CHAPTER 1.

AL-FAṬIḤA.
(Revealed before Hijra)

Place and Time of Revelation

As reported by many traditionists, the whole of this chapter was revealed at Mecca, and from the very beginning formed part of the Muslim Prayers. The chapter has been referred to in the Quranic verse, We have indeed given thee the seven oft-repeated verses and the great Quran (15:88), which was admittedly revealed at Mecca. According to some reports, the chapter was also revealed a second time at Medina. The time of its first revelation, however, must be placed very early in the Prophet's career.

Names of this Chapter and their Significance

The best-known name of this short chapter, i.e., Ṣaḥīḥat al-Kiṭāb (the Opening Chapter of the Book), is reported on the authority of several reliable traditionists (Tirmidhi & Muslim). The name was later abbreviated into Sūra Al-Ṣaḥīḥa, or simply Al-Ṣaḥīḥa.

The chapter has been called by quite a number of names, out of which the following ten are more authentic. These are: Al-Ṣaḥīḥa, Al-Ṣalāt, Al-Ḥamād, Umm al-Qur'ān, Al-Qur'ān al-‘Azīm, Al-Sab’ al-Mathānī, Umm al-Kitāb, Al-Shiṭa, Al-Ruqqya and Al-Kanz.

These names throw a flood of light upon the extensive import of the chapter.

The name Ṣaḥīḥat al-Kiṭāb (the Opening Chapter of the Book) implies that the chapter is to be placed in the beginning of the Quran and that it serves as a key to its meaning.

Al-Ṣalāt (the Prayer) signifies that the chapter forms a perfect prayer and is an integral part of the institutional Prayers of Islam.

Al-Ḥamād (the Praise) signifies that the chapter brings to light the lofty purpose of man's creation and teaches that the relation of God to man is one of grace and mercy.

Umm al-Qur'ān (Mother of the Quran) signifies that the chapter contains the essence of the whole of the Quran, providing man in a nutshell with all the knowledge that has a bearing on his moral and spiritual welfare.

Al-Qur'ān al-ʿAzīm (the Great Quran) signifies that although the chapter is known as the Umm al-Kitāb and Umm al-Qur'ān, it is nevertheless a part of the Quran and not separate from it, as has been supposed by some.
Al-Sab' al-Mathâni (the Oft-repeated Seven Verses) signifies that the seven short verses of the chapter virtually answer all the spiritual needs of man. It also signifies that the chapter must be repeated in every rak'at of Prayer.

Umm al-Kiîb (Mother of the Book) signifies that the prayer contained in the chapter has been the cause of the revelation of the Quranic dispensation.

Al-Shifâ (the Cure) signifies that it provides remedy for all doubts and misgivings.

Al-Ruqya (the Charm) signifies that the chapter is not only a prayer to ward off disease but also provides protection against Satan and his followers, and strengthens the heart of man against them.

Al-Kanz (the Treasure) signifies that the chapter is an illimitable treasure of knowledge.

Al-Fâtiha referred to in a Prophecy of the New Testament

The best-known name of the chapter, however, is Al-Fâtiha. It is interesting to note that this very name occurs in a New Testament prophecy. In Rev. 10:1–2 it is written: "I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven...and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth." The Hebrew word for 'open' is fatoal which is the same as the Arabic word fâtiha. Rev. 10:3–4 says: "And when he (the angel) had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices." The seven thunders represent the seven verses of this chapter. Christian scholars admit that the prophecy refers to the second advent of Jesus Christ, and this has been established by actual facts. The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who claimed to have fulfilled the prophecy relating to the second advent of Jesus, had constantly in his hands the little chapter, Al-Fâtiha, and wrote several commentaries on it. He deduced arguments of his truth from its contents, and often referred to it in his speeches and writings and always used it as a model prayer, exhorting his disciples to do the same. He deduced from the seven short verses of this chapter truths which were not known before. It was as if the chapter had been a sealed book until its treasures were discovered by Hazrat Ahmad. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy contained in Rev. 10:4, "And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." This prophecy referred to the fact that the Fatoal or Al-Fâtiha would, for a time, remain a closed book, but that a time would come when it would become open.

Subject-Matter

This chapter contains the essence of the entire Quranic teaching. It comprises, in outline, all the subjects dealt with at length in the body of the Quran. The chapter starts with a description of the fundamental attributes of God, the pivot round which all the other divine attributes revolve, the basis of the working of the universe and of the relations between God and man. Rabb (the Creator, Sustainer and Developer), Rahmân (the Gracious), Rahîm (the Merciful) and Mâlik yaum al-Dîn (Master of the Day of Judgement)—these attributes signify that after creating man God endowed him with the best capacities and capabilities, and provided the means
and material needed for his physical, social, moral and spiritual development. Further, He made a provision that all labours and endeavours of man should have an ample reward.

The chapter goes on to say that man has been created for 'ibadat i.e. the worship of God and the attainment of His nearness, and that he constantly needs His help for the fulfilment of this supreme object of his creation.

Then we have a comprehensive prayer in which all the urges of the human soul find full expression. The prayer teaches us that we should always seek and invoke the assistance of God that He may provide us with the means required for our success in this life and the life to come. And as man is apt to derive strength and encouragement from the good example of those noble and great souls who led successful lives in the past, he is taught to pray that just as by God’s help and assistance those righteous and God-fearing men achieved the object of their life, and their labours were crowned with success, God should open up for him also avenues of moral and spiritual progress.

Finally, the prayer contains a warning that after having been led to the right path, man sometimes strays away from it, loses sight of his goal and becomes estranged from his Creator. We are taught to remain always on our guard and constantly seek God’s protection against any possible estrangement from Him.

This is the subject which is put in a nutshell in Al-Fatiha, and this is the subject with which the Quran deals fully and comprehensively, citing numerous examples for the guidance of the reader.

Relation to the Rest of the Quran

The chapter is introductory to the Quran. It is an epitome of the whole Book. Thus, at the very beginning of his study, the reader knows in broad outline the subjects he should expect to find in the Quran. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the chapter Al-Fatiha is the most important of the chapters of the Quran (Bukhari).

A Prayer that must precede the Recitation of the Quran

Muslims are bidden always to begin the reading of the Holy Book with a short prayer, soliciting God’s protection against Satan. God says in 16:99: When thou recitest the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the rejected. Now, refuge or protection implies: (1) that no evil should befall us; (2) that no good should escape us; and (3) that after we have attained goodness, we may not relapse into evil.

Thus, by seeking the protection of God while reciting the Quran we pray, firstly, that we may not miss any teaching of the Quran through weakness or negligence or in consequence of our sins, or under the influence of evil company; secondly, that we may not fail to understand rightly any teaching of the Quran; thirdly, that, having understood, we may not relapse into ignorance again. The prescribed words for the prayer are: اعره أيه من الشيطان الرجيم “I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the rejected,” which must precede every recitation of the Quran.
The Meaning and Significance of the Word 'Sūra'

A chapter of the Quran, and there are 114 of them, is called a Sūra. The word Sūra rendered into English as 'chapter,' means: (1) rank and eminence; (2) a mark or sign; (3) an elevated and beautiful edifice; and (4) something full and complete (Aqrab & Qurṭubi). The chapters of the Quran are called Sūras because, (a) one is exalted in rank by reading them and attains to eminence through them; (b) they serve as marks for the beginning and the end of the different subjects dealt with in the Quran; (c) they are each like a noble spiritual edifice, and (d) each of them contains a complete theme.

The name Sūra for such a division has been used by the Quran itself as in 2:24 and 24:2. It has been used in Ḥadīth also. Says the Holy Prophet: "Just now a Sūra has been revealed to me and it runs as follows" (Muslim). From this it is clear that the name Sūra for a division of the Quran has been in use from the very beginning and is not a later innovation.
1. In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

Placed before every chapter except ch. 9; also in 27:31. See also 96:2.

1. Important Words:

\(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) (in) occurring here in combination with \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) is a particle used to convey a number of meanings, the one more applicable here being that of 'with.' The compound word \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) therefore would mean 'with the name of.' According to Arab usage, the words \text{iqra}' or \text{aqra'u} or \text{naqra'u} or \text{ishra'} or \text{ashra'u} or \text{nashra'u} would be taken to be understood before \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \). The expression \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) would thus mean 'begin with the name of Allah' or 'recite with the name of Allah;' or 'I or we begin with the name of Allah;' or 'I or we recite with the name of Allah.' In the translation the words \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) have been rendered as "in the name of Allah" which is a more familiar form (Lane).

\(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) (name), which is derived either from \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) or \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) (a mark) or \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) (height), means a name or attribute (Aqrab). Here it is used in both senses; for, firstly, it refers to 'Allah' which is the personal name of God; and, secondly, it refers to \text{Al-Rahmān} (Gracious) and \text{Al-Rahīm} (Merciful) which are His attributive names.

\(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) (Allah) is the name of the Supreme Being Who is the sole possessor of all perfect attributes and is free from all defects. In the Arabic language, the word Allah is never used for any other thing or being. No other language has a distinctive name for the Supreme Being. The names found in other languages are all attributive or descriptive and are often used in the plural, but the word "Allah" is never used in the plural number. It is a simple substantive, not derived. It is never used as a qualifying word. Hence, in the absence of a parallel word in the English language, the original name "Allah" has been retained throughout the translation.

This view is corroborated by eminent authorities of the Arabic language. Says Lane: "\(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) (Allah) according to the most correct of the opinions respecting it is a proper name, applied to the Being Who exists necessarily by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection, the \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) (al) being inseparable from it" (Arabic-English Lexicon). For a fuller discussion of the word 'Allah,' the reader is referred to \text{Tafsir Kabīr} by Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Community.

\(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) (Gracious) and \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) (Merciful) are both derived from the same root \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) meaning, he showed mercy; he was kind and good; he forgave. The word \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) combines the idea of 'tenderness' and \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) i.e. 'goodness' (Mufradāt). The measure \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) is in the measure of \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) and in the measure of \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \). According to the rules of the Arabic language, the larger the number of letters added to the root word, the more extensive or more intensive does the meaning become (Kashshāf). The measure of \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) thus conveys the idea of fulness and extensiveness, while the measure of \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) denotes the idea of repetition and giving liberal reward to those who deserve it (Muhīt). Thus the word \(\text{ا} \text{ب} \) would denote "mercy comprehending the entire universe," whereas the
word  would denote "a mercy limited in its scope but repeatedly shown."

In view of the above, is One Who shows mercy gratuitously and extensively to all creation without regard to effort or work, and is One Who shows mercy in response to, and as a result of, the actions of man but shows it liberally and repeatedly. The former is applicable to God only, while the latter is applied to man also. The former extends not only to believers and unbelievers but to the whole creation; the latter applies mostly to believers. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: , i.e., the attribute generally pertains to this life, while the attribute generally pertains to the life to come (Mufîlî), meaning that as this world is mostly the world of actions and the next a world where actions will be particularly rewarded, God's attribute of provides man with material for his works in this life, whereas His attribute of brings about results in the life to come.

The abundance of everything which we enjoy in this life, which is indeed all a favour of God, is provided for us before we do anything to deserve it or even before we are born, while the blessings in store for us in the life to come will be given to us as a reward of our actions. This shows that is the bestower of gifts which precede our birth, while is the giver of blessings which follow our deeds as their reward.

Commentary:
(i) The verse is the first verse of every chapter of the Quran, except the chapter which, however, is not an independent chapter but a continuation of the chapter Anfâl. There is a saying reported by Ibn 'Abbâs to the effect that whenever any new chapter was revealed, Bismillah was the first verse to be revealed, and without Bismillah the Holy Prophet did not know that a new chapter had begun (Dâwûd). This hadith goes to prove that (1) the verse Bismillah is part of the Quran and not something superfluous and (2) that the chapter Barâ'at is not an independent chapter. It also refutes the belief expressed by some that Bismillah is a part only of Al-Fatiha and not of all the Quranic chapters. Such views are further refuted by the hadith in which the Holy Prophet is reported to have said definitely that the verse Bismillah is a part of all the Quranic chapters (Bukhâri & Qurâni).

(ii) The Holy Prophet attached very great importance to the verse Bismillah. He is reported to have said that any important work which is done without reciting Bismillah is apt to prove devoid of God's blessings. So it is a general practice among Muslims to commence every work with a recital of this prayer.

(iii) The place of this verse in the beginning of every chapter has the following significance:

1. The Quran is a treasure of divine knowledge to which access cannot be had without the special favour of God. In 56:80 God says regarding the Quran, None shall touch it except those who are purified, meaning that except the favoured ones who have been purified by the hand of God, none shall grasp the deeper meaning of the Quran. Thus Bismillah has been placed at the beginning of each chapter to remind the reader that in order to have access to, and benefit by, the treasures of divine knowledge contained in the Quran, he should not only approach it with pure motives but also constantly invoke the help of God and try to lead a righteous life.

2. In the Old Testament (Deut. 18:18, 19) we read: "I will raise them (the Israelites) up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee (Moses), and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all
that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.” As the Holy Prophet of Islam was raised in the likeness of Moses (Quran, 73 : 16), so in fulfilment of the above prophecy God so ordained that each time a new Sūra was revealed, it was begun by the words, in the name of Allah. This meant that every chapter of the Quran, i.e., every new proclamation made by God through the Holy Prophet, should commence with this verse so that on the one hand might be fulfilled the prophecy made by Moses and, on the other, there might be a constant repetition of the warning to Jews and Christians that if they hearkened not to the words of the new Prophet, they would be answerable to God.

3. In the Old Testament we also read: “But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die” (Deut. 18:20). The verse Bismillah (in the name of God) has, therefore, been placed at the beginning of every chapter of the Quran so that the fact might be brought home to Jews and Christians in particular and to other peoples in general that the success which attended the career of the Holy Prophet was a positive proof of the fact that all that he spoke was spoken by the command of God; for if it had been otherwise, he would surely have met with early destruction. The verse Bismillah is thus a standing challenge to Jews and Christians, and every time it is repeated at the head of a chapter it serves as an argument for the truth of the Holy Prophet. This result could not have been attained if the verse had been put only in the beginning of the Quran.

4. The verse Bismillah placed before every chapter of the Quran also serves another important purpose. It is a key to the meaning of each individual chapter. This is so because all questions affecting moral and spiritual matters are related in one way or other with these fundamental divine attributes: Rahmāniyyat (grace) and Rahimiyyat (mercy). Thus each chapter is, in fact, a detailed exposition of some aspect of the divine attributes mentioned in the verse.

(iv) Some Christian writers have raised the objection that the formula of Bismillah has been borrowed from earlier scriptures, insinuating that therefore it cannot be of divine origin. Wherry in his Commentary has expressed the opinion that it has been borrowed from the Zend-Avesta where it has the form:

\[بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم\]

i.e. With the name of God, Forgiving, Kind. A similar objection has been raised by Sale. Rodwell, however, has expressed the opinion that the Quran borrowed the formula from the Jews, among whom it was in vogue and from whom its use was borrowed by pre-Islamic Arabs. Both these criticisms are wrong and beside the mark; for firstly it has never been claimed by Muslims that the formula in this or similar form was not known before the revelation of the Quran; secondly it is wrong to argue that because the formula, in an identical or a similar form, was sometimes used by pre-Islamic peoples even before its revelation in the Quran, it could not be of divine origin. As a matter of fact, the Quran itself states that Solomon used the formula in his letter to the Queen of Sheba (27 : 31). What Muslims claim—and this claim has never been refuted—is that the Quran was the first scripture to use the formula in the way it did [see (iii) above]. It is also wrong to say that the formula was in common vogue among pre-Islamic Arabs, for it is well known that Arabs had an aversion from the use of the name Al-Rahmān for God. Again, if such formulae for the praise of God were known before, it only goes to corroborate the truth of the Quranic teaching that there has not been a people to whom a Teacher has not been sent (35 : 25),
2. "All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds," and that the Quran is a repository of all permanent truths contained in the previous Books (98:4). It adds much more, of course, and whatever it takes over it improves in form or use or both.

(v) It has been asked why the word "I (name) has been used before the word "a" (Allah) in the verse Bismillah. This may be explained in a number of ways:

1. In the Arabic language the particle "I is used not only to signify connection or invoke help, but also in swearing. So if the word "I had been dropped, the phrase "I (billah) might have meant "I swear by Allah." The introduction of "I (name) removes this ambiguity.

2. God being the source of all goodness, even the invoking of His names proves a blessing. Says the Quran (55:79), "Blessed be the name of thy Lord, the Owner of Majesty and Honour. The Holy Prophet sometimes healed people by invoking the various names of God. So the word "I (name) has been added in order to remind the Faithful that to remember the names of God is to merit a blessing.

3. The use of the word "name" further indicates that God is hidden and can be known only through His names, i.e., attributes. By reciting Bismillah a believer seeks the help of God through His attributes of Al-Rahmān and Al-Raḥīm.

4. Again, the inner meanings of the Quran are a guarded treasure and nobody can have access to them, except under proper authority. The person who begins a recitation with the formula, In the name of Allah, says, as it were, to the guardian angels of this spiritual treasure, "I am approaching it in the name of Allah, so open to me the treasures of the inner meanings of the Quran." To one who approaches the Quran in such a spirit, the treasures will indeed be opened. The verse, None shall touch it except those who are purified (56:80), likewise shows that only the pure in spirit can find access to the deep secrets of the Quran.

5. Another reason for introducing the word "name" in Bismillah is to draw attention to the prophecy of Moses (Deut. 18:18—20) to which reference has already been made.

2. Important Words:

All (All) is more or less like the definite article 'the' of the English language. It is used to convey a number of senses one of which is that of totality. So would mean, all kinds of praise.

Hamd (praise). They say, i.e. he praised him. Thus "Hamd" means 'praise'. There are four words in Arabic which are used, in varying significance, in the sense of praise or thankfulness; viz., Shukr, Hamd, Thana, and Madh. Of these God has here chosen the last. Shukr, when used about man, expresses recognition of, and thankfulness for, benefits received, whereas Hamd not only embodies the idea of thankfulness but also has reference to the intrinsic qualities of the object of praise. Thana indicates an idea of publicity, the root meaning of the word being repetition. The emphasis in Thanā is more on publicity than on personal experience. Madh gives a somewhat similar meaning as Hamd but whereas Madh may be false, Hamd is always true. Says the Holy Prophet:
"Throw dust in the faces of those who praise falsely." Again Madīḥ may be used about such acts of goodness over which the doer has no control, but Ḥamād is used only about such acts as are volitional (Mufradāt). Ḥamād also implies admiration, magnifying and honouring of the object of praise, and lowliness, humility and submissiveness in the person who offers it (Lane). Thus Ḥamād was the most appropriate word to be used here, where a reference to the intrinsic goodness and truly merited praise and glorification of God is intended. In common usage the word Ḥamād has come to be applied exclusively to God.

Lord. means, he gathered together the thing; he owned the thing. means, he ruled over the people and administered their affairs. means, he increased and developed the favour. means, he improved and completed the matter. means, he sustained and looked after the child till he was of age. means, lord, master or owner; one to whom obedience is due; one who reforms; one who sustains and develops (Aqrab & Lisān); one who brings to perfection by degrees (Mufrādāt). also means, Creator (Muḥīṭ). When used in combination with some other word, the word may be used for others than God, as we say i.e. the owner of the house (Lane).

(vehicles) is the plural of which is derived from i.e. he knew. means, proper name by which a person or thing is known; flag or banner; sign; minaret. primarily means, that by means of which one knows a thing. Hence, the word has come to be applied to all beings or things by means of which one is able to know the Creator (Aqrab). The word is applied not only to all kinds of created beings or things but also to their classes collectively, so that one says i.e. the world of mankind, or i.e. the animal kingdom. The word al-‘alāmīn is not used to denote rational beings—men and angels—only. The Quran applies the word to all created things (26:24—29 & 41:10). Sometimes, of course, it is used in a restricted sense. Thus in 25:2 it is used in the sense of ‘mankind’ only and not in the sense of ‘all created things.’ In 2:123 it is used in a still more restricted sense, meaning not all mankind but only the people of the age.

In the verse under comment the word is used in its widest sense and signifies ‘all that is besides Allah,’ i.e., both those that have life and those that have not, including heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon, the stars, etc.

Commentary:

The believer is taught to say, All praise belongs to Allah, and not “I praise Allah” or “we praise Allah.” The sentence (all praise belongs to Allah) denotes much more than (I praise Allah), because man can praise God only according to his knowledge, but (all praise belongs to Allah) comprises not only the praise which man knows, but also the praise which he does not know, to be God’s due. God is worthy of praise at all times, independently of man’s imperfect knowledge or realization. Moreover, if the expression (I praise Allah) had been used, it would have implied that man, a finite being, can completely comprehend the Infinite, an implication which is obviously wrong.

The word is an infinitive and as such can be interpreted both subjectively and objectively. Interpreted subjectively it would mean that God alone has the right to bestow true praise. No other being is entitled to give such praise, owing to his limited knowledge. Interpreted objectively, it would signify that true praise is due to God alone. The praise due to other beings and objects is only borrowed and secondary. It is God Who provides everything
and grants all powers and capacities. Therefore, when a person or thing is praised, it is really God to Whom the praise belongs, the person or thing being entitled to it only secondarily.

The verse, *All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds*, conveys, among others, the following meanings:

1. Allah is free from all blemishes and possesses all perfect attributes.

2. He alone is fully aware of the real nature of all things. The truth of this statement is verified by the daily multiplying discoveries of science which go to prove how inadequate human knowledge ever remains.

3. God can be entitled to "all praise" only when He is believed to be رَبِّ الْأَلَامِينَ i.e. Lord of all the worlds; and if He is Lord of all the worlds, then His providence must not only be universal but must extend to both the physical and the spiritual world. From the above it follows that no people must remain deprived of God's spiritual blessings and all must have their share. If, therefore, any revelation is meant for a particular people, other peoples must have separate revelations to guide them, as was the case in pre-Islamic times. On the contrary, if, at a certain time, separate revelations are not sent for different peoples and only one revelation is sent, that revelation must claim to be universal, affording equal opportunities to all peoples, as is the case in Islam; otherwise God cannot be looked upon as "Lord of all the worlds", nor can He be considered to be entitled to "all praise." In fact, the belief that revelation is the privilege of any particular people to the exclusion of all others who cannot claim any share in it, is false and repugnant to God's universal providence as well as to His title to all praise.

4. The powers and faculties with which man is endowed are all gifts of God. So it is He Who is deserving of praise for any good that may be done by man.

5. By linking up the clause "all praise belongs to Allah" with the phrase "Lord of all the worlds" God has drawn our attention to the fact that one man's good is really linked up with, and dependent on, the good of all mankind. A true believer should, therefore, look not only to his own good but to the good of all. One who does not do so has failed to grasp the true spirit of Islam and the universality of God's providence. Happiness for one lies in happiness for all.

6. The phrase رَبِّ الْأَلَامِينَ (Lord of all the worlds) also points out that as things which grow, develop and change cannot do so by themselves, so all life is subject to God's lordship.

The phrase further points to a law of evolution in the world, that things undergo development and that this development is progressive and is brought about in stages, Rabb being One Who makes things grow and develop by stages.

The verse also points out that the principle of evolution is not inconsistent with belief in God. On the contrary, the progressive development of things makes creation all the more marvellous and God all the more deserving of praise. It must, however, be noted that the process of evolution referred to here is not identical with the theory of evolution as ordinarily understood; the expression is used here only in a general sense.

7. Again, the verse points to the fact that man has been created for unlimited progress, because the phrase رَبِّ الْأَلَامِينَ implies that God develops everything from a lower to a higher stage and this can be only if beyond every stage there is another in a never-ending process.

8. Finally, by putting the verse "الْحَدَّ ثَ رَبِّ الْأَلَامِينَ" in the very beginning of the Quran, a declaration is made that the time of separate revelations has come to an end, and that God is now going to bestow a universal revelation upon the world. When separate Prophets were raised
The Gracious, the Merciful, for separate nations, ignorant people, not understanding the purpose of God, rejected the Prophets of other nations; but, with the advent of Islam, one Prophet and one religion were given to all mankind, and the different peoples inhabiting the world—white, yellow, brown and black—were all invited to sing one common hymn in praise of Allah, Lord of all the worlds.

3. Important Words:
For the meanings of the words Al-Rahman and Al-Rahim see note under 1:1.

Commentary:
In the verse Biṣm allah the attributes of Al-Rahman and Al-Rahim serve as a key to the meaning of the chapter at the head of which they have been placed. Their mention here in the third verse serves an additional purpose. Here they are used as a link between the attribute of ربه المالک يوم الیکین (Lord of all the worlds) which precedes and that of ربه رحل المأمون (Lord of all the worlds) which follows them. As we have seen, the phrase ربه المأمون (Lord of all the worlds) also implies that after creating things God leads them progressively to higher stages of development. In the words الیکین and رحل المأمون occurring in the present verse light is thrown on the process of that development. The word Al-Rahman means that God provides not only all the necessary means, but also all the faculties needed for the development of man; and the word Al-Rahim signifies that when man makes proper use of the means and faculties bestowed upon him, God not only rewards his labours but also inspires him with a desire for further good actions, thus opening out to him unending avenues of progress and development.

The attribute of Al-Rahman rules out the doctrine of Atonement, because Al-Rahman signifies that God can bestow unearned favours on His creatures, whereas the doctrine of Atonement is based on the belief that God is, as it were, bound to treat men only according to their merits. Islam teaches that God is bound by no such restrictions. He possesses the power to forgive sins and treat His servants as He likes, because, being Al-Rahman, He can reward a person beyond his deserts.

The attribute of Al-Rahim, on the other hand, rules out the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. This doctrine is born of the idea that actions of man in this life, being limited, cannot bring him everlasting salvation. The attribute of Al-Rahim shows that by liberally rewarding man's labours, God creates in him the desire to repeat his good actions, repetition of good works resulting in a repetition of rewards and so on without end.

Misunderstanding arises from the fact that supporters of the doctrine of transmigration look upon Heaven as a place of inaction. To them salvation means Nirvana or cessation of all desire and action. This view the words الیکین and رحل المأمون (Lord of all the worlds) emphatically deny. The next life being also a creation of God, the attribute of Rabb will continue to operate in that life as well. Man's spiritual progress will not end with death. On the contrary, he will go on doing good works in the next life, and God, the Al-Rahim, will continue to reward those works. Spiritual progress will therefore go on for ever. Only in the present life is there the possibility of dropping behind as well as of forging ahead; in the next there will be no dropping behind...
but only forging ahead. Effort and action and, therefore, progress will continue for ever. So the question about unlimited reward for limited action does not arise.

4. **Important Words:**

**Master** (Master) is derived from ملك. They say ملك meaning, he owned the thing and possessed the right of doing with it what he liked. ملك means, he gained complete dominion over the people. ملك (malak) which, according to some authorities, is derived from the same root, means ‘an angel.’ ملك (malik) means, king or ruler. ملك means, master or one who possesses the right of ownership over a thing and has the power to deal with it as one likes (Aqrab).

**Day** (Day) means (1) time absolutely, whether day or night, short or long; (2) day from sunrise till sunset; (3) present time or now; (4) لقاء الله means, God’s favours and punishments (Aqrab & Lane). The Quran says: *Verily a day with thy Lord is as a thousand years of what you reckon* (22: 48). At another place (70: 5) the Quran uses the word to indicate fifty thousand years. At yet another place the Quran says: اداوم اکلن لکو درک i.e. *Now have I perfected your religion for you* (5: 4). Here simply means ‘now.’

**Judgement** is derived from دان. They say دان meaning, he rewarded or recompensed him; he became his master and set him to any task he liked; he judged him; he obeyed him. دان (السلام) means, he adopted Islam as his religion (Aqrab). Thus the word دان is used in several different senses, e.g., (1) recompense or requital; (2) judgement or reckoning; (3) dominion or government; (4) obedience; (5) religion (Lane). The word has been used in the Quran in all these different senses: see 37: 54; 24: 3; 12: 77; 5: 4; 4: 126.

**Commentary:**

Generally, this verse is understood to mean that God is the Master of the Day of Judgement. But it has a wider significance: for although the last and the perfect reckoning will take place on the Day of Judgement, the process of requital is going on even in this life. In its wider significance, therefore, the verse would mean that God, Master of the Day of Judgement, is also Master of the period and process of reckoning in this life as well as in the next. There is, however, one difference. In this life human actions are often also judged and rewarded by other men—kings, rulers, superiors, etc.; and there is, therefore, always the possibility of error. On the Day of Judgement, however, the mastery of God will be exclusive and absolute and the work of requital will lie entirely in His hands. There will be no error, no undue punishments, nor undue rewards. It is to point out this difference, that in spite of the fact that God is the Master of the time of requital, both in this world and the world to come, He has been spoken of in this verse as the Master of the Day of Judgement, so that it may be emphasized that on the Day of Judgement He will be the sole Master.

The use of the word ملك (Master) in the verse is also intended to point to the fact that God is not like a judge who is bound to give his judgement strictly in accordance with a prescribed law. But, being Master, He can forgive and show mercy wherever and in whatever manner He may like.

The use of the word “Master” thus serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it
encourages a person who has, in a moment of weakness, committed a sin, not to despair, because God, being his Master, has the power to forgive. On the other hand, it serves as a warning against taking undue advantage of God’s mercy. For if as Master, God could and no doubt would, forgive, He would also hate to see His servants degraded by sin. God, the Master, inspires man both with hope and with fear, and this is essential for man’s spiritual progress and development.

The four attributes of God i.e. (1) ربِ الْعَالَمَانِ (Lord of all the worlds); (2) الرَّحْمَٰنُ (Gracious); (3) الْرَّحِيمُ (Merciful) and (4) مَلِكُ عِيْلَةِ الْجُنْدِ (Master of the Day of Judgement) mentioned in verses 2-4 are fundamental. The other attributes only explain and serve as a sort of commentary upon these four attributes, which are like four pillars on which the Throne of the Almighty rests.

The order in which these four attributes have been mentioned here throws light on how God manifests His attributes to men. It is obvious that the first divine attribute to manifest itself to man is that of ربِ الْعَالَمَانِ (Lord of all the worlds) which means that, together with the creation of man, God creates the necessary environment for his spiritual progress and development. Next, the attribute of الرَّحْمَٰنُ (Gracious) comes into operation, and through this, God, so to speak, hands over to man the means and material required for his moral and spiritual advance. And when man has made proper use of the means thus granted to him, the attribute of الْرَّحِيمُ (Merciful) comes in to reward his works. Last of all, the attribute of مَلِكُ عِيْلَةِ الْجُنْدِ (Master of the Day of Judgement) produces the final and collective results of man’s labours; and the process finds consummation in his being granted spiritual dominion over the world, such as is granted to the chosen ones of God. This is what may be called the descent of God towards man.

On the other hand, when man begins to ascend towards God, the process is reversed. In this process, man, first of all, becomes the manifestation of the attribute of مَلِكُ عِيْلَةِ الْجُنْدِ (Master); he begins to manifest in himself the attribute of الرَّحِيمُ or justice, tempering it with mercy and forgiveness. Having developed in his person the attribute of الرَّحِيمُ man reaches the second stage of spiritual progress where he becomes the manifestation of the attribute of الرَّحْمَٰنُ i.e. he begins to reward the actions of men liberally and generously. This is the stage which is termed إِخْرَاجُ ابْدَالٍ or beneficence. The next stage relates to the attribute of الرَّحْمَٰنُ. Here the sphere of man’s beneficence becomes widened; his goodness extends to believers and unbelievers alike—he begins to treat them just as a mother treats her children, prompted only by a natural instinct and without hope of return. This stage has been termed إِخْرَاجُ الْإِخْرَاحِ or i.e. doing good to others as one would do to one’s near relatives. Then comes the attribute of الْرَّحِيمُ which marks the highest stage of man’s spiritual development, when he becomes a manifestation of “Lord of all the worlds.” At this stage man makes himself responsible for the welfare and guidance of the whole world. He is not satisfied if only he or those who immediately surround him are guided or otherwise provided, but desires the good of the whole world, and begins to use his God-given powers for the achievement of this great end. This is the philosophy of مَلِكُ عِيْلَةِ الْجُنْدِ and صَدَقَةُ فِي سَبْعِ صَلَاةٍ i.e. the process of Descent and Ascent which has been so beautifully described in these three short verses.
5. Thee alone do we worship and
Thee alone do we implore for help.

Important Words:

ناذب (we worship) is derived from عبد meaning, he believed in the Oneness of God and served and obeyed Him with humility and submissiveness. The noun-infinitive from عبد signifies humility, submissiveness, obedience and service; the idea is not of simple humility but of complete humility. It also implies belief in God’s Oneness and declaration of it (Aqrab). Another meaning of the word is to accept the impress of a thing. In Mufradat we have طريق عبد امزلال i.e. a way is called عبد when, on account of constant travelling, it becomes susceptible to the travellers’ footprints. With reference to God the meaning would be “receiving the impress of His attributes.” عبد means, a man whether free or slave; a male slave or a bondman (Aqrab); a servant or worshipper of God. عبدال량ر means, one who serves or worships the devil (Lane).

Commentary:

True worship demands perfect humility and complete submissiveness, and this is not possible unless there is born in the heart of man a state agreeable to it. So a person can worship God in the real sense of the word only when acts of worship are performed with complete humility of heart.

It should, however, be noted that in Islam نذب does not merely mean the performance of certain known acts of worship, e.g., Prayer, Fasting, etc. It has a much wider significance. In fact, the Holy Prophet of Islam is reported to have said that any act performed in obedience to God’s commands and to seek His pleasure is an act of ‘ibādat. Says the Holy Prophet: “If you give a morsel of food to your wife (believing that you are thereby obeying a behest of God), you will find the reward thereof with God” (Bukhari).

In the verse the word نذب has been placed before the word نذب to signify that after man has become aware of God, his first impulse is to worship Him. The idea of invoking God’s help comes after the impulse to worship. Man wishes to worship God but he finds that for doing so he needs God’s help. That is why the word نذب is placed after the word نذب. Man should first make up his mind to worship God, then seek His help for carrying out this resolve.

The word اياك (Thee alone) has been placed before the words نذب and نذب to point to the fact that not only is God alone deserving of worship but that He alone can give the help which man needs to discharge this duty truly and effectively. As long as man is not granted the power and means necessary for his guidance, it is not possible for him to become God’s or servant in the real sense of the word. No man-made law can make man a good and true servant of the Lord; it is only God’s help that can bring about this change in him.

The use of the plural number in نذب and نذب directs our attention to two very important points:

(1) that man is not alone in this world but is part and parcel of the society that surrounds him. He should, therefore, seek not to go alone but to carry others also with him on the path of God.
that as long as a man does not reform his environment, his own reform cannot make him immune from danger; for a house surrounded by others on fire cannot enjoy security for long. Thus the use of the plural number points to a principle which is of vital importance for the moral, cultural and spiritual uplift of Muslims as well as for their success in missionary and other activities. The principle is a special feature of Islam and remains as important today as ever it was.

The verse also contains a hint about the eternal controversy whether man is free or predestined to follow a given course of action. Men of learning in all ages have disagreed upon this point, and no solution has yet been found. Some are of the opinion that man is the master of his will and is free to do what he likes, while others believe that freedom of action is an illusion and man only acts in a manner predestined for him. The verse offers an easy solution of this difficult problem.

The words لذ نع (Thee alone do we worship) which have been put by God in the mouth of man draw our attention to the fact that man in not determined but free to choose and carry out a course of action as he likes. On the other hand, the words لذ نسمن (Thee alone do we implore for help) remind us of the fact that, though free, we may yet suffer from constraints and compulsions of various kinds. The prayer, لذ نع us to tread.

The Christian doctrine that man has inherited sin from Adam and therefore cannot get rid of it without Atonement is tantamount to the belief that man is not free but is bound to adopt a course predestined for him. Similarly, the Hindu doctrine of transmigration of souls is also a form of predestination. That man's state in the present life is the result of his actions in a previous life only means that man is bound to follow the course to which he is pre-natally destined. Of modern thinkers, Freud, the famous Austrian psychologist, has also lent powerful support to this view. He has tried to show that the adult has his actions determined by the environment and experiences through which he passes in early childhood. Unable to shed the influence of his early days, the adult is not free. True, early environment exerts an influence on later life. The Holy Prophet of Islam, fourteen hundred years ago, drew attention to the fact that early environment exerts a distinct influence on the life of the human adult. Says he: “A child is born in the likeness of Islam; it is his parents that make him a Christian, a Jew or a Fire-worshipper” (Bukhari). In spite of this, Islam repudiates the idea that man is not free. It is our daily experience that in later life man often outgrows the atmosphere and ideas of his childhood and adopts a course of life quite at variance with the sort of life he would have led if he had not outgrown those ideas.

There is yet another point to be cleared about this verse. God is spoken of in the first four verses of this chapter in the third person, but in this verse He is suddenly addressed in the second person. This abrupt change from the third to the second person may appear to be an example of bad grammar. Nothing of the kind. A thoughtful contemplation of the divine attributes in the first four verses brings to the mind of the worshipper such an attractive picture of his Creator that he feels irresistibly drawn towards Him, and this, coupled with the realization of His presence, makes him address his Lord and invoke His assistance in supplicatory tones. The Quran is no book of philosophy but has been sent to bring about a change in man and to open up to him avenues of spiritual progress. Therefore its style is made to fit in with the nature of man and with his innermost feelings. The contemplation of
6. Guide us in "the right path."

the four attributes creates in man such an irresistible longing for his Creator and such an intense desire to offer his whole-hearted devotion to Him that, in order to satisfy this longing of the soul, the third person used in the first four verses has been changed to the second in the fifth verse. It is to this point that the Holy Prophet has beautifully alluded in the Hadith. Says he: “Allah has divided the chapter Al-Salāt equally between man and Himself, the first half belongs to Allah, the second to His servant. When, therefore, a man offers this prayer to God from the fullness of his heart and asks for something, the same is given to him” (Muslim).

6. Important Words:

"guide" is derived from حـدـِـى. حـدـِـى means, he guided him. حـدـِـى الـطـريق or حـدـِـى الـطـريق means, he showed him the right path and made it known to him. حـدـِـى الـطـريق means, he led the way for him. The word حـدـِـى is also sometimes used intransitively. They say حـدـِـى الـرـسـالـي, i.e. the man became rightly guided. The infinitive form حـدِـى is generally used in three different senses:

(1) to show the right path,
(2) to lead to the right path,
(3) to make one follow the right path (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Bāqā).

In the Quran, the word has been used in all these different senses. Thus, in the Quran we read:

(1) i.e. We showed him the two highways of good and evil (90: 11).
(2) i.e. Those who strive in Our cause, We will assuredly lead them to Our ways (29: 70).

Commentary:

The prayer taught in this short verse is so perfect and so comprehensive that it has no parallel in any other religion. In the first place, the verse teaches that paths are of two kinds: (1) even and straight, and (2) uneven and crooked, and the attention of a true believer is drawn to the fact that he should be ever on the look-out to take the straight path and reject the crooked one.

Again, sometimes a man is shown the right path but is not led up to it, or, if he is led up to it, he fails to stick to it and follow it to the end. The prayer embodied in this verse requires us not to be satisfied with being shown a path, or even with being led up to it, but ever to go on following it till we reach the destination.
7. The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, those who have not incurred Thy displeasure, and those who have not gone astray.

Another aspect of this wonderful prayer is that it is not confined to things spiritual or to things of this world only, but covers the entire field of human requirements, both spiritual and temporal. This makes the prayer truly comprehensive. A Christian prays only for his "daily bread," but a Muslim is enjoined to make his prayer cover the entire field of his requirements, material or spiritual. Moreover, as hinted above, this prayer is not confined to man's present requirements but extends to his future requirements also. It is a wonderful prayer, which even a non-Muslim may use without contravening any of his religious views. In fact, many non-Muslims have used this prayer and benefited by its marvellous efficacy.

It has been objected that Muslims offer this prayer in their daily Prayers and their constant prayer for the right path shows that they have not yet found it. This objection springs from nothing but ignorance. As already explained, this verse teaches a Muslim to pray not only that God may show him the right path; nitt merely that He may lead him to it but that He may enable him to go on till he reaches the goal. In fact, man needs God's help at every step and at every moment, and it is imperative that he should ever be offering to God the supplication embodied in the verse. Constant praying, therefore, is not only not objectionable but is even necessary. To say that the repetition of this comprehensive prayer is futile is simply absurd. As long as we have requirements unfulfilled and needs unsatisfied and goals unattained, we stand in need of this prayer; and what prayer can be more comprehensive and more pithy than this?

7. Important Words:

اِنْعَمَتْ (Thou hast bestowed blessings) is derived from نَئَمَ which means, he became well off. نَئَمَ means, his life became happy and full of comfort and ease. نَئَمَ على فَتَنَ or نَئَمَ فَتَانَ means, he made his life comfortable; he bestowed favour on him. فَتَانَ means, favour, blessing, anything which affords happiness (Aqrab). The word نَئَمَ is used with reference to rational beings only. For instance, we would say نَئَمَ على عِبَدِهِ i.e. he bestowed a favour on his slave or servant, and not نَئَمَ على فِرْسِهِ i.e. he bestowed a favour on his horse (Mufradāt).

العذَرُوب (those who have incurred displeasure) is derived from غَضِبَ which means, he was angry, he showed anger. غَضِبَ عليه means, he was angry with him, he was wrathful against him, his anger and wrath being combined with the intention of punishing or retaliating (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

المَسْجِلِ (those gone astray) is derived from مَسْجَلَ which means, he went astray, he lost his way, he deviated from the right path. مَسْجَلَ سَيْبَهِ means, his effort was lost, being unsuccessful. مَسْجَلَ الرِّجْلِ means, the man perished and his body became converted into dust (Aqrab). The word سَلَّلَ is also used to indicate the state of being engrossed or lost in some effort or pursuit. Says the Quran:

i.e. those whose labour is all lost in search after things pertaining to the life of this world (18: 105). Again: i.e. and He (God) found thee engrossed in search (after Him), so He showed thee the way (93: 8).
Commentary:

In the last verse, God taught us to pray for guidance to the right path. In the present verse the idea has been further advanced by adding the words, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings. This has been done with a twofold purpose:

(1) That a true believer should not be satisfied with only being guided to the right path or with performing certain acts of righteousness. He should set his goal higher, and try to attain to a position in which God begins to bestow His special favours on His servants. He should not merely pass the test but do well in it.

(2) That a true believer should look up to the historical examples of divine favours and receive encouragement from them. But he is not to stop at that. He should try to join the favoured company and become one of them. And as the topmost in a class is still one of the class, the goal set before a believer is very high indeed.

For a description of the favoured ones, we read elsewhere in the Quran:

And remember when Moses said to his people, 0 my people, call to mind Allah's favour upon you when He appointed Prophets among you and made you kings and gave you what He gave not to any other among the peoples (5: 21). This verse pointedly refers to the things which can be held to be special favours for man; and the Israelites are told that they have been given a goodly portion of all these favours.

Human excellences are of three kinds: (1) worldly and personal, (2) spiritual and personal, and (3) worldly or spiritual excellences in relation to others, i.e., excellences that are of a relative nature and consist in an individual or a people being superior to others. A man naturally likes to attain this last kind of excellence also, which confers upon him a superiority over his rivals and compatriots. In the verse quoted above (i.e. 5: 21) Moses ascribes all these three kinds of favours to the Israelites:

(1) They received worldly favours, so much so that they remained rulers of a land for a
long time. All worldly excellences require kingship or government administration for their right growth and development, and a people who become rulers get this important means of development, irrespective of whether they benefit by it or not. The very fact that kingship is granted to a people means that all avenues of worldly progress are thrown open and made secure for them.

(2) They also received high spiritual favours. Just as kingship is a means of attaining worldly greatness and constitutes its culminating point, prophethood is the means of attaining spiritual greatness and constitutes the culminating point of spiritual progress. This is why Moses tells his people that prophethood, the greatest spiritual favour, has also been conferred upon them. Indeed they were granted this favour through a long series of Prophets.

(3) The third class of favours being relative, Moses most fittingly tells his people that God gave you what He had not given to any other among the peoples. In the above expression, though the idea is that of Moses, the words are Quranic and, as usual, the Quran has combined brevity of words with vastness of meaning in a manner which cannot fail to impress a thoughtful person.

The words, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, coming after the words, Guide us in the right path, give great extensiveness to their significance. The words do not hold the object of a Muslim to be merely to pray that God may show him the right way. They direct him to pray for lofty objects and to implore God that He may not only show him the ways of guidance but that He may lead him to those special paths of spiritual knowledge which had been revealed to the favoured ones before him. By raising such high aspirations in the minds of the believer God has indeed conferred a great boon on Muslims.

Although in the presence of this clear and plain teaching it is not necessary to give any further evidence to show that the doors to every kind of progress have been thrown open to believers, yet, as latter-day Muslims have generally given way to despair, it is necessary to turn to the Quran to see what it means by prayer for the grant of favours, and whether it holds out any promise of the acceptance of this prayer. As partly quoted above, we read in 4: 67-70: And if they had done what they are exhorted to do, it would surely have been better for them, and conducive to greater strength, and then We would have surely given them a great reward from Ourselves, and We would have surely guided them in the right path. And whoso obeys Allah and this Messenger (of His), shall be among those on whom Allah has bestowed His blessings, namely, the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous, and excellent companions are these.

The above-quoted verse clearly speaks of the favours that are in store for true Muslims and uses the very words which occur in the verse under comment, viz., the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings. As already noted, the receivers of blessings have been explained to mean the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous. This shows that the divine gifts which Muslims are asked to pray for embody the highest stages of spiritual progress, and the Quran informs us that all these stages are attainable, and indeed will be attained, by Muslims.

The objection is sometimes raised that prophethood being a free gift and not something to be earned, it is meaningless to offer any prayer for its attainment. The answer to this objection is that a Muslim does not pray particularly for the gift of prophethood. He only prays in a general way and implores God to bestow the highest spiritual favours on Muslims, and it rests with God to confer His favours on whomsoever He likes. The Quran says, Allah knows best where to place His
message (6: 125), i.e., He alone knows whom to make His Messenger. This is why God has taught this prayer in the plural number, saying Guide us, and not "Guide me"—to point out that prayer for such spiritual blessings should be general and not particular. Moreover, though it is true that prophethood is a free gift, yet it is not wholly so, for there is undoubtedly some element of "earning" in it, otherwise why was this gift conferred on Muhammad (on whom be peace) and not on Abū Jahl?

Another objection in this connection is that when the Holy Prophet has been declared to be Ṣaḥīḥ (Seal of Prophets), there is no possibility of any Prophet appearing after him. This objection has also been clearly answered in the verses quoted above (4: 67-70); for there the words used are who so obeys Allah and this Messenger (of His) which definitely means that the spiritual boons, promised to Muslims will be given only to such as will obey God and His Messenger, the Holy Prophet; and it is evident that the work of one who is subordinate to the Prophet cannot be considered as separate from his work, nor can such a one bring a new Law. Hence the appearance of a Prophet from among the followers of the Holy Prophet is not inconsistent with the latter's being the Seal of Prophets. On the contrary, such a Prophet will only complete the significance of Ṣaḥīḥ (Seal of Prophets). But of this we will speak later at its proper place. In short, the verse clearly tells us that the door of the highest spiritual blessings—even that of prophethood—is open to Muslims.

It should, however, be noted that "a favour" or "a blessing", spoken of in the verse, is not to be understood in the spiritual sense only. It covers the entire field of human activity, and in its wider significance the prayer includes the seeking of what may be called earthly eminence. Knowledge, honour, power, wealth are all among the favours of God and a true believer may pray for the attainment of these along with spiritual blessings.

The latter portion of the verse contains a dreadful warning. Man receives favours from God and then begins to abuse them. Or he loses the right path, encounters a fall, and becomes rejected of God. It is to guard against this danger that the latter portion of the verse contains a warning for mankind in general and for Muslims in particular. God enjoins us to pray that after becoming His favoured ones, we should not incur His displeasure nor stray away from the right path, so that our progress, be it spiritual or temporal, may be continuous with no falling back.

The words Ṣaḥīḥ (Seal of Prophets) and have been used to denote two kinds of dangers. One is that one should outwardly stick to the right path but lose the inner spirit, retaining the shell without the kernel. The other is that one should lose the path itself and wander away into the wilderness. It is to these two kinds of dangers that the words ابوب عليهم and all refer. The Holy Prophet said: Ṣاحب الأفوار عليهم and i.e. By are meant Jews, and by Christians (Tirmidhi & Musnad). These words of the Prophet are full of meaning. Not only do they describe the nature of the two dangers but warn Muslims that, if they are not watchful, they may fall a prey to them. They may either lose the spirit of faith just as the Jews did, who stuck to the letter of the Law but lost its spirit; or they may lose the path itself just as the Christians did, who strayed away from the true teachings of Jesus and began to tread a different path altogether. The Quran speaks of the wrath of God falling on the Jews time after time (2: 62; 2: 91; 3: 113; 5: 61). It also refers to the drifting away of the Christians from the real teaching of Jesus (5: 78).
The words also refer to another set of dangers. As is well known, the Holy Prophet had prophesied the re-coming of Jesus Christ which meant the coming of a Reformer, a Messiah, among Muslims in the spirit and power of Jesus. By using the words which, the Holy Prophet said, referred to the Jews, the Quran warns Muslims against meeting the fate of the Jews by rejecting the Promised Messiah when he appears among them. This prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

The other danger is alluded to in which, according to the Holy Prophet, refers to Christians. The verse foretells a time when Christian nations would dominate the world, and it warns Muslims to be on their guard against the false beliefs and evil culture of these nations. A most dreadful warning, but most deplorably neglected!

This, the last verse of Al-Fatiha, embodies yet another great prophecy. As we have seen, this chapter was revealed early in Mecca, when the Holy Prophet was surrounded by idolaters, and Islam had not yet come in contact with either Jews or Christians. Yet the prayer in this verse refers to the danger of Jews and Christians and not to the danger of idolatry. This unexpected omission in the case of idol-worshippers and this unexpected reference to the People of the Book is not without significance. Idol-worship was to be swept out of Arabia and was no longer to be a danger to Islam, but dangers far more formidable were to confront it in the Latter Days—the internal danger of Muslims becoming like Jews, and the external danger of their becoming Christians. The prophecy in this verse therefore has a three-fold significance: (1) it refers to the early extinction of idolatry from Arabia; (2) it speaks of the danger of Muslims drifting into a state like that of Jews, and (3) it alludes to the universal ascendance of Christian nations in the Latter Days, and warns Muslims against adopting their faith and imbibing their culture. All these prophecies have been literally fulfilled.

The Holy Prophet says that when a Muslim comes to the end of the prayer contained in Al-Fatiha, he should say (Amen) i.e. Accept our prayer, O Lord! It is therefore customary with Muslims to say 'Amen' after reciting Al-Fatiha.

A General Note on the Chapter Al-Fatiha

Al-Fatiha, the opening Sūra of the Quran, reveals a beautiful order in the arrangement of its words and sentences. It is divided, as the Holy Prophet has said, into two halves. The first half pertains to God, the second to man, and the different parts of each portion correspond to one another in a most remarkable manner. Corresponding to the name (Allah), which stands for a Being possessing all noble attributes, in the first half, we have the words, Thee alone do we worship spontaneously rises from the depths of his heart.

Again, corresponding to the attribute (Lord of all the worlds) in the first part, we have the words, Thee alone do we implore for help in the second part. When a Muslim knows God to be the Lord i.e. the Creator and Sustainer of the worlds and the Source of all development, he at once takes shelter in Him, saying, Thee alone do we implore for help.

Again, corresponding to the attribute (the Gracious i.e. the Giver of innumerable blessings, and the Liberal Provider of our needs) in the first part, we have the words Guide us in the right path in the second; for the greatest of the blessings provided for man is guidance which God provides for him by sending revelation through His Messengers.
Again, corresponding to the attribute الرحم (the Merciful, i.e., the Giver of the best rewards for man's works) in the first part, we have the words The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings in the second, for it is Al-Rahim Who bestows merited blessings on His favoured servants.

Yet again, corresponding to مالك يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement) in the first half, we have the concluding part of the last verse in the second, viz., those who have not incurred Thy displeasure, and those who have not gone astray. When man thinks of giving an account of his deeds, he dreads failure; so, pondering over the attribute of Master of the Day of Judgement, he begins to pray to God to be saved from His displeasure and from straying away from the right path.

Another special feature of the prayer contained in this chapter is that it appeals to the inner instincts of man in a perfectly natural manner. There are two fundamental motives in human nature which prompt submission, viz., love and fear. Some people are touched by love, while others are moved by fear. The motive of love is certainly nobler but there may be, indeed there are, men to whom love makes no appeal. They will only submit through fear. In Al-Fatiha an appeal has been made to both of these human motives.

First come those attributes of God which inspire love, i.e., the Creator and Sustainer of the world), الرحم (the Merciful) and الرحمن (the Gracious). Then in their wake, as it were, comes the attribute of مالك يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement) which reminds man that if he does not mend his ways and does not respond to love, he should prepare to give an account of his deeds before God. Thus the motive of fear is brought into play side by side with that of love. But as God's mercy far excels His anger, even the fourth attribute i.e. that of مالك يوم الدين (Master of the Day of Judgement), which is the only fundamental attribute designed to evoke fear, has not been left without a reference to mercy. In fact, here too God's mercy transcends His anger, for we are told that we are not appearing before a Judge but before a Master Who has the power to forgive and Who will punish only where punishment is absolutely necessary.

At the end of the prayer similarly the motives of hope and fear have been brought into play. First God appeals through the motive of love by putting into the mouth of the supplicant the words, Guide us in the right path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, and then He follows it up with the words, Those who have not incurred Thy displeasure and those who have not gone astray. Thus both the motives of hope and fear have been brought into action. But here too the first appeal is to the motive of love.

In short, Al-Fatiha, the Opening Chapter of the Quran, is a wonderful storehouse of spiritual knowledge. It is a short chapter of seven brief verses, but it is a mine of knowledge and wisdom. Aptly called the “Mother of the Book,” it is the very essence of the Quran.

Beginning with the name of Allah, the Fountain-head of all blessings, the chapter goes on to narrate the four fundamental attributes of God i.e. (1) the Creator and Sustainer of the world; (2) the Gracious, Who provides for all the requirements of man even before he is born and without any effort on his part for them; (3) the Merciful, Who determines the best possible results of man's labour, and Who rewards him most liberally; and (4) Master of the Day of Judgement, before Whom all will have to stand to give an account of their actions, Who will punish the wicked but will not treat His creatures as a mere Judge but as a Master, tempering justice with mercy and Who is eager to forgive whenever forgiveness is calculated to bring about good results. This is the portrait of the God of Islam given in the
very beginning of the Quran—a God Whose power and dominion know no bounds and Whose mercy and beneficence have no limitations.

Then comes the declaration by man that, his God being the possessor of such lofty attributes, he is ready, nay eager, to worship Him and throw himself at His feet in complete submission; but God knows that man is weak and liable to err, so He mercifully exhorts His servant to seek His help at every step in his onward march and for every need that may confront him.

Finally comes a prayer—comprehensive and far-reaching—a prayer in which man supplicates his Maker to lead him to the right path in all matters, spiritual or temporal, whether relating to his present or future needs. He prays to God that he may not only stand all trials but, like the chosen ones of God, do so with credit and become the recipient of His most bounteous favours; that he may for ever go on treading the right path, pressing on nearer and yet nearer to his Lord and Master without stumbling on the way, as did many of those who have gone before. This is the theme of the Opening Chapter of the Quran which is constantly repeated, in one form or another, in the main body of the Book which we are now approaching.
CHAPTER 2
AL-BAQARA
(Revealed after Hijra)

General Remarks

This, the longest chapter of the Quran, is known as Al-Baqara. The name was used by the Holy Prophet himself and is probably revealed. The Sûra was given this name probably because the word Bagara (Cow) symbolizes an important incident (related in this Sûra) in the life of the Jewish nation and points to the fact that nations decay and fall, not only on account of žirak 'ula (manifest shirk) but also on account of žirak ' Dillon (hidden shirk), which being likely to be overlooked, is, in a sense, more dangerous than the former and spells the spiritual ruin of a people that do not properly guard against it. The Sûra has another name also i.e. az-Zahra and both this Sûra and the one that follows, viz., the Al-‘Imrân are jointly known as az-Zahra and az-Zahra (i.e. the two bright ones) (Muslim). The Holy Prophet is reported to have once said: “Everything has its peak, and the peak of the Quran is Al-Baqara; and in this Sûra there is a verse which is the most eminent among the verses of the Quran and this is Ayat al-Kursî” (Tirmidhi). Again, “Whosoever shall recite ten verses of this chapter—the first four verses, the Ayat al-Kursî, along with the two verses which come after it, and the last three verses—Satan will not enter his house.” This only means that these verses embody the essence of Islamic teaching, and that Satan cannot come near the man who faithfully acts on these teachings.

Date of Revelation

Al-Baqara was revealed at Medina. It began to be revealed in the first year of the Hijra and was completed only a short time before the death of the Holy Prophet.

Place of the Sûra in the Quran

It is sometimes asked why this chapter, which, as stated above, began to be revealed after the Hijra and was completed only a short time before the death of the Holy Prophet, was placed at the head of the Quran, second only to Al-Fâtiha. The question forms part of the general question relating to the arrangement of the Quran and will be found discussed in the General Introduction to this Commentary. Here it should suffice to say that Al-Baqara has been placed next to Al-Fâtiha, not because it is the longest, but because it deals with questions which at once confront a reader who turns from Al-Fâtiha to a study of the main Book.

The literary merit of this Sûra is unparalleled. It is on record that Labîd bin Rabî’a, one of the seven outstanding Arab poets of pre-Islamic days, who later embraced Islam, was once asked by ‘Umar, the Second Khalîfa, to recite from his recent poetry. Upon this, Labîd began to recite Al-Baqara, and when asked about it, he only said, “How can I think of composing anything after God has taught me Al-Baqara and Al-‘Imrân” (Ghâba).
Subject-Matter

The subject-matter of this long chapter is epitomized in its 130th verse. This verse contains a prayer of the Prophet Abraham in which he implores God to raise a Prophet from among the Meccans who should (1) recite to them the Signs of God; (2) give the world a perfect Book containing perfect laws; (3) explain the wisdom underlying them; and (4) lay down principles which should lead to a spiritual transformation in the people and make them a great and powerful nation. The four ends which Abraham prayed for are dealt with at length in this chapter, in the same order in which he prayed for them. The "Signs" are discussed in the beginning in vv. 1—168; then the "Book and Wisdom" in vv. 169—243 and lastly the "Means of National Progress" in vv. 244—287.

"The recitation of the Signs" refers to the arguments for the truth of the Holy Prophet's message. We are told, for instance, that he appeared in the fulness of time in fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. The Holy Prophet was no innovator. Messengers of God had appeared before, and Islam was only the culmination of the religious history of man. Accounts of the Prophets of Israel and the working of the law of nature have been cited in support of the Holy Prophet's claim. Unbelievers are warned that if they reject the Signs that have appeared in support of the Holy Prophet, it will lead to their own extinction.

"The teaching of the Book and Wisdom" refers to the laws of shari'at laid down in the chapter and to the wisdom or philosophy which underlies them. After a description of fundamentals like belief in God, the Last Day, the divine Revelations and the Prophets of God, we have ordinances about Prayer, Fasting and Pilgrimage, and then laws relating to marriage, divorce, the care of orphans and widows, the law of Inheritance, etc., along with the wisdom underlying these laws and ordinances.

Last of all, in elucidation of the subject of spiritual change spoken of in Abraham's prayer, the principles that lead to national awakening are briefly but effectively dealt with, and the lesson is brought home that no people could hope to live who are not always prepared to die for their ideals. The giving and taking of interest is denounced, as this practice not only kills the spirit of sacrifice and mutual co-operation, but also leads to war and helps to prolong it.

The Sûra ends with a moving prayer in which God's help is invoked by believers for the discharge of their great responsibilities.

Connection with Al-Fâthiha

Al-Fâthiha, though connected with all the other Sûras, is specially connected with Al-Baqara. The latter is the fulfilment of the prayer, Guide us in the right path, contained in the opening chapter of the Quran. Indeed Al-Baqara, with its discourses upon the Signs, the Book, the Wisdom and the Means of Purification, constitutes an appropriate and comprehensive reply to that great prayer.
1. In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

2. "Alif Lām Mim."

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8. Commentary:

See note under 1:1.

8A. Commentary:

Abbreviations like "Alif Lām Mim" are known as "Muqatta'āt" i.e. letters used and pronounced separately. They occur in the beginning of not less than 28 Sūras, and are made up of one or more, to a maximum of five, letters of the Arabic alphabet. The letters out of which these abbreviations are constituted are thirteen in number: Alif, Lām, Mim, Sād, Rā, Kāf, Hā, Yā, 'Ain, Tā, Sin, Hā, and Qāf. Of these Qāf occurs alone in the beginning of one Sūra only, the rest occur in combinations of two or more in the beginning of certain Sūras.

Of the meanings ascribed to "Muqatta'āt" two seem to be more authentic: (1) that each letter has a definite numerical value. Thus L has the value of 1, B of 2, G of 3, D of 4, S of 5, and so on (Aqrab). This system was known to the early Arabs and is mentioned in some well-known books of tradition (e.g. Jarir, i. 70 & 71). In numerical terms the letters "Alif Lām Mim" would signify the length of time which the full manifestation of the inner significance of the Sūra was meant to take.

The letters have the numerical value of 71 (I being 1, J 30 and M 40). Thus the placing of Alif Lām Mim in the beginning of the Sūra would mean that the subject-matter of Al-Baqara i.e. the special consolidation of early Islam, would take 71 years to unfold itself completely. It is well known that this consolidation went on until the year 71 A.H., the year of the coming to power of Yazid, son of Mu‘awiya, when the history of Islam took a different turn.

2. The second and much more important significance of the "Muqatta'āt" is that they are abbreviations for specific attributes of God and a Sūra before which the "Muqatta'āt" are placed is, in its subject-matter, connected with the divine attributes for which the "Muqatta'āt" stand. The Arabs used such abbreviations. Says an Arab poet:

"I will certainly return good for good; but if you are bent on mischief, so will I. I do not contemplate mischief except that you yourself should desire it." (Jarir). Here B and L stand for "الله أعلم" respectively. Similarly, the letters "Muqatta'āt" stand for "وإن أردت لا أحب" and "عندما قرر" respectively.

"I am Allah, the All-Knowing"—a meaning which has the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, cousin of the Holy Prophet (Jarir). Thus Alif Lām Mim placed in the beginning of Al-Baqara indicate that the central theme of this chapter is divine knowledge. God proclaims, as it were, that Muslims, weak in the beginning, will soon become strong and attain to knowledge, wisdom and power.

The system of using "Muqatta'āt" was in vogue among the Arabs, who used them in
3. This is a perfect Book; *there is no doubt in it;* it is a guidance for the righteous,

their poems and conversations. In the modern West also the use of abbreviations has become very widespread. Nearly every dictionary provides a list of them along with their meanings. (For fuller discussion of the *Muqatta‘āt* see Tafsir Kabir by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, Qadian.

9. Important Words:

ذاك (this) is derived from ذا meaning “this.” The word is primarily used in the sense of “that,” but it is also sometimes used in the sense of “this” (Aqrab). Here it is used to denote that the Book is, as it were, remote from the reader in eminence and loftiness of merit (لثلي).)

ال (perfect), like the definite article “the” in the English language, is used to denote a definite object known to the hearer or reader. In this sense the words ذاک الكتاب would mean, this is the Book, or this is that Book. The article ال is also used to denote a species in its totality or the properties of an individual in their totality. It is also used to denote the combination of all attributes in one individual, as one says ذاک النر-رجل (Zaidu nir-rajulu) i.e. Zaid is a perfect specimen of humanity. In this sense the words ذاک الكتاب would mean, this is a perfect Book, or this Book alone is perfect.

رب (doubt) is derived from راب. They say راب meaning, he caused him uneasiness of mind, or he put him in doubt, etc. راب means: (1) disquietude or uneasiness of mind; (2) doubt; (3) affliction or calamity and (4) evil opinion, false charge or calumny (Aqrab). The word has been used in the Quran at different places; but in the sense of doubt it is always used in a bad sense. The Quran addresses disbelievers, saying: *If you are in doubt as to what We have sent down to Our servant* (2: 24). Here راب means “doubt” about a truth. The Holy Prophet says: “Give up that which creates doubt in your mind in favour of that which does not create any doubt” (Musnad). Here again راب is used in a bad sense. So the word راب when used in the sense of “doubt”, means such doubt as is based on prejudice or suspicion, and not the doubt which helps in research and the promotion of knowledge.

هدى (guidance), as explained under 1: 6, signifies: (1) calling to, or showing, the right path; (2) leading up to the right path; and (3) making one follow the right path till one reaches one’s goal or destination.

متقين (the righteous) is derived from متقن which is derived from متر. They say متر نفْي وقْم, i.e. he guarded or shielded him against evil, etc. متقن means, he was on his guard against, or he guarded himself against. متقن means, he took it or him as a مافي (shield) for himself (Aqrab). In religious language the word means, to guard oneself against sins or harmful things; or to take God as a shield for protection against sins. It is wrong, therefore, to translate the word as “fear”, unless it is for want of a better word. متقن or متقن or متقن or متقن means, ever guarding oneself against sins.Ubayy bin Ka‘b, a distinguished Companion of the Holy Prophet, aptly explains متقن by likening متقن to a man who walks through thorny bushes, taking every possible care that his clothes are not caught in, and torn by, the branches (Kathir). An Arab poet, Ibn
al-Mu'tazz, has expressed the same idea in the following beautiful verses:

إِنِّي أُنْفِقُ مَثَلَ الْمِخْرَابِ إِنِّي أُنْفِقُ مَثَلَ الْمِخْرَابِ

i.e. “Avoid all sins both small and great—that is to say. And act like one who walks through a land full of thorny bushes, cautious of all things that one sees. Do not think lightly of small sins, for even big mountains are made up of tiny pebbles” (Kathîr). A Muttaqi (righteous person), therefore, is one who is ever on his guard against sins and takes God for his shield or shelter.

Commentary:

The clause ذاك الكِتَاب (this is a perfect Book) placed in the beginning of the verse, is capable of several interpretations, the following two being more in harmony with the Quranic text:

1. This is a complete and perfect Book, a Book which possesses all the excellences that a complete and perfect Book should possess.
2. This is that Book or this is the Book (which you prayed for, or which was promised to you).

Combined with the words لا يَدْخُلُهُ الشَّخْصُ وَلا يَدْخُلُهُ الشَّخْصُ would mean that this Book is perfect in all respects and contains nothing of ءِبَارٍ in it, i.e., nothing that may make one's mind uneasy, nothing doubtful, nothing that may cause affliction, etc.

A Book claiming to be revealed and demanding acceptance in the presence of other Books which also claim divine origin must at the very outset make such a claim to set at rest the natural question as to what was the necessity of a new Book when already so many Books existed in the world. So the Quran, in the very beginning, asserts that of all Books it alone is perfect, satisfying human needs in a perfect manner.

The above claim of the Quran is capable of detailed substantiation. Briefly, however, it is founded on the comprehensiveness of its teaching. The Quran deals clearly and adequately with all important questions such as God and His attributes, the origin, nature and purpose of man, his life here and hereafter. It instructs man in the regulation of his relations with God and his fellow-men in a manner unequalled by other religious Books. It also instructs parents and children, husbands and wives and other relatives in their duties. It teaches about wills and inheritance and about the rights of neighbours, employers and employees, rulers and ruled. Above all, it tells how man should conduct himself in relation to God and His Prophets. The other Books either do not teach about these matters at all or their treatment of them is very fragmentary.

The Quran also gives a very systematic account of morals—a subject on which the other Books say either little or nothing. In the Buddhist teaching we have a discussion of the basic instincts of man, but that discussion is very meagre compared with the account of the Quran. The Quran tells us about the roots of instincts, the ends which they serve and the use to which they may rightly be put. It also tells us how instincts become transformed into good or bad moral qualities, and how good qualities may be promoted and bad ones eradicated or discouraged. The Buddhist teaching inculcates the killing of desires but does not tell how bad desires arise and how they can be checked. The Quran teaches about the sources of sin and about the means of damming them.

Dealing with all these subjects in detail, the Quran is yet a book of very small dimensions, a fact which makes the reading, understanding and remembering of it a comparatively easy task. Thousands of persons know it completely by heart. The claim of the Quran that it is a perfect Book is, therefore, based on fact, and is appropriately made in the beginning of the text.
The second meaning of ذاك الكتاب (this is the Book) is that the prayer, Guide us in the right path, contained in Al-Fātiḥa meets with acceptance in this verse. Man prayed for guidance and guidance has come. “This is the Book” thus means, “this is the Book which contains the guidance prayed for in Al-Fātiḥa.” The expression may also mean, “This is the Book which was promised to you.”

The full meaning of ذاك الكتاب (this is a perfect Book) becomes clear when we read it together with the ensuing words لا ريب فيه من الدقة i.e. this is a perfect Book; there is nothing of doubt in it; it is a guidance for the righteous. To a new message the first natural reaction is that of fear lest it should lead one into error or evil; the second reaction is the hope that the message may prove beneficial. Both these reactions—the first negative and the second positive—have thus been satisfied in this verse. The Quran is a perfect Book, because on the one hand there is nothing in the Quran to cause uneasiness or to create doubt or despair, and on the other, there is everything in it which can be a guidance for the God-fearing. Elsewhere in the Quran we read, Aye! it is in the word of God (more literally, the remembrance of Allah) that hearts can find comfort (13: 29.)

The words, there is no doubt in it, do not mean that nobody will ever entertain any doubt about the Quran. The Quran itself refers to objections that disbelievers raised against it. The words, therefore, only mean that the teaching of the Quran is so rational that a right-thinking person who approaches it impartially cannot but accept it as a guide. Wherry and other Christian critics, thinking that the words, there is no doubt in it, have only one meaning, have jumped to the conclusion that the Holy Prophet must have been afraid of the doubtful nature of the Quran. These critics forget that this verse was revealed at Medina after a large part of the Quran had already been revealed. Disbelievers had already raised many objections against it, and it was in reply to these objections that the words were revealed. The imputation of a guilty conscience is therefore utterly false. Assertion of truth and denial of doubt is common to other scriptures as well. In the Proverbs we read, “All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them” (Pro. 8: 8; see also Isa. 45: 19; Tit. 3: 8; 1. Tim. 4: 9; Rev. 22: 6).

Moreover, the word ريب does not mean a doubt which helps the investigation of truth but a doubt born of unfounded suspicion. Accordingly, the words لا ريب فيه would mean that there is nothing in the Quran which is based on doubt, i.e., everything is based on truth and certainty. The Quran asserts no doctrine or principle without also giving cogent reasons for it.

The word ريب also means, “affliction or calamity.” The Quran contains nothing that may in any way cause misery or affliction to an individual or a people. It raised nations from the quagmire of moral degradation and social depravity to the highest pinnacles of worldly and spiritual glory. Little wonder they became convinced through experience that there was not a single commandment in it by acting upon which they could come to grief.

The word ريب is also used in the sense of “evil opinion or false charge or calumny.” In this sense the clause would mean that the Quran contains nothing that may, in any way, lay a false charge against anyone. Indeed, the Quran seeks to usurp the right of no one, and it slanders nobody—neither God nor any revealed Book nor any Prophet.

It may seem strange, but is nevertheless true, that religious Books, such as the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta, the Old and the New Testament, ascribe to God imperfections of one kind or
4. Who believe in the unseen and observe Prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them; another. The Quran, on the contrary, declares Him free of all defects, the Most Perfect in Power, Majesty and Holiness. This point will be discussed in detail when we come to the relevant verses.

The word of God has also come in for much criticism. There is the school which holds the view that revelation is man's own mental response to the problems on which he reflects. Thus, certainty of faith, which comes of the spoken word of God, is denied to man, and there remains no distinction between man's own thoughts and those revealed by God. The Quran exonerates the revealed Books of different religions from the charge that they are not the spoken word of God but only a reflection of peculiarly sensitive individuals' own thoughts (4:165). The Quran accepts the divine origin of the Books of other religions (3:4; 35:25).

The Prophets of God—Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna—also have been calumniated unknowingly by their own followers and knowingly by others. The Quran declares them all to be innocent. Belief in the sinlessness of Prophets is among the cardinal beliefs of Islam (6:125). The Quran also proclaims their innocence individually (20:116; 53:38; 20:23; 20:88; 20:91; 2:103; 21:92; 2:88; 19:14).

To sum up, the words would mean: (1) that the Quran contains nothing that may bring misery or affliction to an individual or a nation; and (4) that it contains no accusation against, or low opinion about, any object of faith.

The words (guidance for the righteous) bring before us the positive side of the Quran. The reader is told that the Quran contains not only nothing harmful but also positive good of the highest order. As explained above, guidance has three stages: (1) showing the right path; (2) leading one up to it; and (3) making one follow it till one reaches the goal. The words, guidance for the righteous, therefore, mean that guidance contained in the Quran is limitless, helping man to higher and still higher stages of perfection and making him more and more deserving of the favours of God. The ways and means by which a devotee attains to nearness to his Creator are infinite and unfold themselves one after another without end (29:70). The process of the spiritual advance of man does not stop with death but continues in the life to come (66:9).

The objection has been raised that, if the Quran guides only the righteous, what about those who have not attained righteousness? The objection is groundless. The Quran abounds in verses which prove that it is a guidance not only for the righteous but for all seekers, to whatever stage they may have attained (2:22; 2:186; 3:139; 17:42; 18:55; 30:59).

10. Important Words:

(who believe) is derived from i.e. he felt safe, or he placed his trust in.
means, he rendered him safe; he trusted him.ـ means, he believed him to be true, or he believed in him, or he trusted in him.ـ means, he became submissive and obedient to him (Aqrab). Thus the word ـ (belief) is the opposite of ـ (disbelief). It is particularly used with reference to God and other fundamental objects of faith.

ـ (the unseen) is derived from ـ. i.e. he or it became screened or invisible; he went far away and became separated. Thus ـ means, anything unseen, anything invisible or hidden, anything absent or far away (Aqrab & Lane). All objects of faith—God, the Angels, the Books, the Prophets and the Last Day—are unseen. A revealed Book is visible as a book, but the fact that it is a revealed Book is unseen. Similarly, we see the Prophet as a human being, but the fact that he has a mission from God remains unseen. The word ـ however, is not confined to objects of faith only.

ـ (observe) is derived from ـ. They say ـ presumably meaning, he set the thing up, or he set the thing erect or upright.ـ again is derived from ـ meaning, he stood erect, or he stood up, or he stood still.ـ means, he performed his Prayers regularly (Aqrab).ـ also means, he performed Prayers in accordance with all the prescribed conditions (Mufradât).

ـ (Prayer) is derived from ـ i.e. he prayed. The word gives different meanings with reference to different objects. Used about God, it means, He showed mercy to, or bestowed praise on; used about the angels, it means, they asked forgiveness for men, etc.; and used about man it means, he prayed. In Islam the word ـ has generally come to mean the prescribed form of Prayer (Aqrab).

ـ (We have provided for them) is from ـ i.e. he provided or he gave.ـ means, a thing whereby one profits, or from which one derives an advantage; any article of food; any means of sustenance; anything bestowed by God on man, material or otherwise (Aqrab & Mufradât).

(they spend) is derived from ـ. They say ـ i.e. the thing became spent up or reduced.ـ means, he spent freely and constantly so as to reduce his wealth (Aqrab & Mufradât).

**Commentary**:

In this verse three important qualities of a ـ (muttaqi) have been mentioned: (1) a believer in the unseen; (2) steadfast in Prayer; and (3) spending out of what God has provided for him. Of these the first relates to faith or belief which must always come first; the other two relate to actions. Belief in the unseen does not mean blind belief or belief in things which cannot be grasped or understood. Nothing can be farther from the spirit of the Quran than to imagine that it demands from Muslims belief which reason and understanding do not support. The Quran strongly denounces such beliefs. True faith, according to it, is that which is supported by reason and argument (53:23; 46:5; 30:36; 6:149, 150; 25:74).

Moreover, the word ـ used in the Quran does not mean, as assumed by some hostile critics, imaginary and unreal things, but real and verified things, though unseen (49:19; 32:7). It is, therefore, wrong to suppose, as Wherry has done in his Commentary, that Islam forces upon its followers some mysteries of faith and invites them to believe in them blindly. It is Christianity which forces on its followers mysteries like Trinity in Unity and the Sonship of Jesus, completely beyond human understanding and human reason.

The word ـ as stated above, means things which, though beyond the comprehension of human senses, can nevertheless be proved by reason or experience. The supersensible need not necessarily be irrational. Nothing of "the unseen" which a Muslim is called upon to believe is outside the scope of reason. There
are many things in the world which, though unseen, are yet proved to exist by invincible arguments, and nobody can deny their existence. God cannot be perceived by the physical senses nor, for that matter, can angels or life after death. But can the existence of God and the angels be denied because of this? Can life after death be denied because it remains unseen?

The words, *who believe in the unseen*, may also mean that the Faithful discharge their duties and perform their acts of worship without a bargaining spirit. They are above such bargaining. They suffer hardships, undergo tribulations and make sacrifices not for the sake of any visible or immediate reward, but out of a selfless desire to serve the large and, as it were, invisible cause of community or country or humanity at large. This is all believing in the unseen.

Another meaning of the word غيب as given above, is the state of being hidden from the public eye. In this sense, the expression would mean that the faith of a true believer is ever firm and steadfast, whether he is in the company of other believers or is alone. The faith that needs constant watching and exhortation is not worth much. True and real faith has roots deep in the heart of the Faithful and lives by itself. It does not fail or falter when a Muslim is deprived of the company of other Muslims or even when surrounded by disbelievers. Such faith is described in 21:50 and 57:26.

The second quality of a متقى relates to actions. According to the different meanings of explained above, the expression, *observe Prayer*, would mean: 1. That a Muslim should observe Prayers throughout his life, keeping constant vigil over them. In fact, irregular Prayers are no prayers (70:35). 2. That he should say Prayers regularly at their appointed hours and in accordance with the rules prescribed for them (4:104). 3. That he should say his Prayers in a true spirit and not allow them to be spoilt by wandering thoughts which may disturb and distract his attention (23:3). 4. That he should say his Prayers in congregation (2:44). 5. That he should also exhort others to say their Prayers regularly and thus help to spread the habit (20:133).

Prayer is not a form of bargaining with God, in which a Muslim looks for something in return. Islam strongly repudiates this idea and describes Prayers as a purifying agent for man himself. Through worship man attains to certainty of knowledge which dispels doubt and helps to establish a real and living contact between him and his Creator.

There is a tendency to condemn institutional worship as useless ceremonial. Worship, it is said, is an attitude of the mind and should be confined strictly to it. There is no doubt that attitudes belong to the mind and if the mind is corrupt, humility of the body can be of no avail. A person whose heart is unimpressed by the Majesty and Glory of God and who yet sings His praise is a hypocrite; but so also is the person who claims to accept a certain truth, yet his body and behaviour show no signs of it. When a person is in love, his face betrays a peculiar emotion when the beloved appears before him. Parents fondle and kiss their children and friends express their affection by visible movements. These demonstrations of affection are spontaneous, not assumed. It is, therefore, impossible that a man should love God and entertain a true longing for Him, but should not seek to express this love or longing by some outward acts; and this is the secret of all worship. Worship is the outer expression of the inner relationship of man to God. Moreover, God's favours surround the body as well as the soul. So perfect worship is only that in which body and soul both play their part. Without the two the true spirit of worship cannot be preserved, for though adoration by the heart is the substance and
adoration by the body only the shell, yet the substance cannot be preserved without the shell. If the shell is destroyed, the substance is bound to meet with a similar fate.

Besides other advantages, Prayers in congregation, such as Muslim Prayers always are, foster the spirit of brotherhood. Five times a day believers, both rich and poor, have to stand unceremoniously together, shoulder to shoulder, and offer their humble supplications to God. The busiest and the biggest of them have to find the time and join in this united act of worship. Such a fellowship cannot but react wholesomely on the worshippers' hearts.

Incidentally, it may also be remarked that the outward form of the Islamic Prayer includes all the poses of the body expressive of humility, i.e., standing with folded arms, bowing, prostrating, and sitting with folded knees, each pose being allotted a corresponding prayer. Besides the prescribed Prayers, one is free to pray in one's own words and one's own way.

The expression, they spend out of what We have provided for them, includes not only spending in the cause of Allah but also spending for the welfare of the individual and the community. The words used here are used in their widest possible sense. Wealth, power, influence, physical and intellectual capacities—in short, all that one may receive from God—must be devoted, partly at least, to the well-being of others.

The application of this injunction is not confined to the poor only. All those who have claims over the belongings of a Muslim are entitled to a share in them. The injunction applies to a mother who gives suck to her child, to a father who spends upon the education and upbringing of his children, to a husband who provides for the needs of his wife, and to the children who serve their parents. The commandment is aptly explained in the famous hadith: "Your self has a claim upon you, and your Lord has a claim upon you, and your guest has a claim upon you, and your family has a claim upon you. So you should give to every one his due" (Tirmidhi).

The verse, in short, lays down three directions and describes three stages for the spiritual well-being of man:

1. A Muslim should believe in the truths which are hidden from his eyes and beyond his physical senses, for it is such a belief that can show him to be possessed of the right sort of Qur'anic or righteousness. An intelligent person does not remain satisfied with natural phenomena as he sees them, but looks deeper into their source and origin; and it is this delving into the depths of the unknown that leads to great knowledge and great achievement. All this comes under "belief in the unseen" which has special reference to God, Who is the source of all creation.

2. When the believer reflects on the creation of the universe and the marvellous order and design which exists in it and when, as a result of this reflection, he becomes convinced of the existence of the Creator, an irresistible longing to have a real and true union with Him takes hold of him. This finds consummation in the observance of Prayer.

3. Lastly, when the believer succeeds in establishing a living contact with his Creator, he feels an inward urge to serve his fellow-beings who, being the creatures of his own Lord and Master, are members of the large family to which he himself belongs. So, in order to meet their needs and requirements, he spends willingly and freely out of the wealth, knowledge or anything else which God has given him.
5. And who believe in that which has been revealed to thee, and that which was revealed before thee, and they have firm faith in what is yet to come.\textsuperscript{11}

11. Important Words:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{तल} (has been revealed) is derived from तल which means, he descended; or he came down. The literal meaning of the transitive form तल would, therefore, be, he sent down, or he caused to descend. Figuratively, however, the word has come to be used about anything bestowed by God on man. God being high, everything that comes from Him may be said to descend from above. When used with reference to God’s word, तल would mean, He revealed. Thus we say, तल आलोच्या in the sense of तल मारे i.e. God revealed His word (Aqrab).
\item \textit{क्योंन} (what is yet to come) is derived from क्यों. They say, क्यों i.e. he put it back; he put it behind; he postponed it. The word क्यों which is the feminine of क्यों i.e. the last one or the latter one, is used as an epithet or an adjective opposed to क्यों i.e. the first one.
\item \textit{आलोच्या} (what is yet to come) is derived from आलोच्या. They say, आलोच्या i.e. the other or another (Aqrab). The object which the adjective आलोच्या in the verse qualifies is understood, most Commentators taking it to be the last abode, the full expression thus being आलोच्या (the last abode). The context, however, shows that here the word understood is not आलोच्या but आलोच्या (the message or revelation which is to come). The word आलोच्या has, therefore, been rightly translated here as “that (i.e. the revelation) which is yet to come.”
\end{itemize}

Commentary:

This verse describes three more qualities of a \textit{मुक्ति}, i.e. a righteous person. In the previous verse mention was made of faith in general. But as a true believer seeks to know the details of \textit{क्यों} (righteousness) in order to perfect his faith, he is told here that for its consummation he must believe in the Holy Prophet and through him in the previous Prophets, and must at the same time believe in “what is yet to come.” Thus belief in the Holy Prophet is the central point so far as belief in the Prophets of God is concerned, and no person can become \textit{मुक्ति} (a truly righteous person) unless he believes in the Holy Prophet.

From the words, \textit{that which has been revealed to thee}, quite an erroneous inference is sometimes drawn to the effect that it is belief in the Quran and not belief in the Holy Prophet that is enjoined. This view the Quran forcefully contradicts. Besides making it clear in several places that belief in the Prophet is as essential as belief in the Book (e.g. 2:286; 4:66; 4:137), the Quran makes the point clear in another way also. At one place we have, \textit{He it is Who has sent down to you the Book clearly explained} (6:115), and at another, \textit{and in like manner have We sent down the Book to thee} (O Prophet) (29:48). The fact that God
sometimes speaks of the Quran as having been sent to the people and sometimes to the Prophet is not without point. In fact, the difference in construction is full of meaning; for where the Quran is spoken of as having been sent to the people, the intention is to point out that the Quranic teaching is suitable and appropriate for them and is meant for their good; and where the Quran is spoken of as having been sent to the Prophet, the intention is to emphasize that he is not merely the bearer of a message but is the person best fitted to explain the message he has brought and to become an exemplar of the teaching contained in the message. Elsewhere God says, Allah knows best where to place His message (6: 125), which is a clear proof of the fact that a Prophet is not merely the bearer of a message, but is selected by God for a higher purpose, i.e., to become a model for his followers; otherwise, anybody can be sent as a bearer of a message and the question of special selection does not arise.

The words, and that which was revealed before thee, illustrate a special characteristic of Islam, i.e., it not only recognizes the truth of all previous Prophets but makes it obligatory upon its followers to believe in the divine origin of the teachings they brought with them (see also 13: 8; 35: 25). But it must be remembered that Islam is a complete and final teaching which has superseded all previous teachings. Belief in them, therefore, is only in the sense of reverence for them and not in the sense that a Muslim should act upon them. That is why in the verse under comment God mentions the earlier scriptures after the Quran and not before it, as the chronological order required, so that the attention of the believers may be drawn to the fact that belief in the previous books is based on the Quran and is not independent of it.

According to the Quran (35: 25), Prophets have appeared among all peoples and all nations and we are commanded to believe in all previous revelations, and thus an effective step has been taken to promote peace and harmony among the followers of different religions. The verse applies to no particular Book. Any earlier Book which claims divine origin and has been accepted for a long time and by a large section of mankind to be the word of God falls within the meaning of this verse.

The word َآية (what is yet to come) means either "the message or revelation which is to follow" or "the Last Abode", i.e., the next life. Of these two meanings the first is more applicable here; for it fits in with the other two parts of the verse which speak of God's revelations. In this connection it is also noteworthy that while the word ْتَأْمَّل has been used in reference to the past and present revelations, the word ِلَمْ يَمْثَلْ has been used in reference to the future one. This is because ْتَأْمَّل relates to something definite and determined, and as the future revelation was not yet definite and determined at the time when the verse was revealed, so the word ِلَمْ يَمْثَلْ was used for it.

The subject of the latter part of this verse, referred to in the words, what is yet to come, finds further exposition in 62: 3, 4 where the Quran speaks of two advents of the Holy Prophet. His first advent took place among the Arabs in the 7th century of the Christian era when the Quran was revealed to him; and his second advent was to take place in the latter days of the world in the person of one of his followers who was to come in his spirit and power. This prophecy found its fulfilment in the person of Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, in whose advent have been fulfilled also the prophecies of other Prophets regarding the appearance of a World-Messenger in the Latter Days.
6. It is they who follow the guidance of their Lord and it is they who shall prosper.\textsuperscript{12}

7. Those who have disbelieved—\textsuperscript{it} being equal to them whether thou warn them or warn them not—they will not believe.\textsuperscript{13}

12. Important Words:

\textit{امَّامَهُمُّ} (those who shall prosper) is derived from \textit{أَمَامَهُ} i.e. he was successful and attained what he desired or sought. When we say \textit{أَمَامَهُ} we mean, Zaid reaped the fruits of his labour and his endeavours proved successful (\textit{Aqrab}). Thus \textit{أَمَامَهُ} is one who is successful and attains what he desires and reaps the fruits of his labour. The word is also used about one who acquires any substantial good, be it material or spiritual, the word \textit{أَمَامَهُ} being used for such success or gain as others may envy (\textit{Taj}).

The word \textit{عَلَىُ} in the clause \textit{عَلَىُ} is significant. If the idea had been of simple guidance, the Quran could easily have used the words \textit{عَلَىُ} but it leaves the common construction and uses the words \textit{عَلَىُ} which literally mean, they are on guidance or, in other words, they are mounted on guidance. Guidance becomes, as it were, a riding animal for them which they conveniently use in their march towards God. The construction is not peculiar to the Quran. The Arabs say of a person steeped in ignorance \textit{كَفَرْنَ} i.e. such a one has made error and ignorance a riding beast for himself (\textit{Kashshaf}).

Commentary:

The verse explains that when a man has fulfilled all the conditions of \textit{قَرْيُ} (righteousness) in respect of both belief and actions, then he may be sure not only of being rightly guided but also of being a master of guidance whose success in this life as well as in the life to come is assured. The words \textit{عَلَىُ} (lit. on guidance) also hint that as the believer prayed for guidance in the opening chapter of the Quran, so guidance of the highest order has been provided for him—a guidance on which he can ride comfortably and speed on happily towards his Lord and Master.

13. Important Words:

\textit{كُفْرُ} (they disbelieved) is derived from \textit{kufir} which is the opposite of \textit{إِنَّمَا} and means, he disbelieved. The literal meaning of \textit{kufir} is \textit{كَفَرْنَ} i.e. to cover up a thing. Thence it has also come to mean "ungratefulness" and "disbelief" (\textit{Aqrab}). When the word is used singly, without any qualifying word, it means the rejection of any fundamental object of faith, i.e., the unity of God or the prophethood of the Holy Prophet, or the Holy Book, etc. (\textit{Mufradat}).

\textit{إِنْذَرْهُمْ} (whether thou warn them). \textit{إِنْذَرْهُمْ} is derived from \textit{إِنْذِرْ} i.e. he knew the danger underlying the thing and was on his guard against it. \textit{إِنْذِرْ} is the transitive form of \textit{إِنِّي} so \textit{إِنْذَرْ} means, he warned him of a coming danger. \textit{إِنْذَرْ} means, a warner (\textit{Aqrab}). The \textit{إِنْذَرْهُمْ} used in the beginning of the word \textit{إِنْذَرْهُمْ} does not give
8. Allah has set a seal on their hearts and their ears, and over their eyes is a covering; and for them is a great punishment.\(^{14}\)

\(^{14}\): 156; 6: 26, 47; 7: 102, 180; 10: 75; 16: 109; 45: 24; 83: 15.

the meaning of interrogation. It is simply used to make the word infinitive, and the clause beginning with it would be taken to mean, whether thou warn them or warn them not. It is a parenthetical clause which goes to qualify the words, those who have disbelieved (Mufradât).

**Commentary:**

After speaking of the class of true believers and describing the high stage of faith, God now speaks of the extreme type of disbelievers who have become so indifferent to truth that it matters not whether they receive a warning or not. Of such disbelievers it has been declared that as long as their present condition continues, they will not believe. The verse does not at all mean that no disbeliever will henceforward believe. The idea is not only repugnant to the teaching of the Quran but is also opposed to all established facts of history; for people continued to embrace Islam even after this verse was revealed. Again, it was after this verse that the Sûra al-Hijr (Ch. 110) was revealed to the Holy Prophet, in which God spoke to him saying that people would soon begin to join Islam in very large numbers (110: 3), and so it actually came to pass. In short, the words, they will not believe, refer only to such disbelievers as turn a deaf ear to the warnings of the Prophet, and to them also the words apply only so long as they do not change their present condition. A person who turns a deaf ear to a warning today but begins to heed it tomorrow does not, indeed cannot, come under the so-called ban.

14. **Important Words:**

- مَعْلُومَةٌ (set a seal) means, he set a seal on; or he stamped a thing so that there should remain no likelihood of its being regarded as forged.
- مَعْلُومُ (lit. God has set a seal on his heart) means, God made his heart such that it could neither understand anything nor could anything come out of it, i.e., it could not make itself understood by others (Baqã).
- قَلْبٌ (hearts) is the plural of قَلْبٌ which is derived from قَلْبٌ (qalaba). They say قَلْبٌ i.e. he turned the thing; or he turned it upside down or inside out, etc. قَلْبٌ means, the heart, or the central point of a thing. The word قَلْبٌ is also used in the sense of عَقْلٍ i.e. reason, as well as for such qualities as knowledge, courage and spirit (Aqrab). It also signifies the faculty of thinking and reasoning i.e. the mind (Lisan).
- السَّم (the ears) is derived from السَّم i.e. he heard. السَّم gives three different meanings: (1) the ear or ears; (2) the sense of hearing; (3) the sound which one hears (Aqrab).
- البَصَرٌ (eyes) is the plural of البَصَرٌ (eye). They say البَصَرٌ (basura) or بَصَرٌ (basira) i.e. he saw, or he perceived, or he knew. البَصَرٌ means: (1) the eye; (2) the sense of sight; and (3) knowledge (Aqrab).
- عَذَابٌ (punishment) is derived from عَذَابٌ ('adhhaba). They say عَذَابٌ i.e. the man left off eating, owing to intense thirst. عَذَابٌ (punishment) means, he kept back from it. عَذَابٌ (punishment) means, he prevented him or deprived him. عَذَابٌ عَذَابٌ i.e. the drink and food became good and tasteful. عَذَابٌ i.e. the water became very dirty (‘adhhabahû)
2. 9. And of the people there are some who say, ‘We believe in Allah and the Last Day,’ while they are not believers at all.\(^\text{15}\)

Commentary:
The verse refers to the disbelievers mentioned in the last verse and explains how they have reached their present woeful condition. It is common observation that organs which remain unused for a long time become dead and useless. The eyes lose their sight and the ears their hearing if they remain out of use, and the limbs become stunted for the same reason. The disbelievers mentioned here refused to employ their hearts and ears for the comprehension of the truth, and as a result their capacities for hearing and understanding were lost. It is thus only the natural consequence of wilful indifference which is described in the clause, *Allah has set a seal on their hearts and their ears, and over their eyes is a covering.* As all laws proceed from God, the final controller of the universe, and every cause is followed by its natural effect under His will, so the sealing of the hearts and the ears of disbelievers is ascribed to Him. It is, therefore, a mistake to take the verse to mean that as God had Himself sealed up their hearts, so the disbelievers could not believe. The Quran contradicts this view and states clearly that it is the disbelievers themselves who seal their fate and God’s seal follows only as a result of their action (see 4: 156; 40: 36; 47: 25; 83: 15). Says the Holy Prophet: “When a man commits a sin, a black spot is thereby formed on his heart. Then if he repents and gives up the sin and asks God’s forgiveness, the black spot is washed off, leaving the heart clean. But if he repents not and commits another sin, another black spot is formed on his heart and so on, until his whole heart is covered with a black covering, and that is the covering of rust to which the Quran refers in *Sura Tāfīf*” (Jarir).

It may also be noted that in the present verse the word “ears” has been put before the word “eyes.” This is in conformity with the law of nature that the ears of a new-born baby begin to function earlier than the eyes.

15. Important Words:
*الْمُؤْمِنُونَ* (we believe) is derived from لَمْ يُؤْمِنُ for which see 2: 4. The word *الْمُؤْمِنُونَ* (belief or faith) does not consist in a lip-profession of truth, or a vague realization of it. It combines three necessary elements, viz., (1) conviction of mind; (2) profession by tongue; and (3) demonstration through actions (Mufradāt). The Quran itself explains لَمْ يُؤْمِنُ in this light (49: 15; 27: 15).

Commentary:
After describing the condition of believers (vv. 4-6) and that of disbelievers (vv. 7-8)
They would deceive Allah and those who believe, but they deceive none but themselves; only they perceive not.¹⁶

The Quran proceeds to describe the condition of a third group, the hypocrites. These were mixed up with the believers and posed as such. They were divided into two classes: (1) disbelievers at heart but united with the believers for the sake of some material or communal advantages; (2) believers at heart but lacking the strength of conviction necessary for thorough conversion and complete obedience. The reference here is to the first class of hypocrites, those who mixed with the believers but did not at heart believe in the truth of Islam.

It may be noted that only God and the Last Day are mentioned here, other Islamic beliefs being left out. This has led some to think that Islam requires belief only in God and the Last Day. The truth, however, is that ‘God’ and the ‘Last Day’ are respectively the first and the last items in the Islamic formula of faith and a profession of them *ipso facto* implies profession of the other items. Elsewhere the Quran clearly states how belief in the Last Day implies belief in angels as well as in the divine Books (6:93).

The omission may also be explained in another way. The hypocrites wanted to deceive the believers, so possibly they expressed themselves purposely in these words, omitting all reference to the Prophet and the Quran. By mentioning God and the Last Day they would induce believers to think that they subscribed fully to the Islamic faith, but in their hearts they made a reservation as regards belief in the Quran and the Prophet. This interpretation finds support in the following verse which says that the hypocrites wished to deceive the believers. The expression, *they are not believers at all,* has been used to intensify the repudiation of the claim of the hypocrites to be believers. If a mere negation of their claim had been intended, it would have been expressed by some such expression as ‘they are hypocrites’.

Strong denunciation of hypocrites is characteristic of the Quran (3:168; 5:42 & 5:62). According to the Quran, hypocrites are only disbelievers. This view of the Quran furnishes a strong refutation of the criticism that Islam permits the use of force in religious matters. Conversion by force can never be sincere, while the Quran insists upon sincerity in believers. A religion which makes sincerity a necessary quality of belief cannot tolerate, much less encourage, the use of force in religion.

¹⁶. **Important Words:**

*خادع* (would deceive) is derived from *خادم* and *خادم* (deceive) is derived from *خادم*. They say *خادم* *خادم* i.e. he deceived him; he made a show of what he was not; he tried to harm him in a way unknown to the latter. *خادع* is sometimes loosely used to give the same meaning as *خادع* but really it is different. *خادع* is used when the deceiver is not successful in his attempt at deception and *خادع* is used when the party intended to be deceived actually falls a victim to the deception (Baqq & Aqrab). This distinction is corroborated by Lane who says, “One says of a man *خادع* when he has not attained his desire, and *خادع* when he has attained his desire.”

The word *خادع* also means: (1) he forsook or he abandoned; (2) it (the market) was variable. They say *سوق خادع* i.e. a market varying in its state, at one time brisk, at
another dull in respect of traffic (Lane). Following this signification یادعورن اللہ would mean: (1) they forsake and abandon God; and (2) they are variable with respect to Allah, believing at one time and disbelieving at another.

(they perceive) is derived from یشرون. They say یشرون meaning, he perceived it; he came to know of it; he understood it; he felt it (Aqrab). یشرن is the faculty of insight not depending upon the senses for its exercise, something that rises from within. In the verse the word یشرون has been used to signify that though the disease of the hypocrites lies in their hearts, yet their insight gives them no warning.

Commentary:

The verse makes it clear that effective faith is based upon truth and sincerity. Faith not so based amounts to deception and God cannot be deceived.

The verse has given rise to some objections: 1. How can it be possible for any man to deceive God? 2. The word یادعورن ناذاع which denotes two parties mutually engaged in the same operation. The words یادعورن اللہ would, therefore, mean that hypocrites and God are both engaged in deceiving each other.

In answer to the first objection it may be said that the word used here is یدعور and not یذوعر, the former, as explained above, signifying only an attempt at deception and not actual deception. The objection is, therefore, without foundation.

The second objection also does not hold good. The measure یذوعرة does not always carry the sense of mutual participation. Sometimes it signifies only one of the parties so engaged. For example, in the sentence یذوعرة meaning, "I punished the thief" the word یذوعرة belongs to the measure of یذوعرة, yet here it does not denote mutual participation in the act. It only means, I punished the thief.

A note on the hypocrites will not be out of place here. Before the coming of Islam into Medina there were in that city two pagan Arab tribes known as Aus and Khazraj, and three Jewish tribes named Banú Quraiṣa, Banú Ṭayy and Banū Qainuqā‘. The two pagan tribes were superior to the Jews in numbers but inferior to them in wealth and education. The Jews thus exercised great influence over the pagans of Medina. In order further to increase their influence, they encouraged internecine feuds among their idolatrous neighbours. A few years before the rise of Islam the pagan tribes of Medina, realizing how they had been duped, decided to organize themselves under a duly elected king. Their choice fell upon one ‘Abdullah bin Ubayy, chief of the tribe of Khazraj, and they were preparing for his coronation when news came to them of the rise of Islam in Mecca. Events suddenly began to take a different turn. The idolatrous tribes of Aus and Khazraj became attracted towards Islam and began to embrace the new faith in large numbers, believing that the solution of their difficulties lay not in electing a king but in accepting Islam. Soon after the Holy Prophet emigrated to Medina.

The tide of enthusiasm became irresistible; and ‘Abdullah bin Ubayy and his party felt it wise to follow their tribesmen into the new faith. They did not realize at the time that the establishment of Islam would mean the frustration of their own hopes. When, however, the power of Islam became established, they realized that they had put an end to their hopes. This realization destroyed any attachment they had for Islam. Instead, they developed actual hostility towards it. But as a preponderating majority of their tribesmen had already become zealous followers of Islam, they could not openly leave its fold. Thus came into being the hypocrites—a party
11. *In their hearts was a disease and Allah has increased their disease to them; and for them is a grievous punishment because they lied.*

 professing Islam outwardly but at heart hostile to it. Not strong enough to oppose Islam openly, they naturally thought of entering into a secret alliance with the Jews in order to injure the cause of Islam. In the beginning they had nothing to do with the Meccans for whom they bore a long-standing tribal antipathy. After the battle of Uhud, however, at the instigation of the Jews and prompted by their own jealousy, they forgot their enmity and began secretly to conspire with the Quraish of Mecca, keeping up a show of attachment for Islam. Their leader Abdullah continued to accompany the Holy Prophet in many of his expeditions.

In the Quran this party of hypocrites is mentioned in several places. Their last act of hostility towards Islam was their attempt, after the fall of Mecca, to conspire with the Byzantine Christian power. The occasion was the Tabuk expedition led by the Holy Prophet in the ninth year of Hijra. The attempt met with discomfiture. It was probably the shock of its failure that caused, only two months later, the death of Abdullah bin Ubayy. The party then broke up. Some of its members entered Islam sincerely; others ended their days in obscurity.

17. Important Words:

- مرض (disease) is derived from مرض, i.e. he fell ill; he lost his health. Thus مرض means, anything whereby a man loses his health (physical, moral or spiritual); disease or hypocrisy; doubt or darkness or loss; omission of any kind (Aqrab); any disease or any physical or moral weakness or defect of faith, in fact, anything that hinders man's physical, moral or spiritual progress (Mufradat).

- كاذبون (they lie) is derived from كاذب which means, he lied; he said what was untrue while he knew the truth; he gave a wrong account of something, whether intentionally or unintentionally; it (the heart or the eye) felt or perceived wrongly (Aqrab); he said what was true but said it insincerely, i.e., he himself believed the thing to be untrue (the Quran 63:2). كاذب (kadhdhaba) is the causative or transitive form from كاذب. They say i.e. he accused him of lying; he attributed falsehood to him in his claim or statement; he pronounced him a liar. كاذب means, he rejected and disbelieved it. كاذب means a liar, and كاذب (kadhib) and كاذب (kidhdhiib) mean, falsehood, lie, untruth; also the act of uttering a lie. كاذب also means the act of accusing one of lying (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

God speaks of two diseases of the heart: (1) كفر i.e. disbelief; and (2) غناط i.e. hypocrisy. The former has already been referred to in verses 7 and 8. The present verse refers to the disease of hypocrisy and points out that those suffering from it do not act as normal, healthy persons do.

The Holy Prophet has mentioned the following signs of hypocrisy. Says he: "When a hypocrite speaks, he lies; and when he makes a promise, he does not fulfil it; and when he is entrusted with anything, he acts dishonestly; and when he makes a contract, he breaks it; and when he engages in a dispute, he uses foul words" (Bukhari).
12. And when it is said to them: "Create not disorder in the earth," they say: 'We are only promoters of peace.'

In the verse under comment the increase of hypocrisy is attributed to God, not because God increases it but because the increase results from disregard of His commands; also because it is God who finally dispenses the good and evil consequences of human actions. The Quran has only been revealed for healing diseases. Says Allah: O mankind! there has come to you an exhortation from your Lord and a cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts (10: 58).

The increasing of disease also means that the expanding power of Islam was naturally increasing the disease of the hypocrites who were all the more forced to remain, against their will, in outward friendliness with the Muslims.

In the case of disbelievers the punishment mentioned is عذاب عظيم (great punishment), whereas in the case of hypocrites it is عذاب المم (grievous punishment). This is because disbelievers express their disbelief and enmity openly, while hypocrites keep their feelings of hatred and malice concealed in their hearts, thinking that they are thereby deriving twofold pleasure—one of enmity towards Islam and the other of befouling the Muslims. So the retribution in store for the hypocrites is characterized by special pain and anguish—a fit recompense for their false pleasure.

18. Important Words:

اًسْأَدْعَوا (create disorder) is derived from اَسْأَدَنِ (fasüda) which is derived from نَفَد (fasāda) i.e. he or it became corrupt or evil or vitiated or spoiled or tainted or in an altered state or in a disordered or disturbed condition, etc. The word is the opposite of ﺿَمَحَ: The transitive form نَفَد means, he or it made (it or him) bad or corrupt or vitiated or spoiled, or put (it or him) in a disordered or disturbed condition, or simply he created disorder, etc. The word is the opposite of ﺿَمَح for which see below (Lane).

اًصْلَحَ (the earth) means: (1) the earth or the globe; (2) part of the earth i.e. a land or country; (3) ground or surface of the earth; (4) floor; (5) anything that is spread on the floor; (6) anything that is low; (7) shivering or tremor (Lane).

اًصْلَحَ (promoters of peace) is derived from اَصْلَحَ which is derived from ﺿَمَحَ i.e. he or it became good or proper or righteous or in a state of order, etc. They say ﺿَمَحَ i.e. this thing is suitable or fit or meet for you. اَصْلَحَ also means, he corrected or reformed or improved; or he promoted or brought about peace, harmony or reconciliation. It also means, he performed a good and right act (Lane).

Commentary:

The hypocrites tried to create disturbance in various ways: (1) they tried to sow discord among the Muslims themselves by instigating the i.e. Medinite Helpers against the i.e. Meccan Refugees (63: 8, 9); (2) sometimes they imputed motives to the Holy Prophet in the distribution of alms (9: 58), or his system of gathering information (9: 61); (3) sometimes they tried to undermine the spirit of the Muslims (9: 50), or to demoralize them by spreading rumours (4: 84); (4) sometimes
13. Beware! it is surely they who create disorder, but they do not perceive.19

14. And when it is said to them, 'Believe as other people have believed', they say: 'Shall we believe as the foolish people have believed?' Beware! it is surely they that are foolish but they do not know.20

they encouraged non-Muslims to fight against Muslims (59:12).

In the present verse reference is made to the double-dealing of the hypocrites. Confronted with this the hypocrites invariably pleaded that they were prompted by nothing but sincerity of purpose and that their intention was not to create ill-will but to establish mutual cordiality and peace. This is the typical defence of all mischief-makers.

The presence of hypocrites and malcontents is inevitable in every organised society. In a society, not properly organised, it is easy for disaffected members to leave. But in a well organised community, the malcontents find it difficult to leave. So they remain within and carry on their nefarious activities secretly. The presence of hypocrites is not a sign of weakness but rather of strength in a community. But this should not make a community neglectful about them. On the contrary, it is imperative that malcontents and hypocrites should be closely watched and properly dealt with, as and when circumstances require. The Holy Prophet was ever watchful of this class.

19. Important Words:

لاك (and but) is a combination of two words, و (and) and ل (but). Ordinarily, only one of these words would have sufficed, but they have been used together to intensify the meaning.

Commentary:

In the last verse the hypocrites insinuated that it was not they but the main body of Muslims who caused disorder. The reply to this insinuation is given in the present verse in the emphatic words, Beware! it is surely they who create disorder.

The last words of the verse signify that the hypocrites lack the faculty of insight. If, instead of fabricating a defence for their duplicity, they had tried only to study their own mind, they could have easily perceived that it was not the desire of peace or reform but cowardice and jealousy that prompted their loathsome conduct.

20. Important Words:

سماء (foolish people) which is the plural of سماء i.e. he was or became light-witted or ignorant. The word سماء means: 1. simple or light-witted or foolish; 2. ignorant; 3. fickle and inconstant; 4. weak in intelligence; 5. one whose opinion is of no consequence; 6. one who squanders away his wealth and property without consideration (Aqrab, Mufradät & Lisân).

فلمون (they know) is derived from علم i.e. he knew. علم means: 1. he knew it or became acquainted with it; 2. he knew it thoroughly so as to base his belief on it (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse means that when the believers asked the hypocrites to be sincere in their
15. And when they meet those who believe, they say, 'We believe'; but when they are alone with their ring-leaders, they say, 'We are certainly with you; we are only mocking.'

faith, the hypocrites would say that the believers were, like fools, squandering away their lives and property, a mere handful of men who had taken up the fight against the whole country.

The hypocrites called true Muslims "fools" because they thought they (the hypocrites) could protect their lives and property by maintaining friendly relations with the disbelievers, while the true Muslims, on account of their complete estrangement from disbelievers, were exposing their lives and possessions to constant danger. Muslims were also given to spending recklessly on religion. Such allegations are contained in 5:59; 8:50; 9:79 & 63:8. God replies to them by saying: Their possessions and their children should not excite thy wonder; Allah only intends to punish them therewith in this world, that their souls may depart while they are disbelievers (9:85). The verse means that soon the hypocrites would witness the ruin of their possessions, while Muslims would prosper. Success and prosperity come, not of cowardice and stinginess, but of courage and sacrifice, and the hypocrites were hopelessly lacking in both these qualities.

In fulfilment of this prophecy Abdullah bin Ubayy, the hypocrite leader, lived to see the frustration of his designs against Islam and his only son became a true and zealous Muslim.

21. Important Words:

1. خالا (they are alone) is derived from خلا i.e. he was alone. They say خلا للج i.e. the man was alone in a place. خلا للكان means, the house became empty and untenanted. خلا للبني means, the thing passed away. خلا لله or خلا لله means, he was alone with him; he met him in private (Aqrab). خلا لكان means, he died (Lisan).

2. شيطان (ringleaders) is the plural of شيطان (satan) which is either derived from (1) شين or (2) مفردد (Mufradat). مثل شيطان عليه means, he was or became distant or remote from him or it. مثل شيطان عليه means, he opposed his comrade and turned him from his intention or course (Aqrab). Derived from this root the word شيطان would mean, the being who is not only himself far from truth but also turns others away from it.

The other derivation is from شين which means, he burnt; he perished. Derived from this root the word شيطان would mean, the being who burns with hate and anger and is lost.

In common usage the word شيطان means: (1) the wicked or evil spirit i.e. Satan; (2) anybody who greatly transgresses the proper limits and is excessively proud and rebellious; (3) serpent (Aqrab); (4) any blamable power or faculty or propensity like anger, etc. (Mufradad); (5) any painful condition like excessive thirst, etc. (Lane). In its wider sense, the word has also come to be used about anything which is harmful and injurious and is likely to cause suffering.

3. استكر (mocking) is derived from استكر which again is derived from سكره, both having the same meaning. استكره i.e. he laughed at, or mocked or scoffed at, or derided
16. "Allah will punish their mockery, and will let them continue in their transgression, wandering blindly."  

Commentary:

The context of the verse makes it clear that by ~شيطان is here meant not evil spirits but rebellious ringleaders among the disbelievers and the hypocrites who were proud and haughty and ready to transgress all limits. Reference to such leaders has been made in 33: 68 where God says, "And they (the people of Hell) will say, 'Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones and they led us astray from the way.'" These were the men who egged on the hypocrites to mischief and who were ever burning with jealousy and hate at seeing the Muslims prosper and who had gone far astray from the truth.

Some Christian writers have rendered the word ~شيطان in this verse as "satans" or "devils", and then charged the Quran with reviling idolaters, Jews and Christians. The charge is groundless; for, as already explained, the word ~شيطان does not here mean "satans" but simply proud and mischievous ringleaders. In fact, as shown above, the word ~شيطان has a very wide significance in Arabic. The Holy Prophet once said to his Companions, "A single rider is a sha’iṭān, a pair of riders also is a pair of sha’iṭāns, but three riders are a body of riders" (Dawūḍ). The meaning here is that one rider is exposed to mischief and danger and so are two riders, but three riders travelling together form a safe company.

Christian critics, ever keen on finding fault with the Quran, forget the New Testament passages (Mark 8: 33; 8: 38 & Matt. 3: 7; 23: 33) where Jesus calls a disciple satan and his opponents serpents and a generation of vipers, etc.

This meaning of the word ~شيطان i.e. ringleaders from among disbelievers and hypocrites, is supported by eminent Muslim scholars like Ibn ‘Abbās, Qatāda, Mujāhid, and 'Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd (Jarir).

22. Important Words:

- ~شيطان (will punish mockery). See 2: 15 and also commentary below.
- ~هاد (He will let them continue) is derived from ~هديل. They say it meaning, he let him continue in a course, or he granted him a delay or respite. Literally ~هديل means, he spread, or he stretched, or he made a thing extend (Aqrab).
- ~طيين (transgression) is derived from ~طيئ which means, he exceeded the proper limits. ~طيئ means, he was excessive in sin and transgression.
- ~أمور (wandering blindly) is derived from ~أمء which means, he was or became confounded or perplexed and was unable to see his way, and went to and fro in confusion (Aqrab). ~أمء is like ~عمى; but whereas ~عمى is wider in its significance, being used for blindness both physical and mental, ~أمء is confined to mental blindness only (Kashshāf). ~أمء also means, it (the place) lost all marks or signs helpful for identification or for finding a way through it (Aqrab).
17. These are they who have taken error in exchange for guidance; but their traffic has brought them no gain, nor are they rightly guided.  

Commentary:

In this verse the word يُسُمِّي (lit. will mock) has been used for God, and this has occasioned the criticism that the God of the Quran is given to mocking. The criticism is due to the utter ignorance of Arabic idiom and usage. In Arabic, punishment for an evil is sometimes denoted by the term used for the evil itself. For instance, in 42:41 we read وَحَرَّمَهَا سِيْلَةَ مَا مَاتَهَا i.e. the penalty for an evil is an evil the like thereof, whereas the penalty of an evil is not an evil. Again in 2:195 the word اعتداء (transgression) is used for the punishment of transgression. Similarly, the well-known pre-Islamic Christian poet, 'Amr bin Kulthüm says:

الله يَسُمِّي أحدًا منا فَنَجِهِ فِي جَهَلِ الْجَهَلِ "Beware! nobody should employ ignorance against us; or we will show greater ignorance in return;" i.e. we will severely avenge such ignorance (Mu'allaqat).

Thus the expression يُسُمِّي does not mean, Allah shall mock at them, but that Allah will punish them for their mocking. The former meaning, followed by some translators, is absolutely inconsistent with the spirit of the Quran which condemns jest and ridicule as marks of ignorance (2:68). How, then, can God attribute to Himself what He declares to be a practice of the ignorant?

The expression, who have taken error in exchange for guidance, means: (1) that they have given up guidance and taken error instead; or (2) that both guidance and error were offered to them but they preferred error and refused guidance. Both these meanings apply here. According to the first, the verse would mean that originally everybody is endowed with a pure nature and the best of capacities (30:31; 95:5), but, owing to wrong training or wrongdoing, the original nature and capacities become lost. In this case “guidance” would mean the nature or grants the disbelievers respite with the sole object of reforming them but they unfortunately only increase in transgression.

The word يَمِينُ (wandering blindly) is derived from the root مَهْمَة which, as explained above, signifies, besides other meanings, the absence of signs or marks. The meaning here would, therefore, be that the hypocrites persist in their wickedness without care or consideration, as if the way they are travelling has lost all signs, leaving the traveller without any sense of distance or direction.

23. Important Words:

اشترى (have taken in exchange) is derived from أشتَرَى which again is derived from أشترى both having the same meaning, i.e., he purchased a thing or became owner of a thing by purchase. The word also sometimes gives the meaning of أقعَع i.e. he sold a thing. The word is also used of a person who gives up one thing and lays hold on another (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The expression, who have taken error in exchange for guidance, means: (1) that they have given up guidance and taken error instead; or (2) that both guidance and error were offered to them but they preferred error and refused guidance. Both these meanings apply here. According to the first, the verse would mean that originally everybody is endowed with a pure nature and the best of capacities (30:31; 95:5), but, owing to wrong training or wrongdoing, the original nature and capacities become lost. In this case “guidance” would mean the nature or
18. Their case is like the case of a person who kindled a fire; and when it lighted up all around him, Allah took away their light and left them in thick darkness; they see not.

Capacities with which every man is endowed by God, and "exchange" would mean that through making wrong use people lose the God-given guidance, landing themselves in error instead. According to the second meaning, the verse would signify that through His Messengers, God communicates to man only truth and guidance, whereas Satan presents to him his own evil teaching. Wrong choice by man results in his acceptance of error instead of guidance.

This traffic, however, brings the hypocrites no gain. They believe that by preferring the promptings of Satan to the guidance of God they would reap a good profit in this life. But, says God, they will reap no such profit. On the contrary, they will be the losers and suffer humiliation through their own wrong choice.

The words, nor are they rightly guided, point to yet another consequence of the wrong choice of hypocrites. They will not only suffer loss and humiliation in this life, but will also suffer punishment in the life to come, for being deprived of guidance they will not reach the goal. Thus the words, their traffic has brought them no gain, refer to the benefits that accrue to one in this life, and the words, nor are they rightly guided, refer to the end they will meet in the life to come.

The verse teaches an important truth. Every action of man is attended by two kinds of results, one immediate and the other deferred. A person who is detected in theft suffers punishment and humiliation in this life. This is the immediate consequence of his action. The deferred consequence is that by the same action he reduces his ability to find and accept the truth and guidance. Similarly, when a person does a good deed, the immediate result is that he is pleased with himself and rises in the estimation of others. The deferred consequence is that he increases his power of finding and accepting the truth and guidance. It is the deferred consequences that are referred to in the expression, nor are they rightly guided.

24. Important Words:

- مثال (case) gives a number of meanings: (1) likeness or similitude; (2) state or condition; (3) reason or argument; (4) proverb, etc. (Aqrab).
- إنهار (it lighted up) is derived from إنهار, i.e. it or he became bright or lit up. إنهار is used both transitively and intransitively. Used transitively it means, it lit up or lighted up (the surroundings, etc.), and used intransitively it means, it became bright or lit up. إنهار or الضوء means, light (Aqrab). In the verse under comment the word has been used transitively.
- ظلالات (darkness or lit. darknesses), which is the plural of ظلمة i.e. darkness or absence of light, is derived from ظلم, i.e. it became dark. The word ظلال is also used figuratively to signify i.e. error or ignorance, just as the word هداية ظلال is used to signify i.e. guidance (Aqrab). ظلال also means, affliction, hardship and danger. In the verse the word ظلالات has been used in the plural.
form in order to signify that the position or place spoken of is not only wanting in light, but is also full of various dangers. In the Quran the word is always used in the plural and denotes different kinds of darkness, physical, moral or spiritual. In the moral and spiritual sense the plural form also signifies that sins and evil deeds do not stand alone, but grow and multiply, one stumbling leading to another.

Commentary:

The verse speaks of hypocrites who were unbelievers at heart but outwardly formed part of the Muslim community. The light of the Holy Prophet or the light of Islam touched their outside, but owing to the diseased condition of their hearts it could not penetrate their inside, which is essential for true religious conversion; so they remained virtually deprived of that light. “The kindler of fire” in the verse can mean either: (1) the class of hypocrites who kindled a fire for themselves, i.e., they accepted the light of Islam but when the light grew in intensity and lit up the surroundings, their hidden disease got the better of them and they lost the light and were left in utter darkness. In this case the Arabic text would read somewhat like this: مثلكم كمثل الذين استوددوا نارا فلا أضاءت ماحولهم. i.e. their condition is like the condition of those who kindle a fire, etc. This reading would be quite correct according to Arabic idiom and the style of the Quran itself. Or, (2) it may mean the Holy Prophet of Islam who, under God’s command, kindled a fire or a light but then the class of hypocrites came into being, whom the light touched but did not penetrate. Though apparently in light, they were really deprived of it, and owing to the disease of their heart their deprivation grew as the light increased. In this case the Arabic text would read somewhat like this: مثلكم كمثل بعض السامع الذي استوددو نارا فلا اضاءت ما حوله. i.e. their condition is like the condition of some of those surrounding a person who kindles a fire, etc. This reading is also correct according to the Arabic idiom. In either case the people deprived of light are the hypocrites.

By ‘a fire’ is meant, the light of divine teaching and heavenly Signs. This is corroborated by other passages in the Quran. In 28: 30, 31 it is said that Moses saw a fire near Mount Sinai and, approaching it, he heard a voice, saying, O Moses, verily I, even I, am Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Elsewhere in the Quran divine revelation is compared to “fire” and it is stated that some human beings possessing extraordinary spiritual potency are near to being lit up even without divine revelation (24: 36). Thus, according to the Quran, the word “fire” sometimes signifies the light of divine teaching and heavenly Signs, and in the present verse the word has been used in this very sense.

According to Arab usage, the word “fire” is sometimes also used for war. In 5: 65 the Jews are said to have lighted the fire of war. In this sense, the verse would mean that hypocrites conspired with disbelievers to wage war against Islam. But the war only served to increase the power of Islam, leaving the hypocrites utterly confounded.

The words, Allah took away their light, may mean that the wars tore away from the hypocrites the bright mantle of Islam with which they had disguised themselves. The wars not only failed to bring the expected victory to the disbelievers, but also helped to expose the hypocrites who betrayed themselves by failing to join up with the Muslims and to share the perils of the wars with them. The gradual extension and elaboration of the teachings of Islam also helped the exposure. The more commands there were to obey, the more burdensome did obedience prove to the hypocrites.

The expression, left them in thick darkness; they see not, means that the hypocrites had
19. They are "deaf, dumb and blind; so they will not return."

20. fomented the wars in order to re-establish their influence but the actual result of these wars was the exposure of their hypocrisy and their consequent confusion and perplexity.

If the word "fire" means the light of Islam, the verse would signify that though the light of Islam touched the hypocrites on the outside, yet their hearts remained unaffected by it. God deprived them not only of the light of revelation with all its blessings but also of the light of conscience which He has implanted in the nature of man.

25. Important Words:

אַל (deaf persons) which is the plural of אֵל (a deaf man) is derived from אֵל. They say אֵל, i.e. he put a stopper into the mouth of the bottle. אֵל means, his ear became closed up, or he became deaf, or he had a heaviness of hearing. אֵל means, one who has a stoppage of the ear and heaviness of hearing. אֵל means, a man whom one does not hope to win over and who will not be turned back from the object of his desire. The word also signifies one who persists in his evil course (Aqrab).

בֲּא (dumb persons) which is the plural of בֲּא (a dumb man) is derived from בֲּא (bakima) i.e. he became dumb. בֲּא (bakuma) means, he kept silent intentionally. בֲּא means, one who is dumb either by natural conformation or from inability to express himself; or, one not having ability to find words, though possessing the faculty of speech (Taj).

אֶשָּׁא (blind persons) which is the plural of אֶשָּׁא (a blind person) is derived from אֶשָּׁא i.e. he became totally blind. אֶשָּׁא means, one physically blind of both eyes; or one blind in respect of mental vision (Aqrab). See also 2: 16.

Commentary:

The verse aptly describes the mental condition of the class of hypocrites mentioned in the previous verse. The first cause of their going astray was that they had turned a deaf ear to the admonitions of the Prophet. Secondly, they did not give straightforward expression to their doubts to have them dispelled. Exaggerated pride and self-esteem prevented them from asking questions. Lastly, they had become insensitive to the progress Islam was making and the change it had effected in its followers. As they made no use of their ears, their tongues and their eyes, they are spoken of as deaf, dumb and blind.

The words, they will not return, point to an important truth. Man is born with a pure nature—the nature of Islam—and it is only by his evil deeds that he corrupts himself. So the words, they will not return, allude to the fact that these men have strayed away from their original good nature, and though God is calling them back to the pristine purity of their nature, they will not return.
20. Or it is like a heavy rain from the clouds, *wherein is thick darkness and thunder and lightning*; they put their fingers into their ears because of the thunder-claps for fear of death, and Allah encompasses the disbelievers.26

26. Important Words:

اَوْ (or) is a conjunction signifying several meanings. Here it is used in the sense of “or.” It does not, however, denote doubt but simply indicates the presentation of an alternative similitude.

مَـيْت (heavy rain) is derived from مَّـيَت which means, it came down; it descended; or it poured forth. The word مَـيْت means, clouds pouring down heavy rain; or heavy rain itself (Lane).

السَّاء (the clouds) is derived from السَّاء i.e. he or it became high or towering. Thus السَّاء means, anything that hangs high over your head and covers you in its shade; the sky; any canopy, ceiling or roof; a cloud (Aqrab).

رَدَّ (thunder). ردَّالسَّاء means, the cloud thundered. ردَّ على لان means, he threatened me. ردَّ therefore means, thunder of clouds; or thunder of war, etc. In the present verse it is used figuratively, meaning, weighty commands; or prophecies relating to coming disasters; or injunctions relating to war, etc.

البَرْق (lightning) is derived from بَرْق i.e. it shone or gave out light. بَرْق السَّاء means, the sky shone with lightning. بَرْق الكَثِيْر means, the thing shone with light. بَرْق therefore means, lightning or gleaming in the clouds (Aqrab). In this verse it is used figuratively, meaning, victories in wars; or spoils of war; or clear signs of truth, etc.

الصرَعَة (thunder-claps) is the plural of الصَّعَة (a thunder-clap) which is derived from صَعَة (sa'qa) or صَعَة (sa'qa). They say صَعَة السَّاء or صَعَة (sa'qa). They say i.e. the sky hit the people with lightning.

مَـت (death) is from مَّـات i.e. he died (in various senses); he became as if dead; he slept. مَـت is the opposite of حَيَّ (life) and means, death or lifelessness. Like life, death is also of several kinds: (1) Stoppage of the power of growth (50:12). (2) Deprivation of sensation or consciousness (19:24). (3) Deprivation of the faculty of intellect and understanding (6:123). (4) To be, as though, dead with grief or sorrow or fear (14:18). (5) Spiritual death (3:170). (6) Sleep, which the Arabs call a light sort of death (Mufradāt). (7) Stillness or motionlessness. (8) Being reduced to poverty. (9) Becoming worn out. (10) Becoming base, abject, vile and despicable. (11) Becoming destitute of cultivation or of inhabitants (Lane). According to Lisān مَـت (death) also signifies any painful condition such as poverty, humiliation, dotage, sinfulness, etc.
Commentary:

This verse refers to the second class of hypocrites, viz., those who, though not quite insincere in their belief, were yet weak in their faith and practice and became upset whenever there was a threat of attack by the enemy or whenever a situation arose demanding some sacrifice. These people feared the oppression of men more than the punishment of God, and tried to maintain good relations with disbelievers by secret correspondence and by supplying information about the believers. They consoled themselves with the thought that as Islam was a true religion from God, its victory was assured in spite of anything they might do, and hence it was not proper for them to expose themselves to unnecessary danger.

Islam has no place even for such weaklings. It is a religion of action and sacrifice. That is why, in the very beginning of the Quran, such people have been plainly told that God reckons them among the hypocrites and will deal with them accordingly. Islam teaches us not to spare any sacrifice to win the pleasure of God and one who is not prepared for such a complete sacrifice will not deserve the reward promised to Islam and Muslims.

This and the preceding verses refer to two classes of hypocrites: (1) disbelievers who posed as Muslims, and (2) believers bad in faith and worse in works—with leanings towards disbelievers. This is proved by the following considerations: (a) In verse 18 it is said that the hypocrites kindled a fire, but in the present verse there is no mention of the hypocrites kindling a fire. On the contrary, mention is made of signs or trials coming from Heaven. (b) In the first simile it was said that when the fire illuminated its surroundings, the hypocrites were bereft of their sight. In the second simile embodied in vv. 20 & 21 it is said that when there is light, the people take advantage of it and begin to move. (c) In the first simile it was said that the people referred to were not believers. They were deaf, dumb and blind. But in the second simile it is only said that if God willed He would make these people deaf and blind, implying that they were not so already but would become so, if they continued to pursue the course they had adopted. (d) The men in the first simile were said to be plotting against Islam and Muslims, whereas those in the second simile are not spoken of as plotting against Muslims, but simply as leaving them alone in times of danger. All these facts indicate that these verses refer to two separate classes of hypocrites and this is why the word 'or' has been placed between the two verses. They are two separate classes and not the same class.

The purport of the present verse is that the condition of the latter class of hypocrites is like that of those timorous people who, at a mere shower of rain with thunder and lightning, become timid and fail to benefit from the rain. Similarly, the coming of Islam is accompanied by trials and hardships. The true believer knows that these too have a purpose and is not upset. The trials serve only to increase his zeal.

Objection is sometimes taken against Prophets on the ground that their advent produces disorder and disunion in the earth. The verse provides an answer to this objection by pointing out that just as rain, which gives life to the earth, is accompanied by darkness and thunder and a temporary screening of the sun, even so the trials which accompany the advent of Prophets only presage the dawning of a new era in even greater splendour and effulgence.

The word ماعط (thunder-clap) is spoken of in the verse as making the hypocrites fearful of death. The verse suggests that such a fear is unreasonable because the thunder-clap which makes these people afraid comes after the lightning has actually struck. To slip one's fingers into one's ears can therefore serve no purpose. A state of war already
21. The lightning might well-nigh snatch away their sight; whenever it shines upon them, they walk therein; and when it becomes dark to them, they stand still. And if Allah willed, He could take away their hearing and their sight; surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills.27

ex[ists between believers and disbelievers and this must entail some suffering and hardship. It is no use for the hypocrites to try to escape the implications and consequences of war.

The words, Allah encompasses the disbelievers, at the end of the verse point to the unreasonableness of the fear entertained by the hypocrites. Since God has already decreed the defeat and destruction of the disbelievers, the hypocrites need have no fear of any serious harm from them.

27. Important Words:

( snatch away) is derived from meaning, he seized a thing quickly; he snatched it away. means, the lightning snatched away the sight (Aqrab).

(thing or what one wills) is infinitive from i.e. he willed or he intended. The word is ordinarily translated as, a thing or anything or something; but as in Arabic the infinitive is sometimes used to give the meaning of a passive participle, the word may also be translated as, what is willed or intended or something that one wills or intends.

(has the power) is derived from i.e. he had the power to do it; or he possessed power over him or it. means, powerful, possessing power over, or possessing power to do. is the intensive form of and means, very powerful, most powerful, having or possessing full power.

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that these hypocrites—the hypocrites described as weak believers—are very near to losing their sight. They have not actually lost it, but if they are repeatedly confronted with situations demanding courage and sacrifice symbolized by lightning and thunder, they are very likely to lose their faith. But the mercy of God has so ordained that lightning is not always accompanied by a thunder-bolt. Often it is only a brilliant flash, which lifts the veil of darkness and helps the wayfarer to move on. In this case it symbolizes the dazzling power of Islam. On such occasions these hypocrites make common cause with the Muslims. But when lightning is accompanied by thunder i.e. when the situation demands sacrifice of life or property, the world becomes dark to the hypocrites; they become dumb-founded and stand still, refusing to move on with the Faithful.

The words, and if Allah willed, He could take away their hearing and their sight, indicate that the hypocrites referred to here had not till then been deprived of their hearing or sight. It was still open to them to submit to the teaching of the Quran completely and to accept the leadership of the Prophet in all sincerity. If, however, they continued in their present course and did not stop deserting the Muslims in difficult times, they would soon cease to have any connection with Islam and the Muslims—they would lose all sight and all hearing.
22. O ye men, “worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you, that you may become righteous; 28

The words, *surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills,* imply that the fear of the hypocrites lest they should come to harm at the hands of disbelievers has its origin in their want of faith in God and of a knowledge of His attributes. If they only knew that Allah had the power to do all that He willed and that He had decreed that Islam should triumph over all its enemies, they would not fear the disbelievers at all. Fear other than the fear of God is always due to a weakness of faith in God, and a lack of true knowledge of His attributes.

The statement that, *Allah has the power to do all that He wills,* also disposes of the question, sometimes very naively asked, whether God has the power to cause His own death or make an equal to Himself or to speak a lie, etc. As explained above, the word *will* means, something that is willed or intended, and as God never wills to cause His own death or to make an equal to Himself or to speak a lie, etc.—because these are signs of imperfection and God is perfect—so these and all similar questions, besides being foolish, are irrelevant and do not arise.

Lastly, it may be noted that this verse also serves as a warning to Muslims. One may be careful against drifting away into a state of (disbelief) or against becoming (hypocrite) of the first class, but one may imperceptibly turn into a hypocrite of the second class without feeling the change in the beginning. A true Muslim should, therefore, be ever on his guard against that danger. He should not only hold the beliefs taught by Islam, but should also act like a true Muslim and be ever prepared for all sacrifices in the cause of Islam.

28. **Important Words:**

ْ (Lord). For the meaning of this word see note on 1:2. In the present verse God Himself explains the meaning of the word ْ by saying ْ, i.e. your Rabb is He Who has created you. This meaning, though absolutely correct, is not to be met with in the ordinary lexicons which interpret it simply as Lord and Sustainer. The full meaning of the word thus turns out to be “Lord, Creator and Sustainer.”

لمل (so that) is generally used to denote expectation, or doubt combined with expectation. That is why Christian translators have generally rendered it as, haply or peradventure or perhaps. But this rendering is clearly wrong in the present context; for, as explained by Lane, the word when used by God generally signifies not doubt but certainty. In fact, God’s announcements are in the nature of royal proclamations in which such words are used not to express doubt resulting from ignorance but to express hope born of certainty. The word has therefore been rightly rendered here as, that or so that. Sometimes it may be rendered as, may be.

**Commentary:**

As we have seen, the Quran began with the claim that the best Book of guidance can only come from a Being Who is All-Knowing and that such a being is Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of the world, Who has sent down the Quran for the guidance and perfection of mankind. This Book is (1) a perfect treasure-house of all that is good and valuable, (2) is free
from all defects, and (3) does not stop short at any stage of spiritual progress but carries men and women of all grades of righteousness to higher and still higher stages, and so on to unlimited progress. Having made this claim, the Quran proceeds to give a brief description of the three classes: believers, disbelievers and hypocrites.

Attention is then drawn to the fact that as the Quran enables the righteous to make greater and greater spiritual progress, everybody should try to become one of the righteous and earn the spiritual benefits of the Quran. Says the Quran: 0 ye men! worship your Lord (i.e. enter into His service)... that you may become righteous.

Worship demands complete subjection, and the sense of subjection is generated in its perfection only when one and one's forefathers are all under obligation. History tells us that lives have been sacrificed for the sake of cruel kings simply because the ancestors of those kings had done some good to the ancestors of the people making the sacrifice. The feeling of obligation becomes stronger as generation after generation is laid under obligation. Therefore, it is a perfectly natural appeal which is made in the verse in the words: O ye men, worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you.

The verse then proceeds to make it clear that the object of worship is not merely recognising and acknowledging God. If it were so, the worship of idols, however unjust, would not be so injurious. God is worshipped for the sake of attaining righteousness and spiritual perfection. How can false gods make man perfect spiritually, when they have not created him and have no knowledge of his powers or limitations?

The words لَا كَانَ لَا كَانَ لَا كَانَ (that you may become righteous) clearly point out that the command to worship is not for the benefit of God. It is for the benefit of man himself. Those who regard the Law as a curse look upon it only as a mere show of authority on the part of God. But the Quran clearly states that God's commands are for the guidance of man. They help to nurture all his latent powers. Such a teaching cannot be a curse. He who warns a blind person of a pit lying in front of him does not curse him. A doctor who prescribes for a suffering patient does no wrong to him.

There is another point to be remembered. The word رب means, He Who creates and then develops by degrees. At the birth of man, the foundation is laid for his perfect future development. If worship, on his part, does not lead to the perfection of his latent powers, that worship is no worship at all. It is a mere show or a lifeless form.

The clause لَا كَانَ لَا كَانَ (that you may become righteous) teaches us to avoid not only those things which impair man's relation with God but also those which impair the relation between man and man. He who regards God as his Creator and Sustainer will look to Him for his needs and will not cast greedy looks at the wealth of others. He can never be untrue to his fellow-men, and will remain always at peace with them. The Companions of the Holy Prophet lived for God and looked only to Him. The peace which the world witnessed in their time remains unparalleled. Indeed there can be no peace, unless we are devoted to God. If Europe had been so devoted, she would not have been suffering from the mortal disease now eating into her vitals—the hunger for land and wealth.

This verse contains the first command of God given in the Quran. As the words, O ye men, indicate, this command to worship God is addressed to all mankind and not to Arabs only, which shows that Islam, from the very beginning, claimed to be universal. It abolished the ideal of national religion and conceived mankind as one brotherhood.
23. Who made the earth a bed for you, and the heaven a roof, and caused water to come down from the clouds and therewith brought forth fruits for your sustenance. Set not up, therefore, equals to Allah, while you know.29

The question "Who is to be worshipped" is answered by the word رب (Creator) in order to disavow false gods who have created nothing and are themselves created.

Men are actuated either by love or fear. In this verse appeal is made to both motives. Love either springs from حسن i.e. beauty of the beloved, or from a feeling of الإحسان i.e. favour received from some one. God is beauty and the source of all beauty. One aspect of His beauty is that He creates man in a very low condition and then by degrees develops and raises him to the highest mark of perfection. The feeling of obligation is appealed to by saying "Your Lord is He Who created you and your fathers."

It is curious that when Jesus was asked, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matt. 22:36, 37). But this commandment which Jesus calls the great commandment in the Law is not presented in the beginning of the New Testament. It comes much later and then only when people asked Jesus about it, although as regards importance it should have been given the first place. In the Old Testament also this commandment occurs in later chapters. So is the case with other scriptures. None gives it the first place. Only the Quran does so.

29. Important Words:

- فرش (a bed) is derived from فرش means, a thing that is spread upon the ground: a thing that is spread for one to sit or lie upon: a bed on which one sleeps; a wide or spacious plain or tract of land (Lane).

- ماء (a roof) is derived from ماء meaning, he built; he constructed. So ماء means, a building; a structure; a thing that is built or constructed; also the roof or ceiling of a house or of a chamber or the like (Lane).

- أشراط (fruits) is the plural of أثر meaning, a fruit. The word is derived from the verb أثر which means, the fruit became ripe. أثر means, the tree, etc. produced fruit. The word أثر is also used figuratively, meaning, son or offspring; or profit of a thing (Taj).

- أتاد (equals) is the plural of أتاد which means, the like of a person or thing; or the like of a thing by participation of substance. It is a more specialised term than ماء which signifies a like by participation of anything. The word أتاد also means, a thing which does or may supply the place of another thing; or a like that is contrary or opposed to another thing; a thing taken as an object of worship instead of the true God (Lane). أتاد is to be distinguished from شريك; for whereas شريك is the like of a thing, being contrary or opposed to it, شريك is simply a participant that shares the attributes or work of a thing (Aqrab under شريك and شريك).

Commentary:

The subject-matter of the last verse has been completed in this. It was said in that verse
that should be worshipped because He is the Creator and He alone can foster man's powers. In the present verse it is said that not only man but the heavens and the earth also have been created by God. It is evident that human actions depend upon environment. Trade, agriculture, industry, travel, etc. are made possible ultimately by the nature and influence of the heavens and the earth. So human actions can be guided aright only by a Being Who has made the heavens and the earth. It is only He Who can harness them for the use of man. None else has such knowledge, power or authority. So man should worship God alone.

The expression, and Who made the heaven a roof, suggests that just as a building or a roof is a source of protection for those living in or under it, similarly the remoter parts of the universe are a protection for our planet; and those who have studied the science of the stars, the clouds and other atmospheric phenomena know how the other heavenly bodies, running their courses through the boundless expanse rising high above the earth on all sides, make for its safety and stability.

In the clause, caused water to come down from the clouds, the word 'l- has been used in the sense of "cloud," whereas in the preceding clause, and Who made the heaven a roof, it signifies "heaven." Had it meant the same thing in the two places, it would have been replaced in the second place by a pronoun. The repetition of the word is intended to convey a difference of meaning in the second place.

After making it clear that everything in this world is the creation of God, attention is drawn to the fact that God has no equal. There is nothing in the whole universe which can show any part of it to have been created by anyone other than God. Why then should man worship any but Him?

In this verse it is also hinted that the perfection of the material world depends upon a co-ordination of earthly and heavenly forces. When water is made corrupt by men on earth, fresh and pure water is supplied from heaven. Breathing makes the air foul but it is purified when it rises up. The eye is useful, but of what avail is it without the rays of the sun? In short, if the earth is a bed for man, the heaven is a roof. So with the spiritual world. Man is gifted with reason but, like the eye, reason cannot function properly without the help of divine revelation. Human instincts are pure but they become unclean by greed, malice, etc. They can only be cleansed by the water of revelation. Hence man cannot attain to spiritual success without attaching himself to God. By showing material life to be dependent upon both earth and heaven, God points to a parallel in the spiritual world, and teaches that in spiritual matters also man should not trust earthly means alone. The intellect is not enough. Like the material world, the spiritual world also requires heavenly help. Just as there is a heaven above the earth, there is a heaven above the heart and brain of man. This is God's guidance received through revelation.

An interesting question arises here. According to a widespread modern belief, the idea of God has evolved out of a primitive belief in spirits, ghosts and fairies. It is also said that in primitive times man worshipped beasts and poisonous insects and then advanced gradually to the idea of God. Modern critics appear to be agreed that the idea of many gods has always preceded the idea of one God. The history of man's beliefs is cited as evidence.

Some of those who hold such a view seem anxious to reconcile it with religion. They claim that their view does not go against religion. They say that God revealed the laws of nature by degrees; therefore there is nothing surprising if He should have
revealed Himself also by degrees. Now, all religions base themselves upon revelation. And if the basis of religion is revelation, then the belief that God revealed Himself by degrees and that He first guided the world to other gods, and then to Himself, at once falls to the ground. It is against all reason that God should first guide man to spirits, stones, rivers and snakes and then reveal Himself. What was there to hinder Him from guiding man to Himself from the very beginning? The living religions of the world have ever believed in revelation. Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Islam, all teach that revelation began with the creation of man. This being the case, there can have been no gradual evolution of the idea of God. Evolutionary accounts, therefore, conflict with religion. Those who hold them must deny revelation, the basis of religion.

The denial of revelation is, of course, very common in the Christian West. Christendom has failed for a long time to provide any examples of persons with revelational experience. Little wonder that those speculators who have had no such experience themselves and who have not been made aware of such experience in others should deny revelation outright. According to the Quran, however, God has spoken to man in all ages. The Quran itself is a record of revelation and, according to the Quran, the followers of Islam must continue to receive revelation. The recipient in our age is the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Nobody who knows all this can be impressed by denials of revelation. He can only treat them as mere ignorant conjectures.

Evolutionary accounts have little foundation in fact. It is said that the idea of God found amongst uncivilised peoples of the world today is polytheistic, therefore the idea of one God must have originated in polytheism. But it is not realized that the uncivilized peoples of today are not samples of the earliest human beings. Civilization has known many ages. Greece, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, India and China were centres of civilization and culture in their own days, but now they seem engulfed in darkness and ignorance. If ignorance can grow out of civilization, why not polytheism out of monotheism? In India Krishna preached the doctrine of the Unity of God, but after his time a wave of idolatry swept over the country; and when Muslims came here, they found idol-worship rampant throughout the land. In Judaism false gods have taken the place of Jehovah. Jesus preached a simple faith in One God, but Christendom now believes in Trinity. A lower conception can easily supplant a higher one. Islam is an historical religion. Even its enemies admit that it teaches belief in the pure Unity of God. But today even Muslims have degenerated to the worship of things other than God. These examples refute the doctrine that monotheism has necessarily grown out of polytheism.

Moreover, a study of primitive religion itself shows that among the primitive people the idea of a perfect Deity exists side by side with their worship of many deities. Only, God is known by different names among different peoples. There also exists among the primitives the idea of revelation; they hold it to be the medium through which they came to have a knowledge of God.
24. And if you are in doubt as to what We have sent down to Our servant, then "produce a chapter like it, and call upon your helpers beside Allah, if you are truthful.}\(^{30}\)

30. **Important Words:**

- عس (servant). For the root meaning of the word see note under 1:5. As explained there, the verb عس means, he showed complete submission and humility; or he received the imprint of a thing. So عس would mean a person who, through complete submission and humility to God, has become, as it were, an image of God. The word has been used here about the Holy Prophet by way of endearment and is expressive of the exalted position he holds in the sight of God.

- شهد (helpers) is the plural of شهد which is derived from شهد i.e. he was present; or he gave witness, etc. Thus شهد means, one who is present; one who sees or witnesses; one who gives testimony or evidence; one who possesses much knowledge; one from whose knowledge nothing is hidden (Aqrab & Lane); also a helper (Mufradiit). Following the last mentioned signification the word may also refer here to the Jews who were friends of the disbelievers (5:81) and spoke of the idolaters as being better guided in religion than those who believe (4:52).

**Commentary:**

In the preceding two verses the Quran gave its first commandment to the people. Having been thus directly addressed by God, the polytheistic disbelievers felt a natural reaction to repudiate the monotheistic teaching of the Quran, because they felt that its acceptance meant that they should give up their long cherished beliefs.

In the present verse God says that if the Quran created doubts and disquietude in their minds and is not worthy of acceptance, the disbelievers should produce one like it. If they cannot, then this very fact would prove them to be wrong.

The subject of the incomparable excellence of the Quran has been dealt with at five different places in the Quran, i.e., in 2:24; 10:39; 11:14; 17:89; & 52:34, 35, and disbelievers have been challenged to produce its equal.

In two of these five verses (2:24 & 10:39) the challenge is identical, while in the remaining three verses three separate and different demands have been made from disbelievers. Thus, to begin with the largest demand in 17:89, disbelievers are challenged to produce the like of the whole Quran, and they have been told that even if all jinn and men should join together they would not be able to produce it. In 11:14 the challenge is limited to the production of ten chapters. In 2:24 and 10:39, however, it has been confined to one سورة only; while in 52:34, 35, the condition of even one سورة has been omitted and disbelievers have been given the option of producing even a single piece like any one piece (i.e. announcement) of the Quran. On the face of it, this difference in the form of the challenge at different places seems to be incongruent and to spring from a lack of harmony in the Quran. Some Commentators have endeavoured to explain away this seeming incongruity by saying that it was due to the challenge having...
been made at different times. At first disbelievers were called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran. When they failed to do so, the challenge was whittled down to the production of the like of any ten chapters. When, however, they were unable to produce even ten chapters, the challenge was further reduced to the production of a single chapter; and, lastly, disbelievers were asked to produce even a single piece like any piece of the Quran. This explanation, however, does not seem to hold good. The different Sūras containing these different challenges were revealed in the following order: (1) 52:34, 35; (2) 17:89; (3) 11:14; (4) 10:39; (5) 2:24 (Rodwell). Now in Sūra 52, the first to be revealed, the challenge is not qualified by any condition as regards size, disbelievers having been given the choice of producing even one single piece like any piece of the Quran. It is very strange that, whereas at first the challenge was unqualified and disbelievers were called upon to produce something comparable to any piece of the Quran, later it began to be hedged round by conditions and stipulations, first requiring disbelievers to produce the like of the whole book, then reducing the challenge to ten Sūras, and last of all reducing it to a single chapter. The order is most unnatural.

Moreover, some of the Sūras which contain this challenge were revealed on occasions so close to one another that some Commentators have found it difficult definitely to fix their order of priority. Hence it is unwise to settle this question on the basis of the chronological order of the Sūras containing this challenge.

Another point worth considering in this connection is that the verses in question do not mention any historical event but contain only a general challenge which stands for all time. Now the question is, in what form should the challenge be delivered to the world? Should disbelievers be called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran, or to produce ten Sūras like any ten Sūras of the Quran, or should they be called upon to bring forward the like of one Sūra only or the like of any single piece of the Quran? If it is enough to make a demand for the like of a single piece of the Quran, why should a demand for the like of a Sūra be made, and if it is enough to make a demand for the like of one Sūra, the demand for the production of ten Sūras or, for that matter, for the whole of the Quran seems extravagant.

The fact is that these verses contain certain demands which stand for all time, and there is no need to enter into the question of their chronological order. The challenge can be made even today in all the different forms mentioned in the Quran as it was made at the time of the Holy Prophet.

Before explaining the various forms of these challenges it is worth noting that mention of them in the Quran is invariably accompanied by a reference to wealth and power, except in 2:24, which, as already stated, does not contain a new challenge but only repeats the challenge made in 10:39. From this it may be concluded that there exists a close connection between the question of wealth and power and the challenge for the production of the like of the Quran or a part thereof. This connection lies in the fact that the Quran has been held out to disbelievers as a priceless treasure. When disbelievers demanded material treasures from the Holy Prophet and asked, "Wherefore has not a treasure been sent down to him" (11:13), they were told in reply that he possessed a matchless treasure in the Quran. The same reply was repeated when disbelievers asked, "Wherefore has not an angel come with him?" (11:13). They were told in reply that angels did descend upon him; for their function was to bring the word of God, and the divine word had already been vouchsafed to him. Thus both the demand for a treasure and the demand for the descent
of angels have been jointly met by offering the Quran as a matchless treasure brought down by angels, and the challenge to produce the like of the Quran has been put forward as a proof of its peerless quality.

Let us now take the different verses containing this challenge separately. The greatest demand is that made in 17:89, where disbelievers are required to bring a book like the whole of the Quran in all its manifold qualities. In this verse disbelievers are not required to represent their composition as the word of God. They may bring it forward as their own composition and declare it to be equal of or, for that matter, better than the Quran. As, however, it was necessary to define in what respect the work to be produced was to resemble the Quran, the Quran says in the next verse, And of a truth We have (herein) set forth for mankind in various ways, all kinds of similitudes, but most of men would reject everything but disbelief (17:90), hinting thereby that if disbelievers reject the divine origin of the Quran and believe it to be the work of the Prophet himself, then let them produce a book which, like the Quran, should possess the following excellences: (a) it should throw light on every essential subject pertaining to religion; (b) its discussion of these subjects should be exhaustive, offering detailed guidance on every question; (c) it should be free from all harm and contain nothing but good; and (d) it should aim not at the good of any particular people or community but at the well-being of all mankind, containing guidance for all temperaments and dispositions as well as for all circumstances and conditions. But as at the time when this challenge was made the whole of the Quran had not yet been revealed, disbelievers were not required to produce the like of the Quran there and then; and the challenge thus implied a prophecy that they would not be able to produce the like of it, neither in the form in which it then was nor when it became complete. Again, the challenge was not confined to the disbelievers of the Prophet’s time alone, but extended to doubters and critics of all times.

The second verse which contains a challenge is 11:14. In this verse the disbelievers’ objection that the Prophet had not come with a treasure, nor had an angel come to him, has been met by calling upon them to bring similar Sūras which they should represent as the word of God. The latter demand, i.e., that pertaining to the representation of the required production as the word of God, has a reference to the objection of the disbelievers that no angel has come down to the Prophet. They are told that if no angel has really come to him and his claim to receive divine revelation through the medium of angels is false, then let them also produce ten Sūras, claiming, like him, that they have been brought down to them by angels, and then see what their end would be. If they had not the courage to forge a lie against God, how could they think that the Prophet could be guilty of such fabrication or, if he had dared to commit this forgery, why had he remained secure from God’s punishment?

The reason why the disbelievers in this verse have been called upon to produce ten Sūras and not the whole Quran is that the question here did not relate to the perfection of the Quran in all respects, but to that of only a portion of it. The disbelievers had objected to some parts of it being defective, as is evident from the words: They imagine that thou art now perhaps going to abandon part of that which has been revealed to thee (11:13). Hence, they have not been required here to bring a complete book like the whole Quran, but only ten Sūras in place of those parts of the Quran which they deem to be defective, in order that the truth of their assertion may be tested.
As for the selection of the specific number 10 for this purpose, it should be noted that in Arabic 10 represents a complete number. As the object was to refute the assertion of the disbelievers that certain portions of the Quran were defective, therefore the disbelievers were given the option of making as many as ten efforts to substantiate their claim. They were thus asked to produce ten Sūras not because they could produce less than that number but because the best way to refute their objection was to afford them several opportunities to substantiate the truth of their assertion. In short, since in 17:89 the whole Quran was claimed to be a perfect Book, its opponents were called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran; but since in 11:14 the point was that certain portions of it were objected to, so they were asked to choose ten such portions as appeared to them to be most defective and then produce a composition even like those portions.

The third verse where the Quran has been declared to be matchless is 10:39. Here disbelievers have been called upon to produce the like of only one Sūra of the Quran. This is so because, unlike the above-mentioned two verses, the challenge made in this verse is in support of a claim made by the Quran itself and not in refutation of any objection on the part of disbelievers. In the verses preceding 10:39, it was claimed that God possessed full authority over all things (see 10:32-36), and as a proof of this, in 10:38 the Quran was put forward as possessing the following excellences: (a) it contains teachings which could not be devised by man; (b) it has come in fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the previous scriptures; (c) in it the imperfect teachings of the previous scriptures have been perfected; (d) the word of God embodied in it has been made secure from being interpolated or tampered with by man; and (e) its teachings are meant for all men and all time. In support of this claim, verse 10:39 throws out a challenge to those who deny or doubt it to produce a single chapter containing these excellences in the same perfect form in which they are contained in this chapter i.e. ch. 10.

The verses 52:34, 35 contain the smallest of all demands. In these verses disbelievers are challenged to produce a single piece or a single announcement like any piece or announcement of the Quran. This demand also has been made in support of a claim made by the Quran itself and not in refutation of any objection on the part of disbelievers. Hence the smallness of the demand. The claim in question is made in the opening verses of chapter 52 i.e. Sūra Al-Ṭūr to the effect that the Quranic revelation which was promised to mankind through Moses on Mount Sinai, will continue to be written, read and published throughout the world and that its followers will continue to multiply and will comprise not only common men but persons of great spiritual and temporal eminence, and that the fountain of the new faith will continue to provide the water of eternal life to all the countries of the world so that the fulfilment of these prophecies will constitute a proof of the fact that there is a Day of Judgement. Thereafter the Quran proceeds in 52:34, 35 to challenge disbelievers that, if they look upon the revelation of the Quran to be a fabrication, then they should come forward and make a prophecy like the one made above. This challenge is unconditional and without qualification. Disbelievers are not required to represent what they produce as the word of God, nor is it laid down as a condition that their prophecy should be of their own devising. They may as they like either make a prophecy of their own devising or borrow it from any other scripture. Again, disbelievers are not asked to bring forward as many prophecies as there
are in the Quran—and these are legion—but to bring forward only one single prophecy similar to any one of the prophecies made in the beginning of the Sūra. They are told that they will not be able to fulfill this demand, for such a prophecy could be made only by the Being Who is the Creator and Owner of the heavens and the earth, along with their treasures, and Who not only knows, but possesses mastery of, the unseen. This challenge also stands for all time.

The fifth challenge to produce a like of the Quran is contained in the verse under comment (2:24) and here also, as in 10:39, disbelievers have been called upon to bring a Sūra like that of the Quran, not in refutation of any of their objections, but in support of a claim made by the Quran itself. In the case of the verse under comment this claim is stated in the beginning of the Sūra in 2:3 which says: This is a perfect Book; there is no doubt in it; it is a guidance for the righteous. Similarly, 10:39 is also preceded with the words: there is no doubt about it (10:38). This shows that the challenge to produce a chapter like one of the Quran has special reference to the peculiarity which is described by the words, there is no doubt about it. The challenge given in the present Sūra is preceded by the claim that the Quran is a guidance for those who fear God (2:3), which means that it guides the righteous to the highest stages of spiritual progress. Hence in the above challenge it has been declared that if disbelievers are in doubt as to the divine origin of the Quran, then they should bring forward a Sūra that may be comparable to the Quran in the spiritual influence it exercises over its followers.

One of the characteristics of the Quran is that, whatever chapter of it we may read, it casts a subtle and sublime spiritual influence over our minds. Thus, instead of creating doubts it dispels them and takes men to a stage where no doubt can possibly survive, which is the stage of communion with God. This stage can be attained only by the study of the Quran; no other Book can compare with it in this respect.

The above explanation will show that all these challenges calling upon disbelievers to produce the like of the Quran are quite distinct and separate one from another, and all of them stand for all time, none of them superseding or canceling any other. The misconception that these challenges are one and the same seems to have arisen from the wrong notion that in all of them it is the elegance of the Quranic style and diction that has been held out as unique and incomparable and that it is such elegance of Arabic diction that disbelievers have been called upon to produce. But this is not the case. The challenges made in the five Sūras referred to above are not one or identical nor do they make the same demand; each has a distinct and separate demand of its own and it is in keeping with the nature of these demands that disbelievers have been called upon to produce the like of the whole Quran or a part of it.

The question now remains whether these demands also include a challenge to produce a work comparable to the Quran in elegance of style and diction. The answer is that they certainly do so, but only in an indirect way and not as a direct and fundamental demand, for sublime ideas can only be expressed in sublime language. As the Quran comprises sublime and lofty ideas, it was inevitable that the most beautiful diction and the chastest style should have been employed as the vehicle for the expression of those ideas; otherwise the subject-matter was liable to remain obscure and doubtful and the perfect beauty of the Quran would have become marred. Thus, in whatever form and in whatever respect disbelievers have been challenged to produce a composition like the Quran, the demand for beauty of style
25. But if you do it not—and never shall you do it—then guard against the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, which is prepared for the disbelievers.  

The clause, and never shall you do it, signifies that the disbelievers knew that the idols had no power of revealing anything; so they would never call upon the idols to help them. The word "fuel" may also be taken in a figurative sense, in which case the meaning would be that the punishment of Hell is caused by idol-worship. So the idols are like fuel for hell-fire, being a means of bringing it into existence.

The words الناس (men) and الحِجَارة (stones) may also be taken as indicating two classes of inmates of Hell. The word الناس (men) which, according to its root, signifies love, has been used to denote those disbelievers who may be called human in so far as they still retain something of the love of God which distinguishes human beings from stones. But the other disbelievers are called الحِجَارة (stones), for they have no love left for God. Such men are indeed no better than stones.

31. Important Words:

(stones) is the plural of حِجَّر (a stone) which is derived from the verb حَجَر which means, he or it prevented or hindered or resisted. A stone is called حِجَر because it resists pressure owing to its hardness. حِجَّر also means, a rock or a great mass of stone; a metal as gold and silver which both together are sometimes called حِجَّر i.e. the two metals (Lane). Thus coal (not charcoal) would also be looked upon as حِجَر. The word حِجَارة may also be used metaphorically for idols made of stone or metal (Kashshaf).

(prepared) is derived from حَضَر which again is derived from حَضَر which means, he considered or he counted. حَضَر means, he prepared a thing and made or kept it ready (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse says that if the opponents of Islam are not able to produce the like of the Quran as demanded in the previous verse, they should understand that it is the word of God and that they are not opposing a man but God Himself; they should, therefore, be ready to suffer the lot of those who oppose divine will.

The subject will be discussed later in its proper place.

and elegance of diction comparable to those of the Quran also forms a part of the challenge.
26. And give glad tidings to those who believe and do good works, that for them are gardens beneath which flow streams. Whenever they are given a portion of fruit therefrom, they will say: 'This is what was given us before,' and gifts mutually resembling shall be brought to them. And they will have therein mates perfectly pure and therein will they abide.32

32. Important Words:

بَشَّرُ (give glad tidings) is derived from بَشَرُ (bashr) which again is derived from بَشَ (bashra). They say بَشَ (bashra) i.e. he laid bare its skin. Thus بَشَ (bashra) means, the outer and visible part of the skin. So بَشَ (bashra) means, he gave or imparted news which changed the colour of the listener. The word has generally come to be used in connection with good or happy news. But it is also sometimes used in connection with bad news (e.g. 3:22). بَشَ (bashr) means, one who announces good news to a people or a person. All Prophets are spoken of as بَشَ (bashr) and نَذِرُ (nazar) i.e. givers of good news to those who believe in them and givers of bad news to those who reject them (Aqrab & Mufradat).

الأعمال (good works) is the plural of أَعَمَلَ (almal) which is derived from the verb أَعَمِلُ (almal) meaning, he or it became good or suitable and proper. أَعَمَلَ (almal) is used about all those deeds and actions which are not only good intrinsically but are also meet and suitable. See also under 2:12.

الحدائق (gardens) which is the plural of حيَّة (hay) meaning, it veiled, concealed, or covered a thing. So حيَّة means, any garden having trees by which the ground is covered or concealed; an orchard or garden having luxuriousness and densisness of verdure (Aqrab & Lane). Heaven has been called حيَّة or garden, because: (1) the mercy of God will 'cover' its dwellers just as trees in an orchard cover the ground thereof; or (2) because the blessings of Heaven are 'hidden' from the eyes of man; or again (3) because Heaven is like a garden in which the trees represent good faith and the streams good actions.

النَّهَارُ (streams) is the plural of نَاهِرٌ (nahr) or نَاهِرٌ (nahar). They say نَاهِرٌ (nahr) i.e. the water flowed on the earth and cut out a channel for itself. Thus نَاهِرٌ (nahr) or نَاهِرٌ (nahar) means, a channel through which a stream or a river flows; a stream or river itself. نَاهِرٌ (nahar) also means, abundance (Aqrab).

الأزواج (mates) is the plural of زوج (zawj) which signifies, anything that is one of a pair or couple; it does not mean a pair but only one of a pair, whether male or female (Aqrab). The word زوج (zawj) also means, a comrade (Lane).

الخالدون (shall abide) is derived from خَلَّدَ (khald) meaning, he remained and lived on. خَلَّدَ (khald) means, he stayed or abided in a place. خَلَّدَ (khald) means, staying on, or living without change or
deterioration for a long time but not necessarily for ever (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

This verse gives a brief description of the rewards which the believers will have in the next world.

Critics of Islam have raised all sorts of objections to this description. They say that:

1. The promise of such rewards is only an appeal to greed and a faith based upon greed is not worth the name.
2. The Quran promises material rewards to the believers and this is objectionable.
3. If the rewards of the next world are going to be material, then it must be supposed that the same body which one has in this life will be resurrected after death and this is against all reason, because this body perishes and the particles of one body are used in the making of several bodies. To whom and to how many will then the same body be given in the next world?
4. Believers are promised wives in Heaven which shows that sex relations will continue in the next world. An appeal to sex is very objectionable for spiritual ends. Sex relations are necessary only for the continuation of the race in this world. Why should there be such a thing in the next world?
5. The Quranic Paradise appears to be a place of luxury and sensual pleasures. There is thus nothing spiritual about the Islamic conception of the next life.

This criticism is based on a failure to understand the real Islamic teaching. The Quran has made it clear that in this life it is not possible for man to comprehend the nature of the rewards of the next. It says: No soul knows what joy of the eyes is kept hidden for them, as a reward for their actions (32:18). That is to say, whatever the Quran says about Heaven and Hell is only metaphorical. The descriptions are not to be taken in the sense in which they are ordinarily taken in this world.

The Holy Prophet says of the blessings of the next world: "No eye has seen them, nor has any ear heard of them, nor can the mind of man form any conception of them" (Bukhārī). If the blessings of the next life are to be like the joys of this life, we should be able to form some idea of them, no matter how remote they may be. The blessings of the next life, therefore, must be quite different from the blessings of this life.

In another place in the Quran we read: The similitude of the Heaven promised to the God-fearing is that through it flow streams; its fruit is everlasting, and so is its shade. That is the reward of those who are righteous, and the reward of the disbelievers is Fire (13:36). Now the fruit of this world is not everlasting, so in order to be everlasting the fruit of the next world as well as its streams will have to be taken as something other than material. Again we read: A similitude of the Paradise promised to the righteous: Therein are rivers of water which corrupts not; and rivers of milk of which the taste changes not; and rivers of wine, a delight to those who drink; and rivers of clarified honey (47:16). There is nothing material in this. About the wine of Heaven we read: Wherein there will be no intoxication, nor will they be exhausted thereby (37:48). Again, And their Lord will give them to drink a beverage that is pure (76:22). Thus wine in Heaven will not only be pure itself but will purify the drinkers as well. Elsewhere the Quran says that the pure wine of Paradise will be tempered with Tasnim (83:28), which means 'abundance' and 'height'. In the cup of wine that will pass from hand to hand in Heaven God says there will be neither vanity nor sin (52:24). As against this, the wine of this world is described in the Quran as: Wine and the game of hazard and idols and divining arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork. So shun each one of them that you may prosper. Satan desires only to create enmity
and hatred among you by means of wine and the game of hazard and to keep you back from the remembrance of Allah and from Prayer (5:91, 92). This proves that the wine of the next world is quite different; it is pure and purifying and nothing material.

The blessings of Heaven have indeed nothing in common with their counterparts of this world except the name. Ibn 'Abbās, the Prophet’s cousin, also says the same thing (Jarir).

Now the question arises, Why have the blessings of Heaven been given the names used of material things in this world? This is so because Islam is meant for all kinds of people. It does not address only the intellectually advanced but also all others. Therefore it uses simple words which can be understood by all. The disbelievers used to say that the Prophet disallowed the good things of the world, and his followers were thus deprived of all blessings. Therefore, while describing the blessings in store for the Muslims, God used the names of things generally looked upon as good in this world and told the believers that they would get all these things in a better form.

The water of this world putrefies, but believers would have water in the next which will not putrefy. Gardens are blessings but they become decayed; so believers will have gardens which will last for ever. The unbelievers drank intoxicating wine which made them drunk and which dulled their senses; but the wine which the believers will get in Heaven will be pure and purifying. It is to bring out this important contrast that familiar words are used; otherwise there is nothing common between the delights of this world and the blessings of the next.

It may be added here that, according to Islam, the next life is not spiritual in the sense that it will just consist of a mental state and nothing else. Even in the next life the human soul will have a kind of body; only, it will not be material. One can glean some idea of this from the phenomenon of dreams. The Quran says: Allah takes the souls of human beings at the time of their death; and (He also takes the souls of) those that have not died, during their sleep. Then He retains those against which He has decreed death, and sends (back) the others till an appointed term. In that surely are signs for a people who reflect (39:43). Death and sleep resemble each other, the difference being that whereas in death the human soul is completely and permanently severed from the body, in sleep the severance is only temporary and partial. Now the scenes which a man witnesses in a dream cannot be called purely mental or spiritual, because he has a body also in his dreams and finds himself sometimes in gardens and streams, and eats fruits and drinks milk. It is hard to say that the contents of dreams are only mental states. The milk enjoyed in a dream is no doubt a real experience, but no one can say that it is the material milk found in this world. Dreams have a meaning of their own. For instance, eating mangoes in a dream symbolizes a righteous child or a righteous heart; eating grapes signifies love and fear of God; and eating bananas, a good and lawful subsistence which is also easy of attainment. In short, the spiritual blessings of the next life will not be a mere subjective realization of the gifts of God with which we become familiar in this world. As a matter of fact, what we enjoy here is just a representation of the real and true gifts of God which man will find in the next world.

Again, gardens represent faith; and streams, good actions. Gardens cannot prosper without streams, nor faith without good actions. Therefore faith and actions are inseparable for the attainment of salvation. In the next world, gardens will remind the believers of their faith in this life and streams will remind them of their good works. They will know, then, that their faith and good works have not gone in vain.
The flowing of streams or rivers beneath the gardens also implies that every person in Heaven will have a free and unrestricted enjoyment of his portion. In this world, a single stream often serves several gardens and there is the possibility of a quarrel over it; but in Heaven each garden will have its own stream exclusively meant for itself. See also 10:10.

It is wrong to conclude from the words, This is what was given us before, that in Heaven the believers will be given such fruit as they will have enjoyed in this world, because, as already explained, the two are not the same. The fruit of the next world will, in fact, be the image of the quality of their own faith. When they will eat it, they will at once recognize and remember that it is the fruit of the faith they had in this world; and it will be out of gratitude for this that they will say: This is what was given us before.

The expression rendered as, was given us, may also mean, 'was promised us'; and in this sense it would mean, this is what was promised to us in the world.

The word منا (mutually resembling) refers to the resemblance between the acts of worship performed by believers in this world and the fruits thereof in Heaven. The acts of worship performed in this life will appear to believers as fruit in the next. The more sincere and the more appropriate a man's worship, the more he will enjoy his portion of the fruit in Paradise and the better in quality will it be. It, therefore, lies in one's own power to improve the quality of one's fruit as one likes.

The expression, mutually resembling, also implies that in Paradise one spiritual food will completely harmonize with the other, so that the possibility of spiritual disease will be eliminated altogether. It also means that the food in Heaven will be suited to each and every individual and to his stage of progress and degree of development.

The words, they will abide, signify that the believers will go on abiding in Heaven and will not be subject to any change or decay. Man dies only when he cannot assimilate food or when some one kills him. But since the food of Paradise will be perfectly suited to every individual and since man will have pure and peaceful companions, death and decay will automatically disappear.

The Faithful will also have pure mates in Heaven. A good wife is a joy and a comfort. The Faithful try to have good wives in this world, and they will have good and virtuous company in the next. Yet these joys of Heaven are not physical.

A typical Christian comment on this subject is made by Sir William Muir: "It is very remarkable that the notices in the Koran of this voluptuous paradise are almost entirely confined to a time when, whatever the tendency of his desires, Mohammad was living chaste and temperate with a single wife of three score years of age. It is noteworthy that in the Medina Sūras, that is, in all the voluminous revelations of the ten years following the Hegira women are only twice referred to as constituting one of the delights of paradise and on both occasions in these simple words: 'And to them (believers) there shall be therein pure wives'. Was it that the soul of Mohammad had at that period no longings after what he had then to satiety the enjoyment of? Or that a closer contact with Jewish principles and morality repressed the budding prurience of the revelation, and covered with merited confusion the picture of his sensual paradise which had been drawn at Mecca?" (Muir, page 76).

It is amazing how these Christian critics with pretensions to culture and learning will draw on sheer speculation to attack the honour of a Teacher who is held in the deepest reverence and devotion by many millions of men and
women all over the world. They seem emboldened to do so, because Christians today hold political sway over the Muslims. A few centuries of power have made them forget that Muslims ruled over Christendom for fully 1,000 years, and during this time they never said anything unbecoming about Jesus. They respected Christian susceptibilities when Christians were quite unprotected and were much weaker than Muslims are today. Would to God Christians did not feel so elated!

Sir William conveniently ignores the fact that there are other things besides women which are mentioned in the Meccan chapters and to which there is no reference in the Medinite chapters. We read in the Meccan chapters that there will be wine, honey and rivers of milk in Paradise. Was the Holy Prophet deprived even of these things at Mecca that he should have compensated himself by imagining them in Paradise? Nothing could be more absurd than this. Personally the Holy Prophet was much better off at Mecca than he was at Medina. His rich wife Khadija was then alive and she had placed all her wealth at his disposal. By the time he reached Medina, most of this wealth had been spent in good works and the Holy Prophet was left a poor man with little to live on. If the picture of Paradise was an imaged compensation for his wants, it should have emerged at Medina instead of at Mecca.

Supposing Sir William is right, cannot critics of Christianity say justifiably that Jesus imagined himself the king of the Jews because he was persecuted everywhere? Could they not also say that as Jesus saw nothing of sex life in this world, he remained obsessed with the idea of a second advent and imagined himself a bridegroom taking no less than five virgins for wives? In the words of the New Testament, he is reported to have said: “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. . . . And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut” (Matt. 25, 1–10). A bridegroom surrounded by a bevy of virgins—is not this the Heaven of Jesus' imagination?

But to revert to the subject; the disbelievers at Mecca used to taunt the Muslims about their poverty, saying they had nothing of the good things which they had, so God took over their own phrases and said that the rewards which believers would have in Paradise would be even better. When Islam was established at Medina, the disbelievers gave up their taunts. So God also dropped the earlier descriptions of Paradise. The descriptions in their deep significance, however, hold for all time.

At Mecca, moreover, it was necessary to explain and emphasize the basic belief of Islam. Therefore, greater detail of doctrine is found in the Meccan chapters, and as Paradise, the abode of believers in the after life, is an important item of belief, it is dealt with in detail in them. At Medina, on the contrary, practical matters like personal ethics and social legislation became more important. So greater attention was given to them in the Medinite chapters. The Meccan Sūras also abound in descriptions of Hell. What are they a compensation for?

Sir William also suggests that the Holy Prophet changed his views about Paradise under the influence of the Jews and the Christians of Medina. But he forgets that
27. Allah disdains not to give an illustration as small as a gnat or even smaller. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord, while those who disbelieve say, 'What does Allah mean by such an illustration?'

Many does He adjudge by it to be erring and many by it does He guide, and none does He adjudge thereby to be erring except the disobedient.\(^{33}\)

the stock criticism made by Christian writers is that some Christian slaves had taught the Holy Prophet the Christian scriptures, the substance of which was incorporated in the Quran. Sir William himself alleges that the Holy Prophet learnt Christianity from Suhayb, a Roman slave at Mecca (Life of Muhammad, p. 67). If the Holy Prophet at Mecca already knew the Christian teachings, he need not have waited for their influence until his arrival at Medina. In point of fact, in the Jewish and the Christian scriptures there are no descriptions of Paradise. The Jews and the Christians have remained so engrossed in the affairs of this life that their books do not say much about the life to come. The promises made by their Prophets about the next life have always been taken by them to pertain only to this life. It cannot be imagined that anybody could be influenced by such a teaching.

33. Important Words:

\(\) is derived from which means: (1) he lived or had life; (2) he felt or had a sense of shame or shyness or bashfulness. The infinitive means, sense of shame or modesty or shyness or bashfulness; or keeping back from a thing through fear of blame. means, he felt a sense of shame or shyness; he kept back, or he forbore, or he shrank from. means, he disdained it, or he refused to do it by reason of pride, or he kept far from it (Lane).

\(\) (He adjuges to be erring) is from which means, he went astray; he lost his way; he erred; he was lost; he perished. is the transitive form of They say i.e. he led him astray; he caused him to err; he lost him or it; he caused him to perish. also means, he found him to be erring or straying or lost, etc. (Lane). may also mean, (1) God adjudged him to be erring or He adjudged him to have gone astray; (2) God forsook or abandoned him and he went astray (Kashshaf). See also 1:7

\(\) (the disobedient) is the plural of which is derived from which means, he left the right course, or he declined from the right path. means, he departed from the command of his Lord; he disobeyed his Lord. is thus one who departs from the right course or from the way of truth, or from the limits of the law, or from the bounds of obedience. The word is generally applied to one who first takes upon himself to obey an authority or to observe the ordinances of a law and then falls short of it (Lane & Aqrab).
28. Who break the covenant of Allah after having established it, and cut asunder what Allah has bidden to be joined, and create disorder in the earth; it is these that are the losers.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Commentary:}

If, as described in the previous verse, there is not much in common between the gifts of this world and those of the next, why has the Quran given a description of Heaven at all? This question is answered in the present verse. Even if the picture of Heaven and Hell given in the Quran is not exact, it cannot be denied that the imagery used enlightens and helps us to form an idea of the next life. God has, no doubt, described Heaven and Hell by using metaphors and similes, but no one can say that they are useless. Metaphors and similes are used in all languages, and they express depths of meaning which cannot be reached otherwise, and in things of the spirit they afford perhaps the only method by which ideas can be conveyed. The words used for describing Heaven may be as inadequate and insignificant as a gnat; nevertheless they help to conjure up the picture. The believers know the words are only metaphorical and try to get to the depth of their meaning; but the disbelievers begin to find fault with them and increase in error and misguidance.

The words \textit{يَضِلُّ (lit. many does He misguide)} have been translated in the text as, \textit{many does He adjudge by it to be erring}. This, as shown under Important Words above, is a perfectly correct rendering, for though misguidance springs from one's own self, as the verse itself makes clear in the concluding clause, yet it is God, the final Judge, Who declares or adjudges the misguided to be so.

\textbf{34. Important Words:}

- \textit{يثاَبَثُ (having established it)} is derived from \textit{يثَابَتُ} which means, it became firm and established.
- \textit{أَوَّل} means, he made it firm and fast; he bound or tied it firmly and strongly (Aqrab).
- \textit{الخَامِرُ (losers)} which is the plural of \textit{خَامِر} is derived from \textit{خَامِر} which means, he lost; he suffered a loss; he went astray; he became lost; he perished. Thus \textit{خَامِر} means one who loses or suffers a loss, or one who goes astray (Lane). See also 6:13.

This verse gives some characteristics of \textit{الفاَضِلُونَ (the disobedient)} mentioned in the previous verse. These characteristics are that: (1) they break the covenant made with God; (2) they cut asunder the relations which God commands to be strengthened; and (3) they create disorder and mischief in the earth.

Regarding the first, it should be remembered that the covenant which they break has been mentioned in the following two verses:

(a) And when thy Lord brings forth from Adam's children—out of their loins—their offspring and makes them witnesses against their own selves by saying 'Am I not your Lord?' they say 'Yea, we do bear witness.' This He does lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'We were surely unaware of this' (7:173).

(b) And remember the time when Allah took a covenant from the people through the Prophets, saying 'Whatever I give you of the Book and Wisdom and then there comes to you a
29. How can you disbelieve in Allah? When you were without life, and He gave you life, and then will He cause you to die, then restore you to life, and then to Him shall you be made to return.  

Commentary:
This verse reverts to the original subject of revelation. The question of the reward of believers and the punishment of disbelievers was only incidental. The real subject is that of revelation. In this verse the Quran explains why without revelation spiritual life would be impossible. Nobody can know anything about the next life without the help and guidance of God Who alone knows everything. The verse points out that when God provides for our physical needs, there is no reason why He should not provide for our spiritual needs, which are much more important.

God is Wise. If human life had no purpose, God would not have created it; having created it, He would not have made it subject to death, unless there had been an after-life. If death were the end of all life, the creation of man would turn out to
30. "He it is who created for you all that is in the earth: then He turned towards the heaven, and He perfected them as seven heavens: and He knows all things."

be mere sport. The fact that God does all this shows that He has created man not to return to dust after a life of 60 or 70 years but for a better, fuller and everlasting life, which he must live after death.

The word "then" in the clause, then to Him shall you be made to return, hints that after death the human soul does not go at once to Heaven or Hell. There is an interim period in which the soul is made to taste some of the good or bad results of its deeds. The resurrection which will herald a full and complete requital will take place later.

The mentioning of life twice (in the words اَااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااa and ) may also refer to the rise of Islam in this world, for Islam is the means of spiritual life. Islam had its first life in the time of the Holy Prophet; the second life was to come in the Latter Days. This is referred to in 62 : 4, where it is said that the Holy Prophet of Islam will make, as it were, a second appearance in the world. The promise has been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

36. Important Words:

استوى (he turned) is derived from استوى which means, he became firm or was firmly settled. استوى gives the same meaning as استوى. It also means, he became straight and even and rightly set. استوى means, he became firmly seated on the horse or the like. استوى على العرش means, he (the king) was or became firmly established on the throne. استوى على النتيج means, he turned to a thing, or he directed his attention to it (Aqrab). استوى gives different meanings when used with regard to two or more things and when used with regard to one thing only. When used about more than one thing, it means, to be or to become equal; and when used about one thing only it means, to become straight and firm (Mufradat).

سرى (perfected them) is derived from سرى which is the transitive form of سرى (sawiyā) for which see above. سرى means, he made it uniform or even; he made it congruous or consistent in its several parts; he fashioned it in a suitable manner; he made it adapted to the exigencies, or requirements, of its case; he perfected it; he made it in a right or good manner; or he put it into a right or good state (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

Whatever is on the earth is created by God for the benefit of man. Elsewhere we read, And He has subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all from Himself. In that surely are signs for a people who reflect (45: 14). The sun, the moon, and other heavenly bodies are of immense benefit to mankind. Modern science has made many discoveries in this connection and more may yet be made, all of which testify to the truth and comprehensiveness of the Quranic teaching. Science also continues to find more and more the properties of things of this earth; many things which were formerly thought to be useless are now known to be highly serviceable to man.
Again, of all creatures man alone has the knowledge to profit by the things of the world. When so many things have been created to promote the comfort of man and to extend the field of his activities, and when such unlimited provision has been made for his material advance, it cannot be said that there is no purpose in the creation of man or no provision for his spiritual advance.

The verse also hints that the world is the common inheritance of mankind. It should not become the property of one man or one nation. By ignoring this great truth, Europe is now going to rack and ruin.

If the teachings of the Quran are acted upon, envy and malice between individuals and nations will disappear. The ordinances of Islam regarding charity and Zakāt are also based upon this conception of the world being the common inheritance of all men. Islam does not disallow the right of private ownership but this is not to be exercised so as to deprive others of their right to the common inheritance.

It should also be noted that, according to most religions, this world is not a desirable place for man. Salvation, according to them, lies in killing desire or escaping from evil and suffering. The Jews, on the other hand, make this world the sole end of life. It is Islam alone that teaches man to use rightly the gifts and opportunities which this world affords and to make them a means of attaining success and salvation in the next.

The words, He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth; then He turned towards the heaven, do not refer to the creation of the earth or the heavens. The verse only purports to say that whatever has been created in the earth is for the benefit of man. Then it goes on to say that those who make good use of the gifts of God will advance to higher and still higher stages of spiritual progress. The words “seven heavens” signify seven stages of spiritual progress, the figure seven, according to Arabic idiom, standing for perfection and completeness. So God has not omitted to provide a place of everlasting spiritual progress, viz. Paradise of the next world.

With this verse concludes the present discussion about the necessity of revelation. The way God has created the universe points to the necessity of revelation. If man is not destined for unlimited spiritual progress for which revelation is the only effective means, there was no need to create the heaven and the earth and whatever is in them for his benefit, nor were the powers and capabilities, with which he has been equipped, necessary for him. All this is to enable him to make endless progress.
31. And when thy Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth,' they said, 'Wilt Thou place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood?—and We glorify Thee with Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.' He answered, 'I know what you know not.'

37. Important Words:

قَالَ (said) is a common Arabic word meaning, he said. Sometimes, however, it is used in a figurative sense when, instead of a verbal expression, a state or condition amounting to a verbal expression is meant. For example, the expression "فَلَانَ يَقُولُ يُقُولُ (the tank became full, and said, 'that will suffice,' does not mean that the tank actually said so, but simply this that its condition implied that it was full. The word is also used in the sense of holding a view. We say: فَلَانَ يَقُولُ يُقُولُ i.e. that man holds a view similar to that of Abū Ḥanīfa. Again, the word is sometimes used to denote something not yet spoken but still in the mind. We say: فَلَانَ يَقُولُ يُقُولُ i.e. there is something in my mind which I have not yet disclosed (Lisan & Mufradat).

الملائكة (the angels) is the plural of مَلَك (an angel). Authorities differ as to the derivation of the word. Some derive it from مَلَك but the more commonly accepted derivation is from الله which is used in the sense of conveying a message, the word الله meaning 'a message' (Mufradat & Lane). This explains the object of the creation of the angels. They are meant to convey God's message to men and to execute His will in the universe.

خِليفَة (vicegerent) is derived from خَلَفَ which means, he came after, or stood in place of. The word خِليفَة is used in three different senses: (1) one who comes after and stands in the place of some one, (2) an ĩmām or supreme religious head and (3) a sovereign or king or ruler (Aqrab). The word is also used for one who precedes someone and is followed by him (Qadir).

سْبَحُ (we glorify) is derived from سُبِحُ i.e. he went or travelled far away. سُبِحُ عَنِ الإِنسَانِ means, he got freedom from the affair, having completed it. سُبِحُ وَسُبِحَ i.e. he swam in the water. سُبِحَ فِي الفَيْضِ means, he declared God to be holy and free from defects; he glorified God (Aqrab). The word is used about God and conveys the sense of glorifying Him and declaring Him to be free from all defects—anything that may detract from, and adversely affect, His attributes of Oneness, Knowledge, Power, Purity, etc. (Taj & Mufradat).

نَتْسَبِحُ (extol holiness) is derived from نَتْسَبِحُ i.e. he became pure and blessed. نَتْسَبِحُ اللهَ i.e. means, God purified and blessed him. نَتْسَبِحُ الْجَلَالِ اللهِ means, the man declared God to be holy and free from defects (Aqrab). The word thus has a meaning similar to the preceding word i.e. نُصَبِبِيْحُ, but it conveys the further sense of ascribing to God the positive attributes of Holiness, Majesty, etc. (Lisan & Mufradat).

Commentary:

This verse is important, and Commentators have differed about its meaning. Who was
Adam, where was he placed, why did God speak to the angels about his being appointed as khalīfa, why did the angels object to this appointment, are some of the questions which arise here at once.

But before dealing with them it is necessary to explain what connection this verse has with the preceding one, and why the Quran refers to Adam, while discussing the ministry of the Holy Prophet of Islam. If the Holy Prophet was a true Messenger of God, was he the first to receive a message from heaven or did similar messages precede his? If he was the first Messenger, did God neglect those of His countless creatures who lived before him? These questions make the subject of Adam's ministry at once relevant. The verse is intended to convey that the Holy Prophet is not the first Prophet; others have gone before him and Adam was the first link of the chain. Thus, by making a reference to the ministry of Adam, God removes the doubt agitating the minds of disbelievers about the mission of the Holy Prophet. It does not matter, if they do not understand his mission; even the angels did not understand the purpose of prophethood at its inception.

Adam, who lived about 6,000 years ago, is popularly believed to be the first man created by God upon this earth. This view is, however, not corroborated by a close study of the relevant facts. The truth is that the world has passed through different cycles of creation and civilization, and Adam, the progenitor of the present human race, is only the first link in the present cycle, and not the very first man in God's creation. Nations have risen and fallen, civilizations have appeared and disappeared. Other Adams may have gone before our Adam; other races may have lived and perished, and other cycles of civilization appeared and disappeared. This view has also been held by certain eminent Muslim savants. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, the great mystic, says that once he saw himself in a dream performing a circuit of the Ka'ba. In this dream a man appeared before him and claimed to be one of his ancestors. “How long is it since you died?” asked Ibn 'Arabī. The man replied, “More than forty thousand years.” “But this period is much more than what separates us from Adam,” said Ibn ‘Arabī. The man replied, “Of which Adam are you speaking? About the Adam who is nearest to you or of some other?” “Then I recollected,” says Ibn ‘Arabī, “the saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect that God had brought into being no less than a hundred thousand Adams, and I said to myself, 'Perhaps this man who claims to be an ancestor of mine was one of the previous Adams’” (Futūḥāt, iii. 607).

If the period covered by the progeny of each Adam be taken to be of seven thousand years, on an average, then, on the basis of the Holy Prophet’s saying referred to above, the age of the human race, as such, works out to be 700 million years; and this is the age of the progeny only of Adams, which does not include such races as may have passed before the creation of the first Adam. As against this, modern science gives one million years as the age of the human race (Fnc. Br. 14th Edition, xiv, 767).

It is not claimed that the race which lived before Adam was entirely swept away before he was born. Most probably, there had remained a small degenerated remnant of the old race and Adam was one of them. God then selected him to be the progenitor of a new race and the precursor of a new civilization. Created, as it were, out of the dead he represented the dawn of a new era of life. In this connection we may well quote from one of the speeches of the Promised Messiah, Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement:

“"We do not follow the Bible in holding that the world began with the birth of Adam six
or seven thousand years ago, and that before this there was nothing, and God was, as it were, idle and without work. Neither do we claim that all mankind, who are now found in different parts of the earth, are the progeny of the self-same Adam. On the contrary, we hold that this Adam was not the first man. Mankind existed even before him, as is hinted by the Quran itself, when it says of Adam, 'I am about to place a Khalifa in the earth.' As *khalifa* means a successor, it is clear that men existed even before Adam. Hence, we cannot say whether the original inhabitants of America, Australia, etc. are the progeny of this last Adam, or of some other Adam gone before him” (*Al-Ḥakam*, May 30th, 1908).

The word *khalifa* used about Adam in the verse has, as pointed out above, a reference to the fact that he was a remnant or successor of the old race and was selected by God to bring into being a new race; it also means a viceroy of God—an *Imām* or leader appointed by God to fulfil a special mission.

The question here arises, why did the angels object to Adam’s appointment as *Khalifa*? In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the so-called objection is not really an objection; it is merely a presentation of facts placed before God, not by way of objection but to gain knowledge and obtain enlightenment. In fact, whenever a new Prophet is raised, God intends to bring about through him a revolution in the world, a change in the existing system, an ushering in of a new era. This process naturally entails the destruction of the old system and the construction of a new one. This was to be particularly the case with Adam’s ministry, as he was the first Messenger of a new order.

The people before Adam were without Law and lived almost like savages. Law was to be introduced through Adam and with the introduction of Law was to come sin, for sin is nothing but the breaking of Law. The angels, with their limited knowledge and little insight into the future, were naturally perturbed at the idea that with the ministry of Adam, sin and disobedience would come into being, and people would henceforward begin to be condemned and punished for acts against which there had previously been no bar. In the view of the angels, Adam was nothing but a Law-giver who was to prescribe limitations for the actions of man and mete out punishment to those who transgressed. The future *Khalifa* was thus going to shed blood and create disorder in the earth by shaking the foundations of society.

The angels saw the darker side of the picture only, but God saw the brighter side. Adam was, in the sight of God, a trumpet through which His clarion call was going to be sounded to the people. The dead were going to be quickened and the slumberers awakened from their sleep. Henceforward, there were to come into being men who would know their God and manifest His attributes and lead pious and righteous lives.

God could not leave mankind in a state of spiritual death, just because one section would have to be dubbed as disobedient. One obedient soul was better in the sight of God than a million disobedient ones. Scattered spots of light with patches of darkness, however large, were better than a universal veil of gloom covering the entire earth.

Moreover, Adam and his message could not be held responsible for the recalcitrant spirits who rejected him. He was only a harbinger of mercy, and those who rejected him and thereby incurred the displeasure of God were themselves to blame for their doom. The sun is not to be condemned for the shadows that must result from its light.

This is the deep truth underlying the story which the verse under discussion narrates to the world, and the verse has been very fittingly placed in the beginning of the Quran to serve
as a warning and an eye-opener for those to whom the message of the Holy Prophet of Islam was addressed. The Prophet was bringing light from God and in the wake of his message was to come a gigantic process of destruction and construction for which mankind was to be prepared. Some were to be awakened from sleep and saved from fire, and others to be shaken out of slumber to commit yet more acts of mischief and fan the fire that was blazing. But the believers, however small in number, were far weightier in the sight of God than hosts of disbelievers who had brought destruction on their own heads. Nay, the Prophet taken singly was weightier than the whole of mankind put together. According to a hadith God said to the Holy Prophet: "But for thee, O Muhammad, I would not have cared to bring into being the whole universe." This is not an idle boast but a statement full of truth and wisdom. For, is not a grain of truth better than a whole mountain of falsehood? And the Prophet was not a grain of truth, but a whole mountain of it.

In the verse under discussion, and for that matter, in the verses that follow, the conversation between God and angels need not necessarily be taken in a literal sense, i.e., it is not necessary that the dialogue should have actually taken place in so many words. As explained under Important Words, the word "الكاف": is sometimes used in a figurative sense to convey not actually a verbal expression, but simply a state or condition amounting to a verbal expression. In this sense, it would not be necessary to hold that God actually spoke the words ascribed to Him or that the angels actually replied in so many words. It may simply mean that the angels by their state or condition implied a reply that has been here ascribed to them in words.

Much has been said about the place where Adam was born or where he was raised as a Reformer. The popular view is that he was placed in Paradise but was later expelled therefrom and put somewhere on the earth. But the words in the earth belie this view. These words definitely prove that Adam lived on the earth and it was on the earth that he was raised as a Reformer. As to the place of Adam's residence, it may be noted that a study of the relevant facts, into a detailed discussion of which we need not go here, indicates that most probably Adam was first made to live in Iraq but was later directed to move down to a neighbouring land.

As we have not held Adam—God's vicegerent spoken of in this verse—to be the first man created by God, we will not enter here into the discussion as to how and when the first man was created. The subject of the initial creation of man will be dealt with under relevant verses. As will be noted, the word khalifa has been used in the verse under comment in the sense of a Prophet; for truly speaking Prophets are also the khalifas of God, manifesting the divine attributes in accordance with the requirements of their age. In fact, the word khalifa has been used in three senses:—

Firstly, it is used to denote a Prophet of God. Prophets are, as it were, the images of God. Adam was a khalifa in this sense. David has also been called a khalifa in this sense in the Quran. Says God: (We said), 'O David, We have made thee a Khalifa or vicegerent in the earth' (38: 27).

Secondly, the word khalifa is spoken of a people who come after and stand in place of another. Thus, when a people decline or are destroyed and another people take their place, the latter are called their khalifas as in 7: 70 and 7: 75.

Thirdly, the successors of a Prophet are also called khalifas because they follow in his footsteps and enforce his Law and maintain unity among his followers. Such a khalifa may either be elected by the people or appointed by the Prophet or raised directly by God as a Prophet serving the cause of the preceding one. Abü Bakr was a khalifa of the Holy
Prophet elected by the people after him. Moses appointed Aaron as his khalifa when he went up the Mount, saying to him, Act for me (lit. be my khalifa) among my people in my absence, and manage them well, and follow not the way of those who cause disorder (7:143). Though Aaron was a Prophet himself, yet he also acted as a khalifa in the absence of Moses. In the same way, God sometimes raises a Prophet to reform the followers of another Prophet. Such a Prophet does not bring a new Law but only enforces the existing Law. As he carries on the work of his predecessor, he is called his khalifa or successor. He is neither appointed by his predecessor nor elected by the people but is directly commissioned by God. There have been many such khalifas among the Israelites. They were Prophets of God but brought no new Law, simply serving the Law of Moses (5:45). Jesus was the last of these khalifas. He brought no new Law as he himself says: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17, 18).

Muslims have been promised all these three kinds of khalifas. Says the Quran: Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and do good works, that He will surely make them khalifas in the earth, as He made khalifas those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely change their condition, after their fear, into peace and security: They will worship Me, (and) they will not associate anything with Me. But whose is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious (24:56). God made Muslims the inheritors of the earth in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. Then after the Holy Prophet He established the khilafat of Abü Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmân and 'Ali. And finally now, according to the Ahmadiyya Movement, God has made Ahmad of Qadian a khalifa of the Holy Prophet in the same sense in which He made Jesus a khalifa of Moses. Ahmad has attained to prophethood by following in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet and has brought no new Law. He has been raised to serve Islam and make it dominant in the world.

This is the first verse of the Quran which makes mention of angels, so a short note about them will not be out of place here.

As pointed out under Important Words, the word ḥālāṣ has the literal meaning of a “message-bearer” or “agent.” This explains the object of the creation of the angels. They bring messages of God and execute His will in the universe. This does not mean that God is not All-Powerful and All-Knowing and All-Encompassing and that He stands in need of any agents to execute His will or to carry His messages. But in His eternal wisdom He has decided to work with a system. Just as He has a system in the physical world, He has a system in the spiritual world also. The establishment of a system or a method of work is not due to any weakness in God but is, on the other hand, a sign of perfection. Thus angels are part of the system with which God executes His will in both the physical and the spiritual worlds. In the physical world they form the first link, with a number of physical links descending downwards; but in the spiritual world they form a direct link between God and man. We may not quite understand the nature of their being, but we may well understand the object of their creation and the functions which they are meant to perform.

According to the teachings of Islam, there is quite a large number of angels, and they are divided into classes, each occupying a definite position and serving a definite purpose. They exercise their influence in their respective spheres and serve as agents for executing God’s will. In the physical world they remain, so to
32. And He taught Adam all the names, then He put the objects of these names before the angels and said, 'Tell Me the names of these, if you are right.'

"And He taught Adam all the names, then He put the objects of these names before the angels and said, 'Tell Me the names of these, if you are right.'"

As for the functions of angels, the Quran enumerates a number of them, some of the more important being the following:

1. They are bearers of divine messages (22:76).
2. They inspire men to do righteous deeds, moving their hearts to virtue (91:9; also Tirmidhi, ch. on Tafsir).
3. They serve the Prophets and help their cause (15:30; 4:167); they also help believers (41:31, 32).
4. They bring punishment upon those who oppose the Prophets (6:159); and inspire their enemies with fear and awe (3:125, 126).
5. They enforce the laws of nature and, as it were, bear the Throne of God on their shoulders (40:8).

The reason why angels have been mentioned in this verse in connection with the mission of Adam is that, as indicated above, one of the functions of the angels is to help the Messengers of God; so whenever a new Prophet is raised in the world, the angels are bidden to serve him by bringing into play the different forces of nature to help his cause. When, therefore, God decided to raise Adam as a Reformer, He informed the angels of His decision so that they should devote themselves to his service.

For a fuller discussion of the subject of angels the reader is referred to (1) Taudīḥ and (2) Ātīna by the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement and (3) Malāʾika by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, present Head of the Ahmadiyya Community.

38. Important Words:

(1) Names (islam) is the plural of (1) the name of a thing
i.e. a word fixed for a thing or attribute for the purpose of distinction; (2) a mark or sign of a thing (Aqrab); (3) fame or reputation of a person or thing (Lane); (4) a word, its meanings and combinations (Mufradât).

مَدِينَ (right) is the plural of مَدِينَ which is derived from مَدِينَ. They say مَدِينَ, i.e. he was or is correct in his opinion (Lane). مَدِينَ and الحَدِيث means, he spoke the truth.

مَدِينَ means, he was sincere to him or he was his well-wisher (Aqrab). مَدِينَ means: (1) you are speaking the truth, not a lie; (2) what you say is right, not wrong. It is in the latter sense that the word has been used in the present verse.

**Commentary:**

Commentators differ as to what is here meant by the word اسماء (names). Some think that God taught Adam the names of different things and objects, i.e., He taught him language. Others hold that God taught him the names of his offspring.

There is no doubt that man needed language in order to become civilized and God must have taught Adam a language, but the Quran indicates that there are أسماء (names or attributes) which man must learn for the perfection of his religion and morals. They are referred to in the verse: And to Allah alone belong all perfect attributes; so call on Him by these and leave alone those who deviate from the right way with respect to His attributes. They shall be requited with what they do (7:181). This verse shows that man cannot attain to divine knowledge without a correct conception of God’s أسماء or attributes and that this can be taught only by God. So it was necessary that God should have, in the very beginning, given Adam knowledge of His attributes so that man should know and recognize Him and attain His nearness and should not drift away from Him.

The verse quoted above (7:181) shows that the word أسماء (names) is used to signify the attributes of God and that a Muslim must be familiar with those attributes, so that he may pray to Him, invoking attributes most suited to the nature of the prayer. For example, if one prays for forgiveness and mercy, one should invoke the attributes of forgiveness and mercy; and if the prayer be for the attainment of righteousness, God should be invoked by names which pertain to that quality. The above verse also indicates that man must not of himself devise the attributes of God, because it is only God who can describe His attributes; man, being himself the creation of God, cannot do so. In fact, those who try to devise God’s attributes have been threatened with divine punishment.

In short, we learn from this verse that a Muslim must know God’s أسماء (names) which can be taught by Him alone, and which man has no right to devise out of his own fancy. There is strong evidence that God gave Adam a knowledge of His attributes. The view gains further strength when we take into consideration the difference between man and angel. According to the Quran, man differs from angels in that, whereas the former can be an image or reflex of أسماء, the latter represent only a few of them. The Quran says: They (the angels) do what they are bidden to do (66:7) which implies that the angels cannot act of their own free will. They have no will of their own, but passively perform the functions allotted to them by Providence. On the other hand, man, endowed with volition and free choice, differs from angels in that he has capabilities which make him a perfect manifestation of all divine attributes. A saying of the Holy Prophet—“the best morals in man are those which are in conformity with the great attributes of God” (‘Ummal, ii. 2)—also points to this. As God is Merciful, we should also show mercy to men; as He is Forgiving, so we must also be ready to forgive our
33. They said, 'Holy art Thou! No knowledge have we except what Thou hast taught us; surely, Thou art the All-Knowing, the Wise.'

fellow beings; as He connives at faults, so we must try to imitate Him in this particular; and as He protects the weak, so we must be ready to protect the weak, and so on. This injunction of the Holy Prophet justifies the inference that man has the capability to manifest in himself all the attributes of God. Thus, both the Quran and the Holy Prophet's sayings are agreed that man and angel differ in the manifestation of divine attributes, and the "names" in the clause, He taught Adam all the names, refer to the attributes of God. The verse means that God first implanted in Adam free will and the needful capacity for the comprehension of the various divine attributes, and then gave him the knowledge of those attributes, which was impossible without the power of assimilation.

The verse that follows corroborates this meaning; for therein it is stated that the attributes (attributes) were such as were not wholly known to the angels and it is evident that such are only the divine attributes.

The word \(\text{\textasciitilde}}\) may also mean the qualities of the different things in nature. As man was to make use of the forces of nature, God gave Adam the capacity of knowing their qualities and properties.

The word \(\text{\textasciitilde}}\) used here does not imply absolute totality. It simply means all that was necessary. The Quran uses this word in this sense elsewhere also (see 6:45; 27:7, 24; 28:58).

The pronoun in the words \(\text{\textasciitilde}}\) (He put the objects of these names) shows that the objects referred to here are not inanimate things; for in Arabic this form of pronoun is used only for rational beings. The meaning of the expression, therefore, would be that God showed Adam in a \(\text{kashf\ (vision)}\) certain human beings from among his progeny who were to be the manifestations of divine attributes in the future. Such beings were the Prophets or other holy persons who were to enjoy such nearness to God as to become His image and through whom God was to reform mankind. The angels were then asked whether they could manifest the divine attributes like them. This is what is meant by the words, Tell Me the names of these, occurring in the present verse.

39. Important Words:

\(\text{\textasciitilde}}\) (Holy art Thou). The word \(\text{\textasciitilde}}\) is the infinitive of \(\text{\textasciitilde}}\) for which see 2:31. The infinitive form is used to intensify the meaning.

Commentary:

As the angels were conscious of their nature and limitations, they frankly confessed that they were unable to reflect God's attributes as man could do, i.e., they could reflect only such of His attributes as He, in His eternal wisdom, had given them the power of reflecting. Man was a fuller image of God than the angels, or, for that matter, any other created being. Says God: We have created man in the best of constitutions (95:5).
34. He said, 'O Adam, tell them their names;' and when he had told them their names, He said, 'Did I not say to you, I know the secrets of the heavens and of the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?'

40. **Important Words**:

كمون (you conceal) is derived from كنت، meaning, he concealed. They say كنت لى لى i.e. he concealed or suppressed the thing. The Arabs use the expression كنت ذو كبير (he suppressed his breath) of a horse who, after running some distance, begins to pant, but having small nostrils, his breath remains, as it were, suppressed or concealed within him (Lane under كنت). So كنت (the act of concealing or suppressing) need not be deliberate or the result of a desire or attempt to conceal. It may merely be the result of circumstances or only the outcome of nature without an attempt or desire to that effect.

**Commentary**:

When the angels confessed their inability to manifest in themselves all the attributes that Adam could manifest, the latter, in obedience to the divine will, manifested the different capabilities ingrained in him and showed to the angels the extensiveness of his natural capacities. Thus man proved the necessity of a being who might secure from God the faculty of volition or the power of will by means of which he might voluntarily take to righteousness, (or, for that matter, to sinning) and might thereby reveal to the world the glory and the greatness of God.

The words, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal, mean that God knew which divine attributes the angels manifested in themselves and which they were incapable of manifesting.

The words, what you conceal, do not mean that the angels had a desire for, or that they made an attempt at concealment; for, as explained under Important Words, the word كنت (concealing) is also used to denote a state of affairs without there being any attempt or desire on one’s part to conceal or suppress anything. The words, what you conceal, therefore, refer to such attributes of God as the angels are unable to reflect in their own being on account of their natural inaptitude. It is a gross error to take the words, what you reveal and what you conceal, as signifying that the angels were not telling the whole truth before God.

As already pointed out under 2: 31, the conversation between God and angels and Adam, as mentioned in the verse, need not necessarily be taken in a literal sense. Sometimes the word قال (he said) is used to describe the practical upshot of events without there being any actual speech or dialogue, the purpose of such narration being only to show the existing condition of things in a vivid and graphic form and nothing more. A poet says: ُوُلْدُ يَنْتِيُنَانِ i.e. "Both of his eyes said, 'We will listen and obey,'" whereas the eyes have no speech. Thus the conversation embodying the story of Adam may also be nothing more than a portrayal in words.
And remember the time when We said to the angels, ‘Submit to Adam,’ and they all submitted. But Iblīs did not. He refused and was too proud; and he was of the disbelievers.

41. Important Words:

Submit (ṣadda) is derived from ṣadd which means: (1) he humbled or submitted himself; (2) he bowed; (3) he prostrated himself. They say ṣadda al-nifaa which means, the boat bowed before the wind i.e. it followed the direction of the wind (Aqrab); (4) the word also means, he obeyed and worshipped (Mufradāt).

But (la) is used to signify the sense of exception. In Arabic استثناء (exception) is of two kinds: (1) استثناء متعلق: i.e. an exception in which the thing excepted belongs to the same class or species to which the things from which an exception is sought to be made, belong, as we say: جاء القوم إلا زيدا i.e. all the people came except Zaid. Here Zaid belongs to the same class to which the people belong. (2) استثناء متصل: i.e. an exception in which the excepted thing belongs to a different class or species, as they say: جاء القوم إلا حارا i.e. all the people came except the donkey. Here the donkey does not belong to the class or species from which exception is sought to be made. In the verse under comment the word لا denotes the latter kind of exception, Iblīs not being one of the angels.

Iblīs is derived from إبلس which means: (1) his good or virtue became less or decreased; (2) he gave up hope or he despaired of the mercy of God; (3) he became broken in spirit and mournful; (4) he was perplexed and was unable to see his way; (5) he was or became silent on account of grief or despair; (6) he was cut short or silenced in argument; (7) he became unable to prosecute his journey; (8) he was prevented from attaining his wish. Iblīs is generally considered to be a name of Satan (Lane). Based on the root meaning of the word إبلس is a being who contains little of good and much of evil and who, on account of his having despaired of God’s mercy, owing to His disobedience, is left perplexed and confounded and unable to see his way. Iblīs is often considered identical with Satan, but is in some cases different from him, as will appear from the following commentary.

(Iblīs) is a very common word of the Arabic language giving a vast variety of meanings some of which are : (1) he or it was; (2) he or it is; (3) he or it shall be; (4) he or it came into being; (5) he or it became; etc. The word is also used to express a permanent attribute or quality, as the Quran says: هو كأني علم خداύن. The expression لا يليك أن يكون له أسرى means, it does not behave a Prophet, or it does not become a Prophet, or it is not right or proper for a Prophet that captives be taken for him (8: 68). The clause لا يليك أن يقلgrounds is impossible for a Prophet to act dishonestly, or a Prophet cannot act dishonestly (3: 162) (Aqrab, Mufradāt, Tāj & Kashshāf).

Commentary:

When Adam became an image of the attributes of God, and attained the rank of a Prophet, God ordered the angels to serve him. The words اسجد الأدم do not mean, “Fall prostrate before Adam.” The Quran definitely says: Prostrate not yourselves before the sun, nor before the moon, but prostrate yourselves before Allah, Who created them (41: 38). Thus
prostration before Adam by way of worship is opposed to the teachings of the Quran, and a command to that effect could never proceed from God. The word سجدة has been used here in the sense of "obedience," and "submission." Thus the verse means that God bade the angels serve Adam, that is, assist him in his mission. In this way, the angels are ordered to serve all the Prophets of God, their chief duty being to help the cause of a Prophet and to draw the hearts of men towards him.

'Iblis, it must be clearly understood, was not one of the angels, because, whereas Iblis has been here described as disobeying God, the angels have been described as ever 'submissive' and 'obedient.' Says the Quran: They disobey not Allah in what He commands them, and do what they are commanded (66:7). Hence Iblis could not be an angel. The objection, why was God angry with Iblis whereas the commandment stated in this verse was meant for the angels and not for him, is baseless, for elsewhere the Quran makes it clear that Iblis was also commanded to serve Adam. God says: What prevented thee (O Iblis,) from submitting (to Adam) when I commanded thee? (7:13). This shows that Iblis, though not an angel, was also ordered to make submission to Adam. Moreover, even if there were no separate commandment for Iblis, the one for angels must be taken to extend to all others, because angels being the custodians or guardians of the different parts of the universe, the commandment given to them automatically extends to all.

As to the identity of Iblis it may be briefly stated that, as described under Important Words, Iblis is really an attributive name given, on the basis of the root meaning of the word, to the Evil Spirit opposed to the angels. Iblis has been so named because he possesses the attributes enumerated under Important Words above, particularly the quality of being deprived of good and of being left bewildered in the way and of despairing of God's mercy.

That Iblis was not the satan spoken of in 2:37 below is apparent from the fact that the Quran mentions the two names side by side, wherever the story of Adam is given, but everywhere a careful distinction is observed between the two i.e. wherever the Quran speaks of the being who, unlike the angels, refused to serve Adam, it invariably mentions the name Iblis, and wherever it speaks of the being who beguiled Adam and became the means of his being turned out of جنة (garden), it invariably mentions the name 'satan.' This distinction, which is most significant and has been maintained throughout the Quran i.e. in at least ten places (see 2:35, 37; 7:12, 21; 15:32; 17:62; 18:51; 20:117, 121; 38:75), clearly proves that Iblis, who is mentioned side by side with the angels, is different from the 'satan' who beguiled Adam and was one of Adam's own people to whom Adam was sent as a Reformer.

Iblis thus was not one of the angels. This is apparent from the fact that whereas the angels have been described as being always obedient to God and incapable of disobedience (16:51; 66:7), Iblis has been spoken of as having arrogantly disobeyed a clear commandment of God (7:12, 13). Elsewhere, the Quran speaks of Iblis, saying: He (Iblis) was one of the jinn (a secret creation); then he chose to disobey God's order (18:51). From the above it is clear that though not one of the angels, Iblis belonged to a secret creation of God who, unlike the angels, was capable of obeying or disobeying the Lord, as he liked. The Quran further makes it clear that when Iblis insolently disobeyed God, He turned him away and cursed him for his rebellious attitude, whereupon Iblis took the vow that he would thenceforward take to misleading men and hindering them from following the right way (7:17, 18; 15:35, 36, 40; 17:63). Elsewhere the Quran says: Then said We to the angels,
36. And We said, 'O Adam, 'dwell thou and thy wife in the garden, and eat therefrom plentifully wherever you will, but approach not this tree, lest you be of the wrongdoers.'

42. Important Words:

الشجرة (tree) is the singular of شجرة (trees). It is derived from the verb شجر. The Arabs say شجر الأمر وشجراء i.e. the affair or case became complicated and confused so as to be a subject of disagreement and difference between them. شجرة means a tree, because of the intermixing or confusion of its branches. شجرة also signifies, the stock or origin of a man. They say، هو من شجرة طيبة i.e. he is of a good stock or origin (Lane).
wrongdoers) is the plural of ظالم which means: (1) he put a thing in the wrong place or in a place not its own; (2) he made one suffer loss; (3) he transgressed or committed a wrong. A ظالم is thus one who does an inappropriate or improper thing; or one who commits a wrong; or one who makes someone suffer a loss (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

The word جنّة (garden) occurring in this verse does not refer to Heaven or Paradise but simply to the garden-like place where Adam was first made to live. It cannot refer to Heaven: Firstly, because it was on the earth that Adam was made to live, as the words, Lord, they are not believers until they make thee judge in all that is in dispute between them (4: 66). Secondly, Heaven is a place from which no one who once enters it will ever be expelled (15:49), whereas Adam was made to quit the جنّة (garden) spoken of in this verse. This shows that the جنّة or garden in which Adam first dwelt was a place on this very earth which was given this name on account of the fertility of its soil and the abundance of its verdure. Recent researches go to show that the place where Adam was made to dwell was the garden of Eden which lay near Babylon in Iraq or Assyria.

According to the Bible, the forbidden شجرة (tree) was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2: 17). But we learn from the Quran that after having eaten of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve became naked which means that, unlike knowledge which is a source of goodness, the tree was a source of evil, making Adam exhibit a weakness. The Quranic view is evidently correct, because to deprive man of knowledge was to defeat the very purpose for which he had been brought into being. The Quran and the Bible seem, however, to agree on the point that the tree was not a real one, but only a symbol, because no tree with either of the above characteristics i.e. making a man naked or giving him knowledge of good or evil, exists on the face of the globe. So the tree must represent something else.

As explained above, the word شجرة also means a quarrel. Says the Quran: But no, by thy Lord, they are not believers until they make thee judge in all that is in dispute between them (4: 66).

Elsewhere, the Quran makes mention of two kinds of شجرة (1) شجرة طيبة (good tree) and (2) شجرة خبيرة (evil tree) for which see 14: 25 & 27. Pure things and pure teachings are likened to the former, and impure things and impure thoughts are likened to the latter. In the light of these explanations, the verse would mean: (1) that Adam was enjoined to avoid quarrels; (2) that he was warned against evil things, because although the verse does not specify evil or good, yet the prohibition cannot but refer to impure and evil things.

The expression, eat therefrom plentifully wherever you will, indicates that the place where Adam lived had not yet come under the jurisdiction of anybody and was what may be termed “God’s land ” which was given to Adam who was thus made lord of all he surveyed.

The concluding clause, lest you be of ظالمين or wrongdoers, means that the result of approaching the prohibited شجرة would be that Adam would become one of those who do not observe propriety in their actions; for, as explained under Important Words, ظالم means, putting a thing at a wrong place.
37. But *Satan caused them both to slip by means of it* and drove them out of *the state* in which they were. And We said, 'Go forth; some of you are enemies of others and *for you there is an abode in the earth and a provision, for a time.*'

43. **Important Words:**

- **إِن** (caused them both to slip). *إِن* is derived from *إِنْ* i.e. he slipped. *إِن* means: (1) he caused him to slip; (2) he turned him from the truth or from the right path (Aqrab). The word *إِن* is sometimes used of slipping without intention (Mufradát).

- **إِبْرَأْمًا** (go forth) is derived from *إِبْرَأَم* meaning, he descended or alighted or went down. But when the word is followed by the preposition *مِن* it generally means, he went forth or he departed. Thus *إِبْرَأْمًا مِنْهَا* means, he went forth from the valley (Baqá). Arabic grammar, however, permits of the preposition being omitted. Thus the word *إِبْرَأْمًا* in the present verse would mean, go forth or depart. Further on (in 2:39) we read *إِبْرَأْمًا مِنْهَا* which means, go out of it or go forth from it.

- **مستقر** (abode) is derived from *مستَقِرَ** which again is derived from *قَرْرَ* i.e. he stayed or became established in the place; he adopted the place as his residence. So *مستقر* means, a place where one resides or abides for some length of time (Aqrab).

- **طَاعٌ** (provision) is derived from *تَعَهَّد* i.e. God made him profit by it for some length of time. So *طَاعٌ* means: (1) any of the necessaries of life like food, clothes and furniture; (2) goods of the world; (3) any short-lived profit that does not last for long (Aqrab). The word also means, deriving benefit from a thing for some length of time (Mufradát).

**Commentary:**

The pronoun "it" in, *caused them both to slip by means of it*, evidently refers to the *شَجَرَة* or tree. The first two clauses of the verse mean that a satanic being enticed Adam and his spouse from the place where they were and thereby deprived them of the comforts they enjoyed. As explained in 2:35 above, it will be noted that he who beguiled and brought trouble on Adam was *Shaiṭān* and not *Iblīs*, who is spoken of as refusing to serve Adam. This distinction is to be found not only in the verse under comment but throughout the Quran which invariably speaks of *Iblīs* while mentioning the incident of refusal to bow down through pride, and of *Shaiṭān* wherever mention is made of Adam being instigated to eat of the prohibited *شَجَرَة* (tree). The distinction points to the conclusion that the word *Shaiṭān* does not here refer to *Iblīs*, but to some one from among the fellow-beings of Adam who was hostile to him. The inference is further supported by the verse: *As to My servants, thou (O Iblīs) shalt certainly have no power over them* (17:66). As Adam was a vicegerent of God, *Iblīs* could have no power over him, and the being who beguiled him was someone else. Hence, in order to bring out this fact, the word *Shaiṭān*, which has a much wider significance than *Iblīs*, has been used here.

The concluding words of the verse, *i.e., for you there is an abode in the earth, also prove that the Quran lends no support to the
38. Then Adam learnt from his Lord certain words of prayer. So He turned towards him with mercy; surely He is Oft-Returning with compassion, and is Merciful.  

A short note here on the word 'Satan' will not be out of place. As will be readily seen, the word 'Satan' is of much wider significance than Iblîs, for whereas Iblîs is the name given to the Evil Spirit who belonged to the jinn and refused to serve Adam, thereafter becoming the leader of the forces of evil in the universe, the word 'Satan' is used about any evil or harmful being or thing, whether a spirit or a human being or an animal or a disease or any other thing. Thus Iblîs is a 'satan;' his comrades and associates are 'satans;' enemies of truth are 'satans;' mischievous men are 'satans;' injurious animals are 'satans;' and harmful diseases are 'satans.' The Quran, the Hadîth and the Arabic literature are full of instances in which the word 'satan' has been freely used about one or all of these things. Thus the Quran says that there are 'satans' both among men and the jinn (6:113). Again, mischievous enemies of truth are also called 'satans' in the Quran (2:15). The Holy Prophet once used the name 'satan' about a thief who had repeatedly robbed Abû Huraira (Bukhârî). Similarly the Holy Prophet once said that a black street dog was a 'satan' (Mâjah). Again he once ordered his Companions to cover up their utensils containing food and drink lest 'satan' should find its way into them, evidently meaning harmful insects and germs (Majâh). At another place the Holy Prophet exhorts his followers to clean their nostrils when they rise from sleep in the morning as 'satan' rests in them, hinting that harmful matter accumulates in the nostrils which, if not removed, may injure health (Muslim).

From the above instances it is clear that 'satan' is a very general term and is freely used about all evil or harmful beings or things. For the meaning of the word 'Satan' see note on 2:15.

44. Important Words:

- لَتَلَقَّى (learnt) is derived from لَتَلَقَّ لَتَلَقَّ i.e. he came face to face with him; he met him or he saw him; he found him.
- تَلَقَّى the latter expression being generally used of two or more persons speaking to one another.
- تَلَقَّى the word means, he said to him; the latter expression being generally used of two or more persons speaking to one another.

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39. We said, 'Go forth, all of you, from here. And if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoso shall follow My guidance, on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve.'

Commentary:

This verse tells us that when 'satan' deceived Adam, and God informed him of his mistake, he prayed to God for forgiveness in words which he learnt from God Himself. These words have been mentioned by the Quran elsewhere and they run thus: Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the lost (7:24).

This was the prayer that Adam learnt from God. The prayer was heard and Adam was forgiven. The fact that God Himself taught Adam the words of this prayer shows that he was a chosen one of God and was a recipient of divine revelation. The verse also tells us that on special occasions God Himself teaches His servants the words in which they should pray to Him, and it is evident that the words of prayer chosen by God are sure to find ready acceptance with Him. It is in fact a way of honouring holy men and expediting their reconciliation with Him that God sometimes teaches them the words in which they should pray to Him. It is, in other words, saying to them, "Come to Me with a request and I will grant it." Strange indeed are the ways of the Lord Whose mercy and forgiveness are, as it were, always eager to descend on man, if he only cares to turn towards Him with repentance. Says the Holy Prophet, "God has spoken to me saying: 'Whoso does a good deed will have a tenfold reward and even more, and whoso does an evil deed will have a punishment only equal to it or will have his sin forgiven altogether. And whoso approaches Me by half a cubit, I will go to him by one cubit and whoso approaches Me by one cubit, I will go to him by four cubits; and whoso comes to Me walking, I will go to him running'" (Muslim).

45. Important Words:

خوف (fear) is derived from خان i.e. he feared. خوف denotes fear about the future.

حزن (shall grieve) is derived from حزن which means, he felt regret, grief, and sorrow. حزن means, he made him sorrowful. حزن (grief) generally, though not always, relates to what is past.
40. But \textit{they who will disbelieve} and treat Our signs as lies, these shall be the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.\footnote{Important Words: خالدون (shall abide). For the meaning of خالدون see under 2:26.}

R. 5 41. O children of Israel! \textit{remember My favours which I bestowed upon you}, and fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you, and Me alone should you fear. \footnote{Important Words: اسرائيل (Israel) is another name of Jacob, son of Isaac. This name was bestowed by God on Jacob later in life (Gen. 32:28). The original}
Hebrew word is a compound one made up of יִרְאֵ א and יִרְאֵ א and means: (a) God’s prince; (b) God’s warrior; (c) God’s soldier (Concordance by Cruden and Hebrew-English Lexicon by W. Gesenius). The name Israel is used to convey three different senses: (1) Jacob personally (Gen. 32: 28); (2) progeny of Jacob (Deut. 6: 3, 4); (3) any righteous and God-fearing person or people (Hebrew-English Lexicon).

I.J} ~ I (remember) is derived from ذكر meaning: (1) he spoke of; (2) he remembered, i.e. called to mind; (3) he kept in memory. Thus ذكر (remembrance) may either be with the tongue or with the mind or heart (Aqrab & Mufradat).

-lr~ (covenant). The word ¥ gives a number of meanings. ¥ (injunction; a commandment; a responsibility; a covenant; a promise; fulfilment of a promise; an oath; observance of the sanctity of a thing; protection; meeting with a person or thing; etc. (Lane & Aqrab). In the present verse does not mean, My part of the covenant, because the Israelites could not be asked to fulfil what God had promised. It means, the covenant you made with Me. Similarly ¥ means, My covenant with you and not your covenant with Me.

As to the question that naturally arises here, why God addresses the Jews in this verse as “the children of Israel” and not as “the children of Jacob” or simply as “the Jews,” it may be stated that Israel, being the name given to Jacob by God Himself, has been preferred to the name Jacob which was apparently given him by his parents. Moreover, Israel, being an attributive name meaning “God’s warrior,” has been chosen to remind the Jews that, being the children of a great soldier of God, they should also behave like brave men and, throwing aside all petty considerations, should come forward and accept the Prophet whom God has raised for their own good. The form ¥ (O ye children of Israel), is similar to addressing a man as ¥ (O you the son of a noble man), which expression we use when we wish to appeal to him to show nobility and generosity just as his noble father before him used to do.
As to the other name "Jews," it may be noted that both "Israel" and "Jews" are attributive names which have come to be used as proper names. Where the Quran desires to refer to the followers of Moses as a community descended from one common ancestor, it speaks of them as "children of Israel," and where it desires to refer to them as a religious unit it uses the name "Jews," the word нед carr or нед (derived from нед) meaning a people that turn to God or to the truth with repentance. Or, as some people have thought, нед is derived from нед (Judah) who was one of the sons of Jacob. As Judah's descendants together with those of his brother, Benjamin, constituted the kingdom of Judah at Jerusalem, as opposed to that of the remaining ten tribes of Israel, collectively known as Israel, and as Jerusalem became the religious centre of the Jews, therefore the Jewish religion came to be known as Judaism and the people professing that religion as нед or Jews (Enc. Brit. under Jews).

The "favours" spoken of in the verse include both spiritual and temporal favours, of both of which the Israelites had their share. Says the Quran: And remember when Moses said to his people, 'O my people, call to mind Allah's favour upon you when He appointed Prophets among you and made you kings' (5:21).

This verse makes it clear that the highest spiritual favour is prophethood and the highest temporal favour is kingship and both these favours were bestowed on the Israelites. The facts of history bear out that assertion.

The words اتوأ بعدهم ادوان بعدهمون have been rendered in the text as, fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you, but perhaps a simpler rendering would be, "fulfil My commandments, I will fulfil the promise I made to you." As for the covenant spoken of in this verse, we read in the Quran that, when Abraham enquired of God whether the promise which He had made to him about making him an Imam or leader of the people applied to his posterity also, God said, My covenant does not embrace the transgressors (2:125) which implied that the covenant applied only to the righteous children of Abraham.

The Bible also refers to this covenant in Gen. 17:4-14 where God says to Abraham, "As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations... And I will make thee exceeding fruitful and I will make nations of thee and kings shall come out of thee. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." The circumcision here spoken of is treated as a symbol of spiritual purification in the scriptures (Lev. 26:41 & Jer. 4:3, 4; 9:25). The Jews retained the outward form of the rite of circumcision but neglected the inner spirit, while Christians neglected both.

After Abraham the covenant was renewed with the Israelites. This second covenant is mentioned in the Bible in several places (Exod. 20; Deut. Chaps. 5, 18, 26). God gave Moses on Mount Sinai (or Horeb as it is called in Deut.) the Ten Commandments and made a covenant with the Israelites (Deut. 5:2, 3). They were commanded to keep this covenant thus: "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you and that ye may prolong your days in the land ye shall possess" (Deut. 5:33). And again "Thou (O Israel!) hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken unto His
voice: and the Lord hath avouched thee this
day to be His peculiar people as He has promised
thee, and that thou shouldst keep all His com-
mandments" (Deut. 26: 17, 18).

When the covenant was being made and the

glory of God was manifesting itself on Mount
Sinai, the Israelites were so terrified to see "the,
thunderings and the lightnings and the noise
of the trumpet and the mountain smoking"
(Exod. 20: 18) that accompanied this manifes-
tation that they exclaimed to Moses, saying:
"Speak thou with us and we will hear; but

let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exod.
20: 19). These words sealed the fate of the
Israelites; for thereupon God said to Moses that,
though the Israelites would be blessed as long
as they acted upon the commandments revealed
through him, in future no Law-giving

Prophet, just as he was, would appear
among them. Such a Prophet—a Law-giving

Prophet like unto him—would in future
appear from among the brethren of the
Israelites i.e. the Ishmaelites. Says Moses:
"And the Lord said unto me, they have well
spoken that which they have spoken. I will
raise them up a prophet from among their
brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my
words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto
them all that I shall command him. And it
shall come to pass, that whosoever will not
hearken unto my words which he shall speak
in my name, I will require it of him (Deut.
18: 18, 19).

In the foregoing verses, the Israelites are told
that as they themselves refused to listen to the
word of God, the next Law-giving Prophet will
be raised not from among them, but from
among their brethren. Prophets were indeed
raised among the Israelites even after Moses
as the Quran itself testifies (2: 88), but
the Prophet that was to be "like Moses" i.e.
a Law-giving Prophet, was not raised from
among them in accordance with the prophecy
quoted above.

The prophecy clearly stated that the next
Law-giving Prophet was to be from among
the "brethren" of the Israelites. Now as the
Ishmaelites are the "brethren" of the Israelites,
it was from among them that the Holy Prophet
of Islam appeared. This is quite in conformity
with the promise which was first made to
Abraham himself (2: 130).

It is wrong to say that the words "of thy
brethren" may refer to the Israelites themselves;
for at the time of Moses all the tribes of Israel
were living together, and if the Promised
Prophet was to appear from among them, it
could in no sense be right to say that the Lord
would raise up a Prophet from among the
"brethren" of the Israelites. Neither can the
prophecy apply to Jesus who, besides not being
a Law-giving Prophet (Matt. 5: 17, 18), was an
Israelite and not an Ishmaelite. The prophecy
was clearly fulfilled in the Holy Prophet of
Arabia, who was an Ishmaelite and, like Moses,
a Law-giving Prophet.

It has been objected that elsewhere the Bible
speaking of this prophecy, uses the words
"from the midst of thee, of thy brethren,"
which shows that the words apply to the
Israelites themselves. But this inference is
clearly wrong; for, firstly the words "from the
midst of thee" are not God's words but only
those of Moses (Deut. 18: 15), whereas the
words "from among thy brethren" are God's
own words (Deut. 18: 18); and as the prophecy
is based on God's revelation and not on Moses'
interpretation, the former must be assumed to
be more correct. Secondly, even if we take the
words "from the midst of thee, of thy brethren,"
to be correctly based on God's revelation, then
also these words may be taken to apply to the
Holy Prophet of Islam, for he, having been
sent to all nations, may truly be looked upon
as having been raised amidst each and every
people of the world. In this case the words
"from the midst of thee, of thy brethren"
would be interpreted to give a twofold meaning:
(1) that the Promised Prophet would be raised for all the nations of the world, including the Israelites; and (2) that personally he would belong to the Ishmaelites.

As the Jews repeatedly broke God's covenant, it was transferred to the Holy Prophet and his followers. Says God in the Quran: (Moses prayed to God, saying,) Ordain for us good in this world, as well as in the next; we have turned to Thee with repentance. God replied, I will inflict My punishment on whom I will; but My mercy encompasses all things; so I will ordain it for those who act righteously, and pay the Zakat and those who believe in Our Signs—those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet, the immaculate one, whom they find mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel which are with them (7:157, 158).

The mention of the Holy Prophet in the Bible is to be met with in Deut. 18 wherein the Israelites are exhorted to accept the Promised Prophet so that they may receive mercy.

Again, the Quran says: And remember the time when Allah took a covenant from the people through the Prophets: Saying, whatever I give you of the Book and Wisdom and then there comes to you a Messenger fulfilling what is with you, you shall believe in him and help him, and He said, Do you agree and do you accept the responsibility which I lay upon you in this matter? They said, We agree; He said, Then bear witness and I am with you among the witnesses (3:82).

From what has been said above it is clear that in the words, and fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you, God reminds the children of Israel that He had made a covenant with Isaac and his seed after him to the effect that if they fulfilled their covenant with Him and obeyed all His behests, He would continue to bestow His favours on them; but if they did not fulfil their covenant, they would be deprived of His favours. Now as the Israelites utterly failed to keep the covenant, God raised the Promised Prophet from among the Ishmaelites as He had already promised, and henceforth the covenant was transferred to the followers of the new Prophet. He who obeyed the new Prophet would prosper; he who rejected him would be cut off.

The words, fulfil your covenant with Me, I will fulfil My covenant with you, also lead to an important inference. The greatest favour bestowed by God upon the Israelites in fulfilment of His covenant with them was the gift of prophecy. They were given a Law in the form of the Torah, but this did not put an end to the appearance of Prophets among them who continued to come even after Moses. These Prophets brought no new Law but they received divine revelation and breathed a new life into their people. The Quran also refers to this favour of God upon the Israelites (5:21).

Now in the verse under comment, God holds out the promise to the Israelites that if they fulfilled their part of the covenant and believed in the Holy Prophet of Islam, He would fulfil His part i.e. continue to bestow the gift of prophecy on them as He had done in the past. This could be done only by raising from among them such Prophets as brought no new Law but simply came to serve the Law of Islam. From this it clearly follows that even in the new Dispensation inaugurated by the Holy Prophet, the gift of prophethood is still open; if it were not open, the promise of God that if the Israelites believed in the new Dispensation, the same favours which were bestowed on them in the past would be bestowed on them in the future could not hold true.

From the above it is also clear that the prophethood promised in Islam is to be like that of the Prophets who came after Moses. The latter were not Law-bearing Prophets, but simply came to serve the Law of Moses. Similarly, the prophethood promised in Islam
42. And believe in what I have sent down which fulfils that which is with you, and be not the first to disbelieve therein, and barter not My signs for a paltry price, and take protection in Me alone. 

is not to be a Law-bearing prophethood but simply a prophethood meant for the service of the Quran (See also under 1:7).

The concluding words, and Me alone should you fear, are at once a warning and an appeal to the Jews. As explained under Important Words, this clause contains triple emphasis and means somewhat like this, “Fear Me alone; beware, and fear Me alone.” The Israelites had already incurred God’s anger by repeatedly breaking their covenant with Him. Now was a last chance for them, so let them fear the Lord even now and accept the new Prophet whose acceptance can yet turn the scales in their favour. It was a case of—now or never.

In this connection it may also be noted that the above expression i.e. and Me alone should you fear, has not been used to signify that God is something to be feared. The emphasis is rather on the fact that nothing except God should be feared. Islam roots out all fears except that of God. Indeed, he who fears anybody or anything except God is not a true believer.

48. Important Words:

(fulfilling) is derived from meaning, he told the truth or he was true. (saddaqahū) means, he held or declared him or it to be true. زيد قال that what Khalid had said was true (Aqrab & Lane). The word when used about previous Prophets or previous scriptures can possibly signify three things: (1) that the claim of the previous Prophets and the previous Books about their divine mission or divine origin is true; (2) that the teachings which they gave were true; and (3) that the prophecies which they made about the coming of some future Prophet or future revelation, etc., were true. Now the Quran and the Holy Prophet were of the previous Books and the previous Prophets in all these three senses: (1) Islam declares that all previous Prophets and all previous Books that claimed divine mission or divine origin and were believed in as such by a large number of people were indeed from God (2:5; 2:286); (2) it admits that the teachings of the previous Prophets and the previous Books were true, not necessarily in the form in which they existed at the time of its advent but in the form in which they were originally given (98:4); (3) it claims that the prophecies made by previous Books and the previous Prophets about the coming of a Prophet and the coming of a Book of divine Law were true and have been fulfilled in the Quran and the Holy Prophet of Islam. In the verse under comment the word مصدق is used in the last-mentioned sense i.e. fulfilling the prophecies of the previous scriptures.

Moreover, the word مصدق is here followed by the preposition لام and not ل and there is a difference between simple مصدق and مصدق and مصدق. When the word is used in the sense of holding a thing to be true, it is either followed by no preposition or is followed by the
When, however, the Quran uses the word in the sense of 'fulfilling,' it is followed by the preposition لام. Even in common parlance we say "I have come in accordance with, or to fulfil, the word of such a person.

The use of the word مصدق in the Quran practically bears out this distinction. For instance, in 2:92 the Quran says: 'And when it is said to them, 'Believe in what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us'; and they disbelieve in what has been sent down after that, yet it is the truth, fulfilling that which is with them.' This verse makes it absolutely clear what the word لام means when followed by the preposition لام. It undoubtedly means "fulfilling" and not "confirming" or "declaring to be true." The expression in the verse quoted above has been used as a proof of the truth of the Quran and this clearly proves that this expression (i.e. مصدق لام) conveys the sense of "fulfilling," not that of "confirming;" for if a book declares the Bible to be true, that is no proof of the book being itself a revealed word of God; even an imposter can declare the previous scriptures to be true. It is only the fulfilling of the prophecies contained in the Bible that can serve as an evidence of the truth of the Quran. Thus it is clear that when the Quran speaks of its being لام (used with the preposition لام) of the Christian and the Jewish scriptures, it uses the word in the sense of "fulfilling" and not in the sense of "declaring to be true."

Again in 35:32 we find the same expression definitely used in the sense of 'fulfilling.' The verse runs thus: 'And the Book which We have revealed to thee is the truth itself, fulfilling (صدق) that which is before it, i.e., fulfilling the scriptures that have gone before it. Now in this verse لام cannot mean 'declaring to be true'; for in that case we shall have to admit that the Quran declares all the teachings contained in previous scriptures to be true, whereas many of these scriptures are contradictory of one another and all of them contain at least some teachings that are opposed to the teachings of the Quran. So if the expression لام means "declaring to be true," it would signify that the Quran declares not only all the mutually contradictory scriptures to be true, but also such teachings as are opposed to its own teaching. From this it is clear that the expression مصدق لام can only signify that the Quran fulfils the prophecies that were contained in the previous scriptures regarding the advent of a Law-giving Prophet and a universal Dispensation.

Commentary:
The verse under comment is a fitting complement of what has been said in the previous verse. God, the Almighty, calls upon the Israelites to accept the Holy Prophet of Islam in whom the prophecies contained in their scriptures have been fulfilled. In fact, all the previous scriptures had prophesied about the advent of a great Prophet. The Quran itself refers to this fact where it says: 'And remember the time when Allah took a covenant from the people through the Prophets, saying, 'Whatever I give you of the Book and Wisdom, and then there comes to you a Messenger fulfilling what is with you, you shall believe in him, and help him.' And He said, 'Do you agree and do you accept the responsibility which I lay upon you in this matter? They said, 'We agree;' He said, 'Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses' (3:82). In this verse we have been told that every previous Prophet informed his people of the advent of a great Prophet and enjoined them to accept him when he made his appearance. As, before Islam, different Prophets were sent to different peoples, and it was only with the advent of Islam that there was to come a Prophet for all mankind, therefore it was
necessary that a covenant should have been taken from all the different peoples binding them to accept the World-Prophet when he appeared.

The advent of such a Prophet who was to gather together all nations was announced in Isaiah 42:1—4 in the following words:

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgement to the nations. He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgement in truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgement in the earth; and the isles shall wait; for his law. Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them forth" (Revised Version). Again, in Isaiah 55:4 we read: "Behold, I have given him for witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples" (Revised Version). Compare this with the Quran where God addresses the Holy Prophet, saying: And how will it fare with them when We shall bring a witness from every people, and shall bring thee as a witness against these (4:42). The above quoted prophecy mentioned in Isaiah cannot be supposed to refer to Jesus, for he did not claim to have been sent to all peoples. Says Jesus, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24).

In Isaiah 60:5—7, we read:

"Then thou shalt see and be lightened, and thine heart shall tremble and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; they all shall come from Sheba: They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of the Lord. All the
43. And a confound not truth with falsehood b nor hide the truth, knowingly. 49

of Islam and should therefore be the first to accept him; at least they should not go to the other extreme and be the first to reject him.

The words, and barter not My Signs for a paltry price, are explained in the Quran in 4:78: Say, The benefit of this world is little. Interpreted in this light the verse would mean “Do not forsake the truth for worldly gains,” for worldly gains, however big, are but a small and passing thing when compared with the gains of the Hereafter. These words may also be interpreted to signify that people who reject the truth may secure only temporary gains, but eventually, even in this life, the tide very often turns, bringing the righteous ones in ascendance.

The concluding words, and take protection in Me alone, are similar in construction to those placed at the end of the preceding verse, the only difference being that here the word تَمْرَهْنُ has been replaced by the word تَتَقُرِّب which gives a much wider significance than the former. For an explanation of the word تَتَقُرِّب see under 2:3 above.

Before we pass on to the next verse, it is necessary to remove one possible misunderstanding. The Quran declares itself to be of the Jewish scriptures and we have explained this expression as meaning, not that the Quran holds the previous scriptures to be true but that it has come in fulfilment of what was prophesied in them. This should not give rise to the misunderstanding that the Quran does not accept the divine origin of the previous scriptures. As a matter of fact, the Quran itself says that God’s Messengers have appeared among all the different peoples of the world (35:25). It also calls upon its followers to believe in all the previous revelations but this belief should be through the Holy Prophet and not independently of him (2:5). At the same time, the Quran criticizes and denies several teachings ascribed to the previous scriptures and claims that these teachings have been tampered with (19:89—92; 9:30; 4:47). Thus the position may be summed up as follows:

(1) Wherever the Quran speaks of itself as being مصدق له of the previous scriptures, it does not mean that it confirms their teachings but that it claims to have come in fulfilment of their prophecies.

(2) Nevertheless the Quran accepts the divine origin of all the revealed Books that were sent by God before Islam.

(3) But it does not look upon all their present teachings to be true; for much has been tampered with and much that was meant for a specific period has now become obsolete.

49. Important Words:

��了解 (confound) is derived from لبس which means, he put on a clothing. And as a clothing serves to cover or hide the body of the person clothed, the word has also come to mean, to cover up or to hide or to confound or to make a thing mixed up or doubtful (Aqrab).

 $$$falsehood$$ is derived from بلاء which means: (1) it became corrupt, or (2) it became inoperative, or (3) it went waste and served no useful purpose. The Arabs use the expression دم of a murdered
44. And observe Prayer and pay the Zakāt, and bow down with those who bow.\(^{50}\)

**Commentary:**

Here the Jews are forbidden (1) to mingle the true with the false, by quoting verses from their scriptures and putting wrong interpretations on them; and (2) to suppress or hide the truth, i.e. suppress such prophecies in their scriptures as refer to the Promised Prophet.

50. **Important Words:**

- **Zakāt** (Zakāt) is derived from زكاء, i.e. he or it grew or increased or became good or purified, etc. So literally زكاء signifies: (1) increase or augmentation; (2) purification (Lane). Technically, it signifies the obligatory alms prescribed by Islam. (See note on 9:60). زكاء is so called because it results in the purification of the property from which it is given and also in its increase through God’s blessing (Mufradat).

- **Rakām** (bow down) is derived from ركع which means, he bowed down. ركع means, he leaned towards God and found peace of mind in Him. ركع المصل means, the worshipper performed the bowing posture. ركع means, one who bows down before God or leans towards Him (Lisan & Aqrab). The Arabs used the word راکم for one who worshipped God alone to the exclusion of idols (Asās). A well-known pre-Islamic poet Nābigha says:

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45. **Do you enjoin others to do what is good and forget your own selves, while you read the Book? Will you not then understand?**

46. **And seek help with patience and prayer; and this indeed is hard except for the humble in spirit.**

severed all connections with false deities. This extra significance could not have been secured by the use of the word *Muslim* or *Mu’min* which have come to be regarded as more or less proper names.

51. **Important Words:**

- تنسون (forget) is derived from تنسن meaning: 
  1. he forgot; 
  2. he ignored; 
  3. he left off a thing (Aqrab).

- تقلن (you understand) is derived from تقلن meaning: 
  1. he understood; 
  2. he realized his mistake. تقلن المبارز means, the boy reached the age of puberty. تقلن المبارز means, he tied up the camel with a piece of rope. Thus تقلن also embodies the sense of restraining (Aqrab).

- ج (good) means, acting well towards relations and others; truthfulness; fidelity; righteousness; obedience; obedience to God (Aqrab). It also means, extensive goodness or beneficence (Mufradât).

**Commentary:**

The Quran questions the Jews, as if saying: Do you enjoin men to practise extensive beneficence, to deal kindly with one another, to be truthful, to act righteously and to serve and obey God, yet you neglect your own selves, while you claim to read the Book sent by God? Again, your Book contains prophecies concerning the Holy Prophet of Islam, yet you do not accept him. Thus you break a great commandment of the Lord but bid others to observe lesser commandments. Will you not then understand? The word 'Book' here refers to the Bible, but the clause, while you read the Book, does not imply that all the contents of the Bible have been admitted to be true and indisputable. The words have been used with the object of bringing home to the Jews the fact that while they think they are the People of the Book, they behave like ignorant men. Should the People of the Book behave as they behave?

The words, do you enjoin others to do what is good and forget your own selves, may be interpreted in another way also. As explained under Important Words, the word ج means, acting well towards relations. The Jews are thus invited to ponder over the fact whether they have acted well towards their brethren, the Ishmaelites? They went about enjoining others to act kindly towards relations but for more than two thousand years they themselves acted most shamefully towards their own kinsmen, and their rejection of the Holy Prophet was also due to the jealousy they bore towards the house of Ishmael.

52. **Important Words:**

- (patience) means: 
  1. to steadily adhere to what reason and law command; 
  2. to restrain
47. Who know for certain that they will meet their Lord, and that to Him they will return.

Commentary:
This verse along with the one that follows may be taken to be addressed either to the Jews or to the Muslims. In the former case, it constitutes a continuation of the address to the Israelites, meaning that the Israelites should not be hasty in rejecting the Holy Prophet but should seek to find out the truth with patience and prayer. The verse, however, ends with an expression of the fear that, as seeking to find out the truth in the aforesaid manner is difficult, the Jews perhaps will not resort to the method which only the humble adopt. Or it may be taken to be addressed to Muslims. When the Quran recounted so many hostile activities of Jews against Muslims, it was natural that the weak-minded people among the latter should begin to entertain fear of the Jews. So, as necessitated by the psychological effect of the verses on the listeners, the Quran here turns to the Muslims and gives them a message of hope and encouragement. If Muslims acted with صبر ونذور (patience and prayer), they need have no fear. In other words, if they abstain from evils, and practise virtue and be steadfast and observe patience and constantly pray to God for help, He will certainly send them His help, and they will conquer all opposition.

The pronoun in the words, this indeed is hard except for the humble in spirit, refers either to استمتاع or to استمتاع derived from the word استمتاع meaning, that the act of seeking God's help through الصلاة is not an easy affair. It requires not only a righteous spirit but also one of complete restraint and trust.

53. Important Words:
اذا شاهد (know for certain) is derived from دخوون which expresses two contrary meanings, sometimes implying doubt and uncertainty, and sometimes certainty and knowledge (Aqrab). Evidently, it is in the latter sense that the word has been used in this verse.

Commentary:
This verse explains the word خاشعين (the humble) occurring in the preceding verse. God says that in His sight خاشعين are those people who have complete faith in Him and are sure of meeting Him one day. Such people have the strength of their conviction and do not falter before opposition.

The words, they will meet their Lord, refer to the meeting with God which holy men enjoy in this life, while the words, to Him will they return, refer to the complete nearness to God which such men will attain in the life to come.
R. 6. 48. O children of Israel! remember My favours which I bestowed upon you and that I exalted you above all peoples.54

49. And fear the day when no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, nor shall intercession be accepted for it; nor shall ransom be taken from it; nor shall they be helped.55

54. Commentary:
This verse is clearly addressed to the Jews. God here introduces the previous subject with a repetition of the words, O children of Israel, remember My favours, occurring in verse 41 above. But the words are not truly a repetition; for they are followed by others which do not form part of verse 41. Thus the verse under comment serves to introduce a new point. In the earlier verse the reference in the word favours is to the covenant between God and the Jews, whereas the reference in the verse under comment is to the fact that God exalted the Israelites above other peoples.

In the verse under comment the Israelites are reminded that God had fulfilled His promise to them, but as they had, on their part, failed to fulfil their covenant, He had withheld from them the blessing which He had been conferring on them before. The Promised Prophet from among their brethren had come and God's covenant had been transferred to a new people. So they had no ground for complaint.

The words, I exalted you above all peoples, do not mean that the Israelites are superior to all peoples who have ever dwelt or will ever dwell on this planet. Such a meaning is inconsistent with other passages of the Quran. For instance, in 3:34 it is said: Allah did choose Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imran above all peoples. As there can be only one people who can have superiority over all other peoples in the true sense of the term, evidently the word عالٍ (peoples) here signifies peoples of that age only.

Where the Quran desires to convey the idea of real superiority over all nations, it uses other expressions. For instance, the Quran addresses the Muslims in the words: You are the best people raised for the good of mankind (3:111). Here the Muslims are definitely spoken of as the best nation that has ever been brought forth for the good of the world.

55. Important Words:

shall serve as a substitute) is derived from جزى which means, he or it sufficed; he rendered satisfaction; he paid; he requited or recompensed. The expression جزى هذا من هذا or جزى هذا عن هذا means, this stood in the place of that, or this served as a substitute for that (Lane & Aqrab).

(intercession) is derived from شفع which means, he provided a thing, which was alone,
with another, or he joined up a single thing with another, so as to make it one of a pair or couple. The Arabs say جَعِلَتْ جَعْلًا، i.e. it was a single thing and I joined to it another and made it one of a couple. According to Al-Rāghib شَجَعُ، signifies the adjoining a thing to its like; thus the word has the significance of likeness or similarity also. Then the verb شَجَعُ has come to mean, he interceded, because the person who intercedes for another attaches, or, as it were, joins or links up the latter to himself and thus uses his influence in his favour. Thus شَجَعَ لَقَانَ أَوْلَى لَقَانِ الْأَمِيرِ means, he interceded for such a person with the prince; he requested or prayed the prince to help or show favour to such a person on the ground that he was attached to him as a relation or friend or follower, etc. Therefore Shaj'ah therefore means, interceding or praying for a person to the effect that he may be shown favour or that his sins may be passed over, on the ground that he is connected with the intercessor or is like or similar to him; it being also implied that the petitioner is a person of higher position than the one for whom he pleads and is also connected with him with whom he intercedes (Aqrab, Mufradāt, Lane & Lisan).

شحا (ransom) means: (1) equity or justice; (2) equal compensation; (3) fair and equitable ransom (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse is important. God addresses the Israelites, who claimed to be the progeny of the Prophets, saying that though it was a fact that they were descended from holy personages and He had shown special favour to them inasmuch as He had exalted them above other peoples of the age, yet as they repeatedly broke His covenant and had begun to lead wicked lives and had finally rejected the Promised Prophet, who had made his appearance in fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the Bible, they no longer deserved His blessings, but had, on the contrary, become the object of His wrath and must be prepared to render an account of their deeds. The verse under comment calls upon the Jews to prepare themselves for the Day of Retribution when they would stand alone before God and there would be none to intercede for them or help them in any other way. The fact that they were descended from holy persons would be of no avail, nor would any substitute or ransom be accepted from them. It would indeed be a dreadful day for those who reject God's Messengers; for on that day nothing but one's own deeds would count.

As a criminal can count on four possible means of securing his release, God has mentioned all those means and has made it clear that none of them will avail him on the Day of Reckoning. The first idea that comes to the mind of a culprit is to prove that the offence alleged to have been committed by him was legally not committed by him at all. It was either committed by somebody else or, if it was in fact committed by him, it was committed at the instigation of another person, or another person undertook to shoulder his burden. Thus the culprit tries to secure his release by throwing the blame or the responsibility on somebody else. In view of this plea, the Quran says that (on the Day of Judgement) no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul. If a person is really sinful, the blame will surely lie on his own head and will by no means be shifted to another person. Every one will bear his own cross and there will be no atonement in the sense of one man serving as a substitute for another.

The second possible way of escape when a criminal fails to shift the responsibility to another person, is for him either to try to secure the intercession of an influential person in his favour or to enter a plea that he is related to some big personality and hence is entitled to special treatment. In reply to this, the Quran says, nor shall intercession be
accepted for it. As explained above, the word لِيَأَتُشْرَ لِيُأَتُشْرَ here has a twofold significance: (a) that no influential person shall be allowed to intercede for a culprit; and (b) that no culprit shall himself be allowed to put in the plea that he is related to an influential person.

The third possible means of release is for the culprit to try to secure his freedom by paying a ransom. With regard to this the Quran says, *nor shall ransom be taken from it.*

Finally, when a criminal sees that all other means of escape have failed, he thinks of using force and getting his release by violence. With regard to this, the Quran says: *nor shall they be helped, i.e., they shall find no helpers against God.*

The Quran mentions these things not by way of threat but to make the Jews realize that they should not entertain false hopes. The only way open to them was to accept the Holy Prophet whom God had raised for their own good.

Here arises a very important question. What is the teaching of Islam about لِيَأَتُشْرَ (intercession)? Does Islam hold it to be quite useless and unlawful, as would appear from the verse under comment, or does it hold certain forms of لِيَأَتُشْرَ to be useful and lawful and others to be useless and unlawful? From the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith it appears that the latter view is correct and we proceed to discuss it accordingly. It should be stated at once that the word “intercession” is a very imperfect rendering of the word لِيَأَتُشْرَ. It conveys only a part of the meaning of لِيَأَتُشْرَ and that too very imperfectly.

As explained under Important Words, the root meaning of the word لِيَأَتُشْرَ is to attach or connect or join a thing, or, for that matter, to connect or join oneself with another thing or person so as to form a pair or a couple on the basis of similarity. The Quran uses the different derivations of this word in no less than 29 different places and in all of them the root meaning of the word is retained in one form or another. The word is used in the sense of “intercession” because the person who intercedes for somebody must have a twofold connection:

Firstly, he must have a special connection with the being or person with whom he wishes to intercede, for without such connection none dare intercede nor can intercession be fruitful.

Secondly, he must also have a special connection with the person for whom he intercedes, because none can think of interceding for a person unless he is specially connected with the latter and is akin or similar to him.

In religious terminology لِيَأَتُشْرَ means intercession with God by a holy man for a sinful person. Here too the twofold connection referred to above is essential. The holy person who intercedes with God must have a special connection with Him, enjoying His special favour and being very near and dear to Him. On the other hand, he should also have real connection with the person on whose behalf he wishes to intercede; for without such connection he cannot be properly moved to intercede nor can his intercession carry much weight with God. In fact, the intercessor, on the essential basis of the afore-mentioned double connection, approaches God saying, as it were, “My God, I come to Thee with a special request, knowing that Thou art well pleased with me and that I enjoy Thy special favour. Here is an erring man who is sincerely connected with me but in moments of weakness he has stumbled and faltered. But as Thou art kind and good to me, O Lord, be Thou kind also to this sinful servant of Thine and pardon him his sins.” This is what may be termed the essence of لِيَأَتُشْرَ as taught and held lawful by Islam.
From the above significance of the word it is apparent that true یصیف is governed by the following conditions:—

(1) He who intercedes must be very near and dear to God enjoying His special favour.

(2) The person for whom he wishes to intercede must have a true and real connection with him.

(3) The person in whose favour intercession is to be made must be on the whole a good man, only casually tempted to sin in moments of weakness; for it cannot be entertained for a moment that an habitually wicked man can enjoy a true connection with a holy person.

(4) Intercession must always be made with God's permission; for it is God alone Who knows (a) whether a so-called holy person really stands near and dear to Him, and (b) whether the person for whom intercession is being made is truly and sincerely connected with the holy man making the intercession, for there is many a connection which looks sound and genuine from outside but is rotten from within.

(5) Each and every intercession is not necessarily lawful or fruitful. Only that intercession is lawful which fulfils all the requisite conditions.

The above view finds clear corroboration in the Islamic teachings. For instance, the Quran says: And fear the day when no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, nor shall any ransom be accepted from it, nor shall یصیف (intercession) avail it, nor shall they be helped (2 : 124). This verse is addressed to the Jews and signifies that, as they have rejected the Holy Prophet and thus failed to form the most important of spiritual connections, therefore no other connection or intercession will avail them on the Day of Judgement. This makes it clear that یصیف can avail only those who accept the Messenger of the day. It cannot avail those who, by rejecting a Messenger of God, rebel against divine authority. As such people fail to form the connection that they are called upon to form, no question of یصیف arises.

Again the Quran says: On the Day of Judgement یصیف (intercession) shall not avail any person except him for whom God grants permission and with whose word (i.e. with whose expression of faith) He is pleased (20 : 110). This verse throws light on three very important points:

(a) That if, on the one hand, there are some whom یصیف (intercession) will not avail, on the other hand, there are others whom it will certainly avail.

(b) But it will avail only those for whom God grants special permission.

(c) That such permission will be granted only in the case of those sinners whose faith at least is sound, i.e., their ینک (faith) is true and well-founded; only in ینک (practice) they sometimes show weakness.

At another place the Quran says: Who is he that will intercede with God except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them; and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He pleases (2 : 256). This verse supplies the reason for the principle adduced in the verse quoted above. God's permission is necessary because His knowledge alone is perfect and it is only He Who knows whether the twofold connection essential for یصیف really exists, i.e., (1) whether the holy person wishing to intercede really enjoys the special relation with God required for such intercession and, (2) whether the person for whom he wishes to intercede is truly and sincerely connected with him.

To illustrate the above point, we may well quote an incident in Noah's life. At the time of the great Deluge, he saw that his son had been caught by the surging waves and was going to be drowned. Thereupon he
turned to God, saying that the drowning boy was one of his family whom God had promised to save. Upon this God sharply reprimanded him, saying, *He is surely not of thy family; he is indeed a man of unrighteous conduct. So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge. I advise thee lest thou become one of the ignorant* (11: 47). This verse beautifully illustrates the philosophy of ُناءٌ. In a moment of great uneasiness of mind Noah interceded for his son with God but forgot to ask for His permission, whereupon God reminded him that though the boy was his son in the physical sense, he was not one in the true spiritual sense and was therefore not entitled to ُناءٌ which has its basis in spiritual kinship.

Having briefly explained the nature and conditions of ُناءٌ, we now come to the question: How many forms of ُناءٌ are there? A study of the relevant Quranic verses and of the attendant facts reveals that ُناءٌ is of three kinds:

(1) Firstly, there is the verbal ُناءٌ which has been interpreted as “intercession.” In this form of ُناءٌ a holy person actually prays to God on the basis of his special connection with Him that a sinful person who is truly connected with him may be granted forgiveness or that, for that matter, a person suffering from some disease or misfortune may be restored to health or saved from the attending misfortune. In this case “intercession” is really a form of prayer but it makes a stronger appeal and is much more efficacious. For, whereas a prayer is simply a request made to God, ُناءٌ (intercession) is a prayer reinforced by the twofold connection referred to above. The ُناءٌ (intercessor) appeals to God in a special way because: (a) he enjoys God’s special favour, and (b) the person for whom he intercedes is truly and sincerely connected with him. This twofold connection gives intercession a strength that is lacking in an ordinary prayer. The intercessor, so to speak, says to God “My God, if Thou holdest me dear, then be Thou kind also to this sufferer who is dear to me.” Such a prayer, if offered with God’s permission, most forcefully moves the mercy of God and is sure of acceptance.

(2) Secondly, there is the form of ُناءٌ which, though verbal, yet is offered not in the form of a prayer but merely as a simple statement expressive of the relation between the intercessor and the person for whom he intercedes. Sometimes, it happens that through fear of God or through modesty the intercessor does not make an intercession in the form of a direct request or prayer but simply expresses the relation existing between him and the person for whom he wishes to intercede, leaving the conclusion to be drawn by God Himself. A case in point is that of Noah’s intercession for his son referred to above. Noah did not actually pray for his son but simply drew God’s attention to their relationship: *My Lord, verily my son is of my family and surely Thy promise is true* (11: 46). These are Noah’s words. It is a clear case of ُناءٌ although the actual form of prayer is wanting.

(3) Thirdly, there is the ُناءٌ which is neither made in the form of a prayer nor expressed in words. It simply consists in the practical existence of the twofold relation necessary for ُناءٌ. In fact, in this case the relationship itself is spoken of as ُناءٌ. For instance, the Quran speaks of the Jews saying ُناءٌ i.e. on the Day of Judgement no ُناءٌ shall avail them (2: 124). Here ُناءٌ is used simply in the sense of connection. God means to say that as the Jews have refused to connect themselves with the Holy Prophet of Islam, therefore no other connection will avail them. Their being counted among the followers of Abraham or Moses or David, etc., will be of no avail to them. In this sense a Prophet of God is a ُناءٌ or intercessor for all his true
followers without distinction. Everybody who establishes a true connection with him is saved while others perish. In this sense God also is a رضيع; for those who connect themselves with Him are saved, while others who remain disconnected are ruined.

Now the question arises, Why has God instituted شفاء at all? The answer is as follows:—

Firstly, شفاء in the sense of good association is the very essence of spirituality. All spiritual progress depends on a good spiritual contact. A soul not in contact with God is lost and, for that matter, a soul not in contact with the Prophet of the day, who represents God on earth, is also lost. The Quran says, he who forms a good connection will reap the benefit thereof and he who forms an evil connection will suffer the loss attached thereto (4:86). Thus the need and the usefulness of شفاء in the sense of a good connection is self-evident and one need not say much about it. But when we come to شفاء in the sense of intercession, an explanation seems called for. When all depends on true belief and right actions, why should the necessity of intercession arise at all? Even a cursory thought leads to the conviction that this question, which has misled many, arises from the misleading conception of the word “intercession” as ordinarily understood. Unprincipled men go about interceding for criminals with unprincipled judges, thus thwarting the very ends of justice. Islamic شفاء is far from this. It is not a mere intercession but is an adjunct of the principle of true belief and right actions. According to Islam only that person is entitled to شفاء who is sincerely connected with the Prophet of the day, is true in faith and earnestly tries to live a righteous life according to the teachings of Islam. But, being weak, he sometimes stumbles. There is nothing inherently wrong with his connection with the Prophet, which is pure and true; only an occasional stumbling in practice makes him fall short of the prescribed standard. God entitles such a one to شفاء and that also by His special permission; and when the Knower of all things considers one to be deserving of forgiveness, who is there to object that the case is not deserving? The Islamic شفاء is, in fact, only another form of repentance. For what is توبة (repentance) but reforming a broken connection or tightening up a loose one? But whereas the door of repentance is closed with death, the door of شفاء remains open. Moreover, شفاء is a means of the manifestation of God’s mercy and God says i.e. “My mercy is stronger than My anger” (Bukhari). Thus (intercession) is based on the manifestation of God’s mercy; and as God is not judge but مالك (Master), there is nothing to stop Him from extending His mercy to whomsoever He pleases.

Yet another reason why شفاء has been allowed by Islam is that by this means God honours His Prophets. It is indeed a great honour that He should allow a person to intercede with Him.

It has been objected by some Christian critics of Islam that the doctrine of شفاء is likely to encourage people to commit sins. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Shafa as allowed by Islam should encourage people to strengthen their connection with the Prophet rather than weaken it. As sin is nothing but a product of weakness in the spiritual connection, شفاء and sin really stand poles apart and it is sheer ignorance to suggest that the doctrine of شفاء, whose very conception rests on the soundness of man’s connection with God and His Prophet, encourages one to sin. On the contrary, it is the Christian doctrine of Atonement which throws open the flood-gates of sin; for, unlike Islamic شفاء the doctrine of Atonement is based on the unnatural conception that one man can bear the sins of another. But of this more later, when we come to the relevant verses.
50. And remember the time when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people who afflicted you with grievous torment, slaying your sons and sparing your women; and in that there was a great trial for you from your Lord.\(^a\)

\(^{14:7; 20:81; 44:31,32. \quad b7:128,142; 28:5.}\)

Now we come to the last question in this connection, i.e., who will be for the people of that time and that place. From this it follows that the Prophets of God who passed before Islam were for their own followers and in their own time only; with the advent of Islam the period of their came to an end. Now the Prophet of Islam is the only for all times and all peoples. Being a perfect image of God he is (1) the perfect and, having a universal mission he is (2) the universal ; and having cancelled all previous connections he is now (3) the only (peace and blessings of God be on him!). For proof of the fact that the Holy Prophet has himself put forward the above claim, the reader is referred to a hadith where the aforesaid distinction of the Prophet on the Day of Judgement is most vividly set forth (Muslim ch. on Imān).

56. Important Words:

\(\text{الpeople)}\) is derived from the verb ئ ل which gives the sense of returning or governing or exercising control or managing. The noun ئ ل thus means the family or party of a man, or followers of a leader, or subjects of a ruler to whom they constantly return or who governs or exercises control over them. The word اهل is also sometimes taken to be another form of the word ئ ل and means what the latter word means.

\(\text{فرعون (Pharaoh)}\) is not a personal name. It was the title held by the ancient kings of Egypt. Every Egyptian king is called فرعون in the Bible. The personal name of the
Pharaoh with whom Moses came in contact was Rameses II (Knc. Bib.).

(slaughtering) is derived from which originally means, he slaughtered or cut open the throat of an animal, or he strangled a person to death. Here the word is used in the intensified form ḏḥaabā to signify (1) that Pharaoh and his people treated the Israelites as mere beasts, and (2) that they killed them most mercilessly. It does not mean that they actually slaughtered them like animals, for elsewhere the Quran, speaking of the Bani torment, uses the word instead of ḏḥaabūn (7:142).

(廖) is the plural of (a woman) from a different root. Though the word generally means "women" (Aqrab), it is also sometimes used about girls, as the Quran itself has used it (4:128). It is also used to signify "wives" (33:33).

(λάμ) means, anything by means of which a person may be tried; a trial whether through a blessing or an affliction (Aqrab).

Commentary:

In verses 41–48 God reminded the Israelites of His blessings in general, particularly the blessing of prophethood, which He had bestowed on them. He now calls their attention to such favours as exalted the Israelites above other peoples. The first of them to which God refers here is their deliverance from the hands of Pharaoh and his people, who inflicted on them grievous torments.

Some Christian critics have objected that whereas the Bible nowhere speaks of the sons of the Israelites being slaughtered like beasts, the Quran so speaks of them. We have shown under Important Words that the word ṣiḥ in the sense of slaughtering is used figuratively to denote that Pharaoh and his people treated the Israelites most mercilessly, killing them in whatever manner they liked. Elsewhere the Quran uses the word ṭāl i.e. killing in place of ṣiḥ i.e. slaughtering (7:142).

In Exod. 1:8–22, we read: “Now there arose a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply... Therefore they (the Egyptians) did set over them taskmasters to afflict them (the Israelites) with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Rameses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour; and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour. And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives. . . . When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools, if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.”

The above quotation clearly shows that the Pharaoh whose name was Rameses II not only
And remember the time when We divided the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh’s people, while you looked on.

inflicted upon the Israelites grievous torments by imposing upon them hard and disgraceful labour, but also gave orders to kill their sons and spare their daughters who were thus allowed to grow to womanhood and became نساء as the Quran puts it. The Quran uses the word ذبح to signify that at first the order was to strangle the Israelite male children at birth and when that order failed in its purpose, another was issued to the effect that all male children should be thrown into the river—a most merciless form of killing in which all human feelings were laid aside and the Israelites were treated as mere beasts.

As the word تجربة (trial) may mean either a trial through a favour or blessing, or a trial through grief or affliction, the words “in that” occurring in the verse may either refer to the deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh’s people, in which case the word trial will mean a favour or a blessing; or they refer to the slaying of the male children, in which case it would mean grief or affliction.

God reminds the Israelites in the verse how He delivered them from “Pharaoh’s people,” for it was through his people that Pharaoh inflicted torments upon them, he himself remaining in the background. Moreover, the expression فرعون does not exclude Pharaoh, for it, according to Arabic idiom, may also mean, Pharaoh and his people.

57. Important Words:

(We divided) is from فتح meaning, he divided or he split.

(0) (for you) may give a number of meanings:

1. for you; 2. with you, i.e., the sea divided or receded as you proceeded, as if you were the means of dividing it; 3. because of you i.e. in order to save you; 4. in your presence i.e. while you were present (Kashshaf).

Commentary:

The incident mentioned in this verse relates to the time when, under God’s command, Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to Palestine. The Israelites left secretly at night, and when Pharaoh learnt of their flight, he pursued them with his hosts in order to bring them back to bondage. The verse mentions the favour bestowed by God on the Israelites by dividing the sea for them and drowning the Egyptians. The incident is narrated in Exod. 14: 21—30. The Bible says: “And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night and made the sea dry land and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.
And the Egyptians pursued and went in after them to the midst of the sea. . . . And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.”

The مَرْج (sea) spoken of in the Quranic verse and mentioned in the Biblical quotation given above refers to the Red Sea through which or through an extremity of which the Israelites passed in their flight from Egypt to the Holy Land (Exod. 14).

Besides the verse under comment, the Quran also speaks of this incident in 20:78, 26:64 and 44:25. Says the Quran: And We sent a revelation to Moses, saying, ‘Take away My servants by night and strike for them a dry path through the sea’ (20:78). Again: Then We revealed to Moses, saying, ‘Strike the sea with thy rod.’ Whereupon it parted and every part was like a huge mound, i.e., on one side was the sea itself, and on the other (from which the sea had receded) there loomed large depressions filled with water (26:64). And again: Take My servants away by night; for you will surely be pursued. And leave the sea motionless (i.e. pass through quickly and leave it at a time when the tide has all receded but has not yet begun to flow back, so that, on the one hand, finding the sea-bed dry and, on the other, feeling secure in the thought that the high tide was not likely to overtake them, the Egyptians might be tempted to follow on); they are a host which is doomed to be drowned (44:24, 25).

In view of the above description, the facts appear to be as follows. When the Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land, they were pursued by the army of Pharaoh. When they reached the arm of the Red Sea which lay across their route, they were greatly dismayed, for Pharaoh was close behind with his hosts. But God cheered them through Moses, asking him to strike the water with his rod. This being the time of ebb-tide, the sea receded, exposing to view in the bed of the sea huge mounds of dry sand interspersed with depressions filled with water. Under the lead of Moses the Israelites quickly crossed the dry bed of the sea to the opposite bank. The army of Pharaoh came in pursuit, and while they were yet in the bed of the sea the high tide returned and drowned them all.

It should be remembered that, according to the Quran, a miracle is purely the work of God, and man has no hand in it. So, the striking of the sea by Moses was merely a symbol or a sign, having nothing to do with the actual parting of the sea which was exclusively the work of God, Who so arranged that it was the time of ebb-tide when Moses reached the sea so that just when He lifted his rod the sea began to recede. But when the army of Pharaoh began to cross the sea, they met with obstacles, just as heavily equipped armies generally do, and their progress was naturally retarded so that while they were yet in the midst of the sea, the high tide flowed and they were all drowned.

The words of the Quran do not lend themselves to the erroneous inference that there was an actual split in the sea to afford a passage for Moses and his followers. The two words used in the Quran in this connection are جُعَلَ (We divided) and كُطِلَ (the sea parted), the root idea of both being “parting.” These two words only corroborate the theory that when the Israelites reached the sea, the ebb-tide set in and the sea parted, exposing to view the sand dunes upon which the Israelites crossed over to the other side.

The fact that Pharaoh followed Moses through the bed of the sea also indicates that it was the time of the ebb-tide. If the sea had been actually split against all known laws of nature, Pharaoh would never have dared to follow in the wake of Moses. Nevertheless, it was a
52. And remember the time when We made Moses a promise of forty nights; then you took the calf for worship in his absence and you were transgressors.

great miracle brought about by a subtle combination of the laws of nature, which all united to save the Israelites and destroy Pharaoh and his people.

In this connection we may well quote an incident in Napoleon’s life which goes to illustrate how the tide helped Moses and destroyed Pharaoh in their journey across the Red Sea.

In Abbot’s Life of Napoleon it is related that, “one day, with quite a retinue, he (Napoleon) made an excursion to that identical point of the Red Sea which, as tradition reports, the children of Israel crossed three thousand years ago. The tide was out, and he passed over the Asiatic shore upon extended flats. Various objects of interest engrossed his attention until late in the afternoon, when he commenced his return, the twilight faded away, and darkness came rapidly on. The party lost their path, and, as they were wandering bewildered among the sands, the rapidly returning tide surrounded them. The darkness of the night increased, and the horses floundered deeper and deeper in the rising waves. The water reached the girths of the saddles, and dashed upon the feet of the riders, and destruction seemed inevitable. From that perilous position Napoleon extricated himself by that presence of mind and promptness of decision which seemed never to fail him. . . . . . The horses did not reach the shore until midnight, when they were wading breast deep in the swelling waves. The tide rises on that part of the coast to the height of 22 feet. ‘Had I perished in that manner like Pharaoh,’ said Napoleon, ‘it would have furnished all the preachers in Christendom with a magnificent text against me.’ ” (Abbot’s Life of Napoleon, Chap. 12, p. 96).

The words, while you looked on, have been added in the verse to make the Israelites realize that though the above miracle was performed before their very eyes and their proud and haughty oppressor was brought to naught in their very sight, yet they proved ungrateful to their Lord and His Prophet.

58. Important Words:

transgressors is the plural of ژلل which is derived from ژلل which means: (1) he put a thing at a wrong place; (2) he transgressed against or wronged a person (Aqrab).

Commentary:

In this verse the incident of calf-worship mentioned in Exodus 32 is related. Man is generally the slave of environment. This is particularly true of a subject people, who assiduously imitate the manners and customs of their rulers. The Israelites had lived under the Pharaohs for a long time, and had imbibed the idolatrous faith of the Egyptians. When they left Egypt with Moses, and came across any idol-worshipping people on the way, they requested Moses again and again to sanction a similar worship for them (7: 139). So eager were they for such worship that when Moses went to Mount Sinai, they made a calf and took to worshipping it. They revered the calf, because in Egypt the cow was held in special veneration. Egypt, like India, was an agricultural country where cattle must be of the highest value to man. Hence cow-worship.

The Bible mentions Aaron as having made a calf for the Israelites (Exod. 32:1—6). But
53. Then We forgave you there-after, that you might be grateful.

54. And remember the time when We gave Moses the Book and the Discrimination, that you might be rightly guided.

the Quran strongly refutes this idea. Aaron was a Prophet of God and could not stoop to idol-worship. Says the Quran, And Aaron had said to them before this, 'O my people, you have only been tried by means of the calf; and surely, the Gracious God is your Lord; so follow me and do as I bid you' (20:91). It is strange that such baseless and incredible stories as the participation of a chosen one of God in idol-worship should find place in a Book which claims to be inspired. It only proves that the Bible has been the object of human interference. It is probable that some interested people deliberately interpolated the sacred writings and ascribed certain vices to the Prophets; and the Christian divines eagerly took them for granted, as they were of good use to them as a means of the exaltation of Jesus over the rest of the Prophets.

The verse speaks of the appointed duration as being of forty nights. In 7:143 the Quran further tells us that at first the appointed duration was thirty nights, but by a subsequent addition of ten the period was extended to forty nights which is a fuller number. This favour was granted to Moses because of his faithfulness and sincerity.

The words, and you were transgressors, mean, you resorted to setting up equals with God, because this practice is indeed the greatest i.e. putting a thing in a wrong place. Elsewhere the Quran says: شرك i.e. attributing partners to God is indeed a great (31:14).

59. Commentary:

We learn from Exod. 32:9, 10 that the worship of the calf called forth the wrath of God, whereupon Moses prayed to God for the Israelites and then, in the words of the Old Testament, 'the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people' (Exod. 32:14). In this connection it may be noted that the Quran uses the word 'forgave' instead of 'repented,' as used in the Bible, for the latter expression is obviously quite inappropriate to God's attribute of Knowledge and Majesty. Most probably the word is either a mis-translation of the original or a later interpolation.

It may also be noted here that the word used in this verse does not only signify "forgiving or passing over a sin" but also "obliterating a sin." If a man truly and sincerely turns to God with repentance, He not only forgives him his sin but obliterates the very traces of it, leaving him as stainless and pure as a new-born child.

The words, that you may be grateful, point to a very deep truth. Forgiveness by a superior authority produces the feelings of gratefulness in the person forgiven, and gratefulness in turn impels a man to further acts of obedience and goodness. Thus a sort of continuity in righteousness is brought about.

60. Important Words:

Moses (Moses), the Founder of Judaism, was the deliverer of the Israelites from the hands of
Pharaoh. He was an Israelite Prophet who, according to Biblical data, lived about 500 years after Abraham and about 1,400 years before Jesus. Moses was a Law-giving Prophet, the other Israelite Prophets that came after him being only followers of his system. As a Law-giving Prophet and the founder of a great religious system, Moses bears striking resemblance to the Holy Prophet of Islam to whom he has been likened in the Quran itself (73 : 16).

As for the name Moses, it may be briefly noted that (Moses) is really a Hebrew word in which language it is written and pronounced as (moshe) and means, “a thing drawn out of water” or simply “a thing drawn out” (Enc. Bib.). The Bible itself supports that significance where Pharaoh’s daughter, speaking of the name Moses, says, “because I drew him out of the water” (Exod. 2: 10). This derivation also finds support in Arabic, from which language Hebrew is derived. The Arabs say i.e. he extricated or drew out the thing (Aqrab). Thus the word which is the passive participle from ( derive from (Moshe). They say i.e. he cut the thing asunder (Aqrab). As Moses was cut off from his family, he was given that name.

Recently, however, the view has been expressed by certain Western scholars, e.g., by Breasted in his Dawn of Conscience and by Freud in his Moses and Monotheism that Moses is not a Hebrew name but an Egyptian. It is also claimed that Moses was not an Israelite by birth and did not belong to Hebrew stock. There can be no objection if we accept the first-mentioned view regarding the etymology of the name Moses, because as Moses was in his childhood cut off from his own people and was reared in Pharaoh’s house, it was not unnatural for Pharaoh’s daughter, herself an Egyptian, to give him a name of her own liking. But, as pointed out above, the fact is that Moses is a Hebrew name and Pharaoh’s daughter, if indeed it were she who gave him that name, must have certainly been influenced to give the child a Hebrew name, thinking that he belonged to the Israelite people. It is probable, however, that the name was suggested by the sister of Moses herself who was personally known to the household of Pharaoh, being present at the time when Pharaoh’s daughter picked up the lad from the river (Exod. 2 : 7; Quran, 28 : 9—13).

But there is absolutely no ground for accepting the view that Moses was not an Israelite or that the children of Israel never settled in Egypt. The idea is repugnant to all established facts and runs counter to the accepted history of the Jewish people and to the Bible and the Quran, both giving the lie to it. Among the arguments Western critics have advanced in support of their view, two appear to be the more noteworthy. One is that (Moses) is an Egyptian name occurring in many combinations of that language e.g., Amenmesse, Ahmosi, Thotmes, Ramose, etc., the last-mentioned being the same as Rameses, the name of the Pharaoh in whose time Moses lived. Though a deeper study of these words would indicate that these Egyptian names are really different from the Hebrew or Arabic word discussed above, yet even if we admit the name Moses to be of Egyptian origin, there is no justification for assuming that the man Moses was not Israelite but Egyptian by birth. As Israelites were a subject people in Egypt, living under the rule of the Pharaohs, it is no wonder if they adopted some of the Egyptian names of the ruling class, just as in India many Indians are fond of and actually adopt, English names. But, as shown above, the fact remains that (Moses) is a Hebrew name, having definite derivation in both Hebrew and Arabic.
The second argument advanced by these critics is that the idea of God's Oneness is originally Egyptian, having been first conceived and adopted by an ancient Egyptian king named Amenhotep IV who came to the throne in 1375 B.C. and passed away about 1358 B.C. when probably not 30 years of age. Later he gave himself the title of Ikhnaton (or Akhenaton) which means "the servant of the one God." This, these critics allege, shows that Moses was an Egyptian who borrowed the idea of God's Oneness from Ikhnaton and then preached it among the Israelites. The inference is simply absurd. In the first place, it is against all reason to suppose that a certain conception is the monopoly of one people only. More than one people may independently form similar ideas without having borrowed them from one another. Secondly, even supposing that the idea of God's unity is of Egyptian origin, there is no justification for the inference that Moses was not an Israelite. If an Indian can borrow an idea from an Englishman, why cannot an Israelite borrow an idea from an Egyptian? The truth is that the idea of God's Oneness is neither the produce of Egypt nor of Palestine nor of any other place. It has its origin in divine revelation which has been independently vouchsafed to different peoples in different lands and at different times. It is never claimed that Moses was the first to conceive or preach that idea. He got it through divine revelation just as Jacob and Isaac and Abraham and Noah and Adam got it before him.

In short, there is no justification for supposing that the name Moses is of Egyptian origin or that the man Moses was not an Israelite. The linguistic evidence of Hebrew and Arabic, combined with reason and the evidence of Jewish history and tradition, not to speak of the story of the Bible and the Quran, all go to support the already established fact that Moses was an Israelite and not an Egyptian by birth, and that his name is also of Hebrew origin. (For a full discussion of the point see *Tafsir Kabir* by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Community, under 2:54).

The word "كتاب" (the Book) is derived from which means: (1) he wrote; (2) he made a thing obligatory, or he prescribed a law. The word bears the following meanings: (1) a thing in which or on which one writes; (2) a book; (3) a revealed book; (4) an epistle or letter; (5) an injunction or a commandment prescribed for a person or a people (Aqrab).

The word "الفرعان" (the Discrimination) is an Arabic word derived from i.e. he divided or differentiated. It is wrong to think that it is not an Arabic but a Syriac word. The Arabic language abounds in words derived from the same root, which are also commonly met with in pre-Islamic literature of Arabia. The root meaning of the word "فرعان" is 'to differentiate.' Hence is applied to that which differentiates between the true and the false, between sound reasoning and fallacy. *فرعٰن* also means 'an argument', because an argument serves to discriminate between the true and the false. 'Morning' or 'Dawn' are also termed *فرعان* because they separate night from day. *فرعان* also means 'aid' or 'support', because the man helped and supported becomes distinguished from those against whom he receives assistance (Taj). From the above it is clear that all revealed Books are فرعان as well as all "Signs" granted by God.

**Commentary:**

Here the word "كتاب" (translated in the text as the Book) is used for the "tablets" on which the Ten Commandments given to Moses were written. The Quran itself makes it clear in 7:146, 151, 155 that it was only the tablets and not the Pantateuch that were given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and, as explained
And remember the time when Moses said to his people: 'O my people, you have indeed wronged yourselves by taking the calf for worship; turn ye therefore to your Maker, and slay your own people; that is best for you with your Maker.' Then He turned towards you with compassion. Surely, He is Oft-Returning with compassion and is Merciful.

under Important Words, the word الكتاب does not necessarily mean a book, but any thing on which something is written. Thus the word kitāb here refers, not to the Pentateuch, but to the Ten Commandments that were written on the tablets. The verse would therefore mean that God gave Moses not only the Book or the Commandments written on the tablets but also such clear Signs and arguments, and brought about such events as led to clear discrimination between truth and falsehood. According to the Quran, فرمان is not the name of any particular thing; but every Sign and every instance of divine assistance discriminating truth from falsehood and every argument which serves the same object is termed فرمان.

The Quran uses the word فرمان about itself (25:2) and also calls the Battle of Badr, which so eminently helped to break the power of the Quraish, يوم الفرمان i.e. the Day of Discrimination (8:42).

Dr. Wherry’s criticism that the Quran is wrong in stating in this verse that the Torah was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai betrays his ignorance of the Arabic language. He was apparently unaware that in Arabic the word كتاب is used in a much wider sense than “book.” His inadequate knowledge of the Arabic language has also led Wherry to observe that the Prophet of Islam must have borrowed the word كتاب from the Syrians.

61. Important Words:

أبى (Maker) is derived from بَعِيَّ which means, he shaped or fashioned a reed into a pen, or he shaped an arrow. بَعِيَّ means, one who forms or fashions a thing by cutting; one who shapes out or pares a thing. بَعِيَّ is to be distinguished from بَعِيَّ which means, one who brings a thing into existence according to the proper plan or measure, or one who brings a thing into existence from a state of non-existence, the former word, بَعِيَّ signifies one who fashions a thing into its proper shape. Generally, however, بَعِيَّ is used as somewhat synonymous with بَعِيَّ, i.e. the formation of a shape which is the result in each case (Mufradāt & Lane).

Commentary:

It appears from this verse that, although after the incident of calf-worship a general pardon was granted to the Israelites, yet it was thought essential to punish the ringleaders who were ordered to be slain. The clause فرمان انسكerm does not mean “slay yourselves,” but “slay your men or slay your kith and kin.” The latter meaning is borne out by 2:85, where God says, you shall not turn your people out of your homes. Similarly, in 24:62, we read: When you enter houses, greet your people with salam. In these verses the expression انسكم has been used in the sense of ‘your people or your brethren,’ See also 2:86; 4:67, ...
56. And remember when you said: 'O Moses, we will by no means believe thee until we see Allah face to face; then the thunderbolt overtook you, while you gazed.\(^{62}\)

Speaking of this incident, the Bible says: "Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men" (Exod. 32 : 27, 28).

In the above passage, the number of persons slain has been put at three thousand, but this is apparently an error. Similarly, the number of the Israelites who came out of Egypt is represented in the Bible as six hundred thousand (Exod. 12 : 37) which also is clearly wrong. Such a large number could not live as servants and labourers of the Egyptians, who themselves speak of them as "a small community" (the Quran, 26:55). The error has apparently arisen from a confusion of the words اَلْيَمَنُ (ilf) and اَلْيَمَنُ (alif), the former meaning "a family," and the latter "a thousand" (Aqrab). Really, there were only 600 families of the Israelites who lived in Egypt and who left the country under the leadership of Moses, but they were misconstrued into 600 thousands. Similarly, the number of persons slain could scarcely be three thousand. There were most likely only three families the leaders of which took part in setting up the calf for worship, and these were put to death by their own kinsmen at the bidding of Moses.

The words قَاتِلُوا اَلْيَمَنَر (slay yourselves) have also been construed as "kill your desires"—an interpretation borne out by the usage of the Arabic language. Some Commentators prefer this interpretation to the one given above on the ground that the Israelites, having been forgiven by God at the intercession of Moses, could not have been ordered to slay their brethren, for such an order would have been incompatible with the forgiveness granted them. This argument, however, does not appear to be sound; for forgiveness of a people as a whole is not incompatible with the punishment of a few ringleaders.

The clause, turn ye therefore to your Maker, implies an exhortation to the Israelites to turn to their إِلَيْهِ (or Maker or Fashioner, which means that they should work a change or reformation in themselves.

62. Important Words:

\(\text{اَمْامَة} (the thunderbolt). \text{See 2:20.}\)

Commentary:

The present-day Bible, at fault in many places, does not make a direct mention of the incident referred to in the verse under comment. But a careful study of it reveals the fact that the reference is to the time when Moses went up the Mount to receive God's commandments and left his men camped at the foot of the mountain. On the day appointed, Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the nether part of the Mount. And the Lord came down on Mount Sinai on the top of the Mount and ordered Moses saying: "Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze and many of them perish" (Exod. 19:21). The words
57. Then "We raised you up after your death, that you might be grateful."

It may be noted here that whereas the Bible mentions the incident of calf-worship after the incident referred to above, the Quran reverses the order, mentioning the incident of calf-worship before that of the demand of the Israelites to see God; and a careful study of the relevant facts indicates that the Quranic order is the correct one. The incident of the calf must certainly have taken place before the Israelites went to Mount Sinai and before the Lord came down upon the Mount in the sight of the people; for if the Israelites had already gone to the Mount and had seen a clear manifestation of God, then it is hardly possible that they should have taken the calf for their God after such manifestation. Evidently they had made the calf before going to Mount Sinai, and when Moses ordered them to refrain from calf-worship, they obeyed but expressed an arrogant desire to see God so that they might be sure of His existence. Thereupon Moses took them to the Mount and God descended on the Mount in the sight of the people (Exod. 19:9—11). The words of the Quran: Then the thunderbolt overtook you, may refer to the thunders and lightnings which accompanied the manifestation of God and which caused the Israelites to tremble with fear.

63. Important Words:

(We raised you) is from لَعَبَسْنَكَ. They say لَعَبَسْنَكَ i.e. (1) he sent him as a messenger; (2) he made him to rise; (3) he roused him up; (4) He (God) brought him to life; (5) he awoke him from sleep; (6) he instigated him to do a certain thing (Aqrab).
58. And aWe caused the clouds to be a shade over you and bsent down on you Manna and Salwā, saying, 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you.' And they wronged Us not, but it was themselves that they wronged.64

Commentary:
The verse should not be understood to mean that the Israelites were restored to life after they had actually died. The Quran strongly repudiates the idea of the dead coming to life again in this world (21:96). The death spoken of in the verse is either spiritual death or a state of extreme sorrow, grief, or fear, etc. The Bible testifies to the "death" of the death (death) includes (1) spiritual death; and (2) a state of extreme sorrow, grief, or fear, etc. The Bible testifies to the "death" of which the Quran speaks, as follows: "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee. . . . . And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf" (Exod. 32:31—35).

But God’s forgiveness soon followed; for He did not want to ruin the Israelites but to raise them morally and spiritually and make them a grateful people.

64. Important Words:

א"מ (Manna). The infinitive א"מ signifies bestowing favour on or doing good to. They say מון א"מ i.e. he bestowed a favour on him without his labouring for it. מון means: (1) a favour; (2) anything obtained without trouble or difficulty; (3) honey-dew (Aqrab).

Salwā (Salwā) is derived from سَلَٰحَا. They say سَلَٰحَا that is (1) a whitish bird resembling a quail and found in some parts of Arabia and the neighbouring countries. It also means, (2) whatever renders a person contented and happy; (3) honey (Aqrab).

Commentary:
As the Israelites were camping in hot and open country, God speaks of the clouds having been sent to give them shade. We learn from Exod. 40:34—38, that clouds spread and shaded the spot where the Israelites encamped, and that they dispersed on the day when it was time for them to resume their journey. But the verse under comment shows that the clouds meant not only shadow but also rainfall because, firstly, it is rain-clouds that are generally dark and dense; and, secondly, along with the "clouds," the Quran also mentions two eatables, Manna and Salwā, which served as complement to the favour mentioned in the shadowing clouds. In fact, there was scarcity of both water and food in that arid country, and God used to quench their thirst by sending clouds, and satisfy their hunger by providing Manna and Salwā. And no wonder, for God shows special favours
59. And remember the time when We said, “Enter this village and eat therefrom—wherever you will—plentifully; and enter the gate submissively and say, ‘God! forgive us our sins.’ We shall forgive you your sins and We shall give increase to those who do good.”

The Holy Prophet refers to the Manna bestowed on the Israelites in the following hadith. Says he: “The mushroom is one of the things included in the Manna, and the sap of it heals the eye” (Bukhari). He is also reported to have said: “The mushroom is among the things which God bestowed upon Moses, as a free gift” (Muhit). This shows that God provided the Israelites with a number of things in the wilderness, sometimes with one thing and sometimes with another.

The verse does not mention how the Israelites wronged themselves. But as God speaks here of the favours bestowed upon them, it is evident that they wronged themselves by showing ingratitude and by murmuring and complaining of their lot in spite of God’s special favours. By doing so, however, they did no harm to God or His Messenger, but only harmed their own souls.

65. Important Words:

سجد (submissively) is derived from سجد which means: (1) he showed submissiveness and humility. The Quran says: And to Allah submits whosoever is in the heavens and the earth (13:16); (2) he fell prostrate (Mufradât). In the verse under comment the word is used in the first mentioned sense; for, besides other reasons pointing to this significance, one cannot pass through a gate while fallen prostrate on the ground.

غفرنا (forgive us our sins) is derived from غفر which means: (1) he descended or came down;
60. The transgressors changed it for a word other than that which was said to them. So We sent down upon the transgressors a punishment from heaven, because they were disobedient.

(2) he brought down, or caused to fall, or removed a burden, etc. استحثَّة فِي أَوزَرُهُ means, he requested that person to take down or relieve him of his heavy burden (Aqrab). As in theology, to seek relief from a burden is to seek forgiveness of sins, the expression جلَّة (literally the bringing down of a burden) would mean, remove our burden of sins or forgive us our sins.

غَفُرْنَا (We shall forgive) is derived from غَفَرَ. They say غَفَرَ لَهُمْ meaning, he covered or concealed the thing. غَفَرَ لَهُمْ مَا ظَنُّوا رَجُلًا means, he put the things in the bag and thus covered and protected them. غَفَرَ لَهُمْ مَا ظَنُّوا رَجُلًا means, God covered up his sin and forgave it. غَفَرَ لَهُمْ إِنَّهُ يُغَفِّرُ الرُّجُوسَ and غَفَرَ لَهُمْ إِنَّهُ يُغَفِّرُ الرُّجُوسَ both infinitives, signify God's forgiveness or His protection of a person against the punishment of his sins (Mufradat).

Commentary:

The Bible is here again at fault and makes no direct mention of this incident. It, however, speaks of a battle which in those days took place between the Amalekites and the Israelites in Rephidim (Exod. 17:8) which shows that the Amalekites inhabited certain parts of this land. Though the land was a desert, yet here and there habitations were also to be found (Enc. Bib. iv. 4036, 37). In fact, the presence of a desert does not preclude the existence of habitations, because even wandering tribes make here and there small habitations which serve as meeting-places for their scattered clans.

As the Israelites were eager to live in inhabited places owing to the facilities they afforded and owing also to their previous mode of living, they were bidden to go to some neighbouring village where they would combine the life of the desert with that of a habitation and would be free to eat wherever they liked, as is usual in a desert place where there is no private ownership.

But as this change was to bring them in contact with other people and was likely to affect their morals, they were at the same time bidden to be careful about themselves and to be submissive and obedient to God and also to pray to Him that He might forgive them the sins they might commit. If they acted upon this injunction, God would be kind to them and would forgive them their sins. Nay, He would further bestow on those who acted righteously His added favours and blessings.

The words "this village" need not refer to any specified village. According to the Arabic idiom the words may mean "any village that may be near" or "the nearest village."

66. Important Words:

(1) فَمَنْ كَانَ يَفَسَّرُونَ (from heaven). For سَمَا means a "height" or "anything that is high above us", therefore the
And remember the time when Moses prayed for water for his people, and We said, ‘Strike the rock with thy rod’; and there gushed forth from it twelve springs, so that every tribe knew their drinking place. ‘Eat and drink of what Allah has provided, and commit not iniquity in the earth, creating disorder.’

expression would mean “from on high” or “from God”, implying that the punishment meted out to the Israelites was not brought about through earthly means but, as it were, descended from above.

Commentary:
This verse is a continuation of the previous one. God commanded the Israelites to behave submissively and to pray to Him for the forgiveness of their sins, but they, mischievous and arrogant as ever, disobeyed the injunctions given to them and changed the words of prayer taught by God, whereupon He chastised them with a punishment that was not of this earth, i.e., He visited them with a pestilence or plague that destroyed a number of them. Or the expression may mean that their disobedience recoiled on their own souls in the sense of moral degradation and filthiness of heart and mind.

The question of the word which the Israelites used in place of the one taught to them is immaterial. According to some, they used the word i.e. “give us corn to eat” instead of i.e. “remove our sins” (Bukhari & Jarir). The words sound alike and afforded a playful opportunity to the mischief-minded among the Israelites. But as already said, the word substituted is not material. What matters is that they, i.e., many of them as the Quran hints, disobeyed the Lord and made religion a plaything. Hence the punishment.

67. Important Words:
- عصا (rod) means, he beat the man with a rod.
- عصا القمر means, he brought together the people, or he made them agree on some matter of common concern.
- عصا means: (1) a rod strong enough to support the weight of a man; (2) communal and family life; (3) a community; (4) the shin-bone (Aqrab).
- الحجر (rock) is from جر i.e. it prevented or resisted. الحجر means, a stone; a great mass of stone; a rock (Lane).

Commentary:
This verse mentions another favour bestowed on the Israelites. When once they were hard pressed by thirst and no water was procurable in the desert, God saved them by revealing to Moses the knowledge of a rock from which water flowed out when struck with a rod.

The demand of the Israelites for water and their being supplied with it is mentioned at two places in the Bible. At one place mention is made of the twelve springs of Elim, but nothing is said there of Moses’ striking the rock with his rod (Exod. 15: 27). At the other place, Moses, by divine command, struck the rock Horeb with his rod, and there flowed out abundant water with which the Israelites and their animals slaked their thirst (Exod. 17: 1—7; Numb. 20: 2—11). Here no mention is made of the number of springs. It appears that the Quran refers to the occurrence
relating to the rock of Horeb because, with the only difference that the Bible does not give the number of springs whereas the Quran gives a definite number, almost all the details narrated in the Bible concur with the narrative of the Quran. As for the slight difference with regard to the number of springs, reason favours the narrative of the Quran. The Israelites numbered several thousands besides riding animals and beasts of burden, and one spring was certainly insufficient for such a large number, especially when we take into consideration the fact that the thirsty Israelites were, according to the Bible, in a state of extreme exasperation at that time and were prepared even to stone Moses to death. It is possible, however, that at the source there was only one mouth of the spring, but it divided into twelve channels as it flowed down the rock, the number being in conformity with the number of the Israelite tribes.

If at present there is no trace of the twelve springs at that spot, it is no wonder; for it is a matter of common experience that sometimes several springs rising at the same spot have some of their openings closed and cease to flow. From a testimony quoted by Sale, however, it appears that even as late as the end of the fifteenth century, twelve springs actually flowed there. He says: “The rock stands within the border of Arabia and some of his (the Prophet’s) countrymen must needs have seen it if he himself had not, as it is most probable he had. And in effect he seems to be in the right. For one who went into those parts in the end of the fifteenth century tells us expressly that the water issued from twelve places of the rock, according to the number of the tribes of Israel” (Al-Koran by Sale, page 8).

The miracle of Moses on this occasion did not lie in bringing about a thing against the known laws of nature, but in the fact that God revealed to him the specific spot where water was just ready to flow at a blow of his rod. It is within the experience of those who study geological conditions in rocky districts that sometimes water flows underneath small hillocks or rocks and gushes forth when the rock is struck with something heavy or pointed.

As Manna and Salwā had already been bestowed on the Israelites, God now fittingly asks them to eat and drink of what Allah has provided. But as a life of ease and independence is likely to make men arrogant and mischievous, God at the same time warns the Israelites to exercise self-restraint and refrain from creating trouble and disorder in the land.
62. And remember the time when you said, 'O Moses, surely, we will not remain content with one kind of food; pray, then, to thy Lord for us that He bring forth for us of what the earth grows—of its herbs and its cucumbers and its wheat and its lentils and its onions'. He said, 'Would you take in exchange that which is inferior for that which is superior? Go to some town, and there is for you what you ask'. And they were smitten with abasement and destitution, and incurred the wrath of Allah: that was because they rejected the Signs of Allah and would kill the Prophets unjustly; this was because they rebelled and transgressed.68

68. Important Words:

1. _focus_ (its wheat). Focus means: (1) wheat; (2) any corn suitable for making bread; (3) garlic; (4) chick-pea (Aqrab).

2. _focus_ means: (1) a town or a city; (2) the frontier between two countries; (3) the thing that intervenes between two things (Aqrab).

3. _focus_ (would kill) is derived from _focus_, i.e. he killed. The infinitive means: (1) killing with a sword or with a stone or with poison or by any other means; (2) attempting to kill; (3) making up the mind to; (4) boycotting or cutting off all connections; (5) killing one's carnal desires; (6) weakening the strength of a thing, as alcohol is "killed" with the addition of water, or hunger is "killed" with food, etc.; (7) humbling a person completely; (8) rendering a person like unto one killed either physically or morally or spiritually; (9) acquiring complete and certain knowledge about a thing; and (10) cursing a person or thing (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lisān).

Commentary:

In this verse another instance is cited to show how the Israelites made no effort to turn the favours of God to good account. When they were in the desert, God sent them Manna and Salwā. But soon after this they began to exhibit discontent with one kind of food and to clamour for a variety of grain, onions, salad and green-stuff (Num. 11: 5–11). It may be noted that both Manna and Salwā taken together were considered one kind of food as they were taken continuously for a long time. It is further learnt from the Bible that the supply of Salwā was discontinued after a while and the Israelites were thus left to live on Manna alone (Num. 11: 6). As the demand was not based on a right understanding of the wisdom of God Who wanted the Israelites to breathe the free air of the desert for a time, they met with disgrace and drew upon themselves the wrath of God.

God's displeasure with the Israelites was not due to their demand for other food. The real
cause lay elsewhere. Having lived for a long time in bondage and a state of dependence, they had become cowardly and indolent. So God wished them to stay in the desert for some time, living on game and wild herbs, that they might get rid of their cowardice and indolence by living an independent life in the desert. Thus revitalized, they were to be led to the Promised Land and made rulers of Palestine. The Israelites, however, failed to understand the real purpose of God or having understood it, failed to appreciate it, and foolishly insisted upon living in a town. God pointed out their error, saying that they had asked for a life of agriculture in preference to what was to lead them to sovereignty. He wanted to prepare them for rule over the Promised Land, but they hungered for husbandry. So He indignantly ordered them to go down to a town where they would get the desired things.

The Israelites deserved punishment, because their impatience was the outcome of a want of faith in the promise of God. This lack of faith in God was due to their opposition to His Prophets and disbelief in His Signs, and they opposed the Prophets because they were transgressors and evil-doers. The Prophets invited them to guidance and virtue which they disliked, and, as a result, they opposed them. Thus the Quran admirably traces the causal sequence of every evil to its origin and strikes at its very root so as to prevent all possibility of recurrence.

The words, we will not remain content with one kind of food, contain a threat and are full of arrogance. If the Israelites had meant simply to express a wish, the words would have been "we are unable to remain content with one kind of food," and not as they stand in the Quran. The Bible gives a vivid picture of their insolent and almost rebellious attitude on this occasion (Num. 11:5—15).

The words "would kill the Prophets" do not mean that the Israelites actually killed the Prophets, because, up to the time of Moses, no Prophet is known to have been slain by them. As a matter of fact, Moses is the first Prophet who was sent to the Israelites as a nation. Thus Moses and his brother, Aaron, are the only persons to whom the words can be applied; but obviously these two Prophets were not killed by the Israelites, although the latter often opposed them and were sometimes even bent upon killing them (Exod. 17:4). Hence, the word فلم in the verse cannot possibly mean actual killing. Its only meaning here is that they severely opposed the Prophets and were even prepared to kill them. This interpretation finds corroboration not only in Arabic lexicons, for which see Important Words, but the Quran itself supports it in a number of verses where the word فلم has been used undoubtedly, not in the sense of actual killing but in that of attempting to kill or intending to kill (3:22 and 40:29). Bukhari also relates a tradition to the effect that once certain hot-headed Quraish youths brutally assaulted the Holy Prophet in the precincts of the Ka'ba, whereupon Abü Bakr rushed to his rescue, saying, "Do you kill a man because he says Allah is his Lord and Master?" (chapter on Tafsir). In this hadith the word فلم is clearly used in the sense of attempting to kill or intending to kill and not actual killing.

It will not be out of place to point out here that the purport of verse 2:59 discussed above is altogether different from the one under comment. Though in both of them God apparently orders the Israelites to go to some habitation, yet the meaning is entirely different, rather quite the opposite, in each case. As a matter of fact, whereas in verse 2:59 God Himself willingly commands the Israelites to go to some habitation, His ordering them to
R. 8. 63. "Surely, the Believers, and the Jews, and the Christians and the Sabians—whichever party from among these truly believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds—shall have their reward with their Lord, and no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve."

"go down into a town" in the verse under comment is expressive of definite displeasure and anger. In the previous verse the "or habitation" meant only a habitation found in the desert by going into which the Israelites did not leave the free desert life but rather combined it with the facilities of a habitation. On the contrary, by "going down into" a town or city as mentioned in the verse under comment they altogether abandoned the desert life and adopted a life of ease, as is led in towns and cities. Hence the difference. This is why the Quran uses the simple word "go in the verse under comment while it follows up the commandment with the words "eat therefrom plentifully wherever you like," in the present verse the commandment is followed by the words and they were smitten with abasement and destitution. The difference is apparent. The former expression is indicative of the freedom of life in the desert and the latter of the suffocating atmosphere and mental slavery of towns and cities.

69. Important Words:

الذين آمنوا (The Believers). The expression signifies the people who profess to be believers in Islam i.e. the Muslims. Thus فإن Recon here means only profession of Islam. The word مسلم has been used in the sense of Muslim elsewhere also in the Quran (4: 137.)

الذين هادوا (the Jews) means, those who profess the Jewish religion. The word "HADWA is derived from HAD which literally means, he turned towards the truth or towards God with repentance (Aqrab). The word also signifies returning towards a thing slowly or walking tardily (Mufradat).

النصارى (the Christians) is derived from نصر i.e. he helped. As the disciples of Jesus sided with him as God's helpers (3: 53), so they came to be known as "Nasara" i.e. helpers. Or the word is connected with نازرا (Nazareth), a village which was the scene of Jesus' childhood. In either case Nasara has come to signify the followers of Jesus, i.e., those who profess the Christian religion (Mufradat).

الصالحين (the Sabians) is derived from صأ i.e. he forsook one religion and adopted another. صأ means, the star made its appearance (Aqrab). Literally, therefore, صأ is one who forsakes his old religion and adopts a new one. Technically, however, the word صالحين refers to certain religious sects that were found in parts of Arabia and countries bordering on it. The name was applied to the following faiths: (1) The star-worshiping people living in Mesopotamia (Gibbon's Roman Empire, v. 440 and Muruj al-Dhahab by Mas'udi and Enc. Rel. Eth., viii,

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under Mandauns); (2) The faith which was a sort of patch-work of Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism (Kathir, under 2: 63); (3) A people who lived near Mosul in Iraq and believed in one God but had no known Law or Book. They claimed to follow the religion of Noah (Jarir & Kathir, under 2:63); (4) A people who lived round about Iraq and professed belief in all the Prophets of God and had a special system of prayer and fasting (Kathir). Some Muslim Jurists looked upon them as a People of the Book, allowing them the same privileges as are allowed to the latter. None of the above-mentioned peoples should, however, be confused with the Sabians (not Sabians) mentioned by certain commentators of the Bible as people inhabiting ancient Yemen. In this connection see also R. Rel. xl. 129—132.

من آمن ﷺ (whichever party from among these truly believes in Allah). Here ﷺ means true belief, i.e., the belief which counts true in the sight of God and not merely profession of a certain faith. The Quran uses the word ﷺ in this sense in 49:15.

Commentary:
This verse wedged in among the verses recounting the iniquities of the Israelites seems rather misplaced. But deeper study shows that it has been most fittingly placed here. In fact, the Quran is not a book of stories but has come with the declared object of uplifting those who have fallen morally and spiritually. It follows a psychological order in perfect conformity with the mental attitude of the reader, interspersing every narrative with fitting hints for his moral and spiritual regeneration. So is the case in this verse. After enumerating certain wrongdoings of the Israelites, the Quran goes on to say that although their sins are great, yet God’s mercy is infinitely greater, and if even now the Israelites, or for that matter, Christians, Sabians or any other people, should turn to God and truly and sincerely believe in Him and the Last Day (these being the two fundamental articles of faith which in principle comprise all others) and follow up their belief with good and righteous deeds, they can become heirs to His grace and mercy.

The verse is important and much difference has arisen about its real meaning. Some who are not in the habit of making a deep study of the Quran have hastily jumped to the conclusion that, according to this verse, belief in Islam is not necessary. They say that anybody, whether he is a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian or any other, who sincerely believes in God and the Last Day and does good deeds will be saved. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Quran emphatically declares in a number of verses that belief in the Holy Prophet and in his revelation is essential. Says God: Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers and desire to make distinction between Allah and His Messengers and say, ‘We believe in some and disbelieve in others,’ and desire to take a way in between, these indeed are veritable disbelievers; and We have prepared for the disbelievers an humiliating punishment (4:151, 152). Again, And those who believe in the Hereafter believe therein (i.e. the Quran) and they strictly observe their Prayers (6:93). From these two verses it becomes clear beyond any shadow of doubt that according to the Quran (1) belief in the Prophets is part and parcel of belief in God, and (2) belief in the Hereafter includes belief in God’s revelation as well. Elsewhere the Quran says, Surely the true religion with Allah is Islam (complete submission) and whoso seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him and in the life to come he shall be among the losers (3:20, 86). This verse along with the two quoted above definitely proves that the objection mentioned above is entirely baseless and is born of utter ignorance of the real Quranic
teachings. In fact, as explained in the above verses, the Quran confines itself to a mention of belief in God and the Last Day, not because belief in the Holy Prophet and the Quran is not essential, but because the former two beliefs include the latter two, the four being essentially inseparable.

What is, then, the real meaning of the verse under comment? A careful study of the verse and its context leaves no doubt that it can have only two possible meanings:

(1) One meaning is that, having recounted a number of wrongs committed by the Israelites, God invites them to an easy and decisive method of establishing which party has His support and which not, and in order to make the argument still more forceful, He includes in the proposed context Jews, Christians and Sabians, the only followers of revealed religions found in and around Arabia. It is evident that in religious matters, when everything else has been said and every other means has been tried, the final criterion for testing the truth of contesting parties is reduced to this, which party enjoys divine succour and which not? If God is a living God and has Himself raised a Prophet for the regeneration of the world, it stands to reason that He would not leave His Messenger alone but would come to his help and show powerful Signs in his support. This phenomenon has repeated itself in the time of each and every Prophet of God. So why not make use of it here in order to distinguish the truth from falsehood? It is to this phase of the matter that the verse under comment invites Jews, Christians, etc. God says, there are now as many as four claimants in the field, Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabians. So let all wait and see whom God’s helping hand succours in the present struggle. In the time of Moses God helped the Israelites against the Egyptians; in the time of Jesus He helped Christians against their opponents, and in the time of other Prophets He helped their followers against their enemies, and this served as a practical proof of the fact that the truth lay with the Prophets and not with their opponents. The same tried criterion was now available, viz., whichever party from among these truly believes in Allah and the Last Day shall have their reward with their Lord and no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve. The challenge was thrown out to all existing claimants of divine support and the final and unparalleled triumph of Islam against all adversaries gave the clearest of verdicts in favour of the former.

The verse under comment thus contains a mighty prophecy the fulfilment of which in the teeth of all opposition was a wonderful proof of the truth of Islam. And the fulfilment of this prophecy proves to be the more wonderful when one bears in mind the fact that this verse was revealed at a time (it was revealed in the early years of the Hijra) when Islam was passing through the severest of trials and hardships, and the fate of the new faith was virtually trembling in the balance; nay, so far as worldly causes were concerned, its fate was practically sealed in view of the opposition that remains unparalleled in all history.

It cannot be objected here that after a few centuries of triumph, Muslims too began to decline, thus rendering the argument ineffective. Firstly, the argument, as borne out by the history of all revealed religions of the world, does not relate to communities in their ordinary temporal affairs but to those contending on religious issues. The argument particularly relates to the time when a divine Messenger makes his appearance and extends to the period for which a new-born community sticks to the teachings of their Prophet. It would be absurd to think that divine succour should continue for ever, even after a people has become dead in faith and works. Secondly, it should be remembered that the present-day decline of
64. And remember the time when *We took a covenant from you and raised high above you the Mount, saying, 'Hold fast that which We have given you and bear in mind what is therein, that you may be saved.'

Muslims as well as the present-day temporal ascendancy of Christians is itself in accordance with the prophecies of the Holy Prophet of Islam, and hence it is rather a proof of the truth of Islam than a proof against it. Moreover, the wheel is fast turning and the day is not far off when, according to yet another prophecy of the Holy Prophet, Islam will once more gain ascendancy through the Promised Messiah of whom the Prophet himself has spoken as his own image.

(2) The other meaning relates to the spiritual sense. God says, there are now four claimants in the field, i.e., Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabians. Each one of these claims to enjoy true spiritual contact with God. But as everything in this world possesses certain distinguishing marks and properties which go to establish its identity, so is the case with man's spiritual connection with God which is characterized by certain distinguishing marks or special properties; and the verse goes on to say that one of these distinguishing marks is that people enjoying true spiritual connection with God "have their reward with their Lord and no fear comes upon them nor do they grieve," i.e., God's connection brings with it perfect peace of mind and complete tranquillity of heart. One is not left in the dark, doubting all the time in the depth of his heart whether one is treading the right path or not, with gnawing grief at one's past actions and disquieting fears about the future. The heavenly life of a true believer begins in this very world, and this is why the Quran says that a person truly related to God inherits two Heavens, one in this world and the other in the next (55:47). So in the verse under comment God invites the different claimants to search in their hearts for the peace and tranquillity of mind attending true belief and then say whether they possess it.

Yet another significance of the verse is that lip-profession of a truth is nothing in the sight of God. The Jews professed the truth; but as it did not find its way into their hearts, they stumbled at every step and brought down God's displeasure on their heads. The verse forcefully points out that it did not matter whether one was apparently a Jew, a Christian, a Sabian or, for that matter, a Muslim. If the faith was confined only to the lip, it was a dead thing, without life and without any motive power in it. In order to be really useful and to become really acceptable in the sight of God, faith should not be a mere lip-profession but something rooted deep in the heart with living and healthy branches spreading all around. This was a principle of which even the new-born community of Islam needed to be constantly reminded.

As stated under Important Words, the name "*covenant" has been applied to a number of peoples, and it may rightly apply to one or all of them. In fact, the larger the number, the greater the force of the argument contained in the verse.

70. Important Words:

العهد (covenant) is derived from عهد, i.e. it was or became firm and established. يَوْمَ (means,
65. Then you turned back there- 

after; and had it not been for Allah's grace towards you and His mercy, you would surely have been of the losers.\(^{71}\)

he made it firm and fast; he bound or tied it firmly and strongly. \(\text{مِثَاقُ} \) means, a firmly made promise; a covenant (Aqrab & Lane). It should be noted that every commandment of God has the force of a covenant for those who believe, because once an individual or a people believe in God and accept His guidance, they, as it were, enter into a covenant with Him that they will obey all His commandments, a formal agreement not being necessary. See also 2:28.

\(\text{رَفَّتُ} \) (We raised high) is derived from رف, which means, he raised or lifted a thing or person; he raised a person in rank, honour, position or dignity; he took a report or complaint to a person in authority (Mufradât & Aqrab). It also means, to make a thing tower above another standing beside it. We read in Hadîth, \(\text{رَفَّعَ} \) \(\text{لا صِخْرَة} \) \(\text{طَوْلًا} \) \(\text{هَا} \) \(\text{ظَلَّ} \), i.e. a big stone giving good shade was raised above us i.e. we found ourselves beside a high shady stone (Bukhârî, ch. on Hûira).

\(\text{فَوْقُ} \) (above) is derived from فَوقَ which means, he surpassed it or him; he stood higher than it or him. Thus \(\text{فَوْقُ} \) is the opposite of "beneath" meaning "above," both literally and figuratively (Aqrab). It is also used to denote a place higher than that which one is occupying. The Quran says: \(\text{إِذَا جَاءَ} \) \(\text{وَرَكَّمَ} \) \(\text{مِن فَوْقِكُم} \), i.e. when the enemy made a descent on you from a higher position (33:11).

\(\text{الْمَرْجُ} \) (the Mount) means: (1) a hill or mountain; (2) the mount Ĭîr or Sinai (Mufradât & Aqrab). Thus, it is both a common and a proper name.

Commentary:

In this verse the Quran again reverts to the previous subject, i.e., the iniquities of the Israelites, but in a different field. The verse refers to the time when Moses went up the Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and left his followers standing at the foot of the Mount (Exod. 19:17). So the covenant spoken of in the verse refers to the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses on this occasion.

The clause \(\text{We raised high above you the Mount,} \) does not mean that Mount Sinai was physically lifted up to hang over the heads of the Israelites. It only means that the covenant was taken at a time when the Israelites were standing at the foot of the mountain—a meaning quite consistent with the Arabic idiom as explained under Important Words. The raising of the Mount above the Israelites has been ascribed to God, because it was He Who had commanded them to come and stand at the foot of the Mount.

The verse may also refer to the scene when the Mount Sinai was terribly shaken with an earthquake, while the Israelites were camping near it (Exod. 19:18). On such an occasion the shaking of a high mountain peak appears as if it were hanging over the heads of those standing near it.

71. Important Words:

\(\text{فضل} \) (grace) is derived from the verb فَضَلَّ meaning: (1) it remained, the expression being used when a portion remains out of a larger number or quantity, the rest being given away or
66. And surely, you have known the end of those amongst you, who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath. So We said to them, 

بِسْبَبِ الْحُكْمِ الْمُحْكَمِ

Be ye apes, despised.\textsuperscript{72}e

Commentary:

After receiving God's commandments on the Mount, the Israelites, instead of strengthening their connection with the Lord, showed laxity and carelessness in observing His behests (Num. 11:1); but as God wanted to uplift them and bestow His grace and mercy on them in matters temporal as well as spiritual, He forgave them their sins and saved them from being the losers.

72. Important Words:

السبت (the Sabbath) is derived from مُستَبَت meaning:

(1) he rested; (2) he cut or broke a thing; (3) he shaved his hair; (4) he observed the Sabbath. The noun مُستَبَت (Sabbath) signifies that day of the week which is observed as a sacred day in which no worldly work is done (Aqrab & Mufradât). Among the Jews, Saturday was (and still is) observed as a sacred day which was passed in joyfulness and rest from work as well as in contemplation, sacrifice, holy convocation, etc. (Jew. Enc. under "Sabbath").

القردة (apes) is the plural of القردة (the ape) which is derived from the verb قرَّد meaning, he clove to the ground; he lay in dust. القردة means, he was or became abject or mean. القردة, apes or monkeys (Lane).

الخاشِئين (despised) is the plural of الخاشِئ which is derived from الخَشِأ which i.e. the dog moved away as a result of being driven away; خَاشَأ الْأَلْبَدْ means, the man drove away the dog, despising it. Thus the word is both transitive and intransitive. الخاشِئ means, one who moves away despised by others or one who is spurned by others (Aqrab). الخاشِئ of which the plural is خاشِئين is a word which, according to the rules of Arabic grammar, is used about rational beings only, the word used with regard to animals being خاشِئ.

Commentary:

The verse speaks of the Sabbath and its violation by the Israelites. It is pointed out that...
67. Thus We made it an example to those of its time and to those who came after it, and a lesson to those who fear God.73

God’s covenant made it binding on the Israelites, among other things, to keep the Sabbath (Exod. 20: 8—11) i.e. observe Saturday as a sacred day devoted to spiritual joyfulness and holy convocation, etc. but, recalcitrant as usual, some among them violated the sanctity of the Sabbath and did not observe it, which brought on them God’s wrath, disgrace and humiliation (Neh. 13: 15—18 & Jer. 17: 21—23). The violation of the Sabbath was a great sin, inasmuch as it indicated that the Israelites wanted to remain engrossed in worldly affairs and did not like to pay any heed to religion, not even for a single day out of a whole week.

It is wrong to infer from the word 0.:0 (apes) that the profaners of the Sabbath were actually transformed into apes. The incident has been related by the Quran in two other places (5: 61, 62 and 7: 167—169) and even a cursory study of these verses would show that these people did not actually turn into apes. The word “apes” has been used figuratively meaning that they became abject and mean, like monkeys, the transformation being not in body or form but in character and spirit.

A further proof of this is to be found in the fact that it is a general rule of Arabic grammar that the suffix -ن or -ن is added to the plurals of such words as refer to rational beings only. In conformity with this rule, the qualifying word used in the verse about 0.:0 (apes) here alludes not to irrational but to rational beings, i.e., human beings who had developed the character of apes. Had the Quran meant their actual transformation into apes, it would have used the form خاضصين and not خاضصين.

Many learned Commentators of the past have also held the above view. For instance, Mujahid who is considered to be one of the greatest Commentators of the Quran, being one of the (the immediate successors of the Holy Prophet’s Companions) says: “They were not actually transformed into apes; only their hearts were changed. God has used the expression figuratively” (Kathir). Other eminent authorities have also held the same view, interpreting the words خاضصين (apes despised) as "abject and humiliated men.”

By using the word خاضص (apes) about a section of the Jews, God means to point to the fact that just as apes or monkeys are an abject and despised species which, in spite of possessing, in an extraordinary degree, the habit of mimicking or copying others—a habit which, if well directed, should result in progress—ever remain where they are, as if going about in a circle and making no headway at all, similarly the Jews will always remain humiliated in the world, and in spite of wonderful resources in wealth and education will never be able to gain any stronghold on the earth. It is interesting to note that, as explained under Important Words, even in the root meaning of the word خاضص there is the sense of abjectness and humiliation as well as that of grovelling in the dust. And what is still more interesting is the fact that of all the animals found in the world the advanced people of the West should think of man being descended from the ape.

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68. And remember when Moses said to his people, 'Allah commands you to slaughter a cow,' they said, 'Dost thou make a jest of us?' He said, 'I seek refuge with Allah from being one of the ignorant.'

69. They said, 'Pray for us to thy Lord that He make plain to us what she is.' He answered, 'God says it is a cow, neither old nor young, full-grown, between the two; now do what you are commanded.'

70. They said, 'Pray for us to thy Lord that He make plain to us what colour she is.' He answered, 'God says, it is a cow of a dun colour, pure and rich in tone; delighting the beholders.'

punishment as to make him an example for others (Aqrab).

Commentary:
All punishment, if wisely directed, should serve a twofold purpose: (1) to inflict pain on the offender so as to make him reform in future; (2) to make it a lesson for others so that they may beware of falling into a similar error. But, as the latter part of the verse points out, only such men benefit by punishment as are God-fearing.

74. Important Words:
(a jest) means: (1) jest; (2) the object or butt of a joke (Lisān). See also 2:14.

Commentary:
Here begins an account of another Israelite wrong which was allied to their worship of the calf. Though the calf mentioned in 2:52 was destroyed, yet veneration for the cow lingered in their hearts. The verse, along with those that follow, will be explained under verse 72 below.

75. Important Words:
(a jest) means: (1) jest; (2) the object or butt of a joke (Lisān). See also 2:14.

Commentary:
(of a dun colour) is the feminine from ṣaffron which signifies a thing having the colour of gold; yellow-coloured or saffron-coloured (Aqrab).

Commentary:
See under 2:72.

76. Important Words:
(a jest) means: (1) jest; (2) the object or butt of a joke (Lisān). See also 2:14.

Commentary:
See under 2:72.
71. They said, ‘Pray for us to thy Lord that He make plain to us what she is, for all such cows appear to us alike; and if Allah please, we shall indeed be guided.’

72. He answered: ‘God says, it is a cow not broken in to plough the earth or water the tilth; one without blemish; of one colour’. They said, ‘Now hast thou brought the truth’. Then they slaughtered her, though they would rather not do it.

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77. Important Words:

البقرة (cows) is the plural of البقرة (a cow). The word is used for both male and female (Aqrab).

Commentary:
See under 2: 72.

78. Commentary:

The Israelites had lived for a long time among the Egyptians who had great veneration for the cow. Thus reverence for the cow had crept into the minds of the Israelites as well. This is why, when they made an idol for themselves, they made it in the shape of a calf (Quran 2: 52 & Exod. 32: 4). It was, therefore, quite in the fitness of things that, in order to root out this evil inclination from the hearts of the Israelites, they should have been repeatedly commanded to sacrifice the cow. And this was actually the case (Num. 19: 1-9; Lev. 4: 1-21; 16: 3, 11; etc.). A nation which freely slaughters an animal can never think of deifying it.

In the verses under comment i.e. vv. 68 to 72 mention is made of Moses having ordered the Israelites to sacrifice a cow. It appears that at first they were bidden to sacrifice an ordinary cow, but it seems they had a particular cow which served as a pet among them and they had a natural misgiving that the order pertained to that cow. So they repeatedly asked Moses to specify the cow which God meant to be slaughtered, and as a result of their questionings some conditions were added to specify the animal. Finally, when the description given by Moses corresponded to the particular cow which they had in view, they had to perform to say, Now hast thou brought the truth, the words showing that from the very beginning they had in their mind some particular cow to which they thought the command pertained. Caught in their own net, they were guided aright and had to slaughter the very cow which served as a pet among them and thus a great step was taken to uproot the evil from their hearts.

This incident finds mention in the Bible also (Num. 19: 1-9). The Quranic version, however, differs slightly from that of the Bible. According to the Quran, the Israelites were at first ordered to slaughter an ordinary cow, and it was only on their repeated questioning that descriptions were added to specify it. On the other hand, the Biblical version makes no mention of this questioning, but tells us that at the very outset the Israelites were ordered to slaughter a cow answering a particular description. Again, the narrative of the Quran shows that it was with great reluctance that the Israelites finally complied.
9. And remember the time when you slew a person and differed among yourselves about it; and Allah would bring to light what you concealed. 79

74. Then, We said, 'Smite him (the murderer) for a part of the offence against him (the murdered person). Thus Allah gives life to the dead and shows you His signs that you may understand. 80

Commentary:

See under next verse.

80. Important Words:

مومي (the dead i.e. dead persons) is the plural of ميت (a dead person) which means: (1) one really dead; (2) one like dead; (3) one dying or nearing death (Lane). See also under 2:20, 2:29 & 2:57.

Commentary:

In the preceding verses God related some of the misdeeds of the Israelites in order to bring home to them the fact that in face of such conduct on their part it was idle to expect that God would continue to bestow favours on them. In the verses under comment i.e. 2:73, 74, 75, God recounts one of their final misdeeds which filled the cup of their iniquity to overflowing and sealed their fate.

The Quran has not named the person slain, but when read with the context and the relevant facts of history, the verses appear to apply to the murder of a Companion of the Holy Prophet by the Jews at Medina. Following are some of the details of the incident which was the first public act of enmity perpetrated by the Medinitel Jews against Muslims.

The Holy Prophet, on his arrival at Medina, entered into a treaty with the Jews. But the growing prosperity and success of Islam gradually roused the jealousy of the Jewish
leaders and some of them began secretly to incite their people against the Muslims. The crisis came with the Battle of Badr when the jealousy of the Jews reached its highest pitch. The result was that the Jews were emboldened and assumed a highly insolent attitude towards Islam. A short time after the said battle, a Muslim lady happened to go to a Jew’s shop to make some purchases. The shopkeeper and the other Jews sitting at the shop behaved very insultingly toward her, and the shopkeeper mischievously fastened the lower part of her mantle to the upper part thereof with a thorn so that when, being unable to bear their insults, she unsuspectingly rose to depart, part of her body became naked, at which the shopkeeper and other Jews burst out laughing. This made the helpless lady cry for help. A Muslim happened to be near. Hearing her cry, he rushed to the place and in the fight that ensued the shopkeeper was killed, whereupon the Jews fell upon the Muslim and murdered him and the situation threatened to develop into a sort of a riot. This happened towards the close of the second year of the Hijra. It is with reference to this murder that the preceding verse says, and remember the time when you slew a person and differed among yourselves about it. The Jews differed among themselves about the murder, for none of them admitted that he had committed it, though all adopted a highly insulting attitude towards the Holy Prophet when he exhorted the Jewish leaders to fear God and abstain from jeopardising the peace of the city. The result was a regular fight between the Jewish tribe of Banū Qainuqā' and the Muslims resulting in the banishment of the tribe from Medina (Hishām, Ṭabarā'ī & Zurqānī).

But the real responsibility lay on the ring-leader of the Medinite Jews—Ka'b b. Ashraf—who had taken a leading part in inciting the Jewish tribes and kindling their hatred against the Muslims. The man was looked upon as their leader by the Jews of the whole of Arabia. He was a very rich man and a poet of eminence. Ka'b was also a party to the treaty which was concluded between the Jews and the Holy Prophet on the arrival of the latter in Medina. Inwardly, however, he harboured deep hatred against Islam and its Holy Founder which grew in intensity as Islam made progress. When the Muslims won a decisive victory at Badr, Ka'b, realizing that Islam was taking a deep root in the soil, thought it imperative to make strenuous efforts to extirpate the new faith. So he at once started for Mecca and there, with the aid of his powerful eloquence and stirring verses, set ablaze the fire of enmity and hatred that was already smouldering in the hearts of the Quraisī, and with the skirts of the sacred curtain of the Ka'ba in their hands, he made them take a solemn oath that they would know no rest until they had destroyed Islam and its Founder. Thereafter he toured among other tribes of Arabia and stirred them up against the Prophet and the small body of his followers. Having lighted up the fire of hatred and enmity throughout the land, he returned to Medina and began to create mischief by making scurrilous poems in which mention was made of Muslim women and the ladies nearly related to the Holy Prophet, in the most offensive language. These verses were widely published and were publicly recited by the enemies of Islam. The result of these tactics was that feelings of extreme hatred were excited in the minds of the Jews who assumed an openly hostile attitude to the Holy Prophet and his Companions, throwing to the winds their treaty obligations. It was this attitude of the Jews which emboldened them to commit such offences as the one referred to above, in open defiance of the terms of the treaty they had concluded with the Holy Prophet on his arrival at Medina (Hishām, Zurqānī & Dāwūd).

Thus the real culprit responsible for the assassination of the Muslim referred to above was no other than Ka'b bin Ashraf, the bold
75. Then your hearts became hardened after that, till they were like stones or harder still; for of stones indeed there are some out of which gush forth streams, and of them there are some out of which flows water when they cleave asunder. And indeed of them there are some that humble themselves for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unmindful of what you do.\(^{81}\)

and wicked Jewish leader, who had instigated the Jews to rebellion and breach of faith. He even did not hesitate to plot against the life of the Holy Prophet (Zurqānī). His guilt was an established fact. He was guilty of high treason against the State and was the arch-enemy of peace. So he was put to death by the Prophet’s command in the third year of Hijra. It is to this sentence of death that the present verse refers when it says: then We said, “Smite him (the murderer i.e. the real culprit) for a part of the offence against him (the murdered person), which meant that the sentence of death was only a partial punishment of the offence, the rest of the punishment being reserved for the Hereafter. In fact, there are certain sins which are atoned for by the punishment which is inflicted for them on the offender in this world. But the offence of wilfully killing an innocent man and particularly one who is a righteous servant of the Lord, is not adequately punished with the execution of the murderer, which is only a partial punishment. The real punishment of such an offence is Hell (4: 94).

By using the word \(\text{كُتَّٰبَةً} (\text{you slew})\) in the plural number, the Quran hints that the whole Jewish community of Medina was responsible for it. For the sentence of death, however, the ring-leader, who had brought about a tense atmosphere of hatred and enmity, was selected.

The clause, thus Allah gives life to the dead, signifies that retaliation is an effective form of giving life to the dead, for punishing the offender prevents the would-be assassins from committing further murders, and thus many who would otherwise have been victims of assassination are saved. That retaliation is a sure means of giving life is clearly alluded to in the Quran itself. We read in 2: 180, and there is life for you in the law of retaliation, O men of understanding.

Finally, it may be noted that these verses have also been applied to the attempted murder of Jesus by the Jews (for which see Part I of the Quran published by Anjuman Taraqqī Islām, Qadian, in 1916), but recent research strongly tends to support the above explanation. It may also be noted that the interpretation put on this verse by some Commentators that a really dead person was restored to life is quite erroneous, being unsupported by the context of the verse as well as the authentic teaching of Islam. It is a mere legend which has no foundation in fact.

81. Important Words:

- ﷲ (cleave asunder) which is originally derived from ﷲ meaning, he cut it open or he clove it. ﷲ means, it clove or broke asunder (Aqrab).
76. Do you expect that they will believe you when a party of them hear the word of Allah, then "pervert it after they have understood it, and they know the consequences thereof."

Commentary:

The murder of the innocent Muslim referred to in the preceding verses sealed the fate of the Medinite Jews who thereafter became more and more hardened, their hearts becoming like stones or even worse.

The verse goes on to say that even lifeless things like stones are useful, but the Jews, although rational beings possessing understanding and descended from holy men, have become so hardened as virtually to become worse than stones. Stones have functions to perform; but as they possess no volition, their work can bring them no reward. Deeds are in fact of two kinds, firstly those which are performed through volition or exercise of will, and secondly those which are performed not through volition but under some natural law. According to Islam, it is only the deeds of the former class that bring reward; but the deeds of the latter class, though unable to bring a reward, are also sometimes useful. Most of the Jews, however, had become so depraved that, far from performing any act of virtue out of a desire to be virtuous, they did not even involuntarily perform anything that might be called virtuous. They had become worse than stones; for even from stones there comes out water which people profit by.

It has, however, been added that these remarks do not apply to the whole nation; for some of the Israelites were, no doubt, swayed by the fear of God. Of these the Quran says: Of them (the hearts) there are some that humble themselves for fear of Allah. It may be noted that the pronoun ها (them) in the clause, and indeed of them there are some that humble themselves for fear of Allah, stands for حجرة (hearts) and not for حجر (stones). The fact that of the two pronouns in the verse the first refers to حجرة (stones) and this one to قلرب (hearts) need not create any doubt. The Quran contains many instances of what is termed إشارت ضمائر i.e. where similar pronouns occurring in the same verse stand for different nouns. For example, we read in 48:10: That you may believe in Allah and His Messenger and may help him and honour him, and glorify Him morning and evening. In this verse the pronoun ‘him’ refers to the Holy Prophet in the first two places and to God in the third.

The sentence, for of stones indeed there are some out of which gush forth streams, and of them there are some out of which flows water when they cleave asunder, signifies that even among lifeless things there are grades, some being more useful than others; and the Quran hints that we should recognise the difference in the grade and usefulness of all things. Everything must have its due, whether small or great.

82. Important Words:

حرف (they pervert it) is derived from حروف which means, he turned a thing aside: he made a thing incline away, the infinitive حرف means: (1) he changed or removed a word or speech of
77. And when they meet those who believe, they say, ‘We believe’, and when they meet one another in private, they say, ‘Do you inform them of what Allah has unfolded to you, that they may thereby argue with you before your Lord. Will you not then understand?’

Commentary:
The verse is addressed to Muslims. The Israelites having been reduced to such a condition as to have become hardened like stones or even worse, Muslims cannot expect them to subscribe to their belief or act faithfully to them. The Israelites had become utterly devoid of faith and all sense of honesty. They would hear the word of God revealed to the Holy Prophet and when they went back to their people, they would wilfully pervert it and thus try to mislead them and turn them against the Holy Prophet and his followers by means of deliberate misrepresentation. Nothing good can be expected from such people and nothing can prevent them from breaking agreements and their plighted word.

83. Important Words:

نُعَف* (has unfolded) means: (1) he opened; (2) he unfolded or disclosed; (3) he taught; (4) he gained victory over a place or a people (Aqrab).

عَدَّ (before) gives a number of meanings, e.g., with, by, at, near, in the presence of, in the opinion of or in the estimation of, etc. (Lane). See also 2:275.

Commentary:
The verse mentions another class of Jews who acted hypocritically. When they mixed with Muslims, they chimed in with them from worldly motives, confirming the prophecies contained in their Books about the Holy Prophet. But when they were away from Muslims and mixed with their own people, they behaved in quite a different way. On such occasions other members of the community would reproach them for their enlightening the Muslims on what God had revealed to them, i.e., for letting the Muslims know the prophecies about the Holy Prophet contained in the Jewish scriptures. In that case, they would say, the Muslims would argue with them before God, blaming them before Him on the Day of Judgment for their rejection of the Holy Prophet. And yet they well knew the prophecies which spoke of his advent and bore witness to his truth. That there will be such contentions on the Day of Judgement has also been mentioned elsewhere in the Quran which says:

"Then surely on the Day of Resurrection you will contend with one another in the presence of your Lord (39:32). It is a weakness of human nature that a culprit, even when knowing that the judge knows the truth, tries to put up pleas in his favour. Moreover, there is a sect among the Jews who, against the teachings of their own scriptures, hold that God does
78. Do they not know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they disclose?84

79. And some of them are illiterate; they know not the Book but their own false notions and they do nothing but conjecture.85

80. Woe, therefore, to those who write the book with their own hands, and then say, 'This is from Allah,' that they may take for it a paltry price. Woe, then, to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn.86

84. Commentary:
The verse points out that the Jews know that their own scriptures teach that God knows both what is hidden and what is disclosed (Jer. 16:17; Dan. 2:22). So even if they do not disclose their prophecies to the Muslims, God knows the whole truth and He will judge accordingly.

85. Important Words:
امام (illiterate persons) is the plural of اسم which means, one who can neither write nor read. The word is said to have been derived from اسم (mother), for an اسم (illiterate person) continues, as it were, the same as when born of his mother (Aqrab). اسم also signifies: (1) one not having a revealed scripture; (2) one belonging to the Arab nation (Lane).

86. Important Words:
ويل (woe) means: (1) the coming or befalling of some calamity, misfortune or sorrow; (2) punishment; (3) perdition. The expression
81. And they say, "The Fire shall not touch us except for a small number of days." Say, "Have you taken a promise from Allah? Then, Allah will never break His promise. Or, do you say of Allah what you know not?"

Commentary:

There were Jews who composed books or parts thereof and then gave them out as the word of God. This malpractice was common among the Jews and other peoples. In addition therefore to the canonical Books of the Bible, there are a number of books which are supposed to be revealed, so that it has now become impossible to distinguish the revealed Books from those not revealed. Another malpractice of the Jews was that they distorted the meaning of the divine word. They themselves wrote a whole book or part thereof and declared it to be based on Biblical evidence; while, as a matter of fact, it was opposed to this evidence. Those responsible for this were responsible not only for their own misdeeds, namely, fabricating and distorting the Word of God, but also for the misdeeds of their followers who were led by their example to commit one or all of the following acts: (1) tampering with the Word of God (2:76); (2) preferring worldliness to religion (2:77); and (3) following their own vain desires and false notions (2:79). Hence, while speaking of them, the Quran uses the word وَأَطْلَقُوا,l (woe) in order to warn them and remind them of the seriousness of their offence.

Some Christian writers have argued that the verse under comment proves that the Jewish and Christian scriptures were intact at the time of the Holy Prophet. This inference is absolutely unjustified. For tampering with the text does not necessarily mean tampering with a genuine text. One who tampers with a version of a false book which he believes to be true is as liable to blame as the one who tampers with a genuine scripture. Hence, the warning to the People of the Book against tampering with the Bible cannot be cited as proof of the existence of the true Bible at the time of the Holy Prophet.

The words, paltry price, do not mean that the taking of a good price would be lawful. The words have been used to point out that whatever price they may take would be paltry in view of the great loss they would be suffering thereby. Elsewhere, the Quran says: the benefit of this world is little (4:78).

In the last clause the Quran repeats the words, Woe to them, twice, saying: Woe, then, to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn. This is to point out that by so doing the Israelites are committing two offences: (1) writing down a thing falsely and (2) doing it with the intention of earning some worldly benefit. As the offence is double, the punishment also will be double.

Important Words:

إِنَّ النَّارَ (the Fire) means fire both as a source of light and of heat, the latter aspect being more dominant. Another word derived from the same root is نَار meaning light, which is used without reference to the element of heat.
82. Aye, whoso does evil and is encompassed by his sins,—those are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.88

The word ﷣ (the Fire) has come to be used about “Hell,” the punishment of which will consist of fire (Aqrab). It is significant that whereas the blessings of Heaven have been metaphorically spoken of as “streams of water”, the punishment of Hell has been called “fire.”

Commentary:

After recounting some malpractices of the Jews, the Quran proceeds to explain the root cause of their arrogance and hard-heartedness. These evil practices of the Jews, the Quran points out, are due to the wrong notion that they were immune from punishment (Jew. Enc. under Gehenna), or, if they will at all be punished, the punishment will be very slight. It is recorded that at the time of the Holy Prophet, a section of the Jews thought that the punishment of the Jews would not last more than forty days (Jarir, under 2:81). Others regarded even this as too long, and reduced it to seven days (Jarir, ibid). As for modern Jews, Sale says: “It is a received opinion among the Jews at present, that no person (from among the Jews), be he ever so wicked, or of whatever sect, shall remain in Hell above eleven months or at most a year, except Dathan and Abiram and atheists (from among the Jews) who will be tormented there to all eternity” (Wherry, i. 318).

The concluding portion of the verse i.e. have you taken a promise from Allah...? has been added to point out that the matter of salvation does not rest on the wish of a person or people but only on the grace and mercy of Allah Who has prescribed a law for it. This law the Quran proceeds to explain in the following two verses.

88. Important Words:

- ۤ (evil) is derived from ٍ meaning, it or he was or became evil or bad. So ۤ means, anything that is evil or bad. The Arabs say ی ی, i.e. an evil word or an evil opinion (Aqrab).

- ۢ (sins) is derived from ١ meaning, he committed a mistake or an offence or a sin. The word ۢ, though translated here as plural, is really singular, meaning, a sinful act or an offence, whether intentional or otherwise (Aqrab, Mufradât & Lane).

Commentary:

This and the following verse prescribe the law of punishment and reward, or, in other words, of Hell and Heaven. The Quran here begins with the law pertaining to punishment, because in the preceding verse the Jews claimed immunity from punishment. The Jews based their claim on the fact that they were a chosen people of God, being descended from Prophets. The Quran strongly repudiates this idea, saying, that Hell and Heaven have not been earmarked for any race. The entry of man into Hell or Heaven depends on what beliefs he holds and what actions he performs in this world. If a man holds wrong beliefs and performs sinful deeds, he will go to Hell, irrespective of the fact whether he is a Jew or a Christian or anybody else.
83. But they who believe and do good works,—those are the dwellers of Heaven; therein shall they abide. 89

In the verse under comment, the word ـَ~*ـَـَـَـَـَـَـَ~*ـَـَـَـَـَـَـَ (evil) read with the context signifies rejection of the Holy Prophet by the Jews, thus referring to the condition as to wrong belief, and the word ـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَ~*ـَـَـَـَ~*ـَـَـَـَـَـَـَ (sin) signifies their general misdeeds, thus referring to the condition as to sinful actions. It must, however, be noted that, as occasional stumbling is generally pardonable with the Merciful God, provided the belief is good and provided further that there is an honest effort on one's part to live righteously, the words, he is encompassed by his sins, have been used to point to the fact that only such misdeeds can drive one to Hell as are so large in number as to virtually encompass a man, just as an invading army encompasses a besieged force, leaving it no way out.

Coming as it does after a narration of the wrong beliefs and sinful deeds of the Israelites, the verse warns the Jews that with such a black record they should be ashamed to claim immunity from the punishment of Hell-fire.

89. Important Words:

حلة (shall abide) signifies a long time but not necessarily time without end. See note on 2: 26.

Commentary:

This verse sentimentously sets forth the divine law relating to salvation or the entry into Heaven.

Almost all the religions of the world hold salvation as a monopoly for their adherents and condemn others to everlasting Hell. Islam has raised its powerful voice against such notions, declaring them to be false and baseless. It does not lend the least support to the idea that salvation will come as a free gift to a certain class of men in whose case punishment, if resorted to at all, will only be a nominal one. According to Islam salvation can be attained only by combining true faith with good actions. The condition as to true faith serves as a warning to those people who reject certain Prophets of God and still hope to attain salvation because they belong to a specified class and are descended from certain holy persons. And the condition of good actions serves as a warning to those who are negligent in deeds, thinking that mere enrolment in the category of believers will bring salvation. Islam would have none of them.

The word ـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَ~*ـَـَـَـَـَـَـَ~*ـَـَـَـَ~*ـَـَـَ~*ـَ (shall abide) signifies a long time but not necessarily eternity. As will be noted, the word has been used in verses 82 and 83 both with regard to the inmates of Hell and of Heaven. This should not give rise to the misunderstanding either that both the punishment of Hell and the reward of Heaven are eternal or that both will come to an end after a long time. The Quran makes it clear elsewhere that though both the punishment of Hell and the reward of Heaven are meant to last long, it is only the reward of Heaven which is everlasting (11: 107—109).
And remember the time when We took a covenant from the children of Israel: 'You shall worship nothing but Allah and show kindness to parents and to kindred and orphans and the poor, and speak to men kindly and observe Prayer, and pay the Zakât;' then you turned away in aversion, except a few of you.  

90. Important Words:

(a covenant). See 2:64.

Commentary:

After setting forth the attitude of the Israelites of the Holy Prophet's time towards the Prophets of God and their own scriptures, the Quran draws their attention to the teachings which they had been required to follow but which they ignored.

The verse under comment does not refer to any particular covenant, but to the vices which were rife among the Jews at the time and which were forbidden them in the Bible. Worship of any object other than God is repeatedly forbidden in the Jewish scriptures (Exod. 20:3—6). Again, kindness to parents is also among the injunctions (Exod. 20:12). Similarly, for the kind treatment of kinsmen, clear injunctions have been given (Lev. 19:17, 18; Exod. 21:9, and Prov. 3:27, 28). For care of orphans, an injunction is to be met with in Deut. 14:29. Sympathy for the poor is enjoined in Deut. 15:11. The injunction to deal gently by mankind is found in Prov. 3:30. The commandment to observe Prayer is given in Deut. 6:13. The injunction for alms-giving may be seen in Exod. 23:10, 11.

The Jews openly disregarded these clear injunctions. They set up equals to God, some believing in Ezra as the son of God, others taking the word of their divines as revelation and setting aside the dictates of the Holy Writ. Their treatment of their own kinsmen and others was cruel. Their attitude towards orphans and the indigent was unsympathetic. They were quite devoid of fellow-feeling and were lax in Prayers and alms-giving. It should, however, be noted that God has not condemned the whole Jewish nation, but has made an exception in the case of the righteous few among them.

In this verse, as everywhere else in the Quran, the sequence of words follows the natural order of importance. The worship of the one God is mentioned first. Then mention is made of mankind, who have been divided into two classes: (1) those who deserve good treatment as a right; (2) those to whom kindness is shown as an act of charity. The first class is mentioned first, because in their case there is a sort of obligation, a debt to be paid. Those who are to be treated kindly out of charity are mentioned afterwards, the degree of need in each case determining the sequence. Last of all, acts of obedience to God are mentioned; and out of them the most important ones pertaining to the purification of the soul and the payment of religious taxes are selected; and these are placed after fellow-feeling, because fellow-feeling is the first step towards the moral elevation of man, who often feels impelled to it from within without reference to any law.
85. And remember the time when We took a covenant from you: 'You shall not shed your blood or turn your people out of your homes'; then you confirmed it; and you have been bearing witness to it. 

86. Yet you are the people who slay your own brethren and turn out a section of your people from their homes, backing up one another against them with sin and transgression. And if they come to you as captives, you ransom them, while their very expulsion was unlawful for you. Do you, then, believe in part of the Book and disbelieve in part? There is, therefore, no reward for such among you as do that, except disgrace in the present life; and on the Day of Judgement they shall be driven to a most severe chastisement; and surely Allah is not unmindful of what you do.

87. These are they who have preferred the present life to the Hereafter. Their punishment shall not therefore be lightened, nor shall they be helped in any other way.

It is noteworthy that the injunctions that are found scattered in the Bible have been placed together in a most beautiful order in the Quran.

91. Commentary:
See under 2:87.

92. Commentary:
See under 2:87.

93. Commentary:
After considering the vices of the Jews in general in the previous verse, the Quran addresses the Jews of Medina in particular in verses 85 and 86. It is pointed out that in face of the clear injunctions to the contrary, the Jews of Medina had been killing one another and turning one another out of their homes. As explained under 2:18, there lived in Medina in the time of the Holy Prophet three Jewish tribes, the Banū Qainuqāṣ, the Banū Naḍīr and the Banū Quraṣā; and two pagan tribes, the Aus and the Khazraj. Two of the Jewish tribes, Banū Qainuqāṣ and Banū Quraṣā, sided with the Aus,
And verily We gave Moses the Book and caused after him Messengers to follow in his footsteps; and to Jesus, son of Mary, We gave manifest Signs, and strengthened him with the Spirit of holiness. Will you then, every time a Messenger comes to you with what you yourselves desire not, behave arrogantly and treat some as liars and slay others? 

Important Words:

1. تلا (We caused to follow) is derived from لات which means, the back of the neck. Hence 0/ (gaffa) means, he made a person or thing follow or come after another (Aqrab).

2. ؛يات (manifest Signs) is derived from دم meaning, he explained a thing so as to make it clear or manifest. So دم means, such signs and arguments as make a thing manifest and clearly establish the truth of a claimant (Mufradat & Aqrab).

3. روح القدس (Spirit of holiness) is a compound word made up of الروح and القدس. The first-mentioned word i.e. الروح means, a spirit, an angel, a word of God; and القدس means, sanctity, holiness. روح القدس would thus mean, the holy or blessed word of God; the spirit or angel of holiness (Aqrab & Lane). It is generally taken to signify the angel Gabriel.

Commentary:

In this verse, the Israelites are told that they had opposed all the Prophets of God, beginning from Moses and ending with Jesus, for no other reason than that some of the teachings of these Prophets were at variance with their cherished desires.

The verse, while speaking generally of the Prophets who came after Moses, makes a special mention of Jesus. The reason for this
lies in the fact that, somehow or other, the Jews accepted all those Prophets who appeared prior to Jesus, but they stubbornly refused to accept him. It was, therefore, in the fitness of things that particular mention should have been made of Jesus, and it should have been declared that he was as good and as holy a Prophet as so many others who had gone before him and in whom the Jews had believed, inasmuch as he possessed, in common with them, that characteristic Spirit of holiness which distinguished God's Prophets from other men of the world. The most powerful proof of the truth of the claims of Jesus as a Prophet was his being favoured with Signs and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and this is the very proof on the basis of which the Jews had believed in the previous Prophets. The "manifest Signs" and the Spirit of holiness have been mentioned here not because they were the special characteristics of Jesus, but because both these evidences which must accompany every true Prophet were denied him by the Jews. From Matt. 12:38-40, it is apparent that the Jews denied that Jesus showed any Sign, while from Luke 11:15 and Matt. 10:25 we learn that, according to the Jews, Jesus, far from being favoured with the Holy Spirit, was influenced by the Evil Spirit and was (God forbid!) himself a devil.

That "manifest Signs" and the Spirit of holiness are the common characteristics of all the Prophets of God and not an exclusive distinction of Jesus is apparent from other verses of the Quran as well. Says the Quran: That was because their Messengers came to them with manifest Signs but they disbelieved; so Allah seized them. Surely, He is strong and severe in chastising (40:23). Also see 2:100.

And elsewhere the Quran says about the Holy Prophet, Say, the Spirit of holiness has brought it (the Quran) down from thy Lord with truth that He may strengthen those who believe and as a guidance and glad tidings for Muslims (16:103). The Quran goes still further and declares that the Spirit of holiness descends not only on Prophets but also on true believers (58:23).

In this connection we have also the testimony of the Holy Prophet who is reported to have said to the poet Ḥassān, “Reply, O Ḥassān (to the disbelievers), on behalf of the Prophet of God, and O God, help Thou Ḥassān with i.e. the Spirit of holiness” (Bukhārī & Muslim).

Ḥassān also declares in a couplet of his that i.e. the Holy Spirit was always with the Muslims. Says he:

و جميل رسول الله نيا
و روح القدس ليس له كناء

“And Gabriel, the Messenger of God, is among us and the Spirit of holiness has no match” (Muslim).

From the above it is clear that (manifest Signs) and the Spirit of holiness are not the exclusive privileges of Jesus but were vouchsafed to all the Prophets of God. Even holy men other than Prophets have received the Spirit of holiness from God. The specific mention of “manifest Signs” and “the Spirit of holiness” in this verse is thus meant only to bring home to the Jews that the rejection of Jesus was entirely unjustified.

It is commonly believed that is another name of the angel Gabriel (Jarir & Kathīr). As explained under 2:31, out of His infinite wisdom, God has appointed different angels to execute His will and manifest His attributes in the universe; and the angel to whom the work of bringing about purification in the world and of reflecting God’s attribute of holiness has been assigned is called i.e. the Holy Spirit. The expression “Holy Spirit” is also met with in the Old Testament (Ps. 51:11). Some Commentators have also interpreted as a special manifestation of God’s i.e. His chief attribute of Holiness (Kathīr).
89. They said, 'Our hearts are wrapped in covers.' Nay, Allah has cursed them for their disbelief. Little is that which they believe.

95. Important Words:

- غلاف (wrapped in covers) is the plural of غلاف which means a thing wrapped in a covering. غلاف means a covering. The word غلاف has also come to mean, one who is uncircumcised, i.e., one whose foreskin, which is also like a covering, is not removed. On the same basis غلاف has come to mean, a heart which is wrapped in a covering; a heart that does not understand anything (Aqrab). The word also signifies, a heart which is a storehouse (lit. bag) of knowledge (Mufradiit).

- يعفون (cursed them). يعفون means: (1) he drove him away and removed him from all good; (2) he humiliated him and expressed an evil opinion about him; (3) he cursed him (Aqrab). الن من (curse) which is the infinitive from يعفون gives the sense of driving away a person and putting him at a distance from oneself by way of anger and displeasure. When used by God it means: (1) deprivation of His mercy; and (2) infliction of punishment (Mufradiit). The word is not here used by way of abuse but as expressing an actual state or condition.

Commentary:

The clause, من غلاف can be interpreted here in all the different senses given above. Whenever the Jews found themselves unable to refute Quranic arguments, they ironically said that they were men of poor intelligence and unable to comprehend Islamic doctrines, and that Muslims should, therefore, go to their learned men and explain their tenets to them. Or taking the word غلاف to mean "enclosed in coverings" this reply of the Jews would mean that their hearts enjoyed special protection from their Lord so that they could not be influenced by the preachings of Muslims. Again, taking the word to signify "a storehouse of knowledge," the reply of the Jews would mean that, as they possessed all necessary spiritual knowledge, they did not stand in need of further teaching.

Whatever was the motive of the Jews in saying these words, the Quran says that Islamic doctrines were not only consistent with reason and easy to grasp, but superior to all other teachings, and the reply of the Jews only indicated that they had lost all touch with God and their faith had become corrupt and vitiated.

The clause, Allah has cursed them for their disbelief, is intended to point to the truth that Allah's curse comes only as a result of some evil act on man's own part. Allah, being most Merciful, never deprives a man of His mercy, unless and until he shuts upon himself the doors of divine mercy.

The words, little is that which they believe, point to yet another great principle. Though the Jews have been declared to be "accursed" in the sight of God and have been adjudged as "disbelievers," yet God does not say that they are altogether deprived of faith. Their faith is indeed imperfect; nay, it is positively evil, containing much more of falsehood than of truth, yet the little faith that they still happen to possess has been expressly acknowledged by God. Compare with this the claim of the Jews themselves when they say, the Christians stand on nothing (2:114). The God of Islam would not say that of either the Jews or the Christians.
90. And when there came to them a Book from Allah, fulfilling that which is with them, and before that they had prayed for victory over the disbelievers—yet when there came to them that which they knew, they rejected it. The curse of Allah be on the disbelievers.  

91. Evil is that for which they have sold their souls: that they should disbelieve in what Allah has revealed, grudging that Allah should send down His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases. So they incurred wrath upon wrath; and there is an humiliating chastisement for the disbelievers.

96. Important Words: 

重要意义 (they prayed for victory) is derived from فتح meaning: (1) he opened a thing, or he disclosed a thing; (2) he conquered or gained victory over. The word重要意义 would, therefore, have two meanings: (1) they disclose; and (2) they ask or pray for victory (Aqrab).

Commentary: 

According to the first meaning of重要意义 the verse would signify that Jews used to disclose to the pagan Arabs the fact that there was foretold in their scriptures the appearance of a Prophet who would spread the truth all over the world. But when that Prophet actually appeared, even those of them who had seen the signs of God fulfilled in his person turned away from him.

Taking the second meaning of the word, the verse would signify that before the advent of the Holy Prophet, the Jews used to pray fervently to God to raise a Prophet who would cause the true faith to triumph over the false ones (Hishâm, i. 150). But when the Prophet for whom they prayed actually came and the ascendancy of truth over falsehood became manifest, they refused to accept him. This naturally brought on their heads the curse of God.

It may be repeated here that the word “curse” is not used in the Quran as abuse but as indicative of the actual state or condition of a person or a people. As explained under the preceding verse, the literal meaning of the word إمسة is “to be driven away from God” and hence all who stand in opposition to God and His Prophets incur إمسة and are spoken of as being under the curse of God, i.e., driven away from God’s presence and deprived of His mercy.

97. Important Words: 

بغي (grudging) is derived from بغي meaning: i.e. he wished or desired or sought the thing. بغي الشرير, i.e. the man transgressed or turned away from the truth, or he disobeyed or revolted against a lawful authority.
92. And when it is said to them, 'Believe in what Allah has sent down', they say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us'; and they disbelieve in what has been sent down after that, yet it is the Truth, fulfilling that which is with them. Say: "Why, then, did you attempt to slay the Prophets of Allah before this, if you were believers?" 

Commentary:

In this verse, we are told that the Jews rejected the Holy Prophet solely because he was of different nationality. The verse means that the Jews upon whom the truth has dawned and who have come to recognize the Quran as the very Book mentioned in their scriptures are, out of sheer pride and obstinacy, impiously rejecting it, little knowing that, by so doing, they are hastening the ruin of their own souls. The truth is that they cannot hear to see a Prophet raised from among any people other than their own. They fail to realize that all alike are the creatures of God and there is no earthly reason why Prophets should appear only from among the Israelites.

The words, wrath upon wrath, are used to signify that even before the coming of the Holy Prophet the Jews had incurred the anger of God by their rejection of Jesus and other iniquities; so when they rejected the Holy Prophet, they incurred wrath upon wrath, i.e., they added to their previous load of God's anger.

98. Commentary:

The verse means that whenever Islam is presented to Jews, they, far from reflecting over its claims, consider it enough to say that they will believe in what is sent to Israelite Prophets only, and not in the revelation of outsiders, although the revelation they reject on such flimsy grounds fulfils the prophecies contained in their own scriptures about a new Book. Further, it is added that the statement that they would adhere to what was revealed to Israelite Prophets is absurd, seeing that they had opposed even their own Prophets in their time.

This verse also makes it clear what the word ُلَمْنَأ means when followed by the preposition لام. The expression has been used as a proof of the truth of the Quran, and it is therefore clear that it conveys the sense of "fulfilling" and not that of "confirming". It is
93. And Moses came to you with manifest Signs, then you took the calf for worship in his absence, and you were transgressors.

94. And remember the time when We took a covenant from you and raised high above you the Mount, saying, 'Hold firmly to what We have given you and hearken'; they said, 'We hear and we disobey'; and their hearts were permeated with the love of the calf because of their disbelief. Say, 'Evil is that which your faith enjoins on you, if you have any faith.'
95. Say, ‘If the abode of the Hereafter, with Allah, is solely for you to the exclusion of all other people, then wish for death, if you are truthful’.

96. But never shall they wish for it, because of what their own hands have sent on before them; and Allah knows the wrongdoers well.

97. And thou shalt surely find them, of all people, the most covetous of life, even more than those who set up equals with God. Everyone of them wishes that he may be granted a life of a thousand years, but his being granted such life shall not keep him away from the punishment; and Allah sees all that they do.

98. of that promise, they showed active opposition to the commandments of God by their deeds.

In the concluding portion of the verse, it is pointed out that the Jews professed to believe in what was revealed to them by God, but their belief was of a strange character; for in spite of it, they persisted in their opposition to the Prophets. If this was believing, then their faith was only leading them astray.

101. Commentary:
See under 2:96 below.

102. Commentary:
In verses 95 and 96 Jews are invited to join with Muslims in what is termed a prayer-contest. They are called upon to pray to God in the company of Muslims for the death or destruction of the party with which God is displeased on account of its espousal of the cause of falsehood. If Jews are really the favourites of God and Muslims are under His wrath, the latter, as a result of the prayer contest, will surely meet with ruin, and thus it will become clear which of the two parties is on the side of truth.

The only evidence which in this world can prove the truth of any of the conflicting claims regarding the next life made by the different religious systems is that the promises held out about the next life should in part at least begin to fulfil themselves in this very life. If, in such a prayer-contest as the above, God were to show His favour to the Jews, it would furnish a clear proof that His favours would accompany them also in the next life.

The Quran adds that Jews will never venture to accept the challenge, for they are well aware of their actions and the motives that guide them.

For a fuller description of the institution of Mubahala or prayer-contest see under 3:62.

103. Commentary:
The reason why Jews were more attached to the world than pagans is that the latter did not believe in any retribution after death and, therefore, though they loved this world as
98. Say, 'Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—for he it is who has caused it to descend on thy heart by the command of Allah, which fulfils that which precedes it, and is a guidance and glad tidings to the believers—

the only place for enjoying honour and happiness and entertained no hope about the next, yet with no fear of punishment after death, they were less cringingly attached to the present life than the Jews, who believed in resurrection after death and feared in their hearts that their actions would make them liable to punishment before God.

104. Important Words:

Gabriel (جبريل) is a compound word made up of جبر (Geber) which in Hebrew means a man or a mighty man or a hero, and جبر (Gibr) which means God (Hebrew-English Lexicon by William Geseneus, Boston, 1836. Also see Bukhari, chap. on Tafsir). The latter word occurs in many combinations (e.g. in the word Ishmael in Gen. 16: 11 which means "God heareth" or "God has heard"). In Arabic, which is the mother of Hebrew, the word جبر means, mending a broken thing; giving a poor man so liberally as to make him well off; a brave man. The word جبر is either derived from the Arabic word الله (God) or from the root جبر, the active partciple from which is جبر meaning Controller or Ruler i.e. God (Aqrab). Ibn 'Abbas relates that the other name of جبر is جبر, i.e. the servant of God (Jarir), which is simply another rendering of the word جبر. Thus the angel جبر (Gabriel) is so called because he is the servant of God; he is the strong and brave servant of God; he looks after the repairing or reformation of the universe, he bestows God's bounties on mankind and is a liberal giver.

In Islam جبر has been described as the chief among the angels (Manthūr) and was therefore selected by God to be the bearer of the Quranic message, the best and the last شريعة (Law) to descend from Heaven. Many Commentators consider that جبر (Gabriel) is synonymous with روح القدس (the Spirit of holiness) spoken of in the Quran and the Hadith. Similarly, Gabriel has been spoken of as روح الالهيم (the Trusty Spirit) in the Quran (26: 194).

Commentary:

The Jews had been invited to believe in the Quran, but they refused to accept it (v. 92 above) on the ground that it was said to have been brought by Gabriel while, according to them, the bearer of divine revelation was Michael, and not Gabriel (Musnad). The function of Gabriel, as we learn from the Bible, is to convey the messages of God to His servants (Dan. 8: 16; 9: 21; and Luke 1: 19, 26. It is strange that Gabriel is mentioned in the Old Testament for the first time in Daniel and not earlier). The Quran, as the verse under comment points out, assigns the same function to Gabriel. But in some later writings of the Jews, he is described as “the angel of fire and thunder” (Enc. Bib. under Gabriel). Such was the idea of the Jews in the days of the Holy Prophet. They looked upon Gabriel as an angel of wars, calamities and hardships (Jarir under 2: 98). Muslim historians tell us that this idea had such a firm hold on the minds of the Jews that when they were told that the bearer of the Quranic revelation was Gabriel, they said: جبريل.
99. *“Whoever is an enemy to Allah, and His angels, and His Messengers, and Gabriel, and Michael, then, surely, Allah is an enemy to such disbelievers.”* 105

The Quran has, in the verse under comment, brought forward four arguments in refutation of the Jewish plea for rejecting the Quran:

**Firstly,** that no angel can bring down any revelation unless he receives direct command from God. Hence the angel who brings the revelation, whether he is Gabriel or Michael or any other, is only a vehicle for the divine word; and even if Jewish tradition associates an angel with calamities, it cannot call into question the authority from which his message originates.

**Secondly,** that the revelation sent down to the Prophet of Islam is مُعْلِق (in fulfilment) of the previous Books and in it all the prophecies about the promised Law-giver contained in the earlier scriptures find their fulfilment, which is a clear proof of its divine origin. **Thirdly,** that when it is practically established that the teachings of the Quran are a guidance for mankind, its acceptance becomes binding upon all right-thinking men. **Fourthly,** that the Quran contains teachings which, besides being right, are also بَرِير (bearers of glad tidings) to its followers and harbingers of God’s mercy and favours. Such revelation should not be rejected simply for the reason that it has been brought down by Gabriel.

105. **Important Words:**

مَيْكَال (Michael) is the name of another angel who, like Gabriel, is also one of the chief angels. The word has been described as being a combination of words i.e. مَيْكَال or كَابِل which means, who as God? or who is like God? (Geseneus & Jew. Enc.) i.e. there is none like God, the angel Michael having been given this name owing to his being assigned the duty of establishing God’s Unity and Oneness in the universe. The Jews looked upon Michael as their favourite angel (Jew. Enc., also Jarir, under verse 2: 98, 99). He was the guardian angel of the Israelites (Enc. Brit. under Michael). In Islam Gabriel is believed to be superior to Michael in rank, for whereas Gabriel is known as عَزَّ وَجَلَّ, Michael has been given the name مَيْكَال, the word مَيْكَال being diminutive of the word مُكَال (Jarir, i. 329). In the days of the Holy Prophet, the Jews looked upon Gabriel as the angel of wars, calamities and hardships, whereas they looked upon Michael as the angel of peace and plenty and rain and herbage (Jarir & Kathir).
100. And surely We have sent down to thee manifest Signs, and no one disbelieves in them but the disobedient.\(^{106}\)

101. What! every time they make a covenant, will a party among them throw it aside? Nay, most of them have no faith.\(^{107}\)

102. And now when there has come to them a Messenger from Allah, fulfilling that which is with them, a party of the people to whom the Book was given have thrown the

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Commentary:

As an insult to a king's agent implies insult to the king himself, so those who say unworthy things about any of the angels really find fault with God. The Quran, therefore, declares that the words of the Jews referred to in the preceding verse imply irreverence to God and opposition to His will, such as only an enemy of God could show. Angels constitute an important link in the spiritual chain and he who breaks even one link of the spiritual chain or manifests ill-will against any single unit of the spiritual system, in fact severs his connection with the whole system. Such a man deprives himself of the favours and blessings which are bestowed upon the true servants of God and renders himself deserving of the punishment fixed for transgressors.

In this verse a general mention of God, the angels and the Prophets is followed by a specific mention of Gabriel and Michael. The reason is not far to seek. The Jews regarded Gabriel as their enemy. It is therefore particularly pointed out that enmity with Gabriel merits divine punishment. The name of Michael is also mentioned along with Gabriel's so that no Muslim might take it into his head to retort to Jewish hatred of Gabriel by speaking ill of Michael, the favourite angel of the Jews.

106. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that the denial of the Holy Prophet by the Jews, and for that matter by all other disbelievers, is quite unreasonable because his claim is based on convincing arguments and manifest Signs. The verse gives the lie to those who have the effrontery to assert that, according to the Quran, the Prophet of Islam showed no Signs. The greatest of the Signs shown by the Holy Prophet is the matchlessness of the Quran itself.

The word فاسقرن (the disobedient) occurring at the end of this verse means “those who first take upon themselves to observe what the Law orders and acknowledge its authority and then go against it” (Lane). This is a true picture of the Jews who rejected the Holy Prophet in spite of the fact that his coming had been foretold in their own scriptures.

107. Commentary:

See under next verse.
Book of Allah behind their backs, as if they know it not.¹⁰⁸

103. And they pursue the course which the rebellious men followed during the reign of Solomon. And Solomon did not disbelieve; but it was the rebellious ones who disbelieved, teaching people falsehood and deception. And they pursue what was revealed to the two angels in Babylon, Harüüt and Marüüt. But these two taught no one until they had said, 'We are but a trial, do not therefore disbelieve.' So men learnt from them that by which they made a difference between man and his wife, but they harmed no one thereby, except by the command of Allah; on the contrary, these people are learning that which would harm them and do them no good. And they have certainly known that he who trafficks therein has no share of good in the Hereafter; and surely evil is that for which they have sold their souls; had they but known!¹⁰⁹

108. Commentary:

As pointed out in the preceding verse, the Jews had pledged themselves to their own Prophets that they would accept the Prophet who was to appear from among their brethren, the Ishmaelites, in fulfilment of the prophecies mentioned in the Bible. But although all the signs mentioned in the prophecies concerning the promised Prophet had been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet, yet they persisted in their denial and thus broke their promise and belied their own scriptures.

The word مسْتَطْعَمْ has been construed to mean: (1) that the Quran declares the Bible to be true, and (2) that the Quran fulfils the prophecies contained in the Bible. The latter meaning only is applicable here. For here the People of the Book are spoken of as casting the Book of God (the Torah) behind their backs as a result of the fulfilment of its prophecies in the Quran. This cannot be the case, if we follow the first meaning ascribed to the word; for if the Quran declared the Bible to be true, this could not be the cause of the Jews casting their own Book behind their backs. Evidently, the correct meaning is that in spite of the fact that the Quran fulfils the prophecies contained in the Bible, the Jews reject it, and thereby cast their own Book behind their backs.

109. Important Words:

(1) تُلْوَى (followed). See 2:114
(2) شِيَالِينَ (rebellious men). See 2:15.
(during) gives the sense of "in" or "during" (Aqrab & Mughnī). It is also used to denote a hostile sense meaning "against," as one says: ~ i.e. he rebelled against him, or he went out against him with an army intending to fight (Wright). In this sense the phrase ~ would mean, against the government of Solomon, or conspiring against his government.

\(\text{صَرَحُ} \) (falsehood and deception). In verbal senses he deceived him; he coaxed him and involved him in trouble and deprived him of his understanding; he enchanted him. \(\text{صَرَحُ} \) means, he coated a piece of silver so as to make it look like gold. The noun \(\text{صَرَحُ} \) means, anything the source of which is not quite visible; showing off falsehood in the form of truth; a crafty device; craftiness; mischief; enchantment (Aqrab). It also means, producing what is false in the form of truth; any event of which the cause is hidden and which is imagined to be different from what it really is; embellishment by falsification and deceit (Lane). Thus every falsehood, deceit or crafty device which is meant to hide the real object from public view is included in the meaning of \(\text{صَرَحُ} \).

\(\text{مَلكَينَ} \) (two angels) is the dual number from \(\text{مَلِك} \) (angel) for which see 2:31. Figuratively \(\text{مَلكَينَ} \) is sometimes used to denote a handsome or holy person, as the Quran says, \(\text{He} \) (Joseph) is but a gracious angel i.e. a handsome and pious youth (12:32). As in the verse under comment, the two angels are described as teaching something to the people, therefore the word cannot be taken in its literal significance, because angels do not live among men and do not generally have free intercourse with them (17:95, 96; 21:8). Thus in the present verse \(\text{مَلكَينَ} \) would not mean "two angels" in the literal sense of the word but "two holy men."

\(\text{هَارُوت} \) and \(\text{مارُوت} \) are both descriptive names. \(\text{هَارُوت} \) is derived from \(\text{هَرُوت} \) which means, he tore up (Aqrab); hence \(\text{مارُوت} \) means, one who tears; the tearer. \(\text{مارُوت} \) is derived from \(\text{مَرَّة} \) which means, he broke (Aqrab & Lane). Thus \(\text{مارُوت} \) means, one who breaks; the breaker. These names signify that the object of the appearance of these holy men was to 'tear' asunder and 'break' the glory and power of certain people.

\(\text{فَنَّى} \) (trial) means, the trial or means whereby the condition of a man may be demonstrated in respect of good or evil (Lane). They say \(\text{فَنَّى} \) i.e. the goldsmith melted the gold in the crucible so that its purity or impurity might be ascertained (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

Many a legend unwarranted by the Quran and the Hadith and even running counter to them clusters round this verse. It would be quite unreasonable to interpret it on the basis of those myths. For right interpretation no external evidence is needed, the words being self-explanatory. It is clear from the verse itself that Jews in the time of the Holy Prophet were bent upon the same mischief which characterized them in the days of Solomon and during the days of their captivity in Babylon. The verse further indicates that the mischief-mongers of Solomon's time were those "rebellious men" who called him an unbeliever. God says that those wicked men themselves, and not Solomon, lacked belief. Again, the verse tells us that these men taught their associates such signs as conveyed to them meanings quite different from those generally accepted, for the purpose of deceiving other people and concealing their own activities. All this leads to the conclusion that this verse alludes to those secret plots which the enemies of Solomon made against him, and by which they wished to break his empire. It is pointed out that now in the time of the Holy Prophet these people are resorting to the self-same tactics, but that they will fail.
As the verse refers to a number of historical events, it is advisable to relate them here at some length.

When Jews saw that the power of Islam was steadily expanding and that no opposition from the Arabs had been able to arrest the progress of Muslims, they began to excite outsiders against them. At that time there were two large empires in the neighbourhood of Arabia: (1) The Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire; and (2) The Persian Empire. As Jews were already at enmity with the Roman Government, because they were in constant trouble under it, so it was only the Persian Government to which they could look for support. Harassed by the oppression of Christian rulers, they had taken refuge in Persia, where they enjoyed a good deal of religious freedom, and their religious centre shifted from Judah and Jerusalem to Babylonia (Hutchinson's History of the Nations, p. 550). In the seventh century of the Christian era, i.e., during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, Jews suffered exceptionally cruel persecution at the hands of the Christian Emperors of the Eastern Roman Empire. "Both Phocas and Heraclius", says the Historians' History of the World (vol. 7, p. 175), "attempted to exterminate the Jewish religion, and if possible to put an end to their national existence. Heraclius not only practised every species of cruelty himself to effect this object within the bounds of his own dominions, but he even made the forced conversion or banishment of the Jews a prominent feature in his diplomacy." So, in the time of the Holy Prophet the only government to which the Jews could look for help was that of Persia, where their co-religionists enjoyed much influence, especially in the reign of Chosroes II (Jew. Enc., ix. 648).

Consequently, when the Jews saw that their efforts to check the progress of Islam had totally failed, they took to exciting the Persian Court against the Holy Prophet by various means; and as a result, Chosroes II issued orders to the Governor of Yemen to send to him the Arabian claimant as a captive. But when the envoys of the Governor came to the Holy Prophet, he asked them to see him the next day, when he told them that God had informed him that He had had their king murdered. Thereupon they returned and related this incident to the Governor. A few days later, the Governor received a letter from Siroes, the son of Chosroes II, to the effect that he had killed his father on account of the latter's tyranny and that the Governor should, on his behalf, renew the oath of allegiance from all the Chiefs of Yemen; and that the order of his father regarding an Arab should be considered as cancelled (Tabari, iii. 1573—1574).

Some historians, including Tabari himself, hold that it was the letter of the Holy Prophet to the king of Persia inviting him to Islam that was the occasion of his orders for the apprehension of the Holy Prophet. But on comparison of the dates of the above-mentioned events, this turns out to be a mistaken view. For, as we read in Zurqani (ii. 211-212), the letter in question was despatched from Medina on the first of Muharram, 7 A.H.—a date corresponding to 12th April, 628 A.D. (Lane under هجرة); whereas Chosroes II, who sent orders for the arrest of the Holy Prophet, had been assassinated on the 29th of February, 628 A.D. (Historians' History of the World, viii. 95). Thus the view that the letter of the Holy Prophet was the cause of Chosroes' orders is quite untenable; and the only possible cause of Chosroes' ignominious orders was that his ears had been poisoned by malicious reports, a fact admitted by Sir William Muir (Life of Mohammad, p. 370). It is to these efforts of the Jews that the Quran alludes in the verse under comment.
The verse also points out that it was foolish on the part of the Jews to suppose that they would succeed in that way. Their attention is invited to the fact that they had already been responsible for two secret plots. The first was against Solomon, when some members of their community turned rebels, hatched plots and stirred up bitter feeling against him by calling him an infidel; whereas the infidels were those who opposed him, hurled imputations at him, and set up against him secret societies in which secret signs and symbols were taught. The Jews, however, themselves reaped the ill-reward of their sinister schemes: their power, as a consequence, fell into decay, and at last they became so powerless that they were driven into exile towards Babylon. This account of Jewish secret societies and conspiracies and treacherous signs and symbols, as alluded to in this verse, finds corroboration in the Bible (I Kings, 11:1-6), where we read that the charge of idol-worship was spread against Solomon. An account of his enemies is found in I Kings 11:14, 23, 26, and a reference to secret plots is met with in II Chron. 10:2-4, where we learn that the Jews had sent for Jeroboam, a bitter enemy of Solomon, immediately after his death and had attempted to make Solomon’s son agree to some demands of theirs, involving certain imputations against Solomon, before his accession to the throne. We learn about the secret signs from I Kings 11:29-32, in which the ten tribes of the Israelites are likened to ten pieces of a garment, and Jeroboam is told that these ten tribes were on his side against Solomon; and so it proved to be, for on the death of Solomon, these ten tribes made Jeroboam their king (I Kings 12:20). Again, the reference of the Quran to the infidelity of Solomon’s enemies finds corroboration in II Chron. 11:15, from which we learn that his enemies, who falsely charged him with unbelief, themselves fell into idol-worship when they rose to power.

Besides the testimony of the Bible, there is other evidence to show that in the days of Solomon a secret society was at work against him. An old tradition, current among medieval Freemasons, indicates that Solomon was envious of the superior intelligence of Hiram, the chief architect who built the Temple at Jerusalem. He is said to have attempted to kill the great Mason by having him thrown into a tank of molten brass, but he was saved by the spirit of his ancestor, Cain, who prophesied that at last his people would get the better of their enemy. Solomon, however, as the tradition goes, had him afterwards put to death. It is said of him that he had fixed certain secret signs which were a sort of mystery known only to him and his associates (Secret Societies of the World, Volume II, pp. 1-8; as the original book could not be obtained, the reference is to an Urdu translation). We further learn from this book that before the period of the Accepted Masons, the same signs used in all the Lodges were current among the Masons of Solomon’s time (p. 11) and that at the time of initiation, the Hiram incident was related to the new member (pp. 29, 30). However incredible the story as a whole may be, it points at least to the conclusion that in one way or other, secret societies were associated with Solomon’s reign and were much in vogue in his time.

The second occasion when, according to the Quran, the Israelites had resort to secret societies was during their captivity in Babylon. But this time they were not acting against any Prophet but were, on the other hand, working under the leadership of two inspired personages, who were, in obedience to divine command, trying to bring about the deliverance of the Israelites. Their mission was to “tear asunder” and “break down” the empire of the enemies of the Israelites. These holy men told new members, at the time of initiation, that they were a sort of trial from God, serving to
104. And "if they had believed and acted righteously, better surely would have been the reward from Allah, had they but known!" 

differentiate between the good and the bad, and that the Israelites should not therefore refuse to believe what they said, because this would lead them to infidelity. In their teachings they drew a distinction between males and females, confining membership to males only (this is an old practice found among most secret societies). It is also stated that the disciples of these holy men directed their activities against only those for whose chastisement they were commissioned by God.

In this narration, the Quran refers to the days when King Nebuchadnezzar brought the Jews as captives into Babylon and kept them there for a long time. The holy men referred to in the verse under comment were Haggai, the Prophet, and Zechariah, the son of Iddo (Ezra 5:1). When Cyrus, King of Media and Persia, rose to power, the Israelites entered into a secret agreement with him and greatly facilitated his conquest of Babylon. In return for this service, he not only allowed them to return to their own country but also helped in the rebuilding of the Temple (Historians' History of the World, ii. 126).

After stating that the Jews of the Holy Prophet's time were following the same course which was adopted by the rebels of Solomon’s days and which was later adopted by the Jews under two holy men in Babylon, it was necessary here to state the ultimate upshot of their efforts against the Holy Prophet, because on the two previous occasions their efforts had met with different results. On the first occasion the conspiracy of the Israelites, being directed against a Prophet of God, had ended in the total loss of their prestige and finally in their banishment to Babylon. On the second occasion, they took a similar course under two inspired personages and were successful. Hence, in order to indicate whether the efforts of the Jews against the Holy Prophet would meet with failure, as they did in the days of Solomon, or with success as in Babylon, the Quran says: these people are learning that which would harm them and do them no good; hinting that they will not be successful as in Babylon. Accordingly, the consequence of their hostile efforts against the Holy Prophet was that Chosroes, their only supporter, met his death at the hands of his son, and they themselves were exiled from Arabia in the time of 'Umar. In the concluding portion of the verse, God adds: And they have certainly known that he who trafficks therein has no share of good in the Hereafter, meaning that a mischievous plotter never succeeds ultimately. The last clause, had they but known, throws a flood of light on how intensely God desires that His creatures should always take the right course and not be misled by mischievous people.

110. Important Words:

"ثواب" (reward) is, like "ثواب" (with which it is synonymous), derived from "ثواب" which means, he returned, or he returned to a good condition. "ثواب" and "ثواب" mean, requital or reward of good or bad deeds. Generally, they are used in the sense of a reward of good deeds (Aqrab).
105. O ye who believe, say not, 'Rā'īnā', but say, 'Urnūnā' and hearken. And for the disbelievers is a painful punishment. \[\text{Commentary:}\]

If the Jews had possessed true faith in God and had acted in His fear, they would not have devoted all their energies to the acquisition of worldly gains but would have sought the good of the Hereafter. They have, however, been seeking the advantage of the present life only and have neglected the Hereafter altogether, which shows that they are utterly lacking in true faith and are not leading righteous lives.

111. Important Words:

- *Rā'īnā* is derived from the root *raa* meaning, he watched or looked on. It means, he looked towards him with goodly feeling or he had regard for him. 
- *Rū' āmūr* means, he watched his affair. 
- *Rā'ī fī mīk* means, lend me your ear or listen to what I say. 
- *Rā' āl-jumā* means, he watched the stars and waited for their setting (Aqrab). So *Rā' ānā* would mean, look to us or have a regard for us. Or the word is derived from the root *raa* which generally gives the idea of reciprocity denoting two parties standing almost on the same level; it may mean, have regard for us. Both these words are used by a listener when he cannot follow the speech of a speaker. They roughly give the sense of, "I request you to repeat what you have said" or, to give a commoner idiom, "I beg your pardon"; or they are used on similar other occasions when one desires to draw the attention of a person towards oneself.

- *Urnūnā* is derived from the root *anār* meaning, he looked, or he saw, or he had regard for. So *Urnūnā* would mean, look to us or have regard for us. Both these words denoting two parties standing almost on the same level, it may mean, have regard for us that we may have regard for you. As this expression involved disrespect to the Holy Prophet, God forbids Muslims to use such words, and advises them to use language which

**Commentary:**

After mentioning the intrigues which the Jews carried on with outsiders to ruin the mission of the Holy Prophet, the Quran proceeds to illustrate such of their machinations as they resorted to in order to belittle the Holy Prophet and sow dissension and discord among Muslims. An apparently minor illustration is selected to emphasize the fact that where the spirit of a people is concerned, sometimes very small things bring about dangerous results, inasmuch as they help to undermine the spirit of discipline and respect for authority. It is hinted that the Jews were in the habit of devising plans to detract from the due respect with which the minds of the Muslims were inspired towards the Holy Prophet. One of these mean attempts was to address such words to the Holy Prophet as were not quite in harmony with a spirit of discipline and respect; or bore a twofold sense, one good and the other bad. Some Muslims, in innocent imitation of the Jews and in ignorance of the latter's real motive, sometimes began to imitate their language.

One of the words used by the Jews was *Rā' ānā* which, as explained under Important Words, means, have regard for us. But as the word *Rā' ānā* belongs to the measure of *tāwālīh* which generally gives the idea of reciprocity denoting two parties standing almost on the same level, it may mean, have regard for us that we may have regard for you. As this expression involved disrespect to the Holy Prophet, God forbids Muslims to use such words, and advises them to use language which
106. They who disbelieve from among the People of the Book, or from among those who associate gods with Allah, desire not that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord; but Allah chooses for His mercy whomsoever He pleases; and Allah is of exceeding bounty.\footnote{112}

107. \textit{a}Whatever Sign We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof. Dost thou not know that Allah has the power to do all that He wills?\footnote{113}

\footnote{112}{Commentary:}

The People of the Book and the pagan tribes of Arabia grudged the favours which were being bestowed by God on Muslims. In reply to this, God says that He, being the Lord and Master of the entire Universe, could not for ever bind Himself to one people but chose for His bounty whomsoever He pleased from among His creation. But now when He has chosen the Muslims, He is not confining His favours to one people only. The mission of the Holy Prophet being for all mankind, the call to come and receive God's favours is universal and hence no people need now show envy or grudge. With the advent of Islam the era of \textit{النافع العظيم} \textit{i.e.} "exceeding (viz. universal) bounty" had dawned.

\footnote{113}{Important Words:}

\textit{نسخ} (We abrogate) is derived from \textit{نسخ} which has two meanings: (1) he abrogated or annulled, irrespective of the fact whether he brought another in its place or not; (2) he prepared a true copy of a book (Aqrab). It is from the latter sense that the word \textit{نسخ} or "copy" is derived. From the former sense we derive the words \textit{نسخ} \textit{i.e.} the thing which comes to
abrogate another, and i.e. the thing which is abrogated.

شهى (We cause to be forgotten) is derived from نسي meaning, he forgot, or he failed to preserve in his mind. نسي is the causative form of نسي meaning, he made a person forget a thing (Aqrab).

مثل (like) has three distinct uses: (1) either it is used to denote the like of a thing; (2) or it is used to denote a thing itself; (3) or sometimes it is redundant, giving no special meaning (Aqrab & محتال).

Commentary:

Some Commentators have attempted to infer from this verse that some of the verses of the Quran have been abrogated by others. But this conclusion is grievously erroneous and unwarranted. There is nothing in this verse to indicate that the word شهى (Sign) occurring here refers to the Quranic verses. Both in the preceding and the following verses, a reference is made to the People of the Book and their jealousies for the new revelation, which clearly shows that the word شهى spoken of in this verse as being abrogated, refers to the previous revelation. It is pointed out in this verse that the previous scriptures contained two kinds of commandments. Firstly, those which, owing to the changed conditions of the world and the universality of the new revelation, required abrogation; secondly, those containing eternal truths which did not require abrogation but simply resuscitation so that people might be reminded of the forgotten truth. It was, therefore, necessary (1) to abrogate certain portions and bring in their place new ones, and (2) to restore the lost ones. So, God abrogated some portions of the old Books, replacing them with new and better ones, and at the same time He re-introduced the missing portions by similar ones. This is the only meaning which is consistent with the context and the general spirit of Quranic teaching. In the verse the word شهى (We abrogate) relates to the words مجبر (one better) and the words بنات (cause to be forgotten) relate to the words مثلها (the like thereof) meaning that when God abrogates a certain thing He brings a better thing in its place and when He causes a thing to be forgotten, i.e., when people forget a thing, He brings it over again i.e., He resuscitates it.

The Jews themselves admit that after the Israelites were carried as captives to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the whole of the Pentateuch was lost (Enc. Bib, 653-654).

The meaning put on the verse by some Translators, viz., that certain verses of the Quran stand abrogated is not only opposed to the words of the Quran and the context of the verse, but is also against reason; nor can any authentic saying of the Holy Prophet be quoted in its favour. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the whole of the Quran must be, strictly followed and he himself acted upon all its teachings throughout his life. Besides this, the Quran itself testifies to its own purity and integrity. The well-known verse: Verily, We Ourself have sent down this Exhortation and most surely We will be its guardian (15 : 10) leads to no other conclusion. If the abrogation of any part of the Quran be conceded, the promise about its protection becomes null and void, for in that case it would be impossible to distinguish the abrogated portions from the rest of the Book.

Again, there is absolutely no self-contradiction in the Quran, and therefore there is no need of resorting to the theory of abrogation. So-called contradictions only betray lack of deep study on the part of those who proclaim them. When one fails to understand two verses in their true relations, one is inclined to see a contradiction between them and then takes recourse to the convenient theory that one of the two verses must have been abrogated by the other. As soon as they appear to be reconcilable, the abrogation theory becomes gratuitous. This is why those who have upheld the abrogation
108. Dost thou not know that the kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah alone? And there is no protector or helper for you beside Allah.\footnote{114}

theory have gradually been compelled to reduce the number of abrogated verses; for whereas the abrogated verses were formerly thought to be as many as 500, they have, by later scholars, been gradually reduced to only five. But even this is incorrect; for there is absolutely no verse in the Quran which is abrogated and we challenge any critic to come forward and prove that any verse of the Holy Book is abrogated. It is a pity that such beautiful significance of the verse under comment should have, as has been briefly portrayed above, become marred through ignorance and thoughtlessness.

The verse has a reference to yet another significance as well. The People of the Book have been told that the Quran has come to abrogate all previous scriptures; for, in view of the changed conditions of mankind, it has brought a new Law which is not only better than all the old codes of Law, but is also meant for all men and all times. An inferior thing with a limited mission must give place to a superior thing with a universal mission. Having explained this point, the Quran proceeds to say that although its teachings are meant for all time, yet a period is destined to come in the life of Islam when, though the letter of the Quran would still be intact, its spirit would be forgotten and lost by Muslims. When such a time comes, God will arrange to resuscitate the Quranic teachings, \textit{i.e.}, bring back \textit{“the like thereof”} by raising a special Reformer from among Muslims. This prophecy is referred to more pointedly in 62: 4 where God promises to raise a Reformer in the likeness of the Holy Prophet in the Latter Days. This Reformer, it is pointed out, would bring back the true faith to the world, even if it had soared away as high as the Pleiades (Bukhari, ch. on \textit{Tafsir}). The prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

114. \textbf{Important Words}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{الوالي}} (protector). They say, \textit{he helped him}; or \textit{he made friends with him}. \textit{والي}} means, \textit{he got control or authority over the town}. So \textit{والي}} means: (1) friend; (2) helper; (3) protector; (4) ally, etc. (Aqrab).
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Commentary}:

In this verse an argument has been brought forth in support of the fact that Quranic revelation abrogates the previous revelations. God says that to Him belongs the entire universe, the heavens and the earth, and it was in the fitness of things that finally a revelation meant for the whole of mankind should have made its appearance.

In the verse, the Jews are also told that it will be to their own interest to embrace Islam; for otherwise they will have neither friend nor helper against Allah.

There is a subtle implication in the verse, \textit{viz.}, that the Muslims, though despised and persecuted today, will not only receive spiritual favours from God, but will also become masters of large earthly kingdoms as well; for is not Allah the controller of the heavens and the earth?
109. "Would you question the Messenger sent to you as Moses was questioned before this? And whoever takes disbelief in exchange for belief has undoubtedly gone astray from the right path.\(^{115}\)

110. Many of the People of the Book wish out of sheer envy from their own selves, \(^{b}\) that, after you have believed, they could turn you again into disbelievers after the truth has become manifest to them. But forgive and turn away from them, till \(^{d}\) Allah brings His decree. Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills.\(^{116}\)

115. Important Words:

سواء (right) is derived from سواء. They say سواء ىلبل, i.e. his affairs became straight and well. سواء means: (1) the central portion of a thing; (2) equal. السبيل means, the straight or right portion of a way; or a straight or right way (Lisân & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse mentions another artifice which the Jews employed to overthrow the mission of the Holy Prophet. They asked him absurd and silly questions as had no bearing on religion. This they did to inoculate Muslims with the same spirit of stupid questioning, so that their hearts might gradually become estranged from the dignity of faith and give way to doubt. In warning Muslims against such a course, the Quran points out that the Jews had ruined themselves by putting similar questions to Moses, and that the Muslims should, therefore, beware of following their evil example. In fact, unnecessary and irrelevant questions in religious matters eventually lead one to loss of faith, for they tend to degrade religion to a plaything or a piece of idle philosophy.

As to the nature of questions put to Moses by the Israelites, the Quran refers to one in 4:154. Says God: The People of the Book ask thee to cause a Book to descend on them from heaven. They asked Moses a greater thing than this; they said, 'Show us Allah openly.' Then a destructive punishment overtakes them because of their transgression. Then they took the calf for worship after clear Signs had come to them, but We pardoned even that. And We gave Moses manifest authority. This verse gives us an indication as to the nature of the questions that were put to Moses, and Muslims are forbidden to put such questions to their Prophet.

116. Important Words:

أغفر (forgive) is derived from عف. They say عف عن ذه or عن ذه or عن ذه or عن ذه or عف عن ذه or عف عن ذه or عف عن ذه or عف عن ذه meaning, he forgave and pardoned him and did not resort to punishment; he connived at his fault
111. And observe Prayer and pay the Zakat; and whatever good you send on before you for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah; surely, Allah sees all that you do.\(^b\)

Commentary:
By manifold devices, some of which have been referred to above, the Jews wished to lead the Muslims astray, and their designs had their basis in jealousy. Muslims are exhorted not to quarrel with them but to wait patiently in a spirit of forbearance, till God Himself should finally decide the matter.

As explained under Important Words above, there is a subtle distinction between the meanings of غفر (forgive) and صفين (turn away). Whereas the former means, abstaining from punishment, the latter signifies, turning one's face away or leaving a thing alone. By using the words together, God exhorts Muslims not only to forgive the Jews and refrain from punishing them for their overt hostile acts and covert machinations, but to leave them alone and remain aloof from them till God Himself opened out a way for them, which He eventually did, as soon afterwards the Jews themselves declared war against the Muslims.

It is wrong to think that the words, till Allah brings His decree, refer to aggressive war. It is God's general decree or judgement that is meant here, as may be inferred from the words that follow, viz., surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills. Some of the Jews embraced Islam and the rest perished as a result of divine punishment.

The phrase, out of envy from themselves, means that the Holy Prophet had done nothing to excite their jealousy, but that it was their own evil nature that had given rise to it. The disease of حسد (jealousy) originated in their own hearts and had no infection from outside.

117. Commentary:
When one is subjected to continued persecution, one is apt to lose patience. But Muslims were enjoined meekly to endure troubles and torments, and in order to be able to do so, they were ordered to resort to الصلاة (prayers to God) on the one hand, and to الأزكاة (helping mankind) on the other. By so doing, they would acquire from God the power to endure.

The words, whatever good you send on before you for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah, contain a deep spiritual truth. Whatever good man does is kept in store for him by Allah and nothing is lost. Every good work is like
112. And they say, ‘None shall ever enter Heaven unless he be a Jew or a Christian.’ These are their vain desires. Say, ‘Produce your proof, if you are truthful.’

118. Important Words:

هوذ (the Jews) has by some been looked upon as the plural of هد which is active participle from حذد meaning, he repented and turned towards the truth or towards God. In this sense هوذ would mean, a people who have turned to God with repentance. The word هوذ is a proper name for the Jews. The original and commoner word, however, is هوذ or is هوذ from which, according to some, the letter he has been dropped, leaving the word هوذ (Aqrab). See also 2 : 63.

Commentary:

So far Christians were not separately addressed. But now the Quran mentions them along with the Jews, indicating that their case was no better than that of the latter, both being under the delusion that one could obtain salvation merely by becoming a Jew or a Christian. They forgot the fact that when God had established a fresh covenant, salvation could not be possible without conforming thereto. If, however, the Jews and the Christians were justified in their claims, they should advance some reasons or scriptural evidence to show that it was enough for the purposes of salvation to join their folds. And they could not do it, because in their scriptures themselves there was foretold the appearance of a Prophet whom it was enjoined upon them to accept and whose rejection was stated to lead to estrangement from God.

Christianity, as well as Judaism, was meant for the guidance of the Israelites alone. The mission of Jesus was not meant for the whole world (Matt. 7 : 6; 10 : 6; 15 : 24; Mark 7 : 27). Though later on the followers of Jesus violated the limit imposed upon his mission and claimed universality for it, yet the hard fact remains that he was sent only for the Israelites, and his mission was to uplift that people alone. As other nations of the world are also the creation of God, it is therefore only right to believe that God must have made some arrangement for their guidance as well. Hence, it is quite unreasonable on the part of the Jews and Christians to hold that the door of salvation was closed against the followers of other faiths. Such a view would mean that God had confined salvation to certain tribes, to the exclusion of others, which is evidently absurd.

Islam, however, is not exposed to that objection. In the first place, it is not a tribal faith, but is universal in character. In the Quran God enjoins the Holy Prophet to Say, O mankind! truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah (7 : 169). Similarly, there is a saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect, “I have been sent for the whole mankind while the Prophets before me were sent to particular peoples only” (Musnad).

Secondly, unlike Judaism and Christianity, Islam does not hold Hell to be everlasting,
113. Nay, whoever submits himself completely to Allah, and is the doer of good, shall have his reward with his Lord. No fear shall come upon such, neither shall they grieve.  

119. Important Words:  

- **J.** (nay) is used for **confirmation** and generally follows a question. It must be followed by a clause in the affirmative, whether the question which it follows is in the negative or affirmative. Thus in English it may either be rendered as yes or nay, as the case may be, but not as no (Aqrab & Lane).

- **إِسْلَم** (submits) is derived from **سلم** which means, he was or became safe and secure, or he escaped. **إِسْلَم** means, he became safe or free from defect and evil. **إِسْلَم** which is both transitive and intransitive means: (1) he embraced Islam; (2) he resigned or submitted himself; (3) he paid in advance. **إِسْلَم رَحْبَتُهُ** means, he submitted or resigned himself wholly to God, or he devoted his entire attention to God, or he resigned himself to God (Lane & Aqrab).

- **وجه** (himself, face) means: (1) face; (2) the part of a thing visible to the sight of a looker on; (3) the thing itself; (4) direction; (5) object and motive; (6) deed or action to which a man directs his attention; (7) the desired way; (8) favour or countenance as in **فَنَّذَقَلَتْ لَوْ لَمْ يَرَى **\(لاهـامرْحَبََنُونَ بِّنَةَ أَجْرِهَا **

Commentary:  
The verse is important and explains a fundamental truth. In refutation of the claims of Jews and Christians to the monopoly of salvation, the Quran mentions the fundamental principle that for salvation it is not of any avail to be a Christian or a Jew, but that it lies in **إِسْلَم** or absolute surrender to God's will and unqualified compliance with His word. He who secures this secures salvation; mere profession of a faith is not enough.

The word **حسن** (the doer of good deeds), as also hinted under Important Words above, has been explained by the Holy Prophet as follows:  

"you may become a حسن only if you pray to or worship God in such a spirit of reality and certitude that you feel that you are seeing Him (and that God also is seeing you); or (with a lower degree of certitude) that you at least feel that God is seeing you." **حسن** also means, one who does good to God's creatures, Thus according to Islam, salvation lies, (1) in **إِسْلَم** or absolute submission to the will of God; and
And the Jews say, ^The Christians stand on nothing'; and the Christians say, b' The Jews stand on nothing'; while they both read the same Book. Even thus said those who had no knowledge, like what they say. But Allah shall judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they disagree.120

(2) in true worship of God offered with a perfect degree of certitude; and (3) in doing good to one's fellow-beings.

It is a distinctive feature of Islam that it makes its followers realize the presence of God and continued contact with Him a reality, and thus enables them to establish a true and permanent connection with Him even in this life. This is really the beginning of salvation. The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement has explained this verse in the following beautiful words:

"The verse alludes to the three important stages of perfect goodness, i.e., (1) ٌ ﷽ (self-annihilation); (2) ٌ (regeneration); and (3) ٌ (union with God). The words ٌ و ٌ ﷽ (submits himself completely to Allah) teach that all our powers and organs and whatever belongs to us should be surrendered to God and devoted to His service. This state is known as ٌ or death which a true Muslim must bring on himself. . . . The second clause ٌ و ٌ ﷽ (and is the doer of good) alludes to the state of ٌ or regeneration, for when a man is quickened by the love of God and all his movements become subservient to His will, his self dying entirely within him, he is, as it were, granted a new life which may be called ٌ or regeneration. He lives for God, and through Him he lives for his fellow-beings. . . . The concluding words, (he) shall have his reward with His Lord. No fear shall come upon such, neither shall they grieve, describe the third or the final stage—the stage of ٌ or union with God. It is the highest stage of knowledge, certainty, trust and love. The reward of one's sincerity and devotion is not obscure or doubtful. It is certain, visible, and, as it were, tangible. In this stage man is so sure of the existence of God that he may be said to be actually seeing Him. No fear of the future darkens his faith. The dead past is buried and the living present has no sorrow for him. Every spiritual bliss is present. Such a state is termed ٌ or union with God" (A'ina).

120. Important Words:

اليهود (the Jews) signifies the followers of Moses or of what is known as Judaism. The word as already explained is either derived from ٌ which means, he turned to God or to the truth with repentance (Aqrab); or it is derived from ٌ (Judah) who was one of the sons of Jacob. As the descendants of ٌ formed an independent kingdom at Jerusalem which became the religious centre of the Jews, therefore the Jewish religion came to be known as Judaism and the people professing that religion as ٌ or Jews (Enc. Brit. under the word Jews. See also 2:63 and 2:112).

(they read) is derived from ٌ which means: (1) he followed; (2) he read or recited (Aqrab). The Quran says ٌ و ٌ ﷽ ل تلاهما, i.e. by the moon when it follows the sun; and
115. And who is more unjust than he who prohibits the name of Allah being glorified in Allah's temples and seeks to ruin them? It was not proper for such men to enter therein except in fear. For them is disgrace in this world; and theirs shall be a great punishment in the next.121

Commentary:

Nothing is more foreign to the spirit of Islam than opposition to truth, wherever it may happen to be. Islam teaches that all faiths possess certain truths and the true religion is so called not because it has a monopoly of truth but because it possesses all truth and is free from all defects. While therefore claiming to be a perfect and complete religion, Islam does not denounce other faiths but frankly acknowledges the truths and the virtues they possess. If this golden principle of Islam be properly understood and appreciated, much existing religious rancour and bitterness would disappear. But unfortunately there is a general tendency among the followers of different religious systems to refuse to acknowledge the truth found in faiths other than their own. The Quran declares this attitude of mind to be the result of lack of knowledge and wisdom, and this verse strongly condemns Jews and Christians for refusing to see any good whatever in the rival faith, in spite of the fact that they have a good deal in common, being the followers of the same Book—the Bible.

121. Important Words:

خرب (their ruin) is derived from خرب. They say خرب ليت i.e. the house became desolate and deserted. The word خراب which is infinitive from it is the opposite of عمار i.e. to build or to occupy and live in, and is used about a place when it becomes deserted and desolate and ruined (Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse constitutes a strong indictment of those who carry their religious differences to such extremes that they do not even refrain from perpetrating outrages against the places of worship belonging to other creeds. They hinder people from worshipping God in their sacred places and even go so far as to destroy their temples. Such acts of violence are denounced here in strong terms and a lesson of tolerance and broad-mindedness is inculcated.

The Quran recognizes for all men the free and unrestricted right to use their temples and declares that if anybody wishes to worship God in a place of worship, he should not be prevented from doing so; for a temple or a mosque is a place dedicated to the worship of God and the person who prevents men from worshipping Him in it, in fact, contributes to its ruin and desolation.

This is what Islam teaches about respect for the places of worship, and yet it has come to be condemned as an intolerant religion. Islam is indeed the first and the only religion to
inculcate broad-mindedness and teach respect for the religious susceptibilities of all peoples; and the Holy Prophet was the first person who carried this great and noble principle into actual practice. He allowed the Christians of Najran to hold their service in his own mosque, the celebrated مسجد لؤي, when they came to have a religious discussion with him at Medina (Zurqâni).

It will be noted that the verse prescribes two punishments for those who prohibit the name of Allah being glorified in places of worship. One is disgrace in this world and the other is heavy punishment in the next. The punishment of disgrace is typical of the offence; for a person who first builds a temple or a mosque with the object that the name of God may be remembered in it and then proceeds to prevent people from worshipping Him therein cannot but bring upon himself humiliation and disgrace in the eyes of the world. The words also contain a prophecy about the disbelievers of Mecca who prevented the Muslims from entering the Ka'ba. The prophecy was fulfilled when Mecca was taken and the infidels met with humiliation and disgrace.

Finally, it may be noted that the verse should not be understood to mean that the Quran advocates the unqualified access for all sorts of persons to all places of worship without regard to circumstances. In fact, only those who wish to use them for the specific purpose of God's worship and have no ulterior motive are allowed.

122. Important Words:

(a) (there) is a word generally used to denote a place that is remote from the speaker, unlike the word ۪ which denotes a place that is near (Aqrab).

(b) (face of God). As explained under 2:113 the word وَجَهَّاللٰهِ means: (1) face; (2) attention; (3) the thing itself; (4) direction; and (5) object and purpose (Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse embodies a prophecy about the great and bright future of Islam. The Faithful are told that, being the teachers and proclaimers of truth and the bearers of Allah's standard, success would attend them wherever they went, and that through them Islam would spread all over the world, in the East as well as in the West. This prophecy was made at a time when the early Muslims—a mere handful of men—were being subjected to all sorts of trials and hardships and the future looked quite dark for them. But the prophecy was fulfilled not long after when, with the fall of Mecca, the whole of Arabia entered the fold of Islam and within less than a century the flag of Islam was flying in almost all the lands of the then known world. The words, to Allah belong the East and the West, also hint that Islam was to spread first in the East, and then, after the advent of the Promised Messenger of the Latter Days, it will begin to penetrate the West. So let the West prepare for it, as the time is not far off.

The words, so whithersoever you turn, there will be the face of Allah, throw light on the very high stage of spiritual development to which the Companions of the Holy Prophet had reached. God was so pleased with them and so satisfied with their condition that He undertook to crown all their campaigns with success. The
117. And they say, 'Allah has taken to Himself a son.' Holy is He! Nay, everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. To Him are all obedient.123

118. He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a thing, He does only say to it, 'Be', and it is.124

verse also implies that the Faithful would make no move that was not approved by God, and naturally therefore all their undertakings would meet with success.

123. Important Words:

تاواتن (obedient) which is the plural of تتا which means: (1) he obeyed; (2) he showed humility and submissiveness; (3) he remained silent, refraining from speech; and (4) he stood praying or he stood long in Prayer (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse speaks of the Christians with whom the Muslims were to come in contact in their great march as the torch-bearers of Islam. Failing to get converts from among the Jews, the early Christians turned their attention to the Romans and the Greeks but succumbed to their philosophies and freely borrowed ideas from them, incorporating them into their own beliefs and doctrines. As a result of this, Jesus began to be represented as the Son of God and the dogma of Trinity became the basic doctrine of the Christian faith. The expression "son of God" metaphorically used in Jewish religious literature in the sense of "a beloved servant of God" or "a Prophet" came to bear a literal connotation (Luke 20:36; Matt. 5:9, 45, 48; Deut. 14:1; Exod. 4:22; Gal. 3:26; Wisd. 2:18, etc.). The Quran has exploded this doctrine and has, in the verse under comment, given several arguments to expose its falsity: (1) If God has a son, He must be subject to sexual desires and need a wife and be divisible, because the son is a part of the father's body. Again, He must be subject to death because the procreation of species, which the attribution of a son to God implies, is the characteristic of perishable things. But Islam repudiates all such ideas; for according to it God is holy and free from all defects and weaknesses. (2) One sometimes needs a son or a successor to extend one's dominion and bring into subjugation such territories as do not acknowledge one's rule. But God has no such need; for everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. (3) A son or helper is sometimes required to keep under control the turbulent or far-flung parts of one's kingdom; but God has no such requirement, for "all are obedient to Him." Thus, from whatever angle we may view the question, God is proved to need no son, no helper or assistant to help Him in the work of controlling and managing the universe. In fact, it is blasphemy to say so. The argument is further elaborated in the next verse.

124. Important Words:

بائع (Originator) is derived from بع which means, he originated a thing or brought it
119. And those who have no knowledge say, 'Why does not Allah speak to us, or a Sign come to us?' Likewise said those before them similar to their saying. Their hearts are alike. We have certainly made the Signs plain for a people who firmly believe.

125. Commentary:

This verse refers to two very unreasonable demands of the People of the Book—Jews and Christians: (1) That God should speak to them direct and tell them that the Holy Prophet was His true Messenger; (2) That they should be shown Signs of their own devising.

In reply to the first demand, the Quran says that only ignorant people, unacquainted with the ways of God, make such a demand. This demand was made in the time of all the previous Prophets and was rejected as foolish. So it was unreasonable on their part to make from the Holy Prophet a demand which their own Prophets had not complied with.

In reply to their demand for a Sign, they are told that Signs sufficient for the guidance of right-minded people have already been shown and they could, if they so desired, profit by them, but nothing could avail an obstinate and perverse person. The fact that a demand for a Sign was made from the Holy Prophet does not show that no Signs had been shown by him. Indeed, if such a demand be considered as proof of the absence of Signs, no Prophet could be proved to have shown any Sign; for a similar demand was made from every Prophet of God, notably Jesus (Matt. 12:38, 39).
120. We have sent thee with the Truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. And thou wilt not be questioned about the inmates of Hell.\textsuperscript{126}

121. And the Jews will by no means be pleased with thee, nor the Christians, unless thou follow their creed. Say, 'Surely, Allah's guidance alone is the guidance.' And if thou follow their evil desires after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou shalt have, from Allah, no friend nor helper.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{126} It may be also noted here that whenever disbelievers are spoken of as demanding an \textit{\textsc{\textasciitilde}} or Sign, the word means either a Sign of their own devising or a Sign in the form of divine punishment (see 21 : 6, 7 ; 6 : 38–51 ; 13 : 28–33 ; 20 : 134, 135 ; 29 : 51).

\textsuperscript{127} Important Words:

\textit{\textsc{\textasciitilde}} (creed) is derived from \textit{\textsc{\textasciitilde}} and means, among other things, religion; law of \textit{\textsc{\textasciitilde}}; the right way (Lane).

\textit{\textsc{\textasciitilde}} (evil desires) is the plural of \textit{\textsc{\textasciitilde}} (an evil desire). The verb \textit{\textsc{\textasciitilde}} means, he or it fell or descended or came down from a higher position to a lower one. It also means, it rose or ascended. \textit{\textsc{\textasciitilde}} means, a desire; an evil or low desire; an evil inclination; love and attachment. \textit{\textsc{\textasciitilde}} means, he followed his evil inclination, i.e., swerved from the way of rectitude (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

The words, \textit{if thou follow their evil desires}, though apparently addressed to the Holy Prophet, are really general in their application, being meant for his followers. The Holy Prophet has been described in the Quran as a model for mankind and a paragon of perfection (3 : 32 ;

\textsuperscript{5} : 20 ; 6 : 49 ; 17 : 106 ; 33 : 46. \textsuperscript{2} : 112. \textsuperscript{2} : 146 ; 13 : 38.
122. aThey to whom We have given the Book follow it as it ought to be followed; it is these that believe therein. And whoso believes not therein, these are they who are the losers.128

15:123. O ye children of Israel! bremember My favours which I bestowed upon you, and that cI exalted you above all peoples.129

33:22) and therefore he was infinitely above the possibility of complying with the evil wishes of the Jews and the Christians concerning the guidance he had directly received from God. At several other places in the Quran, the same form of address has been used. This is done to emphasize the importance of the commandment which is seemingly addressed to the Holy Prophet but is really meant for his followers (see 17:24). This mode of address is not peculiar to the Quran. In the Bible we come across similar instances (e.g. Deut. 16:21, 22).

128. Commentary:

The words, they to whom We have given the Book, clearly refer here to Muslims and not to Jews and Christians, because it is the Muslims that were the true and sincere followers of the Quran and not Jews and Christians who refused to believe in the Quran and rejected it as a piece of fabrication. Jews and Christians have been referred to in the concluding portion of the verse where, owing to their rejection of the Quran, they are spoken of as the losers. The verse provides very high and well-merited praise for the Companions of the Holy Prophet who have been described as true followers of God’s guidance.

129. Commentary:

Before proceeding to deal with the point that when the cup of the iniquities of the Jews became full to the brim, prophethood was transferred from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael, God in this verse again reminds the Jews of the manifold favours He had conferred upon them, and by inference also reminds them of their crimes and wickednesses.

The favours which God showered upon the Israelites from the time of Moses to that of Jesus are briefly recounted in the preceding verses along with a tale of their misdeeds and iniquities. Particular reference has been made to the reprehensible treatment they meted out to the Holy Prophet of Islam and the Muslims, and finally the whole subject has been briefly recapitulated in the above verse, forming an introduction to the new theme, i.e., the transfer of prophethood from the House of Isaac to that of Ishmael. With the advent of the Holy Prophet a new era had been ushered and those who rejected him could no longer bask in the sunshine of God’s favours.
124. And fear the day when a soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, nor shall any ransom be accepted from it, nor any intercession avail it, nor shall they be helped.\(^{130}\)

125. And remember when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands which he fulfilled, He said, 'I will make thee a Leader of men.' Abraham asked, 'And from among my offspring?' He said, 'My covenant does not embrace the transgressors.'\(^{131}\)

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130. **Commentary:**

This verse appears to deal with the same subject which has already been dealt with in 2:49; but on comparing the two, an interesting point of difference emerges. In the former verse the word شناعة (intercession) is put before the word مل (ransom), whereas in the present one the order has been reversed. The reason for this change is that, in his endeavour to save himself, it is natural for man to adopt a course which is least expensive and entails minimum amount of hardship. Failing this, he tries to adopt other measures. In other words, man has recourse to offer a ransom only when he finds that he cannot gain his release without offering it. In verse 2:49 this natural order is maintained and intercession is put before ransom. But after that verse, many transgressions of the Israelites have been brought to light, especially their opposition to the Prophets, so now they could not rely much on intercession, and naturally felt constrained to think of offering a ransom first. Hence, the order observed in the former verse has been reversed in the latter. For a discussion of the subject of شناعة etc. see note on 2:49 above.

131. **Important Words:**

\(^{130}\)See 2:49. \(^{131}\)See 2:49. 2:131; 16:121, 122; 60:5.
126. And remember the time when We made the House a resort for mankind and a place of security; and "take ye the station of Abraham as a place of Prayer. And We commanded Abraham and Ishmael, saying, 'Purify My House for those who perform the circuit and those who remain therein for devotion and those who bow down and fall prostrate in Prayer'.

The Quran refers to this covenant in order to remind the Jews that their deprivation of prophethood was quite in conformity with the promise given to Abraham which contained a clear condition that such of his descendants as defied God's commandments would be deprived of the promised favour. The Jews are therefore told that being transgressors, they have been deprived of the blessing of prophethood. A brief reference to this covenant is also found in Gen. 17:9-14, but the Quran has mentioned it in a better and more definite form.

132. Important Words:
- مأج (a resort) is derived from ماج, which means, he returned. مأج الناس means, the people gathered together. مأج الرّضي means, the patient returned to state of health. ماج means, a place where people assemble; a place of resort; a place to which a visit entitles one to or reward (Mufradat & Aqrab). See also 2:104.
- مأج (who perform the circuit) is the plural of ماج which is derived from ماج meaning, he performed a circuit, he went round (Aqrab).
- عبد (We commanded) is derived from عبد which means, he promised. عبد اللّه means, he enjoined upon or commanded him and made it a condition for him (Aqrab).
- ماكفين (who remain for devotion) is the plural of ماكف which is derived from ماكف. They say ماكف في المكان i.e. he remained confined to a place, sticking to it. ماكف المكان and ماكف leaving are words denoting a specified form of religious service in which the worshipper stays within the precincts of a mosque for a number of days which he passes in prayer and devotion (Aqrab & Mufradat).
- ماك (station) is derived from ماك i.e. he stood. ماك means, a place where one stands (Aqrab). Here it means the Ka'ba, where Abraham stood worshipping God. ماك إبراهيم is also the name of a place near the Ka'ba where, after making circuits around it, the pilgrims perform two rak'ats of Prayer. It appears that after completing the construction of the Ka'ba, Abraham said a prayer there in token of his gratitude to God; and it is to commemorate this prayer of Abraham that Muslims are required to perform two rak'ats of Prayer there whenever they make circuits round the Ka'ba.

Commentary:

The verse means that a promise was made to Abraham that the Ka'ba would be made a مأج
127. And remember when Abraham said, 'My Lord, 'make this a town of peace and provide with fruits such of its dwellers as believe in Allah and the Last Day,' He said, 'And on him too who believes not will I bestow benefits for a little while; then will I drive him to the punishment of the Fire, and an evil destination it is.'

Again, the Ka'ba, and, for that matter, the town of Mecca, is declared to be a place of peace and security. The truth of this prophecy is also beyond doubt. Mighty empires have crumbled and large tracts of land laid waste since the dawn of history, but the peace of Mecca has never been disturbed. The religious centres of other faiths have never claimed, and have in fact never enjoyed, such peace and immunity from danger. Jerusalem, Hardwar, Benares, etc., have all been conquered by alien conquerors and have been the scenes of much bloodshed and violence. But Mecca has ever remained a place of peace. No alien conqueror has ever entered it. The sacred town has always remained in the hands of those who have held it in reverence.

The commandment to purify the House of God refers not only to the outward cleaning of the House, but also to its purification from the abomination of idol-worship. The commandment was originally addressed to Abraham and Ishmael but it was finally and fully carried out by the Holy Prophet who, after the conquest of Mecca, cleared the Ka'ba of all the 360 idols that had been placed there by the idolatrous Quraysh.

133. Important Words:
\( \text{مَصِير} \) (destination) is derived from \( \text{مَصِير} \) meaning, he returned, or he became. \( \text{مَصِير} \) is thus a place or condition to which a person
128. And remember the time when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House, praying, 'Our Lord, "accept this from us; for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing."'

or thing comes or returns; a destination (Aqrab).

Commentary:
When Abraham offered the prayer, there was no town existing near the Ka'ba. There existed only the House of God. So Abraham prayed that in that wildest of wildernesses there might grow up a town, and that that town might become a place of security, affording peace to mankind. In fulfilment of this prayer there grew up the town of Mecca which has remained a place of peace and security for thousands of years. The prayer also implied that the Baitullah would be the means of bringing peace and security to mankind. This was destined to come about in two ways: Firstly, those who accepted and followed Islam were to become secure from all evils and to become recipients of God's blessings. Secondly, Islam was to be the means of bringing about peace and concord among the different nations of the world.

While praying to God to grant sustenance to the dwellers of Mecca, Abraham restricted his prayer only to its good and righteous dwellers. The reason of this was that when Abraham had previously prayed to God to raise Reformers and Religious Leaders from his progeny, God had replied that such men would be raised from among the righteous only (2:125). So when he prayed a second time to God to grant sustenance to the people of Mecca, he was more careful and confined his prayer to the righteous only. This shows how submissive and careful God's Prophets are. But Abraham had now evidently become over-cautious, for this time God answered, saying, that He would grant sustenance to all men, irrespective of whether they were righteous or not, because He was the Provider for the whole universe and not for the righteous only. The wicked, however, shall be duly punished for their crimes.

Another reason why Abraham restricted his prayer to the righteous was that he wished Mecca to be the abode of the righteous only; but God knew that even the sacred town was not going to remain untarnished throughout the long centuries of history.

134. Important Words:
When the unfitness of the Israelites for prophethood had been proved, the question naturally arose: What nation would then be the rightful heir to this favour of God? To answer this, reference is here made to the history of the building of the Ka'ba by Abraham and Ishmael, and it is added (vv. 128—130) that while constructing the Ka'ba, Abraham and Ishmael had offered certain prayers which were to bear fruit. These prayers were to the effect that the children of Abraham through Ishmael might multiply and prosper and there might be raised among them a great Prophet.

Whether Abraham was the founder or only the rebuilders of the Ka'ba is a point that has given rise to much discussion. Some hold that Abraham was the first builder of the place, others trace the origin of the House to the days
of Adam and hold that Abraham only rebuilt it on its old ruins. The Qur'an and authentic traditions favour the view that even prior to the erection of a building on this site by Abraham some sort of structure did exist. Even in the verse under comment the words which may mean "the foundations that were left of the house," hint at the fact that a previous structure did exist but it had fallen into ruins and only a trace of the foundations remained. Elsewhere the Qur'an speaks of the Ka'ba, as the first House founded (or built) for (the good of) mankind (3:97). Now as people lived even before Abraham and some Prophets had also been raised before him, it stands to reason that some place of worship did exist for them and as the Ka'ba is the first house of that nature, it must be taken to have priority over all others.

Moreover, the Quran represents Abraham offering the following prayer at the time of his separation from Ishmael and his mother at Mecca: Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in an uncultivable valley near Thy Sacred House (14:38). From this verse it is clear that the Ka'ba existed even before Abraham.

The sayings of the Holy Prophet also support this view. Describing the retreat of Abraham after leaving Hagar and Ishmael at the place where Mecca now stands, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Hagar inquired of Abraham why he was leaving them in a valley without any friend or sympathizer and without any food to eat. She asked the same question several times, but Abraham (probably overpowered by feelings) kept silent and made no reply. At last, she asked whether he was doing this under the order of God, and this time Abraham replied in the affirmative. Thereupon, Hagar said that in that case God would never let them perish. Then Abraham returned, and standing on a hillock, where he could not be seen by Hagar, he turned his face to the Ka'ba, and raising both of his hands, offered the prayer: Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in an uncultivable valley near Thy Sacred House (Bukhari).

The above narrative related by the Holy Prophet shows that even before Abraham's going to the place where Mecca now stands it was held sacred, or else how could he have turned his face to it while offering the prayer and how could he have used the words "near Thy Sacred House." Nor does history say anything contrary to this view, because whatever information can be gleaned from it points to the fact that the Ka'ba is a very old place. Historians of established authority and even some hostile critics of Islam, have admitted that the Ka'ba has been held sacred from time immemorial. In this connection the following quotation may also be of interest. "Diodorus Siculus, Sicily (60 b.c.), speaking of the region now known as Hejaz, says that it was 'specially honoured by the natives' and adds, 'an altar is there built of hard stone and very old in years, ... to which the neighbouring peoples thronged from all sides' (Translation by C. M. Oldfather, London, 1935, Book III, ch. 42 vol. ii. pp. 211-213). "These words," says William Muir, "must refer to the holy house of Mecca, for we know of no other which ever commanded the universal homage of Arabia. ... Tradition represents the Ka'ba as from time immemorial the scene of pilgrimage from all quarters of Arabia. ... So extensive an homage must have had its beginnings in an extremely remote age" (Muir, p. ciii).

Some Christian critics question the truth of the claim that Abraham came to the site of Mecca and built the Ka'ba on the slimy ground that the Bible is silent about it. It is not difficult to see the absurdity of this objection. There is no denying that the story of Abraham's leaving his wife Hagar and his son
129. Our Lord, make us submissive to Thee and make of our offspring a people submissive to Thee. And show us our ways of worship, and turn to us with mercy; for Thou art Oft-Returning with compassion and Merciful.

Ishmael in a desert, the want of water, the extreme thirst of the boy and the providential appearance of a well are all mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 21:14—19). As, however, the Bible gives an extremely brief account of Ishmael's life, owing to the antipathy of the Jews towards him, it is not safe to decide the matter on its authority alone. It is an open secret that the sons of Israel looked upon the sons of Ishmael as their enemies. Therefore, far from preserving any record of the life of Ishmael, the Israelites were more likely to delete even such mention of him as might already have been contained in the Bible. At any rate, the Christians have no historical ground to reject the narrative of the Quran, especially when the well-known national traditions of Arabia all go to confirm it. Even some Christian writers have felt constrained to admit that the story of the Quran and the Traditions is true, or, at least, highly probable. Freytag (Einl. p. 339) says that there is no good reason for doubting that the Caaba was founded as stated in this passage (Rodwell under 2:128). Lieut. Burton in his Pilgrimage (iii. 336) refers to the Arab tradition which he says "speaks clearly and consistently as to the fact of Abraham having visited Mecca to build the Caaba", and considers it not to be without foundation. The Jerusalem Targum also speaks "of the visits of the very old man Abraham to the tent of his nomad son, far away in the Arabian desert" (Jewish Foundation of Islam, p. 84). The Talmud supports the view that Abraham went twice to see Ishmael after the latter had grown up to be a young man and had married (Selections translated by H. Polano, London, Tamuz 5636, p. 51).

135. Important Words:

Masakin (our ways of worship). The word masakin is the plural of mak which is derived from mak which means, he devoted himself to religious worship; he performed acts of worship for God; he slaughtered animals of sacrifice to win God's pleasure. Masakin Haj means, the religious rites or ceremonies of Pilgrimage; and also the places where these ceremonies are performed (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

Having built the House, Abraham and his son Ishmael turn towards God with the supplication that He may afford them the power to lead a life of devotion and submissiveness and show them the ways of such worship as may be performed in the Ka'ba.

This prayer of Abraham and Ishmael also brings out the very important point that even such righteous persons as stand high in the estimation of God need constant prayer for the further purification of their souls and for the consecration of their good deeds by God, because, however noble and righteous the deeds of man may outwardly appear to be, they sometimes lack the true inner spirit and lead to evil consequences.
130. 'And, Our Lord, raise up among them a Messenger from among themselves, who may recite to them Thy Signs and teach them the Book and Wisdom and may purify them; surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise.'

Abraham and Ishmael here use the words صلى الله عليه وسلم (Muslim) for themselves and also pray that from among their posterity too there may be born صلى الله عليه وسلم (Muslim) people who may be submissive and resigned to the will of God. This helps to explain another verse of the Quran which says of Abraham that it was he who first gave the name "Muslim" to the believers in the Holy Prophet. (22:79). It is not of course meant that Abraham used the word صلى الله عليه وسلم in the above quoted verse as a proper name, but his using that word in his prayer certainly suggests that from among his progeny would be born a people who would not only bear that name but would also possess the spirit of الإسلام i.e. submission to the will of God.

136. Important Words:

- **Signs** (اية) is the plural of **Sign**, a sign, token, or mark by which a person or thing is known or recognized; it properly signifies any apparent thing inseparable from a thing not equally apparent, so that when one perceives the former, one knows that one also perceives the latter which one cannot perceive by itself; it also means a miracle, a wonder. The word is also used in the sense of a sentence; a part of speech; a verse (Lane & Aqrab).

- **Book** (كتاب) means, anything written; a book; a prescribed law (Aqrab). See also 2:84.

- **Wisdom** (حكم) is derived from **hakama** (hakum). It means, possessing knowledge or science or wisdom; wise; a sage; a philosopher; a physician; one who performs or executes affairs firmly, soundly, thoroughly, skilfully and well. It is one of the names

They say, حكمة i.e. he prevented or restrained him (from acting in an evil manner). حكمة (hakuma) means, he judged and decreed in the matter. حكمة (hakum) means, he became wise (Aqrab). حكمة (hakum) means, what prevents or restrains one from ignorant behaviour; knowledge or science; knowledge of the true nature of things; wisdom or wisdom underlying a commandment; an action according to the requirements thereof (Mufradat & Lane).

- **purify them** (زكي) is derived from زكك (zakká) which again is derived from زك (zak) meaning, he or it grew and increased and developed; he or it became purified. زك means, he purified; he caused to grow and increase. زك means, the act of purifying and increasing (Aqrab).

- **the Mighty** (ال almú) is derived from ع almú i.e. he was or became mighty, potent or powerful; or high, elevated or illustrious; or hard and resisting. ع almú means, mighty and powerful or high and elevated; or hard and resisting. It also sometimes means, distressing or grievous. almú used as the attribute name of God means, the Mighty Who overcomes everything; the Incomparable or Unparalleled (Lane). See also 2:207 and 5:55.

- **the Wise** (ال almú) is derived from زك for which See above) is derived. زك means, possessing knowledge or science or wisdom; wise; a sage; a philosopher; a physician; one who performs or executes affairs firmly, soundly, thoroughly, skilfully and well. It is one of the names
of God meaning the All-Wise (Lane). Applied to the Quran the word would signify the book that is full of wisdom and is free from all defect and imperfection, having no incongruity or unsoundness; or the book which judiciously decides religious differences.

**Commentary:**

In this verse which is one of the most important, attention is drawn to the prayer of Abraham when he was leaving his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael to live in the arid valley of Mecca. The great prayer was to the effect that God might raise from among the Meccans a Prophet, who should (1) lay before the people Signs of God that may carry conviction to their minds; (2) teach them the Law of God; (3) initiate them into the philosophy of divine commandments, because until the Wisdom underlying a commandment is brought home, one does not feel disposed to attend to it, but rather looks upon it as a burden, as was the case with the Christians who, unable to understand the underlying wisdom of the Mosaic Law, began to look upon it as a curse (Rom. 4: 15; Gal. 3: 13); and finally (4) purify the lives of men and open out to them the avenues of progress. See also 2: 152.

This prayer of Abraham, offered from the very depth of his heart, was fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet. The wonderful way in which the Holy Prophet combined in his person the four characteristics mentioned in this prayer is a fact of history to which even his most hostile critics have testified. By universal consent the Prophet of Islam has been acclaimed as "the most successful Prophet."

The fact that Abraham did not here pray for many Prophets, but for one Prophet only shows that while offering this prayer he had in view a very great Prophet, a Master-Prophet who was to transcend all. This prayer of Abraham has been applied by the Holy Prophet to himself. He is reported to have said, i.e. "I am the prayer (personified) of Abraham" (Jarir & ‘Asuki).

As mentioned in the introductory remarks in the beginning of this chapter, the verse under comment serves as a summary of the entire chapter which is not only an enlargement of the subject-matter of this verse but treats its various subjects in exactly the same order in which they have been mentioned in this verse, i.e., first come the Signs, then the Book, then the Wisdom of the Law, and last of all the means of national progress.

It may be of interest to note here that the Quran speaks of two separate prayers of Abraham—one about the progeny of Isaac and the other about that of Ishmael. The former prayer has been mentioned in 2: 125 and the latter in the verse under comment. In his prayer about the progeny of Isaac, Abraham asks that Imāms or Reformers may be raised from among them, but he makes no mention of their special work or status—they are ordinary Reformers who will follow one another for the reformation of the Israelites. On the other hand, when Abraham prays about the progeny of Ishmael, he begs his Lord to raise among them a special Prophet with a specific and lofty mission. Again, when God answers the first-mentioned prayer of Abraham, He does not make any mention of the Reformers to be raised but leaves their appearance to be inferred only by implication; but He does make a pointed reference to the fact that in spite of these Reformers, the Israelites will end as transgressors. On the contrary, God makes no such mention about the progeny of Ishmael, thereby hinting that after the Promised Prophet has been raised, their glorious days will continue till the end of the world. This is indeed a marvellously true portrait of the two branches of the House of Abraham.

In making mention of the prayers of Abraham in verses 127 to 130 the Quran makes an allusion
to the fact that Abraham did not only pray for the prosperity of the children of Isaac but also for the posterity of Ishmael, his first-born. When the offspring of Isaac lost the gift of prophethood on account of their evil deeds, the next descendants of Abraham were the children of Ishmael and thus the Promised Prophet must belong to the House of the latter. In order to point out that the expected Prophet was to be an Ishmaelite, the Quran makes mention of the construction of the Ka'ba by Abraham and Ishmael and of the prayers offered by Abraham for the posterity of his eldest son.

To this natural conclusion Christian critics generally bring forward two objections: (1) that the Bible makes no mention of any promise having been made by God to Abraham concerning Ishmael, and (2) that, admitting that God did make such a promise, there is no proof of the fact that the Prophet of Islam was descended from Ishmael.

As regards the first objection, it should be borne in mind that even if the Bible be shown to contain no prophecy about Ishmael, the absence of such a mention in it cannot be considered as conclusive testimony that such a prophecy was not actually made. It is no secret that Sarah, the mother of Isaac, hated Ishmael and his mother, Hagar. This hatred of their mother for the House of Ishmael was inherited by her sons, the Israelites. (Gen. 16: 12). In these circumstances it would be idle to search for any express prophecy in favour of Ishmael and his progeny in the Bible, particularly when it was for a long time subjected to all sorts of interference on the part of the Israelites. Moreover, if the Biblical evidence can be taken to establish the existence of a promise about Isaac and his sons, why should not the evidence of the Quran and, for that matter, of the children of Ishmael, be accepted to establish the fact that promises were held out by God to Ishmael and his sons also. But the undeniable fact is that the Bible does contain references to the future prosperity of the sons of Ishmael similar to those it contains about the sons of Isaac. The following are some of these references:

1) "And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. 17: 9, 10). This covenant was made with Abraham before the birth of Isaac and after Ishmael had been born, which shows that it applied to Ishmael and his children.

2) "And the angel of the Lord said unto her (Ishmael's mother), I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man (it appears that here some expression like "Arab" or the dweller of a desert country, has been translated as "wild"); his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." i.e. although all will constantly oppose him and be jealous of him, yet he will succeed (Gen. 16: 10—12).

3) Further evidence of Ishmael and his posterity being included in the covenant which God established between Himself and Abraham and his seed after him is furnished by Gen. 17: 6—8 which says, "And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and
I will be their God.” Now, has not the land of Canaan remained in the possession of the Ishmaelites for over 1,300 years? If the Arab Muslims are not the seed of Abraham, why has Canaan continued in their possession for so long?

(4) Again in Gen. 17:18-20, we read:

“‘And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! and God said, . . . And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.’” It will thus be seen that the promises made for Ishmael are similar to those made for Isaac; nay, they are even greater in number, for, with regard to Ishmael, God says, (a) “I have blessed him”; (b) “I will make him fruitful”; (c) “I will multiply him exceedingly”; (d) “twelve princes shall he beget”; and (e) “I will make him a great nation.”

(5) Further evidence of the fact that Ishmael was included in God’s covenant is furnished by the fact that circumcision which was instituted by God as a token of His covenant with Abraham and his seed after him, has continued among the descendants of Ishmael. Though Islam also enjoined it, yet it was already in vogue among the Arabs, which shows that they were the seed of Abraham and were consequently included in the covenant of which circumcision was instituted as a symbol.

In order to exclude Ishmael from God’s covenant, Christian writers sometimes bring forward the plea that the offspring of a handmaid cannot be included in Abraham’s seed. But this is entirely baseless; for, even conceding, for the sake of argument, that Ishmael’s mother was a handmaid, it has been clearly said with reference to Ishmael: “And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation because he is thy seed” (Gen. 21:13).

The above-quoted verses of the Bible show:
(1) that Ishmael was born according to the promise of God given to Abraham before Ishmael’s birth; (2) that God blessed Ishmael and his mother, Hagar; (3) that He promised to make Ishmael and his mother fruitful and to multiply them exceedingly; (4) that God was with Ishmael; and (5) that the covenant of God with Abraham about the circumcision of every male child among his progeny applied to Ishmael and his children.

As a matter of fact, the promise made to Ishmael does not differ very much from that made to Isaac; they are both to be blessed, both to be made fruitful, the descendants of both to multiply exceedingly and both are to be made great nations, and kingdom and dominion is promised to the progeny of both. So when the nature of the promise made to both the brothers does not substantially differ, the kind of reward granted to the children of Isaac will have also to be admitted for the children of Ishmael. It would be wrong to think that as in Gen. 17:21 it is written that God will establish His covenant with Isaac, so Prophets were meant to be raised from among his children only, for a similar covenant was made with Abraham even before the birth of Isaac, and this clearly applied to Ishmael. This covenant is contained in Gen. 17:10, 11 according to which Ishmael was circumcised at the age of 13 and thenceforward circumcision became a religious rite with the posterity of Ishmael. It is therefore beyond any shadow of doubt that the covenant referred to above was intended for the children of Ishmael quite as much as for the children of Isaac. This fact has even been admitted by some eminent Christian writers of established authority (The Scofield Reference Bible, p. 25).

So far about verbal promises. Now let us see how God practically treated Ishmael. We read in Gen. 21:14-20, “And Abraham rose
up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away; and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer."

This shows that God rendered miraculous help to Ishmael and brought into existence a well of water for his sake. It is now for the Christians to show what extraordinary thing God wrought for Isaac that may be compared with this. In the above passage it is also said that "God was with the lad," which means that Ishmael grew up under the special protection of the Lord.

Further evidence of the fact that Ishmael was looked upon as the seed of Abraham, on a par with Isaac, is furnished by the following circumstances:

In Gen. 25:6, we read that when Abraham grew old and was nearing his end, he sent away the sons of the concubines. And then the Bible goes on to say: "And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred three score and fifteen years, and Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age; an old man full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah." (Gen. 25:7—9). Now, if Ishmael was also treated as the offspring of a concubine, he ought to have been treated as the other children, who were the issue of concubines, were treated. But such was not the case; for when Abraham died, the children of the concubines were away and only Ishmael and Isaac were present, and both of them participated in the burial ceremony of their father. This shows that Ishmael was not treated as the offspring of a concubine, but was looked upon as the equal of Isaac and was treated accordingly.

In reply to the second objection that even if the covenant be understood to include the sons of Ishmael, it is yet to be proved that the Holy Prophet belonged to the House of Ishmael, the following points may briefly be noted:

(1) The best way to know the origin of a race is to refer to the traditions and the testimony of the race itself; and, as we all know, the Quraish, the tribe to which the Holy Prophet belonged, always believed and declared themselves to be the descendants of Ishmael and this claim was recognized by all the people of Arabia.

(2) If the claim of the Quraish and, for that matter, that of other Ishmaelite tribes of Arabia, to Ishmaelite descent had been false, the real descendants of Ishmael would have protested against such a false claim; but no such objection is known to have been ever raised.

(3) In Gen. 17:20 God had promised to bless Ishmael, to multiply his progeny, to make him a great nation and the father of twelve princes. If the people of Arabia are not his descendants, where is the promised nation? The Ishmaelite tribes of Arabia are indeed the only claimants in the field.
(4) According to Gen. 21: 8—14 Hagar had to leave her home in order to satisfy the vanity of Sarah. If she was not taken to Hedjaz, where are her descendants found, and which is the place of her banishment?

(5) After her banishment Hagar dwelt in the wilderness of Paran (Gen. 21: 21). Christian writers have tried to prove that Paran is Feiran near Jebel Serbal in the Sinai Peninsula. But the great English Commentator of the Old Testament, who devoted his whole life to the study of the Bible, Dr. S. R. Driver, has had to confess after all that "the site of Paran, from which the wilderness derives its name, is, however, unknown" (Deut. p. 4). On the contrary, the Arab geographers are all agreed that Paran is the name given to the hills of Hedjaz (Mu’jam al-Buldān).

(6) We are told that the generations of Ishmael "dwelt from Havilah unto Shur" (Gen. 25: 18) and the phrase "from Havilah unto Shur" designates the opposite extremes of Arabia (Bib. Cyc. by J. Eadie, London, 1862).

(7) The Bible calls Ishmael "a wild man" (Gen. 16: 12) and the word عرب (Arabi) "a dweller of the desert" conveys almost the same sense.

(8) Even Paul has admitted Hagar’s connection with Arabia (Gal. 4: 25).

(9) Kedar was a son of Ishmael and it is admitted that his descendants settled in the southern part of Arabia (Bib. Cyc. London, 1862).

(10) Prof. C. C. Torrey says: "The Arabs were Ishmaelites according to the Hebrew tradition ... The ‘twelve princes’ (Gen. 17: 20) subsequently named in Gen. 25: 13ff, represent Arabian tribes or districts; notice especially Kedar, Duma (Dumat al-Jandal), Teima. The great nation is the people of Arabia." (Jewish Foundation of Islam, p. 83).

(11) Similarly, the learned authors of the Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature, New York, (1877, p. 685) admit that "the Arabs, from physical characteristics, language, the occurrence of native traditions, ... and the testimony of the Bible are mainly and essentially Ishmaelites."

(12) Lastly there is the opinion of Narsai, a Syrian writer who lived about a hundred years before the birth of the Holy Prophet. Mingana quotes Narsai as saying: "The raid of the sons of Hagar was more cruel even than famine, and the blow that they gave was more sore than disease; the wound of the sons of Abraham is like the venom of a serpent and perhaps there is a remedy for the poison of reptiles but not for theirs—let us always blame the foul inclination of the sons of Hagar, and specially the people (the tribe) of Kuraish who are like animals." (Leaves from Three Ancient Qurans, edited by the Rev. A. Mingana, D.D. Intro. xiii).

In the face of these conclusive proofs both the objections, that (1) Ishmael was not included in the covenant which God made with Abraham, and that (2) Ishmael did not settle in Arabia or that the Holy Prophet of Islam was not a descendant of Ishmael, fall to the ground.

Before passing on to the next verse a brief reference to Hagar, mother of Ishmael, will not be out of place here. C. J. Ellicott, Lord Bishop of Gloucester, says in his Commentary: "Hagar ... was to be, not Abraham’s concubine, but his wife" (Vol. I, p. 69). The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uziel tell us that "Sarah ... took Hagar ... and set her free, and gave her to Abraham, her husband, to wife" (Translation by J. W. Etheridge, London, 1862, p. 205). This setting free of the "handmaid" or "bondwoman" does not imply that Hagar was a barbarian slave or that she was a slave from her very childhood. Sir Leonard Wooley says that she was a "civilised creature sprung from the second great centre of culture in the ancient world" (Abraham, London, 1936, p. 144).
R. 16 131. And who will turn away from the religion of Abraham but he who is foolish of mind? Him did We choose in this world, and in the next he will surely be among the righteous.137

132. When his Lord said to him, 'Submit', he said, 'I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds'.138

"According to Midrash," says another authority, "Hagar had been given as a slave to Abraham by her father, the Pharaoh of Egypt, who said, 'My daughter had better be a slave in the house of Abraham, than mistress in any other'" (Translation of the Targums by J. W. Etheridge, note 8, on page 204).

137. Important Words:

- **رَغِبُ (will turn away)** is derived from **رِغَب (will turn to)** which is used either with the preposition ق or يعن which gives different meanings. رغب ق means, he sought or desired it; and رغب عن means, he turned away from it or he left or loathed it (Aqrab).

- **سَفِحَة (foolish of mind)**. The word سَفِحَة is used in three different forms: (1) سَفِحَة (safha), (2) سَفَحَة (safaha), and (3) سَفَحَة (safuha). All these give different meanings. The Quran uses the first form i.e. سَفِحَة (safha) which means, he was ignorant or he behaved ignorantly; he was foolish or he acted foolishly; he was light-witted or he behaved light-wittedly.

- **أَخْلَصْتُ (him did We choose)** is derived from أَخْلَصَتْ which means, it became pure and clean. أَخْلَصَتْ بِذَا means, he chose him for that, or he honoured him with that. أَخْلَصَتْ means, he chose or selected him from among others; he chose him in preference to others (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

The attention of Jews and Christians is drawn to the point that when it has been proved that, in accordance with the prayer of Abraham, a Prophet was to appear from among the children of Ishmael and that Prophet has actually appeared, it is incumbent upon them to ponder over his claims and not to belie the prayer of Abraham and go against their own religion. The verse emphasizes the fact that anybody who departs from the way of the great patriarch of the People of the Book betrays his own folly. The religion of Abraham leads to salvation, whereas defection from it leads to ruin and deprivation.

138. Important Words:

- **أَسْلَمْم (submit)**, being in the imperative mood, means, submit or surrender or resign thyself; or
133. The same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons—and so did Jacob—
saying: ‘O my sons, truly Allah has chosen this religion for you; *so let
death overtake you except when you are in a state of submission.*' \(^{139}\)

become a Muslim *i.e.* one resigned to God, For a fuller discussion of the word see 2:113.

**Commentary:**

The Jews are here told that the greatness of their ancestor Abraham lay in the fact that he was always ready to submit fully and resign himself completely to the will of God. So if they too wish to become great in the sight of God, they should also submit to Him and obey His commands and accept His Prophet.

The verse beautifully describes Abraham’s religion. When God asked him to submit, he immediately replied, *I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds.* This reply of Abraham points to two important inferences: (1) That Abraham does not use the words “I will submit” or even “I do submit” but *I have submitted,* which means that he was so eager to obey his Lord that he took no time in making his submission, as if the act were already a thing accomplished. (2) That Abraham does not merely say, *I have submitted,* but adds the words, *to the Lord of the worlds,* which signifies that his submission was not based on any ulterior motive but on the simple fact that the “Being” to Whom he was submitting was the Lord and Master of the world and hence entitled to obedience.

139. **Important Words:**

*رسى (enjoin upon).* *رسى لِما كذا* means, he enjoined this upon him, he ordered him to do this, he charged him with this. *رسى عليه بالصلوة* means, he exhorted him or enjoined him to observe Prayers. *رسى له* means, he made a will in his favour, making him heir of his property after his death (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

Abraham not only submitted himself to the will of God but also took special care that his children too should inculcate that spirit and lead lives of submission and resignation. The name of Jacob or Israel (grandson of Abraham) has been particularly added here to point to the fact that as Jacob also issued a similar injunction to his children, it becomes all the more binding on the Israelites to submit to the will of God and accept the Prophet who has come with the specific mission of *Islam* *i.e.* submission to God’s will.

The words, *so let not death overtake you except when you are in a state of submission,* beautifully point to the fact that as nobody knows the time of his death, one should always lead a life of submission to God’s will so that whenever death comes, it may not find one in a state other than that of submission. The words may also mean that a true believer should be so perfectly resigned to God’s will and should so completely win His pleasure that He may, out of His limitless bounty, arrange that death may not come to him except at a time when he is resigned to His will.

This, as well as the preceding verse, forcefully brings out the important point that Islam really means absolute obedience and complete submission to the will of God. Only he who is completely resigned to the will of God is a
134. Were you present when death came to Jacob, when he said to his sons, 'What will you worship after me?' They answered, 'We will worship thy God, the God of thy fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, the One God; and to Him we submit ourselves.'

true Muslim. Thus every true pre-Islamic religion that inculcated the spirit of submission will, within this meaning of the term, fall under the true definition of Islam, because previous to the religion preached by the Holy Prophet, to follow Islam was to obey the then expressed will of God, or, in other words, the revelation of the day. The point of difference between the religion brought by the Holy Prophet and the other true faiths that preceded it is, that though Islamic in essence, those faiths were not called by the name of Islam, the reason for this being that they were not perfect and each of them was to be replaced by a succeeding one, and so, if all these had been given the name of Islam, there would have been great confusion. Hence, only the faith which was perfect in every way and was meant for all mankind and was to last for ever was given that name so that its very name might be illustrative of its underlying purpose. The name Islam is "the new name" referred to in Isa. 62: 2.

When the Quran calls the former Prophets Muslims, it does not obviously mean that they followed Quranic teachings. What it means is only this that, as explained above, they followed the true faith of their day and manifested in themselves, though partly of course, the spirit of i.e. submission to the will of God.

140. Important Words:

الله (God) is derived from (alaha) which means, he worshipped. So means, a thing or person or being worshipped, whether true or false; a deity (Aqrab).

Commentary:

Jacob or Israel was the son of Isaac who was a son of Abraham. Thus Ishmael was the uncle of Jacob, and yet the children of Jacob here include Ishmael among their "fathers" which proves two things: firstly, that the word (father) is also used of uncle; and secondly, that up to the time of Jacob's sons Ishmael was held in due respect by the Israelites. Nay, the children of Israel mention the name of Ishmael even before that of their own grandfather, Isaac, and do not mention any other son of Abraham.

The words, were you present when death came to Jacob, signify that the principle of submission to the will of God is not an innovation introduced by Islam, but has been recognized by good and righteous people in all times and even Israel, the founder of the Jewish tribes, acted upon that principle, so much so, that the only thought that came to his mind when death approached him was to enjoin the same noble principle upon his children. Israel wished his sons to become pious Muslims; will not the Jews of the Holy Prophet's day act upon that principle?
135. aThose are a people that have passed away; for them is that which they earned, and for you shall be what you earn, and you shall not be questioned as to what they did.141

136. And they say, b'Be ye Jews or Christians that you may be rightly guided.' Say: 'Nay, follow ye the religion of Abraham who was (ever inclined to God); he was not of those who set up gods with God.'142

In corroboration of what the Quran says about Jacob’s will to his sons, Rodwell quotes the following from Midrash Rabbah: “At the time when our father Jacob quitted this world, he summoned his twelve sons and said to them, Hearken to your father Israel (Gen. 49:2). Have you any doubts in your hearts concerning the Holy One, blessed be He. They said, Hear, O Israel, our father, as there is no doubt in thy heart, so neither is there in ours. For the Lord is our God, and He is One” (Midr. Rabbah on Gen. par. 98, and on Deut. par. 2). Compare also Targ. Jer. on Deut. 6:4.

141. Commentary:

The People of the Book are here warned that the fact that they are the descendants of God’s Prophets would not avail them in any way. Their forefathers reaped the rewards of their good deeds and won God’s favours; and if they also wish to become His favourites, they must perform similar deeds and show implicit obedience to God and complete submission to His will. The fact that they are descended from holy persons makes them all the more responsible.

142. Important Words:

حَنَّفٌ (ever inclined to God) is derived from حَنَفَ which means, he became inclined. حَنَفٌ means:
(1) one who turns away from error to guidance (Mufradât); (2) one who steadily follows the right faith and never swerves from it; (3) one inclining in a perfect manner to Islam and continuing firm therein (Lane); (4) one who follows the religion of Abraham (Aqrab).

Commentary:

There is a notion prevalent among the followers of different religions that salvation is confined to their respective folds only. This view is, however, quite erroneous. Salvation depends upon the grace and mercy of God, and submission to His will is the only way to win His grace and mercy. So long as the following of a religion involves submission to God’s will, there is salvation in it. But when this condition ceases to exist in a religion, that religion can no more offer salvation. The verse points out that the Jews and the Christians are wrong in asserting that the bare entry of a person into their respective religions assures salvation. Not so, says Allah, but salvation lies in what Abraham taught—absolute submission to God’s will. And
137. Say ye: "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and his children, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between any of them; and to Him we submit ourselves".143

Abraham was a rightly guided person who taught and practised the spirit of Islam.

The words, he was not of those who set up gods with God, are not used here to remove any misconception about Abraham but to point out to the People of the Book that, while their progenitor Abraham was not an idol-worshipper, they had for themselves practically set up so many equals to God. They outwardly professed belief in God's Oneness but in their hearts lay hidden scores of idols which they loved and revered as one should love and revere God alone.

143. Important Words:

اساط (children) is derived from اَسْتَّاء. They say i.e. the hair was or became loose and hanging. وَسَطَع means, the rain was copious and extensive. وَسَطَع signifies the idea of length and extensiveness. وَسَطَع means, hair that is long and not curly. وَسَطَع الكفَّاء means, a generous man, literally one possessing long and open hands, because his helping hand extends to every needy person. A grandson is also called وَسَطَع because his birth signifies increase of progeny. In a still wider sense, the word might signify progeny generally. The expression here refers to the twelve tribes of Israel named after the twelve sons of Jacob: Ruben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher (Gen. 35:23—26; 49:28).

Commentary:

The verse is addressed to Muslims who are enjoined to reply to Jews and Christians by saying that the central point in religion is belief in, and submission to, God; and so everything that comes from God must be accepted and it is simply foolish to say that a people believing in some Prophets of God need not believe in others. All Messengers of God and all revelations coming from Him must be accepted and no distinction is to be made between this Prophet and that or between this revelation and that, so far as belief in them is concerned. One Prophet may be higher in status than another and one revelation may be more important than another; but all of them must be accepted without discrimination. The words, to Him we submit ourselves, have been used as an argument in support of the above assertion. When we submit to God, everything coming from Him must be accepted.

It indeed redounds to the great credit of Islam that it is the only religion which recognizes the Prophets of all countries and all nations, whereas other faiths limit prophethood only to their own respective spheres. Naturally the Quran mentions only the names of those Prophets who were known to the Arabs to whom the message of Islam was first given; but it makes a general remark to the effect
138. And if they believe as you have believed, then are they surely guided; but if they turn back, then they are only creating a schism, and Allah will surely suffice thee against them, for He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.\(^\text{144}\)

As already pointed out, this verse should not be understood to mean that the Quran regards all Prophets to be equal in rank. In fact, the Quran clearly states that different Prophets possess different ranks, some of them being spiritually higher than others (2:254). The sentence, *We make no difference between any of them*, thus only means that a Muslim makes no distinction between the different Prophets in respect of their prophethood.

Some Christian critics have objected to the verse under comment and have demanded proof of the prophethood of Ishmael. But what proof is there, it may be asked, of the prophethood of Isaac? If the Bible testifies to the prophethood of Isaac, the Quran testifies to the prophethood of Ishmael. If the testimony of the Quran cannot be accepted as a proof for the prophethood of Ishmael, there is no earthly reason why the testimony of the Bible be accepted as a proof for Isaac’s prophethood. And even the Bible is not without evidence of the fact that God made a number of promises to Abraham about the future greatness of Ishmael and his progeny (see note on 2:130).

144. Important Words:

- *شَقَّ (schism)* is from *شقَّ* which is from *شقَّ* meaning, he split up a thing, or he tore it up. *شقَّ* means, he created a split or schism in the community which before stood united.
- *شقَّ* means, the vegetation sprouted forth from the earth. *شقَّ* means, one side as opposed to another. *شقَّ* means, he opposed him and became hostile to him so that each sided with a different party. *شقَّ* means, opposition; hostility; schism; being mutually remote (*أَقْرَب*). The word *شقَّ* however, is not used about the party which sides with the truth (*مُهِّت*).

**Commentary:**

Muslims are here told that if Jews and Christians come to agree with them in holding that religion is not an hereditary matter, but consists in accepting all revealed guidance, then they are one with them; otherwise, their ways stand apart and a wide gulf separates them, responsibility for the schism and the resulting hostility in this case lying with Jews and Christians and not with the Muslims.

In this case, however, Muslims should not be afraid of Jews or Christians; for God is on their side and the God of Islam is All-Hearing and All-Knowing. If they pray to Him for protection, He will answer their prayers; and even if there comes a time when they cannot pray, He will protect them; for He is not only All-Hearing but is also All-Knowing. The verse also refers to the special and personal divine protection promised to the Holy Prophet (5:68) in view of the repeated attempts made by the Jews upon his life.
139. Say, 'We will adopt the religion of Allah; and who is better than Allah in teaching religion, and Him alone do we worship.'

140. Say: 'Do you dispute with us concerning Allah, while He is our Lord and your Lord? And 'for us are our works, and for you your works; and to Him alone we are sincerely devoted.'

145. Important Words:

- صيغة 'religion' is derived from صنف, i.e., he dyed or coloured it. صنف يده في الماء means, he immersed his hand in the water.
- صنف يده بالstamp means, he laboured in work and became notable therein. صنف يده بالstamp means, he became dyed or coloured with it. صنف يده بالstamp means, dye or colour; kind or mode of a thing; religion; code of laws; baptism. صنف يده بالstamp means, God's religion; the nature with which God has endowed men (Aqrab). Religion is called صنف يده بالstamp because it covers a man like a dye or colour.

Commentary:

In the verse the word صنف يده بالstamp (religion) is used as an object, the subject of which is understood. According to the rules of Arabic Grammar, sometimes when it is intended strongly to induce a person to do a certain thing, the verb is omitted and only the object is mentioned. Therefore words like اتبعوا خذرا (adopt) or اتبعوا خذرا (follow) will be taken to be understood before the words صنف يده بالstamp and the clause would mean, "adopt or follow the religion which God wishes you to adopt or follow." This indeed is the true baptism which can make one acquire God's attributes and become His living manifestation. Compare with it the Christian baptism which seeks to procure for a man forgiveness of sins and everlasting life by the mere act of immersing him in water or sprinkling it on him at his christening ceremony.

146. Important Words:

- خالص (sincerely devoted) is derived from صنف which means, he or it became pure. صنف يده بالstamp means, he was or became sincere in obedience. صنف يده بالstamp means, he was sincere in his love for him, lit., he made his love true for him (Aqrab). صنف يده بالstamp means, he was sincere to God or he was sincere in his connection with Him (Lane & Mufradāt).

Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is here commanded to say to the People of the Book that it is God Who has sent His revelation to him and that they should not dispute God's choice, because He is as much the God of the Muslims as He is theirs, and He knows the works of both. He is the Creator of all and His grace is not confined to any one tribe or country. So, if God has now selected an Ishmaelite for the office of prophethood and has chosen the Arabs for His grace, they should not reject him on that account. The central point of faith is the person of God, and if one is sincere in his connection with Him, there should be no hesitation in accepting anything that emanates from Him. The real question is, whether God has indeed chosen Muhammad (peace and the blessings of God be on him) to be His Messenger. If that question is answered...
141. 'Do you say that Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and his children were Jews or Christians? Say, 'Do you know better or Allah?' And who is more unjust than he who conceals the testimony that he has from Allah? And Allah is not unaware of what you do.  

142. Those are a people that have passed away; for them is what they earned, and for you shall be what you earn; and you shall not be questioned as to what they did.

in the affirmative, nothing should stop a man from accepting Islam; and if he rejects Islam, he ranges himself against God, be he a Jew, a Christian, a Hindu or any other.

147. Commentary:
In this verse Jews and Christians have been indirectly asked how Abraham and his children would fare, if salvation were monopolized by them. If they replied that these holy persons were also Jews or Christians, it would be against all the facts of history, because they belonged to pre-Mosaic times when Jewish and Christian religions had not yet come into existence.

Some short-sighted persons attach so much importance to their own views that they begin to ascribe them to every righteous servant of God. In their discussions, Jews and Christians represented even those of their ancestors who lived before their religions came into existence as the followers of their own faiths.

This is the attitude not only of the ignorant masses, but even educated people sometimes fall a prey to this delusion. Many Christians of great learning hold the untenable belief that even those Prophets and other righteous people who lived before Jesus were saved through his alleged death on the cross. Such men should beware of God's judgement, as He is not unaware of their deeds.

148. Commentary:
Jews and Christians are once more warned against relying upon those of their forefathers who won the pleasure of God by their good deeds. It is their own deeds and not those of others that will save them. Their own good actions alone can bring them salvation and not the fact that they are the descendants or followers of Abraham, Jacob, Moses or Jesus. No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another, says the Quran (6:165).