”, as they have done, thinking that without it the verse could not be explained!

Now we come to the usage of tribes’ names. It is true that the Arabs say, Bakr, Taghlib, Nizar and ‘Adnan, when they actually mean the children of Bakr, the children of Taghlib, the children of Nizar and the children of ‘Adnan, respectively. But we have never seen them – at the time when the Qur’an was revealed – using “Israel” for “the Children of Israel”. Nor has the Qur’an used this word in that sense anywhere else; although it has mentioned “the Children of Israel” in about forty places, including this very verse: “All food was lawful to the Children of Israel – except that which Israel had forbidden to himself.”

Let us ask them one thing: What is the difference (according to their explanation) between the two clauses? The Qur’an refers to them first as “the Children of Israel” and then immediately after that as “Israel”. Why this change if both words mean the same? If their explanation is correct, then was it not necessary to use the same word in both places, lest there be any confusion? And confusion was bound to occur; because, from the point of view of these two writers, the whole lot of the exegetes was misled into thinking that Israel refers to Ya‘qub, not to his children!

The best proof to show that the name “Israel” refers to Ya‘qub alone, is the singular masculine pronoun, “to himself”, used for “Israel”. Had “Israel” stood for “the tribe of Israel” or “the Children of Israel”, it was essential to say “to itself” or “to themselves”.

Qur’an: “...Say: *“Bring then the Torah and read it, if you are truthful” (3:93).*”

So that it may be seen who is right, I or you. Allah guides His Prophet to reply to them in this way.

Verse 94

Qur'an: "Then whoever fabricates a lie against Allah after this, these it is that are the unjust" (3:94).

Apparently, it is Allah's speech addressed to His Prophet; accordingly, the aim is to strengthen and gladden the Prophet's heart, by declaring that it is his enemies, the Jews, who are the unjust, because they fabricate lies against Allah. It is an indirect adverse allusion to the Jews.

There is another syntactical possibility: It may be a continuation of the reply given to the Jews by the Prophet, although the second person singular pronoun used in the demonstrative pronoun '*dhalika*' (ذَلِكَ = this) does not fit this explanation. However, according to this explanation too, the sentence would be just veiled aside, giving the vanquished adversary a chance to save his face – because it does not clearly say that the Jews are the unjust ones. Putting the matter in general terms gives the enemy an opportunity to surrender gracefully.

It is the same style that has been used in the following verse:

"And most surely we or you are on a right way or in manifest error" (34:24).

The demonstrative pronoun, "this", in "after this" points to the explanation and proof offered to the Jews.

Why has this proviso, "after this", been added here? Is not he, who fabricates a lie against Allah, unjust in all circumstances? The fact is that he cannot be called unjust until proof has been clearly explained to him – as some scholars have said. However, the sentence, "these it is that are the unjust", is an exclusive one, and it implies that such fabricators cannot be but unjust.

Verse 95

Qur'an: "Say: "Allah has spoken the truth; therefore, follow the religion of Ibrahim..." (3:95).

As the truth is on my side (in what I have told you and called you to), you should follow my religion; also, you should admit that camel meat, for example, is a good thing made lawful by Allah, and that Allah had forbidden it to you as a punishment for your injustice and transgression – as He has said.

The clause, "**therefore follow the religion of Ibrahim**" (3:95), is a sort of indirect invitation to follow the Prophet's religion. It was not mentioned directly because: first, the Jews affirmed the truth of Ibrahim's religion; secondly, the present wording shows that the religion to which they are invited is the upright and natural one – after all, nature does not prevent man from eating good sustenance given by Allah, including meat.

Traditions

As-Sadiq (‘a) said: “Whenever Israel ate camel meat, he felt throbbing pain in his sides. Therefore, he forbade camel meat to himself. And it was (long) before the revelation of the Torah. When the Torah was revealed, (Musa) neither forbade it, nor ate it.”³

The author says: An almost similar tradition is narrated through the Sunni chains. The verbs in the clause, neither forbade it nor ate it, refer to Musa (‘a) whose name, although not mentioned, is clearly understood. The verb, ‘*lam ya’kulhu*’ (لَمْ يَأْكُلْهُ = did not eat it) may alternatively be read from the paradigm ‘*at-taf’il*’ as ‘*lam yu’akkilhu*’ (لَمْ يُؤْكَلْهُ = did not feed it, i.e., did not tell them to eat it). The dictionary, *Taj al-‘arus*, says that the verb ‘*al-akl*’ (أَلَكَ = to eat) when conjugated on the paradigms of ‘*at-taf’il*’ (التَّفْعِيلُ) and ‘*al-mufa’alah*’ (الْمُفَاعَلَةُ), has the same meaning. It means that ‘*at-ta’kil*’ (التَّأْكِيلُ = to feed) and ‘*al-mu’akalah*’ (الْمُؤَاكَلَةُ = to eat together) have the same connotation.

1. See Genesis 32/24 – 30. (tr.)

2. We have described it under the verse 2: 106. See al-Mizan (Engl. transl.), vol. 2, pp. 42 – 52. (pub.).

3. al-Kafi; at-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi.

[1] [1]

SHARES

Sura ‘Aal-‘Imran: Verses 96 – 97

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for the worlds” (3:96).

فِيهِ آيَاتٌ ۚ بَيَّنَّتْ مَقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۚ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ ۖ كَانَ ءَامِنًا وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ ۚ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ

“In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim; and whoever enters it shall be secure; and for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men, (upon) everyone who can afford the journey to it, and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient (independent) of the worlds” (3:97).

Commentary

The two verses are in reply to another objection which the Jews were putting to the believers, because of the “abrogation”. Their target, this time, was the change of *qiblah* from Bayt al-Maqdis to the Ka‘bah. We have explained under the verse, **“turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque...” (2: 144)**, that the change of *qiblah* was a very important matter which had profound effect, materially as well as spiritually, on the People of the Book, especially the Jews; apart from the fact that it offended their views about abrogation. That is why they vehemently objected to it and contentions and conflicts between them, and the Muslims continued for a long time after the change of *qiblah*.

It may be inferred from the verses that they had combined two elements in their objection: their aversion to abrogation, and a denial that the new direction of *qiblah* had anything to do with Ibrahim. How could the Ka‘bah be considered the *qiblah* of Ibrahim, when Allah had appointed Bayt al-Maqdis as *qiblah*? This new rule entails abrogation of Ibrahim’s law – admittedly the true religion – when we know that abrogation is impossible and void.

The verse deals with it as follows: The Ka‘bah was appointed as the House of worship long before other houses like Bayt al-Maqdis were built. Undoubtedly it was Ibrahim who built it and dedicated it for Divine Worship; there are many clear signs, like the standing place of Ibrahim, which prove this fact. Bayt al-Maqdis, on the other hand, was built by Sulayman¹ who came centuries after Ibrahim.

Verse 96

Qur’an: “Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for the worlds” (3:96).

The meaning of ‘house’ is well-known; that the Ka‘bah was appointed for men, means that it was dedicated in order that people should worship Allah in that place. It was a means of Divine Worship, helping men and making it easier for them to pray to Allah, by journey to, or facing towards it; and in various ways turning their attention to Him. All this may be inferred from the phrase **“blessed and a guidance for the worlds” (3:96)**. Also, the expression, **“one at Bakkah” (3:96)**, hints at it. The word **“bakkah”** (بَكَةٌ) means gathering of people, and its use here points to the fact that there is always a large gathering of people therein who are engaged in circumambulation, prayer and other rites of worship.

The wording however does not show that the Ka‘bah was the first House built on the earth or appointed for the benefit of men.

Bakkah – refers to the land on which the Ka‘bah stands; it has been given this name because there is always a huge gathering of people there. There are also other explanations:

(1) *Bakkah* is Mecca, the letter ‘m’ (م) has been changed to ‘b’ (ب), as it has been done in ‘*lazim*’ (لَازِمٌ) and ‘*lazib*’ (لَازِبٌ) or ‘*ratim*’ (رَاتِمٌ) and ‘*ratib*’ (رَاتِبٌ) etc.;

(2) It is a name of the Meccan Sanctuary; or

(3) of the Sacred Mosque; or

(4) of the area of circumambulation.

“al-Mubarakah” (الْمُبَارَكَةُ) is on the paradigm of *al-mufa‘alah* (الْمُفَاعَلَةُ) from the root word *al-barakah* (الْبَرَكَه = abundant good); it has been translated here as ‘blessed’; it means bestowal of abundant good on the House, making it blessed. Abundant good covers good of both worlds; but in this verse it has been put face to face with the phrase, ***“a guidance for the worlds” (3:96)***, and it indicates that the blessing refers to worldly good. The best of such blessings is the abundance of sustenance in Mecca, and deep yearning of people to go there for pilgrimage, to present themselves there and to keep it in highest regard. In other words, it would show the fulfilment of Ibrahim’s prayer:

“O our Lord! surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley, uncultivable, near Thy Sacred House, our Lord! that they may establish prayers; therefore, make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful” (14:37).

The Ka‘bah is a guidance, as it shows the people the way to their happiness in the hereafter, leads them to nobility and Divine Nearness; because, Allah has designated it for worship, and has prescribed various prayers, acts of worship and rituals to be performed there; also, it has remained the destination longed for by the believers and a place of worship for worshippers.

The Qur’an shows that it was in Ibrahim’s time – after he had completed the construction of the Ka‘bah – that pilgrimage was prescribed for the first time: Allah says:

“And We enjoined Ibrahim and Isma’il (saying): Purify (you two) My House for those who make circuit and those who abide (in it for devotion) and those who bow down (and) those who prostrate themselves” (2: 125).

“(And He had enjoined Ibrahim as follows:) And proclaim among men the Hajj; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path” (22:27).

This verse clearly says that this call, this cry, would surely be answered with general acceptance by the people from near and afar, from various clans and tribes.

Also the Qur’an proves that this divinely-initiated “symbol” was firmly established and quite well-known in the days of Shu‘ayb (‘a). Allah quotes him as saying to Musa (‘a):

“I desire to marry one of these two daughters of mine to you on condition that you should serve me for eight years (lit.: pilgrimages); but if you complete ten, it will be of your own free will” (28:27).

He used the word “pilgrimages” for “years”. There can be only one explanation for it: the years were counted in terms of pilgrimage, as it happened every year.

Also, there are many points in Ibrahim’s invocation which show that the House all the time served as a worship centre and was a symbol of guidance. (For detail see chapter 14 – Ibrahim).

The Arabs, even in the days of ignorance, held the House in reverence and performed its pilgrimage, rightly believing it to be a part of Ibrahim’s *Shari’ah*. History says that other nations too accorded respect to it. This, in itself, is a sort of guidance because it fixes man’s mind on remembrance of Allah. So far as the period after the advent of Islam is concerned, the Ka’bah’s guidance needs no elaboration. Its fame encompasses the East and the West. The Ka’bah is always present in people’s minds and hearts. The Muslims turn to it from everywhere they are, and at all times: during worship and prayer, while standing or sitting, for slaughtering animals and in a number of other religious affairs.

In this way, the House is a guidance (with all stages of guiding), be it just attention of mind or complete surrender to Allah – the stage which may be attained only by the purified servants of Allah – from among those who are free of sin and error.

Moreover, it guides the Muslim’s world to their worldly blessings because it unifies their goal, unites the *ummah* and opens for them avenues of benefit and profit. Also, it is a guidance for the others because it makes them appreciate the fruits of this unity and they realize how beneficial it is to unite all separate forces together.

It appears from the above that:

First: The Ka’bah is a guidance to the happiness of this world and the next; and it encompasses all the stages of guidance. In short, the guidance is general and unconditional.

Second: It is a guidance for the whole world, not for a particular world or special group like the progeny of Ibrahim, or the Arabs, or the Muslims. It is because of unrestrictedness of the guidance.

Verse 97

Qur’an: “In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim...” (3:97).

The “signs” are qualified by the adjective “clear”. It particularizes the signs to a certain extent. Yet the ambiguity, the vagueness remains. But the context demands that the distinctions and special qualities of the House be clearly shown, in order that the audience may know why it has got precedence over all other houses of worship.

It requires definitive description of its distinctions, free from ambiguous expression or vague depiction. Looking from this angle it becomes clear that the next phrases and clauses have been put there as classifications of the “clear signs”. What are the clear signs? They are the standing place of Ibrahim, its

being a sanctuary and place of safety, and obligatoriness of its pilgrimage for those who can afford.

But it does not mean that the three clauses are in “*atf al-bayan*” (عَطْفُ الْبَيَانِ = explicative apposition) to the phrase “clear signs” or serve as its “*al-badal*” (الْبَدَلُ = substitute). Otherwise, it would require reconstruction of all the sentences. For example, it will have to be rewritten as follows: “These signs are the standing place of Ibrahim, and safety for those who enter it, and its pilgrimage for him who may afford the journey.”

Thus we will have to reduce a whole sentence (whoever enters it shall be secure) to a single word “security” (it makes no difference whether we take that sentence as an imperative or a declarative one), and to change the imperative sentence (and for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent...) into a declarative one and then setting it in conjunction with the preceding sentence; and this too will have to be reduced to a single word. Alternatively we will have to add ‘an’ (أَنَّ) of *masdar* before both sentences. But the context does not agree with all these alterations.

The fact is that the three sentences are independent; each has a certain connotation – either declarative or imperative – and all three together describe the clear signs. It is as we say: Zayd is a noble man; he is the son of a great father; his house is always open to guests; and we should follow in his footsteps. [Thus, the three independent sentences explain the nobility of Zayd.]

“The standing place of Ibrahim” (3:97), is a subject with its predicate omitted; the complete sentence would be, “There is in it the standing place of Ibrahim.” It is the stone that has the imprint of the feet of Ibrahim. It is reported that the stone is fixed in the place now called “*Maqamu Ibrahim*” (مَقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ = standing place of Ibrahim) on the periphery of the circumambulation area,² facing “*al-Multazam*” (الْمُلْتَزِمُ = the Ka’bah’s wall between its door and the Black Stone). It is this stone that Abu Talib, the uncle of the Prophet, refers to in his well-known poem:

And the footprints of Ibrahim in the stone identify,

With his (i.e., Muhammad’s) feet – when they are bare.

Sometimes this phrase gives the idea that there is in the House – or the House itself – the place where Ibrahim stood or stayed for Divine Worship.

Another syntactical possibility: We may say that the implied sentence is as follows, ‘In it are clear signs, and they are the standing place of Ibrahim, and security and pilgrimage’; but the last words (i.e. ‘and security and pilgrimage’) have been omitted for brevity because the next sentences allude to them. The next sentences, **“and whoever enters it..., and for the sake of Allah pilgrimage...” (3:97)**, give imperative connotation but are constructed as declarative ones.

This verse, therefore, shows one of the wonderful Qur’anic styles: It uses a speech (which has its own theme) – to serve another purpose – it is placed in such a way as to point to the other meaning too.

Thus, one sentence serves two purposes without sacrificing either connotation. For example, sometimes it puts direct quotation in an indirect narration:

“...Every one of them believes in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers: We make no difference between any of His messengers” (2:285).

Two examples are found in verses:

“Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrahim about his Lord...” (2:258).

“Or like him who passed by a town, and it had fallen down upon its roofs...” (2:259).

and we have pointed to this in the Commentary of the second verse. Other examples are seen in verses:

“The day on which neither property will avail, nor sons” (26:88).

“... Except him who comes to Allah with a heart submissive” (26:89).

And also in this verse:

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces..., but righteousness is the one who...” (2: 177).

Wherein righteousness has been used for “righteous”; the same modality is seen in:

“And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears not more than a call and a cry” (2: 171).

This modality is used in most of the Qur’anic parables.

The modality used in this verse, ***“In it are clear signs... independent of the worlds” (3:97)***, which frequently switches from declarative to imperative mood and back, is the same as that employed in the verses:

“And remember Our servants Ayyub, when he called upon his Lord: The Satan has afflicted me with weariness and torment” (38:41).

“Stamp your foot, here is a cool washing place and a drink.” (38:42).

“And We gave him his family and the like of them with them, as a mercy from Us, and as a reminder to those possessed of understanding” (38:43).

“And take in your hand a bundle of rushes and beat her with it and do not break your oath; surely We found him patient; most excellent the servant! Surely, he was frequent in returning (to Allah)” (38:44).

However, the explanation given above is totally different from that given by some people who speak in term of explicative apposition, and which we have rejected earlier. If one thinks it necessary to treat it as an explicative apposition, then it is far better to treat only one phrase ***“the Standing Place of Ibrahim” (3:97)***, in this way; and treat the next two sentences as independent ones, which by their meanings point to other two explicative appositions which are deleted for brevity – as we have done. The completed sentence then would be as follows: In it are clear signs, the Standing Place of Ibrahim, and the security of the visitor, and the pilgrimage of one who can afford it.

There is no doubt whatsoever that each of the above-mentioned things is a clear sign that leads to Allah and reminds one of His majesty. What is a sign? It is a thing that points to something else. And there is no sign that may lead to Allah, may remind His servants of His majesty, greater and clearer in people’s eyes than the Standing Place of Ibrahim, the sanctuary that provides security to the one who enters it, and the worship and rites which are performed by millions of people year after year and which the alternations of days and nights cannot set aside.

It should be made clear that it is not necessary for a “sign” to be a super-natural thing that should contradict the normal system of nature; neither is ‘miraculousness’ part of this word’s meaning, nor is its use in the Qur’an confined to this sense. Allah says:

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

No doubt, abrogated laws of the *Shari’ah* are included in the meaning of the word, “signs”, here.

Also, He says:

“Do you build on every height a monument (lit. sign)? Vain is it that you do” (26: 128).

There are many such verses in the Qur’an.

Now you may see how untenable is the position of those who say that only the Standing Place of Ibrahim is a “clear sign”, and that the security and the pilgrimage are not related in any way to the “clear signs”.

The same is the position of those who insist that the phrase “clear signs” refers to various special characteristics of the Ka’bah. (We do not think it necessary to quote them here; whoever so desires, should refer to some detailed books of exegesis.) Such an explanation takes it for granted that “signs” means miraculous and super-natural things; but as we have explained just now, there is no evidence to prove it.

The fact is that the sentence, ***“Whoever enters it shall be secure” (3:97)***, points to a legislative law, not to any creative characteristic. Apparently, it is a declarative sentence which refers to a law that was in force since long and had made the House a place of security. This may be inferred from the invocation

of Ibrahim quoted in the chapter 14 (Ibrahim) and chapter 2 (The Cow). This right of sanctuary was recognized even by the Arabs of pre-Islamic era, and its origin may be traced to Ibrahim's days.

Some exegetes have said: The sentence declares that violence and upheaval, turmoil and turbulence cannot happen in, or reach, the sanctuary. But experience refutes this explanation; we know how many battles and wars were fought in that area; how much distance and violence had occurred there – and especially before this verse was revealed.

Also, the verse

“Do they not see that We have made a sacred territory secure, while men are carried off by force from around them?” (29:67).

Does not show any creative security inherent in the nature of Ka'bah. It only points to the fact that safety and security surrounded the sacred area, because people respected the sanctity of the House and accorded it full honour as it was established by the *Shari'ah* of Ibrahim; thus, ultimately it depends on Divine Legislation, on the law ordained by Allah.

This view is further supported by the invocations of Ibrahim as he implored Allah:

“...My Lord! make this city secure...” (14:35).

“...My Lord! make it a secure town...” (2:126).

He prayed to Allah to make Mecca a secure town, and Allah answered his prayer by promulgating a law to that effect and implanting acceptance of this law in people's hearts so that they could continue respecting this sanctuary generation after generation.

Qur'an: “...And for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men, (upon) every one who can afford the journey to it...” (3:97).

“al-Hijj” (الْحِجُّ), which has also been recited *‘al-hajj’* (الْحَجُّ), literally means, to intend, to aim; then it was reserved for intention of, or repairing to, the House in a particular manner laid down by the *Shari'ah*; *‘sabilan’* (سَبِيلًا = lit.: way; translated here as, the journey) is *‘at-tamyiz’* (الْتَمْيِيزُ = accusative of specification) related to the verb “can afford”.

The verse approvingly describes the institution of *‘hajj’* as a law that was ordained for the *Shari'ah* of Ibrahim; as Allah describes in the verse 22:27, where He mentions His order to Ibrahim:

“And proclaim among men the hall; they will come to you...” (22:27).

It appears from the above, that the modality of the sentence ***“and for the sake of Allah...” (3:97)*** is the same as that of the preceding one ***“and whoever enters it shall be secure” (3:97)***. Each is a declarative sentence which approvingly describes a previously ordained law. Alternatively, it is possible

to treat both as imperative sentences meant to reconfirm the two Ibrahimic laws. But the context obviously supports the first explanation.

Qur'an: “...*And whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient (independent) of the worlds*” (3:97).

Disbelief, in this verse, means disbelieving in a law, in a branch of religion; like the disbelief resulting from neglect of prayer or *zakat*. The word in this context means neglecting the important law of *hajj*. In this clause, the effect has been used to describe the reason; in other words, it says, ‘Whoever neglects *hajj* becomes a disbeliever.’ On the other hand, the clause, “**Allah is Self-sufficient**” (3:97), puts the reason in place of effect; that is, he will not cause any harm to Allah because Allah is Self-sufficient. The full sentence, therefore, means as follows: Whoever neglects *hajj* becomes a disbeliever, but he, by his disbelief, cannot harm Allah in any way because Allah is Self-sufficient and independent of the worlds.

Traditions

Ibn Shahrashub narrates from the Leader of the Faithful (‘Ali, ‘a) about the words of Allah, “**Most surely the first house appointed for men...**” (3:96), as follows: “A man asked him whether it was the first house (built). He said: ‘No. Surely there were houses (built) before it, but it is the first House appointed for men, blessed, in which there is guidance, mercy and blessing. And it was Ibrahim who first built it; then an Arabian group from the (tribe of) Jurhum built it, then it was demolished, so the al-‘Amaliqah rebuilt it; again it fell down and then the Quraysh rebuilt it.’ “

Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated through the chain of ash-Sha‘bi, from ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib, that he said, explaining this verse: “There were houses before that; but it was the first House made for the worship of Allah.”³

The author says: as-Suyuti has also narrated a similar tradition through Ibn Jarir from Matar (Ibn Tuhman). And there are numerous Traditions of the same theme.

as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “The land on which the House stands is Bakkah; and the town is Mecca.”⁴

The same book quotes the same Imam as saying: “Bakkah was named Bakkah because people are crowded therein.”

The author says: “*Yabakkun*” (يَبْكُونُ = they are crowded).

al-Baqir (‘a) said: “Mecca is called Bakkah because men and women are crowded therein; a woman prays in front of you, and on your right, and on your left, and with you, and there is no harm in it (at that place); but surely it is disliked in all other towns.”⁵

The same Imam said: “When Allah intended to create the earth, He ordered the winds, and they agitated

the face of water until it produced waves (and) then brought up foam (and froth); so (all of) it became one foam. Then Allah gathered it in the place of the House (i.e., where the House now stands) and made it a mountain of foam; thereafter He spread out the earth from beneath it. And this is the (meaning of the) words of Allah: Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed. Thus the first plot created of the earth is the Ka‘bah; then the earth was expanded from it.”[6](#)

The author says: There are numerous Traditions saying that the earth was expanded and extended from beneath the Ka‘bah. There is nothing against the Qur‘an in these Traditions. Nor is there any rational reason to refute it – except the ancient philosophers’ theory that the earth was an eternal indivisible element; but that theory has so manifestly been proved wrong that it needs no further exposition.

This narrative explains how and why the Ka‘bah was the first House (i.e., piece of land) of the earth – from Traditions’ point of view. But so far as the obvious meaning of the verse is concerned, it supports the first two Traditions.

as–Sadiq (‘a) was asked what the ‘clear signs’ mentioned in the verse, ***“In it are clear signs” (3:97)***, were: He said: “The Standing Place of Ibrahim – where he stood upon the stone and his feet left their prints in it, and the Black Stone, and the House of Isma‘il.”[7](#)

The author says: There are other Traditions of the same meaning. Perhaps the Imam (‘a) mentioned them as examples, although some of them are not mentioned in the verse.

‘Abdu ‘s–Samad said: “Abu Ja‘far [al–Mansur] wanted to buy from (some) Meccans their houses in order to extend the (Sacred) Mosque; but they refused. Then he induced them; they still resisted. So, he was frustrated. Then he came to Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) and said to him: ‘I requested these people (to sell to us) some of their houses and compounds, so that we could extend the Mosque; but they have refused; and it has put me into utmost grief.’ Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) said: ‘Why does it grieve you and your proof against them is (very) clear?’ He said: ‘And what should I argue against them with?’ (The Imam) said: ‘With the Book of Allah.’ He said: ‘In which place (is it explained)?’

(The Imam) said: ‘The words of Allah: ***“Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah” (3:96)***. And Allah has informed you (in this verse) that the first House appointed for the men is the one that is at Bakkah. Now if they had taken the possession (of the land) before the House (was built) then their plots would belong to them; but if the House was there before them, then it (the Ka‘bah) owns its plot.’ Abu Ja‘far then called them and argued with them accordingly. Thereupon they said: ‘Do whatever you want.’”[8](#)

al–Hasan Ibn ‘Ali Ibn an–Nu‘man says: “When al–Mahdi built (i.e., extended) the Sacred Mosque, there remained there one house (because of which) the Mosque could not be made square. He asked for it from its owners; but they refused. He asked jurists about it, and all of them told him that he should not include in the Sacred Mosque anything taken by force. Then ‘Ali Ibn Yaqtin said: ‘O leader of the faithful!

I am writing (a letter) to Musa Ibn Ja'far (peace be on them both), so that I may tell you what the proper ruling is in this matter.' So he wrote to the Governor of Medina to ask Musa Ibn Ja'far (peace be on them both) about the house which we wanted to include in the Sacred Mosque but its owners refused (to sell it) – how this problem could be solved? (The Governor) told Abu al-Hasan (Musa Ibn Ja'far – peace be on them both) about it. Abu al-Hasan ('a) said: 'Is it necessary to give its reply?'

He said: '(Yes), it is a matter that is necessary.' Then (the Imam) said to him: 'Write down: "In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, if the Ka'bah had settled down with the people, then the people have more rights on its courtyard; but if the people have settled down around the Ka'bah, then the Ka'bah has more right over its courtyard." ' When the letter reached al-Mahdi, he took it and kissed it, then he ordered to demolish the (said) house. The house owners then came to Ab al-Hasan ('a) and requested him to write a letter to al-Mahdi regarding the price of the house. He wrote to him to give them something, so he made them happy."⁹

The author says: The two Traditions contain a very fine point of argument. It was Abu Ja'far al-Mansur who began the extension of the Sacred Mosque which was completed during al-Mahdi's reign.

as-Sadiq ('a) said about the words of Allah, and for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent...: "(Allah) means by it the *hajj* and the *'umrah* both, because both are obligatory."¹⁰

The author says: al-'Ayyashi too has narrated it in his *at-Tafsir*. This tradition takes the word '*hijj*' in its literal sense, i.e., to proceed to.

as-Sadiq ('a) has explained the word, and whoever disbelieves, as "whoever neglects".¹¹

The author says: ash-Shaykh has narrated this tradition in *at-Tahdhib*. We have explained it earlier that disbelief, like belief, has many grades; and that the word, as used in this verse, means disbelieving in – i.e., not complying with – a commandment of the *Shari'ah*.

'Ali Ibn Ja'far narrates from his brother Musa ('a), a tradition in which he, inter alia, says: "I said: 'Then whoever among us does not go for hajj, is an unbeliever?' (The Imam) said: 'No. But whoever says that it is not so (i.e., it is not obligatory) becomes an unbeliever.' "¹²

The author says: There are many Traditions of the same theme. 'Disbelief', as explained in this tradition, means rejection and refutation, and the verse could mean it. Thus, 'disbelief' has been used here in its literal meaning, i.e., hiding the truth; and it may refer to various grades of disbelief according to various situations.

A Short History Of The Ka'bah

It is *mutawatir* and definitely known that it was Ibrahim al-Khalil ('a) who built the Ka'bah. The residents around it at that time were his son, Isma'il, and the tribe of Jurhum (originally from Yemen). It is an

almost square building whose sides face the cardinal points of the compass; the winds, no matter how strong, lose their force when they strike it – without doing it any harm.

The construction of Ibrahim stood intact, until it was rebuilt by al-‘Amaliqah, and later by the tribe of Jurhum (or vice versa), as has been described in the earlier narrated tradition of the Leader of the Faithful (‘Ali, ‘a).

When the management of the Ka‘bah came into the hands of Qusayy Ibn Kilab – an ancestor of the Prophet – in the second century before *hijrah*, he demolished and rebuilt it on firm foundation, putting a roof of doom palm timber and date-palm trunk on it. He also built the ‘*Dar an-Nadwah*’ (دَارُ النَّدْوَةِ = Council House) on one side. It was the place from where he ruled and where he held counsel with his colleagues. Then he divided various sides of the Ka‘bah among different clans of the Quraysh and each clan built their houses at the side allotted to them; and they opened their doors towards the Ka‘bah.

Five years before the start of the Prophet’s mission, there came a flood that destroyed the Ka‘bah’s building. The Quraysh divided among themselves the various responsibilities connected with its reconstruction. They hired a Roman mason to build it and an Egyptian carpenter to help him with the woodwork. When the time came to fix the Black Stone, a dispute erupted as to which clan should be accorded the honour of putting the Black Stone in its place. Then they agreed to leave the decision to Muhammad (S), who at that time was thirty-five years old – because they had full faith in his deep wisdom and sound judgment. He got his robe, and putting the Stone on it, told all the clans to hold the sides of the robe and raise it together. When the Stone reached the required height (on the eastern corner), he took it in his hands and fixed it in its proper place.

But the Quraysh found their funds exhausted. So they reduced the size on one side – as it is today; thus a part of the original foundation was left out, and that is the portion known as ‘Hijr Isma‘il’ (حِجْرُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ = the Enclosure of Isma‘il).

The building remained in that condition until ‘Abdullah Ibn az-Zubayr established his rule over Hijaz during the reign of Yazid Ibn Mu‘awiyah. Husayn Ibn Numayr, the commander of Yazid’s army, besieged him at Mecca and struck the Ka‘bah with catapult. The Ka‘bah was demolished, the ‘*al-Kiswah*’ (الْكِسْوَةُ = covering of the Ka‘bah) and some roof timbers were burnt down. The siege was lifted when news came of Yazid’s death.

Ibn az-Zubayr decided to demolish the Ka‘bah completely and rebuild it on its original foundation. He got good mortar from Yemen and constructed the new building. Hijr Isma‘il was re-included in the Ka‘bah; the door was fixed at the level of the ground; another door was fixed on the opposite side, so that people might enter from one door and go out from the other. He fixed the height of the House at twenty-seven arms. When the building was ready, he covered the whole building with musk and perfume inside out and put silken *Kiswah* on it. The construction was completed on 17th Rajab, 64 A.H.

When ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan came to power in Damascus, he sent his commander, Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf,

who defeated Ibn az-Zubayr and killed him. Entering the Sacred Mosque, he saw what Ibn az-Zubayr had done regarding the Ka'bah. He wrote to 'Abd al-Malik about it who ordered him to return it to its previous shape. Hajjaj, therefore, demolished six and a half arms from the northern side and rebuilt it according to the plan of the Quraysh; he raised the eastern door and closed the western one; he also filled the inside with the stones that could not be re-used (thus raising the inside floor to the new level of the door).

When the Ottoman Sultan Sulayman ascended the throne in 960 A.H., he changed the roof of the Ka'bah. Sultan Ahmad (who came to power in 1021 A.H.) made some other repairs and alterations. Then came the great flood of 1039 A.H. which demolished parts of its northern, eastern, and western walls. Therefore, the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV got it repaired. And the same building continues till this day, and it is the year 1375 by lunar *Hijri* calendar and 1338 according to the solar one.

The Shape of the Ka'bah: The Ka'bah is nearly square in shape, built with hard dark bluish-grey stones. It now rises to sixteen metres; but was much lower at the time of the Prophet (S) as may be inferred from the fact that, on the day of conquest of Mecca, the Prophet raised 'Ali ('a) on his shoulders so that 'Ali could remove and break the idols that were placed on the roof of the Ka'bah.

The wall [the northern] one that faces the Enclosure of Isma'il and] over which is placed the water trough and the one on its opposite side [the southern one] are ten metres and ten centimetres long; while the [eastern] wall which has the door and the one opposite to it are twelve metres long. The door is placed at a height of two metres from the ground level. The Black Stone is fixed in the [east-south] corner, so that if one wants to enter the door, the Stone would be on his left. This Stone is one and a half metres above the ground level, that is, above the level of the circumambulation area. The Black Stone is a hard rock of irregular oval shape, black with some reddish tint; it has red dots and yellow wavy lines which appeared when some broken pieces were soldered and joined. It has a diameter of about thirty centimetres.

The corners of Ka'bah's, since ancient days, are called "*al-arkan*" (أَلْرُكْنَانُ; pl. of "*ar-rukn*" أَلْرُكْنُ = pillar); the northern one is called, the Iraqi *rukn*; the western, the Syrian; the southern, the Yemenite; and the eastern (wherein the Black Stone is fixed), is named the Black. The area between the door and the Black Stone is called "*al-Multazam*" (أَلْمُلْتَزِمُ = lit.: the place where one clings to) because when one circumambulates one adheres to it for invocation and prayer.

The trough fixed over the northern wall, which is called the Trough of Mercy, was an innovation of al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf; in 954 A.H. Sultan Sulayman changed that with a silver one; that too was replaced by Sultan Ahmad in 1021 A.H. with another one of enamelled silver with golden designs. In 1273 A.H. Sultan 'Abd al-Majid replaced it with another one made of gold, and it is the present one.

Facing the northern wall is a wall – half circle in shape. It is called, *al-Hatim*. It is like a bow whose two ends face the northern [Iraqi] and the western [Syrian] *rukns*; there is a gap of two metres and three

centimetres between the ends of the bow and the said *rukns*. The wall, al-Hatim, is one metre high and one and a half metres wide. It is panelled with carved marble. The distance between the centre of al-Hatim and the centre of the northern wall of the Ka'bah is eight metres and forty-four centimetres. The area covered by al-Hatim and the northern wall is known as Hijr Isma'il [Enclosure of Isma'il]. About three metres of this space was included in the Ka'bah built by Ibrahim ('a); and the remaining area was the pen for sheep of Hajirah and her son. It is said that Hajirah and Isma'il are buried in the same Enclosure.

The changes and alterations that were done inside the Ka'bah, and the rituals and sunnah rites connected with the House are not so necessary to be described here.

The Covering of the Ka'bah: We have described, in the chapter of 'The Cow', in the Traditions relating the story of Hajirah and Isma'il and their settlement at Mecca, that Hajirah hang her mantle as a curtain on the door of the Ka'bah when its construction was completed.

As for the covering of the House itself, it is said that the first to cover it was the Tubba' ¹³ Abu Bakr As'ad, who hang on it the sheets embroidered with silver threads. His successors followed this custom. Then people started covering it with sheets of various kinds – putting one upon the other. Whenever a covering looked old, a new one was put over it. This continued until Qusayy came on the scene. He imposed a tax on the Arabs for putting a new covering every year. This system continued in his descendants. Abu Rabi'ah Ibn al-Mughirah used to put a covering one year and all the clans of Quraysh did so the next year.

The Prophet covered the House with Yemenite sheets. This custom continued. When the 'Abbaside caliph al-Mahdi went for pilgrimage, the attendants of the House complained to him about the coverings that had accumulated on the roof of the Ka'bah. They said there was a danger of the roof collapsing down because of that load. The King ordered that all the old coverings should be removed and that every year a new covering should replace the old one – and that custom is followed till now.

The Ka'bah is draped from inside too. The first to do so was the mother of 'Abbas, son of 'Abd al-Muttalib – she had done so because of a vow she had taken regarding her son – 'Abbas.

Prestige of the Ka'bah: The Ka'bah was held in high esteem by various nations. The Hindus respected it, believing that the spirit of Siva – the third person of their Trimurty – entered into the Black Stone, when he was accompanied by his wife visiting Hijaz.

The Sabaeans of Persia and Chaledonia counted it as one of their seven holy sanctuaries. ¹⁴ Many of them said that it was the House of the Saturn – because it was the most ancient, and the longest in existence.

The Persians too respected the Ka'bah, believing that the spirit of Hormoz was present therein; they sometimes went for its pilgrimage.

The Jews honoured it and worshipped God there according to the religion of Ibrahim. There were many pictures and images in the Ka'bah, including those of Ibrahim and Isma'il which had divining arrows in their hands. Also, there were pictures of the virgin Mary and Christ – which indicates that the Christians too respected the Ka'bah like the Jews.

The Arabs held it in the highest esteem; they believed that it was the House of Allah and came to its pilgrimage from every place. They believed the Ka'bah was built by Ibrahim and the hajj was a part of his religion which had come to them as his legacy.

Trusteeship of the Ka'bah: The trusteeship was in the hands of Isma'il; and after him it remained in his descendants. Then the Jurhumites became more powerful and took over the trusteeship. They in their turn were vanquished after several wars by the 'Amaliqah, who were a part of Banu Karkar. The 'Amaliqah resided at the lower section of Mecca while the Jurhumites had settled in its upper section. They had their own Kings.

Later, the Jurhumites defeated the 'Amaliqah and regained the trusteeship, which remained with them for about three hundred years. They extended the area of the House and increased its height.

Gradually the Isma'ilites grew in number and gained power; and they found the place too congested and over-populated. Then they fought the Jurhumites, defeated and expelled them from Mecca. The leader of the Isma'ilites at that time was 'Amr Ibn Lahiyy, the chief of the clan of Khuza'ah. He became overlord of Mecca and took over the trusteeship of the Ka'bah. It was he who put idols in the Ka'bah and called people to worship them. The first idol he put there was Hubal which he had brought from Syria; then he brought others. Gradually there were a lot of idols, and idol-worship spread among the Arabs; the upright religion of Ibrahim was discarded.

Shahnah Ibn Khalaf al-Jurhumi refers to this episode, when he addresses 'Amr Ibn Lahiyy in the following ode:

O 'Amr! you have invented various gods;

At Mecca – idols around the House.

And there was for the House One Lord from ever;

But you have made for it several lords (which are now worshipped) by the people.

Surely you should know that Allah is in no hurry;

Soon He will choose for (His) House stewards other than you.

The trusteeship remained in the clan of Khuza'ah up to the time of Halil al-Khuza'i. He nominated his daughter (who was married to Qusayy Ibn Kilab) to succeed him, and gave the right of opening and

closing the door to a man from his clan, Abu Ghabshan al-Khuza'i by name. Abu Ghabshan sold his right to Qusayy Ibn Kilab for a camel and a skinful of liquor. The proverb, "More loss incurring than the deal of Abu Ghabshan", alludes to this sale.

The trusteeship was thus transferred to the Quraysh. Qusayy rebuilt the House, as we have mentioned above. The things continued as they were, until the Prophet conquered Mecca, and entering the Ka'bah ordered the pictures to be effaced, and the idols to be thrown down and broken.

The Standing Place of Ibrahim – the stone with the imprints of Ibrahim's feet – was at first put in a kneading trough near the Ka'bah; then it was buried in the place where it is at present. It has a dome on four pillars where the people offer their prayers after the circumambulation.

There are a lot of details of various aspects of the Ka'bah and other religious buildings attached to it. We have described here only the things which are necessary for understanding the verses of hajj and the Ka'bah.

One of the specialties of this House – which Allah has blessed and made a guidance – is that no Muslim group has ever disagreed about it or its prestige, honour, and respect.

[1.](#) It was founded by Dawud and completed by Sulayman. (tr.).

[2.](#) Now it is enclosed in a hemispherical glass through which the imprints may be seen. (tr.).

[3.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.

[4.](#) 'Ilalu 'sh-sharayi'.

[5.](#) 'Ilalu 'sh-sharayi'.

[6.](#) Ilalu 'sh-sharayi'.

[7.](#) al-Kafi; at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.

[8.](#) at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.

[9.](#) at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.

[10.](#) al-Kafi.

[11.](#) at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi.

[12.](#) al-Kafi.

[13.](#) Tubba' – was the title of the Kings of Yemen. (tr.).

[14.](#) The seven sanctuaries were: (1) The Ka'bah; (2) Mars – on the summit of a mountain in Isfahan; (3) "Mandusan"? (مندوسان) in India; (4) Naw Bahar in Balkh; (5) House of Ghamdan in San'a; (6) Kawsan in Farghana, Khurasan; and (7) a House in Upper China. (Author's Note).

Sura 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 98 – 101

قُلْ يَٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَىٰ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“Say: “O People of the Book! why do you disbelieve in the communications of Allah? and Allah is a witness of what you do” (3:98).

قُلْ يَٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لِمَ تَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ مَن ءَامَنَ تَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَأَنتُمْ شُهَدَآءُ وَمَا ٱللَّهُ بِغَٰفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

“Say: “O People of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah? You seek (to make) it crooked, while you are witnesses, and Allah is not heedless of what you do” (3:99).

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ۖ إِن تَطِيعُوا۟ ۖ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ۖ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ يَرُدُّوكُم بَعْدَ إِيمَٰنِكُمْ كَٰفِرِينَ

“O you who believe! if you obey a party from among those who were given the Book, they will turn you back as unbelievers after you have believed” (3: 100).

وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ وَأَنتُمْ تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ ءَايَٰتُ ٱللَّهِ وَفِيكُمْ رَسُولُهُۥ ۖ وَمَن يَعْتَصِم بِٱللَّهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

“But how can you disbelieve while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited, and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path (3: 101).

Commentary

The verses – as is evident from thematic continuity – indicate that the People of the Book (a group of them – i. e., the Jews – or a group of the Jews) disbelieved in the Divine Revelation, and hindered the believers from the way of Allah by trying to show that it was a crooked and untrue way, and presenting to them the actually crooked misleading way as the way of Allah. They did so by creating doubts in the believers' minds, in order that the believers would see the truth as falsehood and the falsehood (to which they invited them) as truth.

The preceding verses had pointed to the Jews' deviations, for example, their denial of the fact that all food was lawful to them before the revelation of the Torah, and their rejection of the abrogation of the

previous *qiblah*, that is, Bayt al-Maqdis.

These verses therefore put the finishing touches to the preceding ones which had described the lawfulness of all food before the Torah and declared that the Ka'bah was the first House appointed for the men. Now these verses admonish the Jews because they were constantly trying to create doubts and mislead the believers; also the verses warn the believers against following the advice of those unbelievers, because if they listened to their call, they would themselves become unbelievers; then they exhort and encourage them to hold fast to Allah so that they would be guided to the path of true faith and their guidance would continue for ever.

It has been narrated by Zayd Ibn Aslam (as as-Suyuti has reportedly¹ written in *Lubab an-nuqul*) as follows:

“Shash Ibn Qays, a Jew, saw some people of the tribes of Aws and Khazraj engaged in (friendly) talk, and he was incensed by what he saw of their friendship and unity after their (hereditary) enmity. Therefore, he ordered a young Jew (who was with him) to sit with them and remind them of the Battle of Bu'ath. He did and they started boasting and quarelling with each other. The argument continued until two men – Aws Ibn Qurazi from the Aws and Jabbar Ibn Sakhr from the Khazraj – jumped up and abused each other; the two groups were enraged and stood against each other for fighting. The news reached the Messenger of Allah (S); he came and admonished them and established peace between them. They heeded his call and obeyed. Then Allah revealed about Aws and Jabbar:

“O you who believe! if you obey a party from among those who were given the Book...” (3: 100).

And about Shash Ibn Qays:

“Say: “O People of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah?”” (3:99).

This tradition is abridged from the one narrated (by as-Suyuti) in *ad-Durr al-Manthur* in detailed form from Zayd Ibn Aslam; he has narrated nearly similar Traditions from Ibn 'Abbas and others.

However, these verses obviously fit more properly on the explanation given by us than on this tradition. Moreover, they speak about disbelief and belief, and also about testimony of the Jews, recitation of the revealed verses to the believers, and things like that; and all these matters are more relevant to the explanation given by us. It is also supported by the words of Allah:

“Many of the People of the Book wish that they could turn you back into unbelievers after your faith, out of envy on their part, (even) after the truth has become manifest to them...” (2: 109).

Therefore, the fact is, as we have said, that these verses are a sort of prologue to the preceding ones.

Verse 98

Qur'an: "Say: "O People of the Book! why do you disbelieve in the communications of Allah? and Allah is a witness of what you do" (3:98).

The continuation of the context indicates that "the communications" refers to the lawfulness of food before the revelation of the Torah and to the Ka'bah being the *qiblah* in Islam.

Verse 99

Qur'an: "Say: "O People of the Book! why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah? You seek (to make) it crooked" (3:99).

as-Sadd (الصَّدُّ = to hinder; to divert); "you seek it," that is, you want this way to be crooked; " *'iwajan* (عَوَجًا = crooked, perverted); it refers to the fact that they wanted the way of Allah to be deviated, not straight.

Qur'an: "... While you are witnesses, and..." (3:99).

You know very well that all food was lawful before the revelation of the Torah, and that one of the signs of the promised prophet was that he would change the *qiblah* to the Ka'bah. The Jews have been counted as witnesses in this verse, while the preceding verse declared Allah to be a witness of their activities and disbelief.

The implication of this fine juxtaposition cannot be lost on a man of literary taste. They are witnesses of the truth of what they deny; and Allah is a witness of their denial and disbelief. As "witnessing" was ascribed to them in this verse, the ending clause of the preceding verse (And Allah is a witness of what you do) was changed here to: ***"and Allah is not heedless of what you do" (3:99)***. The implication is that they are witnesses for the truth of the Prophet's claim while Allah is a witness for everyone and everything.

Verses 100 – 101

Qur'an: "O you who believe! if you obey a party from among those who were given the Book, they will turn you back as unbelievers after you have believed (3: 100).

Qur'an: "But how can you disbelieve while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited, and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path (3: 101).

As mentioned earlier, "a party", refers to the Jews or a Jewish group.

"While it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited, and among you is His

Messenger” (3: 101).

It is possible and easy for you to hold fast to the truth (which has been sent and explained to you) if you just listen to the verses recited to you and then meditate on them; then if you encounter any difficulty because of faulty meditation, you may refer to the Messenger of Allah (S) for clarification; you may refer to the Messenger even before meditating on the verses to explain it to you: he is present among you, it is not difficult for you to approach him because he is neither hidden nor far away from you; you may easily find the reality by referring to him, then you may clear the doubts which the Jews try to create in your minds. To hold fast to the Messenger of Allah (S) and the Divine Communications is to hold fast to Allah.

“...And whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path” (3: 101).

The disbelief, mentioned in the clause ***“But how can you disbelieve” (3: 101)*** refers to disbelieving after believing; the clause ***“while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited” (3: 101)*** points to the possibility of holding fast to the communications of Allah and the Messenger of Allah (S) in order to protect oneself from disbelief; the clause ***“And whoever holds fast to Allah,” (3: 101)*** is a sort of the major premise of a syllogism [the full form of which has been given above].

The guidance to the straight path means being guided to the firmly rooted true belief; it is the path that does not deviate, nor does it fail to reach the destination; it keeps all those who proceed on it in proper line without letting them deviate hither or thither lest they go astray.

The Arabic word translated here as, “is guided”, is a past tense in passive voice; it implies that they have been guided without realizing who has guided them.

The verse shows that the Book of Allah and the verbal and practical guidance given by the Messenger of Allah (S) are sufficient to guide a man to every truth and reality in which he could possibly go astray.

¹. Vide Tafsir al-Manar, vol. 4, Commentary of this verse. (Author’s Note).

[1] [1]

SHARES

Sura ‘Aal-’Imran: Verses 102 – 110

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ۖ اتَّقُوا ۚ اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ ۚ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“O you who believe! fear Allah with the fear, which is due to Him, and do not die unless you are Muslims” (3: 102).

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا ۖ بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا ۖ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ
بِنِعْمَتِهِ ۖ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ءَايَاتِهِ ۚ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

“And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided and remember the bounty of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favour you became brethren; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He delivered you from it; thus does Allah make clear to you His signs that you may follow the right way” (3: 103).

وَلْتَكُن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful” (3: 104).

وَلَا تَكُونُوا ۖ كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا ۖ وَآخْتَلَفُوا ۚ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

“And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear evidences had come to them, and these it is that shall have a grievous chastisement” (3: 105).

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكْفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا ۖ الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ

“On the day when (some) faces shall become bright and (some) faces shall turn black; then as to those whose faces will have turned black: Did you disbelieve after your believing? Taste therefore the chastisement for what you were disbelieving” (3: 106).

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ أَبْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

“And as to those whose faces shall have become bright, they shall be in Allah’s mercy; in it they shall abide.” (3: 107).

تِلْكَ ءَايَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“These are communications of Allah which We recite to you with truth, and Allah does not desire

any injustice to the creatures” (3: 108).

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ

“And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah’s; and to Allah all things are returned” (3: 109).

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِنْهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

“You are the best nation raised up for the (benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and you believe in Allah; and if the People of the Book had believed it would have been better for them; of them (some) are believers and most of them are transgressors.” (3: 110).

Commentary

The verses conclude the speech addressed to the believers, warning them of the People of the Book and their machinations. It reminds them that they have a lifeline which if they hold fast to they shall not perish, shall not go astray and shall not fall into pits of perdition. It is a speech branching from the preceding talk. However, the previous context, that is, exposition of the behaviour of the People of the Book, has not been concluded yet, as may be seen from the verses coming after these: They shall by no means harm you but with a slight distress.

Verse 102

Qur’an: “O you who believe! fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him...” (3: 102).

We have explained that “*at-taqwa*” (التَّقْوَى = to be on guard; fear; piety) when related to Allah, means to be on guard against His punishment, to fear His chastisement. Allah says:

“... Then be on guard against the fire of which men and stones are the fuel” (2:24).

One may guard oneself from the Divine Wrath by behaving in manners that Allah is pleased. In other words, it is doing what He has enjoined one to do and abstaining from what He has forbidden; being grateful for His favours and being patient when He puts one in adverse conditions. The last two attributes are actually two facets of gratefulness – because gratefulness is to put a thing in its proper place. In short, fear of Allah means that man should obey (and not disobey) Him and should submit to Him in all that He bestows or withholds.

But the verse talks of *at-taqwa* as it rightfully should be done, that is, a piety that is not tainted by the

least wrong. Such piety is the pure servitude which is never marred by an iota of obliviousness or heedlessness; it is obedience without disobedience, gratitude without ingratitude, remembrance without forgetting; it is the true Islam, that is, the highest grade of Islam. Accordingly, the words, and do not die unless you are Muslims, would mean: Continue on this condition of ideal *at-taqwa* until you die.

This verse gives a different ideal than the words:

“Therefore, fear Allah as much as you can” (64: 16).

This command enjoins man not to leave the fear of Allah in anything as much as he can. But the ability to do so differs from man to man according to the person’s strength, understanding, and will. There is no doubt that the ideal piety is not easily within reach for the majority of men. There are, in this spiritual journey, many stations, locations and danger points that cannot be spotted except by those who know. Also, there are many delicate points and subtle differences which cannot be recognized except by those who have been purified. There is many a stage of piety which a common man would say, was beyond human ability; he really believes it to be far above the human strength – while the truly pious people have long been past that stage and are now progressing towards even more difficult goal, through much more harder terrains.

The verse ***“Therefore fear Allah as much as you can” (64: 16)*** has been so worded that different minds would interpret it in different ways, according to one’s perceived strength and ability. This will provide a means to proceed to the real goal which is given in the verse under discussion:

“Fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him, and do not die unless you are Muslims” (3: 102)

They will then understand that the main purpose is for them to take to the path of the ideal piety and to progress towards that lofty station. In this respect, it is not different from being guided to the Straight Path: Although all men are invited to it, only the true believers, the pure monotheists, get to that path.

The two verses, ***“fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him” (3: 102)*** and ***“fear Allah as much as you can” (64: 16)*** then give the following connotation: All people are called and invited to the ideal piety; then they are told to proceed towards that goal as much as they can, everyone according to his own ability and strength. In this way, all will come on the path of piety; but they will be in different stages and various stations according to their own understanding and ambition, coupled with the Divine help and support, that is, bestowed on deserving servants. (This is what one understands after pondering on the two verses.)

It is clear from the above explanation that the two verses are neither different from each other in meaning nor identical; rather, the first verse ***“fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him” (3: 102)*** points to the ultimate goal, while the second ***“fear Allah as much as you can” (64: 16)*** shows the way.

Qur’an: *“...And do not die unless you are Muslims” (3: 102).*

Death is a creative affair that is beyond the circle of our will and power. An order or a prohibition concerning this, or similar things shall be a creative order or prohibition, as Allah says:

“...Then Allah said to them, Die!...” (2:243).

“...Is only that He says to it, ‘Be’, and it is.” (36:82).

But sometimes an affair beyond our control is joined to one within our control, and then the combined phrase comes within our power, control and authority. At this stage, it may become a subject of legislative order or prohibition, as Allah says:

“...Therefore, you should not be of the doubters” (2: 147).

“...And be not with the unbelievers” (11:42).

“...And be with the true ones” (9: 119).

and many similar verses. Obviously, “to be” is an intransitive creative affair upon which man has no control or power; but when it is joined with an action within his power, like doubting, disbelieving, and holding fast to the true ones, it comes within our power; and then it may become subject of legislative order and prohibition.

In short, the prohibition that they should not die unless they are Muslims is a legislative one because the said proviso has made it a voluntary action; and it implies that man should hold fast to Islam in all conditions and at all times until death comes to him in one of those conditions. Thus, he would die on Islam.

Verse 103

Qur’an: “And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided....” (3: 103).

Allah has said before to the believers:

“But how can you disbelieve while it is you to whom the communications of Allah are recited and among you is His Messenger; and whoever holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided to the straight path” (3: 101).

It had shown that holding fast to the communications of Allah and to His Messenger (the Book of Allah and the sunnah of the Prophet) is to hold fast to Allah; and whoever holds fast to Allah is safe and secure and his guidance is guaranteed; also holding fast to the Prophet is holding fast to the Book, because it is the Book itself that enjoins us to do so:

“..And whatever the Messenger gives you, take it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep it back” (59:7).

Now the verse under discussion has changed the phraseology; instead of telling us to hold fast to Allah, it enjoins to hold fast to the cord of Allah. It shows that the cord of Allah is the Book revealed by Allah; it is the cord that joins the creature to his Lord, that connects the heavens to the earth. You may also say that the Divine Cord is the Qur'an and the Prophet because the end result of all is the same.

The Qur'an invites only to the ideal piety and firm Islam. Yet the aim of this verse is different from the preceding verse that had enjoined ideal piety and the death on Islam, inasmuch as that verse was concerned with guidance of the individual, while this looks at the good of the society. The words "all together" and "be not divided" point to this fact. The verse therefore orders the Muslim society to hold fast to the Book and the *sunnah*, as they had earlier enjoined the individual to do so.

Qur'an: "...And remember the bounty of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favour you became brethren..." (3: 103).

The clause "**when you were enemies**" (3: 103) explains the bounty of Allah, and the next clause, and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He delivered you from it, is in conjunction with it.

The order to remember this Divine bounty and favour is based on the established Qur'anic system: it builds its education on explanation of its reasons and causes; and invites to the good and the guidance through proper door; it does not demand blind following from its adherents. Far be it from the Divine Teaching to guide the people to eternal happiness – that is useful knowledge and good deed – and then to tell them to wander in the darkness of ignorance and blind following.

But the reader is warned here not to confuse the subject matter. Allah teaches men the reality of their happiness and then shows them its proper way and reason, in order that they would understand the mutual relationship between the realities and know that all emanate from the fountainhead of monotheism. It continues side by side with men's obligation to totally submit to Allah because He is Allah, the Lord of the universe, and to hold fast to His cord because it is the cord of Allah Who is the Lord of the universe. The last two verses "**These are communications of Allah which we recite to you...**" (3: 108) point to this fact.

In short, Allah has ordered them not to accept any word, nor to obey any order, except after knowing its reason. At the same time He has told them to surrender totally to Him, giving for its reason the fact that He is Allah Who owns them totally and unconditionally, they have got nothing except that which Allah has willed for them and done for them; also He has ordered them to unconditionally obey what His Messenger has brought to them, giving for its reason the fact that he is His Messenger who conveys to them only that which he has been entrusted by Allah to do; then Allah explains to them the realities of knowledge and describes the ways of happiness, giving them a comprehensive reason in order that they could understand the inter-relation of the spiritual knowledge and the ways of happiness, and thus arrive at the root of monotheistic belief; it provides them with a Divine Training which enables them to think what is correct and speak what is true.

Thus, they would be alive with knowledge, free from blind following. Result: If they would understand the reason of any established religious reality (or any related thing) they would accept it; and if they did not understand they would not reject it outright; instead, they would try to understand it by research and meditation without rejecting, or objecting to, it – because it is an established reality.

But it does not mean that one should not accept anything – even from Allah and His Messenger – without asking for its reason. Such a proposition would be the height of folly, as it would imply that Allah wants His creatures to demand for proof after the proof is given to them: His lordship and His ownership is the basic reason and argument that makes it incumbent on everyone to submit to Him and obey His command. Likewise, the messengership of His Messenger is the solid reason and proof to prove that whatever he says has come from Allah. Otherwise, we would have to say that Allah has no authority in that which He manages by His authority. Is it but a contradiction in terms? In short, the Islamic way and the prophetic method calls only to knowledge, and not to blind following as these so-called critics – who are nothing if not blind followers themselves – claim.

Perhaps that is why Allah has called it a favour ***“the bounty of Allah on you” (3: 103)***. It indicates the reason as to why We enjoin you to unite together: you have already experienced the bitterness of enmity and sweet taste of love and brotherhood; you have seen that you were on the brink of the pit of fire and Allah has saved you; We point this reason to you not because We have to support our sayings with some proof (obviously, Our saying is true whether We point to its reason or not), but only to let you know that it is a favour of Us on you, in order that you may appreciate that in this unity – like everything else We enjoin on you – lies your felicity, comfort and success.

Allah has given here two proofs, one is the sentence ***“... you were enemies...” (3: 103)*** is obviously based on their experience, while the other ***“...you were on the brink of a pit of fire...” (3: 103)*** is based on rational explanation.

The clause ***“so by His favour you became brethren” (3: 103)*** reminds the Muslims a second time of the Divine Favour mentioned in the preceding clause ***“and remember the bounty of Allah on you” (3: 103)***. The bounty and favour refer to their unity; hence the brotherhood too (which results from this bounty) refers to the same love and unitedness. The brotherhood, as used here, is therefore a claimed reality.

Also, possibly it may be a reference to the brotherhood that has been legislated as between the believers, vide the verse:

“The believers are but brethren” (49: 10).

This legislated brotherhood creates very important mutual rights and duties between one believer and the other.

Qur’an: “...And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He delivered you from it...” (3: 103).

“*Shafa hufratin*” (شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ = brink or edge of a pit where one is in danger of falling down); “fire” may be of the hereafter or of this world. If the former, then it would refer to the fact that previously they were unbelievers and about to fall in the hell the moment they died – and death is nearer to man than is the iris of eye from its white – then Allah saved them from it through the true faith. And if the aim is to point to their evil society which they were living in before they accepted Islam and became brethren, and the fire refers to their wars and conflicts – and it is a commonly used metaphor – then the meaning would be as follows:

A society built on disunited hearts and divergent minds cannot proceed under one leader or in one direction; it is bound to turn into a disorientated and deranged collection of people – each one pulling it to his side, as it suits his own wishes and desires. Such a society would be a cauldron of dissension and strife, always pushing its members to ever-new conflicts, embroiling them in wars and fights, and threatening them with decline and extinction. It is the fire that neither allows one to endure nor does it leave one alone, raging in the pit of ignorance from which no inmate could hope to escape.

The immediate audience of this verse were the Muslims who – before the verse was revealed – had accepted Islam after their disbelief. They had spent all their pre-Islamic lives in constant threat of battle and war. There was no security, no peace, no law, and order. They did not understand what constituted public safety – the concept that covers the society in all its aspects like property, honour, and life, etc.

When they joined hands to hold fast to the cord of Allah, perceived the signs of happiness and felicity, and tasted the sweetness of Divine Bounties, they understood by this experience the truth and reality of what Allah reminds them of His pleasant favours and the resulting wholesome felicity. In this background, this speech was bound to win their hearts – as well as of the others – most effectively and in all totality.

That is why the call to unite has been based on their own experience and observation instead of just philosophical presumptions. One picture is worth a thousand words. And it is because of the same reason that the next warning “***And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear evidence had come to them...***” (3: 105) points to the condition of those who had preceded them.

The believers have seen and heard what happened to those nations – how they declined and fell – because of their disunity and internal strife; the believers should learn lessons from them; they should not walk on the same path, should not proceed in the same direction.

Then Allah draws their attention to the special nature of this speech and says:

“... Thus does Allah make clear to you His signs that you may follow the right way” (3: 103).

Verse 104

Qur'an: “And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right

and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful” (3: 104).

Experience shows that the knowledge a man acquires in his life (and he acquires and preserves for himself only that which may be of some use to him) is soon forgotten if not repeatedly remembered, if not frequently put in practice and acted upon – it makes no difference how that knowledge was acquired and preserved. Also, there is no doubt that action, in all its aspects, turns on the pivot of knowledge; its strength or weakness, its efficiency or deficiency all depends on the strength or weakness, efficiency or deficiency of knowledge. Allah has given a likeness of knowledge and action in the following verse:

“And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth (abundantly) by the permission of its Lord, and (as for) that which is bad (its herbage) comes forth but scantily; thus, do We repeat the communications for a people who give thanks” (7:58).

Undoubtedly, there is an interaction between knowledge and action. Knowledge is the strongest motive of action, and action is the greatest teacher that imparts knowledge.

This reality binds a good society (that which has useful knowledge and virtuous action) to preserve and keep intact their knowledge and culture; and obliges them to bring a deviating person back to the right path, to make sure that nobody goes astray leaving the known way of righteousness for the unforgiving desert of evil – they must protect him from falling into the pit of sin and error by forbidding him to go near it.

This is the call to educate the society members; the obligation of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. It is this important obligation to which Allah refers when He says: “... ***who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong***” (3: 104).

The Arabic words translated here as “right” and “wrong” (enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong) are ‘*al-ma‘ruf*’ (الْمَعْرُوفُ) and ‘*al-munkar*’ (الْمُنْكَرُ) which literally mean “known” and “unknown” respectively. Ponder on the explanation given above and you will understand why Allah has used these expressions. The verse under discussion is based on the preceding one

“And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divides...” (3: 103).

A society which follows this guidance must be the ideal society. It would only be the right and the good which they would recognize, which would be “known” to them; and only the wrong and the evil which they would not recognize, which would be “unknown” to them. If this fine point is not kept in mind, then the only possible explanation would be that the right and the wrong were respectively known and unknown in the eyes of religion – but not in actual practice of the society.

The clause ***“And from among you there should be a party” (3: 104)***: It has been said that “from among” indicates portion, obliging only a party among the Muslim ummah to enjoin the good and forbid the evil and call to the truth. Others have said that the particle ‘min’ (مِنْ = from among) has here an

explanatory connotation; that the sentence means as follows: If you unite together, you will become a party who invites to good, enjoins the right and forbids the evil. In other words, it is as we say: 'I should find in you a friend', which actually means: 'Be my friend'. Apparently, the said explanation of "from among" means that the whole Muslim ummah is obligated to call to the good.

Actually, the controversy whether "from among" is for division or explanation is quite irrelevant. Calling to good, enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong are things which, even when obligatory, cannot be obligatory except on a few; because once the goal is achieved it would not be necessary for others to do so. Even if we were to say that the whole *ummah* invited to good, enjoined the right and forbade the wrong, it would only mean that there were some people in the *ummah* who did so.

Thus, the responsibility lies on only a selected group in any case. If the verse is addressed to a group of the *ummah*, the matter is clear; but if it is addressed to the whole nation, that is because of that particular group. In other words, initially the responsibility lies on everybody's shoulders, but when some perform the duty, they get its reward, and the others are then exempted from the obligation. That is why the verse ends with the clause "and these [i.e., those who perform this duty] it is that shall be successful"

It appears from the above that "from among" indicates here a portion; it is this meaning that is generally understood from such combinations in common conversation, and it is not right to go for another meaning without a good reason.

The three – inviting to good, enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong – are profoundly extensive subjects which require deep exegetic discourse, and we shall write about it, Allah willing, in proper places; also, we shall deal there with its academic psychological and social aspects.

Verse 105

Qur'an: "And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear evidences had come to them, and these it is that shall have a grievous chastisement" (3: 105).

Probably the clause, "***after clear evidence had come to them***" (3: 105), is an adverbial phrase related to the verb, "disagreed", only. If so, then the "disagreement" would refer to difference in belief while the "division" to their physical separation and dissociation. Division has been mentioned first, because it is the prelude to divergence of belief. As long as the members of a community remain in contact with each other, there continues a harmony in their ideas and ideals, and their constant meetings – and the inevitable interaction – welds their beliefs into a single entity, protecting them from ideological differences.

If on the other hand, they lose contact and become separated the process of mutual action and reaction comes to a standstill; their views and ideas start developing independently, each going his own way, and it does not take each group very long to develop its own views, ideals, theories, and beliefs. It is in this

way that ideological disagreements are born, and unity of nations is shattered. It is as though Allah was warning the Muslims not to be like those who began their journey to disaster by separating from each other, losing mutual contacts, and remaining aloof from the community, and ended by having different beliefs and divergent ideas.

Allah has mentioned in various places that this disagreement and difference springs from revolt and envy, for example:

“And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves” (2:213).

Of course, it is inevitable for ideas and opinions to differ, because knowledge and understandings differ from an individual to another; but at the same time, it is essential for a society to remove that difference and bring back the deviating individuals to the fold of unity. It is possible to remove the differences through various means; and if the *ummah* neglected this duty, it would in itself be a revolt which would throw them into perdition.

The Qur'an has given utmost importance to unity and forcefully warned the Muslims against disunity. Why? Because it knew which path this *ummah* would take; they would differ, disagree, and disunite not only as the previous people did, but even more. A peculiarity of the Qur'anic style has already been mentioned in several places: When it emphatically warns against some pitfall, it serves as a prophecy that the Muslim *ummah* was going to fall into it, nevertheless; the more forceful the admonition, the more likely the people were to violate it.

This difference and disunity were foretold by the Prophet as well as by the Qur'an; he said that difference would creep into his *ummah*, then it would raise its head in the form of divergent sects; also, he prophesied that the *ummah* would become divided as the Jews and the Christians were before. Some of those prophecies will be given under “Traditions”.

History testifies to the truth of this prophesy. No sooner was the Prophet gone than the people scattered in all directions; they were divided into several sects, each accusing others of apostasy. This has been going on since the days of the Companions to this time of ours. Every attempt at uniting two sects, results in the creation of a third.

Experience and analytical study of Islamic literature and history prove that the fountainhead of this difference were the hypocrites. Read the Qur'an and you will see how forcefully it speaks against them and condemns them; how seriously it denounces their schemes; and how dangerous it portrays their plans to be. Ponder on what Allah has said about them in the Chapters of: The Cow, The Repentance, The Confederates, and The Hypocrites, etc., and you will be stunned. This was their condition and behaviour during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (S), when the revelations were regularly coming from Allah. But as soon as the Prophet departed, the issue of hypocrites were immediately ‘forgotten’; we find no mention of them in the Muslim literature; it was as though they vanished the moment the

Prophet died!

(It was) as though there never was any intimate friend between al-Hujun and as-Safa,

Or there never conversed at night any talker at Mecca.

Soon the people found themselves scattered to the four winds and sectarian differences cut them asunder. Despotic and tyrannical governments succeeded in subjugating them, and their felicity of life was transformed into infelicity of error and straying. And we seek help from Allah. We hope, by the grace of Allah, to write on this subject in detail in the Chapter of The Repentance.

Verses 106 – 107

Qur'an: "On the day when (some) faces shall become bright and (some) faces shall turn black; then as to those whose faces will have turned black: Did you disbelieve after your believing? Taste therefore the chastisement for what you were disbelieving" (3: 106).

Qur'an: "And as to those whose faces shall have become bright, they shall be in Allah's mercy; in it they shall abide" (3: 107).

As the talk centres around ungratefulness which, like treachery and breach of trust, causes shame and bashfulness, Allah has selected here a chastisement of the hereafter that is analogous to it, that is, blackness of face which metaphorically denotes shamefacedness, abashment, and disgrace. It is implied, or rather clearly shown, by the words of Allah:

"Then as for those whose faces will have turned black: Did you disbelieve after your believing?" (3: 106).

For the same reason, those who are grateful for this Divine Favour, shall be given a reward that will be appropriate for thankfulness, and that is brightness of face, which is metaphorically used for contentment and delight.

Verse 108

Qur'an: "These are communications of Allah which We recite to you with truth, and Allah does not desire any injustice to the creatures" (3: 108).

The clause, "with truth" is related to the verb, "We recite", that is, the recitation is the recital of truth, it is not false, nor is it from Satanic whisperings. Alternatively, it may be related to "communications" giving it an adjectival meaning, that is, true communications. Or it may be related to a deleted word. In any case, the verse means as follows: These verses which describe what Allah will do with two groups – the ungrateful and the grateful – are accompanied by and based on truth, there is no falsehood or injustice in them. This meaning is more appropriate because the verse ends on the words:

“And Allah does not desire any injustice...” (3: 108).

The word “injustice”, is a common noun used in a negative context, implies comprehensiveness, that is, every type of injustice is negated. Likewise, “the creatures” being a plural with definite article “the” denotes comprehensiveness. Therefore, the meaning will be as follows: Allah does not desire any injustice – of whatever type it may be – to any of His creatures or a group of creatures.

It is a fact that difference and conflict among the people is such a bad thing that its evil consequences adversely affect all the creatures, the whole mankind.

Verse 109

Qur'an: “And whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allah's; and to Allah all things are returned” (3: 109).

After the declaration that Allah desires no injustice whatsoever, this verse gives its reason to remove any possible misunderstanding to the contrary. Allah owns everything in all its aspects; He has right and authority to manage it in any way He likes. There is nothing outside His ownership. Had there been anything outside His ownership, only then He would do any injustice or exceed the limit by managing or usurping that “unowned” thing.

Moreover, man is inclined to injustice when he has a need which cannot be fulfilled except by manipulation of something he does not own. But Allah is Self-sufficient to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. (This argument has been given by an exegete, but it is not in conformity with apparent meaning of the verse. This reply is based on the Self-sufficiency of Allah, and not on His ownership, while the verse mentions the latter, not the former.) However, the Divine Ownership offers irrefutable proof that Allah is not unjust.

Then comes another proof: Everything and every affair, whatsoever it may be, returns to Allah. If anyone other than Allah would have had any authority on anything or any affair, only then Allah would have been committing injustice if He would have removed it from that other's authority and manipulated it according to His own will. This proof is pointed at in the concluding statement: ***“and to Allah all things are returned.” (3: 109)***

The two proofs, as you see, are complementary. One is based on the premise that everything belongs to Allah, and the other on the principle that no affair belongs to anyone other than Allah.

Verse 110

Qur'an: “You are the best nation raised up for the (benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and you believe in Allah; and if the People of the Book had believed it would have been better for them; of them (some) are believers and most of them are transgressors”

(3:110).

The word translated as “raised up” is “*ukhrijat*” (أُخْرِجَتْ = lit. taken out); it has a connotation of introduction. Taking out also implies incidence, bringing forth and creation. Allah says:

“And Who brought forth herbage” (87:4).

The verse is addressed to the believers; therefore, the word “men” should mean general public, the humanity at large. Someone has said that the verb ‘*kuntum*’ (كُنْتُمْ = lit.: you were) is here devoid of time factor and means ‘you are’. The word ‘*ummah*’ (أُمَّة = nation, group), is used for a party as well as for individual – when they have the same goal which they aim to reach; it is derived from ‘*al-amm*’ (أَلَامٌ = to intend, to aim). The clause **“and you believe in Allah” (3:110)** has been placed after mentioning the enjoining the right and forbidding the evil; it is like mentioning the whole thing or the root after describing some components or branches.

According to the above explanation, the verse means as follows: O Muslims! you are the best group which Allah has brought out for mankind by guiding it; because you are united, you believe in Allah, and perform the twin duties of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong. Obviously, this honoured title has been given to the whole *ummah* only because some of them have attained to the true belief and do fulfil the obligations of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. This is in short what some exegetes have written about it.

But obviously the word ‘*kuntum*’ (كُنْتُمْ = you were) is not devoid of time factor; it is a past tense and refers to the believer’s condition in the early days of Islam. It speaks about those who were foremost among the Emigrants and the Helpers; the belief here refers to their positive response to the call of holding fast to the cord of Allah without being divided; this belief is opposite of the disbelief in that call – the disbelief that is mentioned in the words:

“Did you disbelieve after your believing?” (3:106).

The same is the import of the belief as related to the People of the Book in this verse, **“and if the People of the Book had believed.” (3:110)** In short, the meaning will be as follows:

O Muslims! you were – when you were brought forth first of all and appeared for the people – the best group that was ever formed, because at that time you enjoined good and forbade evil, and holding fast by the cord of Allah you became united and unified like one body and one soul; and if the People of the Book too were like that it would have been better for them, but they are divided and disunited – some of them are believers while most of them are transgressors.

Many times, in these verses the talk switches from third to the second person, and from plural to the singular number, and vice versa. Also, there are clauses where noun has been used instead of pronoun, for example, the Divine Name “Allah” has been repeated several times. The reasons for these changes

are not difficult to find after meditation.

Traditions

Abu Basir says: “I asked Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) about the words of Allah **“fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him” (3: 102)** and he said: ‘He should be obeyed, and not disobeyed; remembered, and not forgotten; and thanked, and not shown ingratitude.’ ”[1](#)

al-Hakim and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated through another chain from Ibn Mas‘ud that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘Fear Allah as He should be feared; (it means) that He should be obeyed and not disobeyed, and remembered, and not forgotten.’ ”[2](#)

al-Khatib narrates from Anas that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘No servant fears Allah with the fear which is due to Him until he knows that what has befallen him could not miss him, and what has missed him could not reach him.’ ”[3](#)

The author says: We have explained in the Commentary how the meaning given in the first two traditions could be inferred from the verse. As for the third one, it gives a concomitant of the Qur’anic meaning, and it is clear.

Ibn Shahrashub quotes from *at-Tafsir* of Waki‘ that ‘Abd Khayr said: “I asked ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib (‘a) about the words of Allah: **“O you who believe! fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him” (3: 102)**, (and) he said: ‘By Allah, no one acted upon it except the House of the Messenger of Allah; we remembered Him, so we do not forget Him; and we thanked Him, so we are never ungrateful to Him; and we obeyed Him, so we never disobeyed Him. When this verse was revealed, the Companions said: “We are unable to do it.” Then Allah revealed, **“Therefore fear Allah as much as you can.” (64: 16)**’ “ Waki’ said: “that is, as much as you are able to do.”[4](#)

Abu Basir said: “I asked Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) about the words of Allah, **“fear Allah with the fear which is due to Him.” (3: 102)**. He said: ‘(It is) abrogated.’ I said: ‘And which (verse) abrogated it? He said: ‘The words of Allah, **“Therefore, fear Allah as much as you can.” (64: 16)**’ ”[5](#)

The author says: It may be inferred from the tradition of Waki’ that “abrogation” (as mentioned in the tradition of al-‘Ayyashi) refers to various stages of piety and fear of Allah. But it does not mean abrogation in the sense of cancellation (as some exegetes have said) because it is against the apparent meaning of the Qur’an.

As-Sadiq (‘a) explained the clause, unless you are Muslims, in these words: **“unless you are in submission.” (3: 102)**”[6](#)

As-Suyuti writes under the words of Allah: **“And hold fast by the cord of Allah...” (3: 103)**, Ibn Abi Shaybah and Ibn Jarir have narrated from Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri that he said: ‘The Messenger of Allah (S)

said: “The Book of Allah, it is the cord of Allah (which is) outstretched from the heaven to the earth.” ’ ’ [7](#)

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrates from Abu Shurayh al-Khuza‘i that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘Surely this Qur’an is a rope, one end of which is in the hand of Allah, and the other end is in your hands; therefore hold fast to it; because you shall never slip nor will you ever go astray after (holding fast to) it.’

[8](#)

As-Sajjad (‘a) said, inter alia, in a hadith: “And the cord of Allah – it is the Qur’an.” [9](#)

The author says: There are other Traditions on this theme, narrated by both sects.

Al-Baqir (‘a) said: “The progeny of Muhammad, they are the cord of Allah which He has ordered (the believers) to hold fast to; so He has said: And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided.” [10](#)

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning; they are supported by what has been written in the Commentary; also, other Traditions given below, support it.

At-Tabarani has narrated from Zayd Ibn Arqam that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (S), said: ‘Surely, I am to depart from you; and surely you are to come to me near the ‘*hawd*’ (الْحَوْضُ = reservoir, i.e., of ‘al-Kawthar’ = الْكَوْثَرُ). Therefore, be careful how you follow me about the two weighty things.’ He was asked: ‘And what are the two weighty things? O Messenger of Allah!’ He said: ‘The greater one is the Book of Allah, the Mighty, the Great, (it is) a rope one end of which is in the hand of Allah and (another) end is in your hands; therefore, hold fast to it, you shall never slip up nor will you ever go astray. And the smaller one is my progeny. And surely, they will never separate from each other until they reach me near the water reservoir; and I have asked for them this (privilege) from my Lord; therefore do not precede them lest you be destroyed; and do not (try to) teach them because they are more knowledgeable than you.’” [11](#)

The author says: The tradition of the “Two Weighty Things” is among the *mutawatir* ones, which has been narrated unanimously by both the Sunnis and the Shi‘ahs. We have mentioned in the beginning of the chapter that some scholars of Traditions have narrated it from thirty-five different narrators – male and female – and a multitude of narrators and scholars have narrated it from those original narrators.

Ibn Majah, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from Anas that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘The Children of Israel became divided into seventy-one sects, and surely my ummah will soon be divided into seventy-three sects – all of them shall be in the fire except one.’ They said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! and who is this one?’ He said: ‘The party.’ Then he recited: And hold fast to the cord of Allah all together.’” [12](#)

The author says: This too is one of the famous Traditions. The Shi‘ahs have narrated it in a different way, as may be seen in *al-Khisal*, *Ma‘ani ‘l-akhbar*, *al-Ihtijaj*, *al-Amali*, *the Kitab of Sulaym Ibn Qays*

and *at-Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi*. We quote it here from the first-named book. as-Saduq narrates through his chains from Sulayman Ibn Mihran who narrates from Ja'far Ibn Muhammad (peace be on them both) who narrates, through his forefathers, from the Leader of the Faithful (peace be on them all) that he said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying: 'Verily, the ummah of Musa became divided after him, into seventy-one sects, one of them (was) saved, and seventy (were thrown) into the fire. And the ummah of 'Isa became divided after him, into seventy-two sects, one of them (was) saved, while seventy-one (were thrown) into the fire. And surely my ummah will soon be divided after me, into seventy-three sects, one of them (will be) saved, and seventy-two (will be thrown) into the fire.'"

The author says: It conforms with the next tradition.

Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and al-Hakim (who has confirmed correctness of this hadith) have all narrated from Abu Hurayrah that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'The Jews were divided into seventy-one sects; and the Christians were divided into seventy-two sects; and my ummah will be divided into seventy-three sects.' " [13](#)

The author says: This theme is found in other Traditions narrated through other chains from Mu'awiyah and others.

al-Hakim has narrated from Ibn 'Umar that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: *"There will happen in any ummah all that happened in the Children of Israel in a completely identical manner, so much so that if there were among them someone who had openly had incestuous relation with his mother, there would be someone like that in my ummah too. Verily the Children of Israel were divided into seventy-one sects, and my ummah will become divided into seventy-three sects – all of them (will go) into the fire except one."* He was asked: 'Which one?' He said: *"That on which are I and my Companions today."* " [14](#)

The author says: A similar tradition has been narrated in *Jami' al-usul* (by Ibn al-Athir) from at-Tirmidhi, on the authority of the son of 'Amr Ibn al-'As from the Prophet.

As-Saduq has narrated through his chains from Ghiyath Ibn Ibrahim, from as-Sadiq ('a) (through his forefathers, peace be on them all) that he said: "The Messenger of Allah (S) said: *"All that happened in the previous nations will surely happen in this ummah in a completely identical manner and exactly alike way."* [15](#)

The Prophet said: *"Most surely you will follow the customs of those who were before you, in a completely identical manner and exactly alike way; you will not deviate from their path; you will imitate them faithfully (in every conceivable manner), span to span, hand to hand and arm to arm; so much so that if someone in previous nations had entered an iguana's den, you will surely enter it."* They said: "Do you mean the Jews and the Christians? O Messenger of Allah!" He said: *"Who (else) do I mean? Surely you will unravel the rope of Islam strand by strand; the first thing you will destroy of your religion shall be trustworthiness, and the last of it (to go, shall be) the prayer."* [16](#)

The author of *Jami' al-usul* has narrated on the authority of the correct books – also at-Tirmidhi has narrated it – from the Prophet that he said: “By Him in Whose hand my soul is, most surely you will follow the custom of those who were before you.” And Razin has added the words: “in a completely identical manner and exactly similar way; so much so that if there were among them one who had cohabited with his mother, someone among you too would do so. But I do not know whether you would worship calf or not.”

The author says: This too is a famous tradition. The Sunnis have narrated it in their *sahih* and other books, while the Shi'ahs have recorded it in their collections of Traditions.

Anas said: “The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘*Surely there will arrive at the Reservoir a group of my Companions, until when they shall be removed (from there) they shall tremble before me. So, I shall say: O Lord! my Companions.*’ Then it will be said: ‘*You do not know what they did do after you.*’ ” [17](#)

Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah (S) said. “*There will arrive near me on the Day of Resurrection a group of my Companions (or according to another report: of my ummah), and they will be evicted from the Reservoir. Then I will say: ‘O Lord! my Companions.’ And (Allah) will say: ‘You have no knowledge of what they did do after you; they became apostates, going backwards (to their previous disbelief).’ Then they will be evicted.*” [18](#)

The author says: This tradition also is very well-known; both the Sunnis and the Shi'ahs have recorded it in their *sahih* books and collections, on the authority of many Companions, like Ibn Mas'ud, Anas, Sahl Ibn Sa'id, Abu Hurayrah, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, 'A'ishah, Umm Salmah, Asma' bint Abi Bakr, and others, and also from some Imams of the Ahl Al-Bayt('a).

These Traditions, numerous and varied as they are, confirm what we have inferred from the verses; and the historical events and strife confirm these Traditions.

al-Hakim has narrated (and confirmed its correctness) that Ibn 'Umar said: “Verily the Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘*Whoever went out of the community about a hand-span, he surely removed the collar of Islam from his neck – until he returns. And whoever died without having a leader of community over him, then surely his death shall be a death of ignorance (i.e., disbelief).*’ ” [19](#)

The author says: The theme of this hadith too is well-known. Both the Sunnis and the Shi'ahs have narrated from the Prophet that he said: “Whoever died without knowing the Imam of his time, he died the death of ignorance (i.e., disbelief).”

It is recorded in the *Sunans* of at-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud that the Prophet said: “*There shall always be a group of my ummah on truth.*” [20](#)

The Leader of the Faithful ('Ali, 'a) said about the words of Allah “***Did you disbelieve after your believing?*” (3: 106):** They are the people of innovations and heretic tendencies and wrong views from

this ummah.” [21](#)

Abu ‘Amr az-Zubayri narrates from as-Sadiq (‘a) about the words of Allah: “***You are the best nation raised up for the (benefit of) men...***” (3:110), that he said: “(Allah) means the *ummah* (group, nation) for which the prayer of Ibrahim (‘a) was granted; and they are the people Allah raised (His Messenger) among them, and from them and to them; and they are the medium nation, and they are the best nation that has been raised up for the people.”[22](#)

The author says: We have explained this tradition under the Commentary of the following verse 2:128.

Ibn Abi Hatim has narrated from Abu Ja‘far (‘a) that he said about the verse: “***You are the best nation raised up for the (benefit of) men...***” (3:110), the People of the House of the Prophet.” [23](#)

Ahmad has narrated through good chains from ‘Ali (‘a) that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘*I have been given that which no prophet was given: I have been helped with awe, and I have been given keys of the earth, and I have been named Ahmad, and the earth has been made a means of cleansing for me, and my ummah has been made the best nation.*’”[24](#)

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- [1.](#) Ma‘ani ‘I-akhbar; at-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi.
 - [2.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [3.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [4.](#) al-Burhan [fi tafsir al-Qur‘an], al-Bahrani.
 - [5.](#) at-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi.
 - [6.](#) Majma‘ al-bayan.
 - [7.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [8.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [9.](#) Ma‘ani al-akhbar.
 - [10.](#) at-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi.
 - [11.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [12.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [13.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [14.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [15.](#) Kamal ad-din.
 - [16.](#) at-Tafsir, al-Qummi.
 - [17.](#) as-Sahih, al-Bukhari; as-Sahih, Muslim.
 - [18.](#) as-Sahih, al-Bukhari; as-Sahih, Muslim.
 - [19.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur.
 - [20.](#) Jami‘ al-usul.
 - [21.](#) Majma‘ al-bayan
 - [22.](#) Majma‘ al-bayan; at-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi
 - [23.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur
 - [24.](#) ad-Durr al-Manthur

Sura 'Aal-'Imran: Verses 111 – 120

لَنْ يَضُرُّوكُمْ إِلَّا أَذًى ۖ وَإِنْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ يُؤْلُوكُمْ ۖ أَلَدَّبَارُكُمْ لَا يَنْصُرُونَ

“They shall by no means harm you but with a slight distress; and if they fight you they shall turn (their) backs to you, then they shall not be helped” (3: 111).

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلِيلَةُ ۚ أَيْنَ مَا تُغْفَوْنَ ۚ إِلَّا بِحِجْلِ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَحِجْلٍ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ۚ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا ۚ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ۚ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا ۚ وَكَانُوا ۚ يَعْتَدُونَ

“Abasement is brought down upon them wherever they are found, except under a protection from Allah and a protection from men, and they have become settled in wrath from Allah, and humiliation is stamped upon them; this is because they used to disbelieve in the signs of Allah and slew the prophets unjustly; this is because they disobeyed and used to exceed the limits” (3: 112).

لَيْسُوا ۚ سَوَاءً ۚ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ عَانَاءَ لَيْلٍ ۚ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ

“They are not all alike; of the People of the Book there is an upright party; they recite Allah’s communications in the night-time and they prostrate (to Him)” (3: 113).

يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ ۚ الْآخِرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۚ وَهُمْ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“They believe in Allah and the last day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and they strive with one another in hastening to good deeds, and those are among the good” (3: 114).

وَمَا يَفْعَلُوا ۚ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَنْ يُكْفَرُوهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ ۚ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ

“And whatever good they do, they shall not be denied it, and Allah knows the pious ones” (3: 115).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ شَيْئًا ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

“(As for) those who disbelieve, surely neither their wealth nor their children shall avail them in the least against Allah; and these are the inmates of the fire; therein they shall abide” (3: 116).

مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوا ۖ أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتُهُ ۖ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

“The likeness of what they spend in this life of the world is as the likeness of a wind in which is intense cold (that) smites the tilth of a people who have done injustice to their souls and destroys it; and Allah does no injustice to them, but they are doing injustice to themselves” (3: 117).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ۖ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا ۖ بَطَانَةً مِّن دُونِكُمْ لَا يَأْلُونَكُمْ خَبَالًا وَدُّوا ۖ مَا عَنِتُّمْ قَدْ بَدَتِ الْبَغْضَاءُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَمَا تُخْفِي صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ ۖ إِن كُنْتُمْ تُعْقِلُونَ

“O you who believe! do not take for intimate friends from among others than your own people; they do not fall short of inflicting loss upon you; they love what distresses you; vehement hatred has already appeared from out of their mouths, and what their breasts conceal is greater still; indeed, We have made the signs clear to you, if you would understand” (3: 118).

هَآأَنْتُمْ أُو۟لَآءِ ۖ لَا تُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّونَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ كُلِّهِ ۖ وَإِذَا لَقُوكُمْ قَالُوا ۖ ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا ۖ عَضُّوا ۖ عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَنَامِلَ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ قُلْ مُوتُوا ۖ يَغِيظُكُمُ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ ۖ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ

“Lo! you are they who will love them while they do not love you, and you believe in the Book (in) the whole of it; and when they meet you they say: “We believe,” and when they are alone, they bite the ends of their fingers in rage against you. Say: “Die in your rage;” surely Allah knows what is in the breasts” (3: 119).

إِن تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُوهُمْ وَإِن تُصِيبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا ۖ بِهَا ۖ وَإِن تَصِبْرِوا ۖ وَتَتَّقُوا ۖ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ

“If a good befall you, it grieves them, and if an evil afflicts you, they rejoice at it; and if you are patient and guard yourselves, their scheme will not injure you in any way; surely Allah comprehends what they do” (3: 120).

Commentary

The verses, as you see, now revert to the original theme, describing the behaviour of the People of the Book – and particularly the Jews – exposing their disbelief in the Divine Revelation, their going astray and their hindering the believers from the way of Allah; the preceding ten verses were a talk within talk, a parenthetical speech. The verses are thus connected with the foregoing discourse.

Verse 111

Qur'an: "They shall by no means harm you but with a slight distress; and if they fight you they shall turn (their) backs to you, then they shall not be helped" (3: 111).

"al-Adha" (الْأَذَى = slight distress) denotes a harm suffered by a creature, either to his soul or body or to those related to him, be it of this world or of the hereafter – as ar-Raghib has said in *Mufradat al-Qur'an*.

Verse 112

Qur'an: "Abasement is brought down upon them wherever they are found, except under a protection from Allah and a protection from men..." (3: 112).

"adh-Dhillah" (الذِّلَّةُ = abasement) denotes here species of abasement; *"adh-dhull"* (الذُّلُّ) is the humiliation imposed by someone else; *"adh-dhill"* (الذِّلُّ) is that which results from one's own obstinacy – as ar-Raghib has written. However, its general import is the condition of humiliation and degradation. Its opposite *'al-'izz'* (الْعِزُّ) means honour, strength and pride.

The word *'thuqifu'* (تُقْفُوا) means "are found"; *'al-habl'* (الْحَبْلُ) literally means rope or cord which provides protection to one who holds fast to it; it is metaphorically used for everything that provides a kind of safety, security and protection, e.g., a covenant, guarantee or amnesty. The meaning is as follows – and Allah knows better: Abasement is stamped on them as a design is stamped on a coin, or it encompasses them as a tent encompasses a man. Anyhow, they are either branded with, or overwhelmed by abasement and humiliation – except when they get a protection or guarantee from Allah and a protection or guarantee from men.

The word "protection" is repeated when referring to Allah and then to men, because the connotation differs from one place to the other. Protection given by Allah is His decree and command, either creative or legislative; and that provided by men is their decision and action.

Abasement is stamped on them; it means that Allah has ordained a law affirming their abasement. This meaning is supported by the proviso "wherever they are found". Obviously, it means that wherever the believers find them and subjugate them; this proviso is obviously more appropriate to legislative abasement, one of whose effects is the imposition of *jizyah*.

The meaning of the verse therefore is as follows:

They are abased and humiliated, according to the law of Islamic *Shari'ah*, except when they come under the protection of an Islamic State, or somehow get protection from people.

One of the exegetes has said that the clause, ***“Abasement is brought down upon them” (3:112)***, is not a legislative order; it is rather a statement of fact describing what they had suffered by the Divine decree and measure – because when Islam came, the Jews were paying *jizyah* to the fire-worshippers of Persia, and some of them were subjects of the Christians.

Comment: This meaning could be correct; and the end portion of the verse might even support this view because it apparently explains the reason of their being branded with abasement and humiliation in terms of their misdeeds, e.g., their disbelief in the signs of Allah, their slaying the prophets and their continuous transgression. But then we would have to apply this verse exclusively to the Jews – and there is apparently nothing in the verse to suggest such exclusiveness. We shall write some more on this subject under the commentary for verse 5:64

Qur'an: “...And they have become settled in wrath from Allah, and humiliation is stamped upon them....” (3:112).

“*Ba'u*” (بَاءُ) = they settled in; they returned with); ‘*al-maskanah*’ (الْمَسْكَنَةُ) translated here as humiliation, literally means extreme poverty. Apparently, it is used when a man finds no way of escape from a threatening poverty or need. Accordingly, the end of the verse conforms with its beginning.

Qur'an: “this is because they disobeyed and used to exceed the limits” (3:112).

They disobeyed, and, even before that, they were habitually and continuously transgressing the limits.

Verse 113

Qur'an: “They are not all alike... and Allah knows the pious ones” (3:113).

“*as-Sawa*’ “ (السَّوَاءُ = literally, to be equal) is a *masdar* which is used in the meaning of adjective, that is, equal, alike. Not all the People of the Book are alike in their behaviour, nor in the rules applying to them; there is among them an upright group whose attributes the verse describes. Obviously, the phrase, ***“of the People of the Book there is...” (3:113)***, shows the reason as to why not all the People of the Book are alike.

Various meanings have been given for the word ‘*qa'imah*’ (قَائِمَةٌ = literally, standing; translated here as upright): It is said that it means ‘firm in obeying the command of Allah’, or ‘just’, or ‘proceeding on straight path’. The fact is that the word is of a general nature which could be interpreted in any of the above meanings. But the mention of the Book and of their good deeds makes it certain that it has been used here in the meaning of being standing or firm in belief and obedience.

‘Ana’ (أَنَا) is plural of ‘inan’ (إِنِّي) or ‘anan’ (أَنِّي) or reportedly ‘anu’ (أَنُو), all of which mean “time”.

‘al-Musara‘ah’ (الْمُسَارَعَةُ = to vie with one another in hastening); it is on paradigm of ‘al-mufa‘alah’ (الْمُفَاعَلَةُ) from the root verb ‘as-sur‘ah’ (السَّرْعَةُ = to be fast, to make haste). It is explained in *Majma‘ al-bayan* as follows: “The difference between *as-sur‘ah* and ‘al-‘ajalah’ (الْعَجَلَةُ) is as follows: *as-Sur‘ah* is to go ahead in a matter in which going ahead is allowed; it is a praiseworthy trait, and its opposite is ‘al-ibta’ (الْإِبْطَاءُ = to be late) which is a disliked action. And *al-‘ajalah* is to be ahead in a matter in which one should not be ahead; it is a disliked trend, and its opposite is ‘al-anah’ (الْأَنَاءَةُ = deliberateness) which is a good trait.

Apparently, *as-sur‘ah* is an attribute of movement, while *al-‘ajalah* shows an attribute of the one who moves.

‘al-Khayrat’ (الْخَيْرَاتُ) means good deeds in general – be it worship, or spending in the way of Allah, or justice or looking after the needs of needy persons. It is a plural with prefix ‘al’ (ال) which denotes comprehensiveness. It is mostly used for monetary good deeds, as its singular ‘al-khayr’ (الْخَيْرُ = good) is mostly used for wealth and property.

In these verses, Allah has enumerated most of the basic good attributes, i.e., faith, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, and hastening towards good deeds; then He has praised them that they are among the good people. It means that they are the people of the straight path, and among the companions of the prophets, the truthful ones, and the martyrs. Read, for proof, the following verses:

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

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

In conjunction with:

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

It has been said that the verses under discussion refer to ‘Abdullah Ibn Salam and his companions.

Verse 115

Qur’an: “And whatever good they do, they shall not be denied it, and Allah knows the pious ones” (3:115).

“*Lan yukfaruh*” (لَنْ يُكْفَرُوهُ = they shall never be denied it); the root word is ‘al-kufraan’ (الْكُفْرَانُ = ungratefulness) which is opposite of ‘ash-shukr’ (الشُّكْرُ = gratefulness). Allah will reward them for

whatever good they do, they will receive its recompense from Allah, He will not let it be lost; He says:

“And whoever on his own accord does good, then surely Allah is Grateful, Knowing” (2: 158).

Also, He says:

“And whatever good thing you spend, it is to your own good;... and whatever good thing you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged” (2:272).

Verse 116

Qur'an: “(As for) those who disbelieve, surely neither their wealth nor their children shall avail them...” (3: 116).

The continuation of context apparently shows that the phrase “those who disbelieve” refers to the other groups of the People of the Book which did not respond to the call of the Prophet; those were the people who used to hatch conspiracies against Islam and had left no stone unturned in extinguishing the light of the truth.

Some people have said that this verse refers to the idol-worshippers; according to them, it paves the way for the story of the Battle of Uhud which comes after a few verses. But this explanation does not take into account the next statements, that is,

“And you believe in the Book (in) the whole of it, and when they meet you they say: “We believe”...” (3: 119).

Obviously, it describes the Jews' behaviour with the Muslims, not that of the idol-worshippers. It proves that the context is the same; it has not changed yet.

An exegete has tried to combine both explanations by applying the verse under discussion to the idolaters and the next one to the Jews. But it is a mistake.

Verse 117

Qur'an: “The likeness of what they spend in this life of the world is as the likeness of a wind in which is intense cold (that) smites the tilth of a people who have done injustice to their souls and destroys it; and Allah does no injustice to them, but they are doing injustice to themselves” (3: 117).

“as-Sirr” (الصَّيْرُ = intense cold). What they spend has been qualified with the proviso ***“in this life of the world” (3: 117)*** to indicate that they are completely cut off from the life of the hereafter; whatever they spend is related only to this life. The smitten tilth is qualified by the phrase ***“of a people who have done injustice to their souls” (3: 117)***. This proviso perfectly meshes with the coming statement, ***“and Allah***

does no injustice to them” (3: 117).

The verse means that whatever they spend in this life (in order to better their conditions and achieve their evil goals) brings nothing to them except infelicity and unhappiness; it destroys what they ardently desire and which they think would bring happiness to them. It is like an intensely cold wind that smites the farm produce of an unjust people; it is because they had done injustice to their own selves – after all, an evil deed can bring only evil results.

Verse 118

Qur'an: “O you who believe! do not take for intimate friends from among others than your own people; they do not fall short of inflicting loss upon you; they love what distresses you; vehement hatred has already appeared from out of their mouths, and what their breasts conceal is greater still; indeed, We have made the signs clear to you, if you would understand” (3: 118).

“O you who believe! do not take for intimate friends from among others than your own people” (3: 118).

Intimate friend has been called ‘*al-bitanah*’ (الْبِطَانَةُ = inner lining of a garment) – i.e., opposite of ‘*az-ziharah*’ (الْظَّهَارَةُ = outer side of a garment) – because such a friend knows the inner thoughts and secrets of man.

“They do not fall short” (3: 118), i.e., they leave no stone unturned; ‘*khabalan*’ (خَبَالًا = harm, mischief); insanity is called ‘*al-khabl*’ (الْخَبْلُ) because it harms or destroys understanding.

“They love what distresses you” (3: 118), “what” in this sentence is for *masdar*, and it means: they love your distress, your grievous harm;

“Vehement hatred has already appeared from out of their mouths” (3: 118), it means that their enmity and hatred is very obvious from their way of talking, from slips of their tongues; it is a fine metaphor; the verse does not describe what they have kept hidden in their hearts, it just says: ***“and what their breasts conceal is greater still” (3: 118)***; this apparent vagueness indicates that the hatred hidden in their hearts is so varied and so great that it is beyond description – this vagueness puts even greater stress on the word “greater”.

Verse 119

Qur'an: “Lo! you are they who will love them while they do not love you,... Allah knows what is in the breasts...” (3: 119).

Apparently ‘*ula'i*’ (أُولَٰئِكَ = they, these) is demonstrative pronoun, and ‘*ha*’ (هَا = lo!) is exclamatory particle, and between the two has been inserted the pronoun “you”; the meaning thus will be, ‘you these’, as we say ‘Zayd this did so’, or ‘Hindah this did so’.

The article ‘al’ (اَلْ = the) in “the Book” denotes genes, i.e., you believe in all the Books which have been revealed by Allah – your Book as well as their Books – while they do not believe in your Book.

The clause “**and when they meet you they say: ‘We believe,’**” (3: 119), shows that they are hypocrites.

“And when they are alone, they bite the ends of their fingers in rage against you” (3: 119).

‘al-‘add’ (اَلْعَضُّ = to bite forcefully); ‘al-anamil’ (اَلْأَنَامِلُ) is plural of ‘al-unmulah, (اَلْأُنْمَلَةُ = fingertip); ‘al-ghayz’ (اَلْغَيْظُ = rage, wrath, anger); to bite fingertips against something proverbially expresses one’s anger or sorrow on that thing.

The clause “Say: **‘Die in your rage’**” (3: 119) is a curse against them in the form of command. It connects the foregoing sentences to the next one “**surely Allah knows what is in the breasts**” (3: 119).

The meaning together will be as follows: “O Allah! Cause them to die in their rage; surely Thou knowest what is in the breasts, that is, what is in their hearts or souls.”

[Verse 120](#)

Qur’an: “If a good befalls you, it grieves them...” (3: 120).

“al-Masa’ah” (اَلْمَسَاءَةُ = to grieve) is opposite of ‘as-surur’ (اَلسُّرُورُ = to make happy; happiness). The verse shows that the believers may protect themselves only if they have patience and piety.

[1] [1]

SHARES

Appendix A: A Chronological List of The Fourteen Infallibles (‘A)

The Holy Prophet, His Daughter And The Twelve Holy Imams

Note: Where there are differences of opinion on the dates of birth or death, the most popular view has been quoted.

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (Kunya)	Name	Father's name	Title (Laqab)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
1.	The Last Prophet of Allah	Abu 'I Qasim	Muhammad (Ahmad) (Al-Mustafa)	'Abdullah	Rasulu'llah, Nabiyyu'llah, An-Nabiyy, Khatamu'n- Nabiyyin	17 th Rabi' I, in the year of the Elephant. (25.8.570 AD)	28 th Safar, 11 AH (25.5.632 AD)	Natural	Holy Medina, al-Munawwa-rah, Saudi Arabia
2.	One of the Fourteen Infallibles	Umm Abiha	Fatimah	Muhammad	az-Zahra', as-Siddiqah, al-Batul, Sayyidatu'n- Nisa'.	20 th Jumada II, in the fifth Year after the declaration of the Prophethood. (2.1.615 AD)	3 rd Jumada II, 11 AH (26.8.632)	Injured	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
3.	1 st Imam	Abu al-Hasan, Abu al-Hasanayn, Abu Turab.	'Ali	Abu Talib	Amir al-Mu'minin, al-Wasiyy, al-Murtada, (Haydar).	13 th Rajab, 10 Years before the declaration of the Prophethood. (25.5.600 AD)	Struck on 19 th Ramadan (25 th January); Died on 21 st Ramadan 40AH (27.1.661 AD)	Sword – while he was engaged in prayers.	Holy an-Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq. (al-Ghariyy)
4.	2 nd Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	Al-Mujtaba, as-Sibt (al-Akbar).	15 th Ramadan, 3AH (1.3.625 AD)	7 th Safar, 50 AH (6.3.670 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
5.	3 rd Imam	Abu 'Abdillah	al-Husayn	'Ali	Sayyidu'sh-Shuhada, as-Sibt (al-Asghar).	3 rd Sha'ban, 4 AH (8.1.626 AD)	10 th Muharram, 61 AH (10.10.680 AD)	Sword – in the Battle of 'Ashura	Holy Karbala' (at-Taff), Iraq.
6.	4 th Imam	Abu Muhammad	'Ali	al-Husayn	Zaynu'l-Abidin, Sayyidu's-Sajidin, as-Sajjad.	5 th Sha'ban, 38 AH (6.1.659 AD)	25 th Muharram, 94/95 AH (31.10.712 / 20.10.713 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
7.	5 th Imam	Abu Ja'far	Muhammad	'Ali	al-Baqir.	3 rd Safar, 57 AH (16.12.676 AD)	7 th Dhi'l-hijjah, 114 AH (28.1.733 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia
8.	6 th Imam	Abu 'Abdillah, Abu Musa.	Ja'far	Muhammad	as-Sadiq.	17 th Rabi' I, 83 AH (20.4.702 AD)	25 th Shawwal, 148 AH (14.12.765 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia

SL. No.	Designation	Agnomen (Kunya)	Name	Father's name	Title (Laqab)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of burial
9.	7 th Imam	Abu al-Hasan (al-Awwal – The First), Abu Ibrahim	Musa	Ja'far	al-Kazim, al-'Abd as-Salih, al-'Alim.	7 th Safar, 129 AH (28.10.746 AD)	25 th Rajab, 183 AH (1.9.799 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.
10.	8 th Imam	Abu al-Hasan (al-Thani – The Second),	'Ali	Musa	Ar-Ridha'.	11 th Dhi al-qi'dah, 148 AH (29.12.765 AD)	17 th Safar, 203 AH (24.8.818 AD)	Poison	Holy Mashhad, (Tus – Kurasan), Iran.
11.	9 th Imam	Abu Ja'far (ath-Thani – The Second)	Muhammad	'Ali	at-Taqi, al-Jawad.	10 th Rajab, 195 AH (8.4.811 AD)	30 th Dhi al-qi'dah, 220 AH (25.11.835 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kazimiyyah, Iraq.
12.	10 th Imam	Abu al-Hasan (ath-Thalith – The Third)	'Ali	Muhammad	an-Naqi, al-Hadi.	2 nd Rajab, 212 AH (27.9.827 AD)	3 rd Rajab, 254 AH (28.6.868 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' (Surra-man-ra'a), Iraq.
13.	11 th Imam	Abu Muhammad	al-Hasan	'Ali	al-'Askari.	8 th Rabi 'Il, 232 AH (3.12.846 AD)	8 th Rabi 'Il, 260 AH (1.1.874 AD)	Poison	Holy Samarra' Iraq.
14.	12 th Imam	Abu 'I Qasim	Muhammad	al-Hasan	al-Mahdi, al-Qa'im, al-Hujjah, al-Gha'ib, Sahibu 'z-Zaman, Sahibu al-Amr, al-Muntazar.	15 th Sha'ban, 255 AH (29.7.869)	Still alive, but in occultation.	----	----

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SHARES

Appendix B: List Of Names and Numbers of The Surahs of The Holy Qur'an

In this book the references of the Qur'anic verses have been given by writing serial number of the relevant chapter, followed by a colon (:) that is followed by the number/s of the Verse/s. The names of the chapters have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

The names of the chapters with their serial numbers are given here for the guidance of the readers.

To find, for instance, the verse 5:67 in the Qur'an, the reader should open the fifth chapter, that is, *al-Ma'idah*, The Table, and then find the 67th verse.

S. No.	Arabic Names of the Chapters	Transliteration	Meaning
1.	فَاتِحَةُ الْكِتَابِ	<i>Fatihatu al-kitab</i>	The Opening of The Book
2.	الْبَقَرَةِ	<i>al-Baqarah</i>	The Cow
3.	آلِ عِمْرَانَ	<i>Al 'Imran</i>	The House of Imran
4.	النِّسَاءِ	<i>an-Nisa'</i>	Women
5.	الْمَائِدَةِ	<i>Al-Ma'idah</i>	The Table
6.	الْأَنْعَامِ	<i>Al -An'am</i>	Cattle
7.	الْأَعْرَافِ	<i>al-A'raf</i>	The Battlements
8.	الْأَنْفَالِ	<i>al-Anfal</i>	The Spoils
9.	التَّوْبَةِ	<i>At-Tawbah</i>	Repentance
10.	يُونُسَ	<i>Yunus</i>	Jonah
11.	هُودَ	<i>Hud</i>	Hood
12.	يُوسُفَ	<i>Yusuf</i>	Joseph
13.	الرَّعْدِ	<i>ar-Ra'd</i>	Thunder
14.	إِبْرَاهِيمَ	<i>Ibrahim</i>	Abraham
15.	الْحِجْرِ	<i>Al-Hijr</i>	El-Hijr
16.	النُّحْلِ	<i>An-Nahl</i>	The Bee
17.	الْإِسْرَاءِ	<i>al-Isra'</i>	The Night Journey
18.	الْكَهْفِ	<i>al-Kahf</i>	The Cave

19.	مَرِيَمَ	<i>Maryam</i>	Mary
20.	طه	<i>Ta Ha</i>	Ta Ha
21.	الْأَنْبِيَاءَ	<i>al-Anbiya'</i>	Prophets
22.	الْحَجِّ	<i>al-Hajj</i>	The Pilgrimage
23.	الْمُؤْمِنُونَ	<i>al-Mu'minun</i>	The Believers
24.	النُّورِ	<i>an-Nur</i>	Light
25.	الْفُرْقَانِ	<i>al-Furqan</i>	Discrimination (Salvation)
26.	الشُّعَرَاءِ	<i>ash-Shu'ara'</i>	The Poets
27.	النَّمْلِ	<i>an-Naml</i>	The Ant
28.	الْقَصَصِ	<i>al-Qasas</i>	The Stories
29.	الْعَنْكَبُوتِ	<i>al-'Ankabut</i>	The Spider
30.	الرُّومِ	<i>Ar-Rum</i>	The Greeks
31.	لُؤْمَانَ	<i>Luqman</i>	Lokman
32.	السَّجْدَةِ	<i>as-Sajdah</i>	Prostration
33.	الْأَحْزَابِ	<i>al-Ahzab</i>	The Confederates
34.	سَبَأَ	<i>Saba'</i>	Sheba
35.	(فَاطِرِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ)	<i>Fatir (or, al-Mala'ikah)</i>	The Originator (or The Angels)
36.	يس	<i>Ya Sin</i>	Ya Sin
37.	الصَّافَّاتِ	<i>as-Saffat</i>	The Rangers
38.	ص	<i>Sad</i>	Sad

39.	الزُّمَر	<i>az-Zumar</i>	The Companies
40.	المُؤْمِن	<i>al-Mu'min</i>	The Believer
41.	فُصِّلَت	<i>Fussilat</i>	Distinguished
42.	الشُّورَى	<i>ash-Shura</i>	Counsel
43.	الزُّخْرُف	<i>az-Zukhruf</i>	Ornaments
44.	الدُّخَان	<i>ad-Dukhan</i>	Smoke
45.	الْجَاثِيَةِ	<i>al-Jathiyah</i>	Hobbling
46.	الْأَحْقَاف	<i>al-Ahqaf</i>	The Sand-Dunes
47.	(مُحَمَّدٌ) ص	<i>Muhammad</i>	Muhammad
48.	الْفَتْح	<i>al-Fath</i>	Victory
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