254. "These Messengers have We exalted; some of them above others: among them there are those to whom Allah spoke; and some of them He exalted by degrees of rank. And We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs and strengthened Him with the Spirit of holiness. And if Allah had so willed, those that came after them would not have fought with one another after clear Signs had come to them; but they did disagree. Of them were some who believed, and of them were some who disbelieved. And if Allah had so willed, they would not have fought with one another; but Allah does what He desires."
being given any new Law. Of Moses who was a Law-giving Prophet the Quran says: And Allah conversed with Moses particularly and freely (4:165). That there are two kinds of Prophets, (1) ملك (to whom God speaks particularly) i.e. Law-givers, and (2) غيب ملك (to whom God does not speak in that particular manner) i.e. Non-Law-givers, is also clear from the sayings of the Holy Prophet. For instance, when asked by Abu Dharr whether Adam was a Prophet, the Holy Prophet is reported to have answered, "Yes, he was a مك (Mukallam) Prophet" (Musnad). The addition of the word مك to the word Prophet clearly shows that Prophets are of two classes, مك (Law-givers) and غيب مك (Non-Law-givers). Adam was a Law-giver because it was he who brought the elementary Law.

The Arabic clause منهم من كم يرجع بضمهم دريات may also be rendered as, "among them there is he to whom Allah spoke and one of them He exalted by degrees of rank." In this case the clause would signify that by the Prophet to whom Allah spoke is meant Moses and by the Prophet whom He exalted by degrees of rank is meant the Holy Prophet to whom God did not only speak, as He speaks to all Prophets, but whom He raised above all others by so many degrees.

The clause, And We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs, does not mean that other Prophets were not granted such proofs. As a matter of fact, all Prophets are given clear proofs and all are strengthened with the Spirit of holiness; but here God makes particular mention of Jesus in order to refute the objections of the Jews who declared that he had shown no Sign and that he was possessed with an Evil Spirit (Luke 11:15, 16). The Quran declares that Jesus was not an impostor, as the Jews believe, but a true Prophet, and that he was not possessed with the Devil but, like all other holy men, was aided with the Spirit of holiness. In this connection see also note on 2:88.

The Arabic clause translated as, if Allah had so willed, those that came after them would not have fought with one another, does not mean, as some may wrongly think, that God is the originator of differences. The expression like لخ on the Quranic idiom, does not simply mean "if Allah had willed " but "if Allah had acted according to His will" i.e. if He had enforced His will. In fact, Allah has, in His infinite wisdom, made man free to choose or reject a thing as he likes. That being so, differences are sure to arise among men. But God does not remain a placid on-looker; for whenever differences become vast and acute, He raises a new Reformer. This is why when discord and disagreements began to rend the ranks of the followers of the previous Prophets, God, in accordance with His old law, raised the Holy Prophet of Islam.

The words, Allah does what He desires, further indicate that the infinite wisdom of God demanded that man should be made a free agent. So God does not compel anyone to adopt this course or that. He has given man the power to choose the good or the evil course as he may like and God rewards him accordingly; He does not force any one to accept the truth; nor should the Faithful.
255. O ye who believe! spend out of what We have bestowed on you before the day comes wherein there shall be no buying and selling, nor friendship, nor intercession; and it is those who disbelieve that do wrong to themselves.²⁶¹

²⁶¹. Important Words:

(买和卖) is derived from اَرِ, i.e., he sold; or he bought; or he bartered (Aqrab).

(兄弟情) is derived from حَلَلَ, i.e., he pierced the thing and made a hole through it. حَلَلَ means, he was very particular in his prayer. حَلَلَ means, he was in need of his help and support. حَلَلَ means, he made friends with him and took him as brother. حَلَلَ is, therefore, that friendship or love which penetrates the heart and takes root in it. حَلَلَ is one whose friendship and love is very deep and sincere; a most loving and bosom friend (Aqrab). The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: “If I had taken any one as my حَلَلَ I would have taken Abū Bakr as such, but my حَلَلَ is God” (Bukhārī, ch. on Manāqib al-Nābi).

(调解) (intercession). See note on 2: 49.

Commentary:

Though, as the preceding verses point out, the final victory of the Holy Prophet of Islam was sure, yet the path before Muslims was not strewn with roses. They had to make great sacrifices in order to reach the goal. It is to this fact that the verse under comment points. It makes particular reference to financial sacrifices.

The words, wherein there shall be no buying and selling, do not mean that there will be no trade and commerce on the Day of Judgement, but that on that great day nobody will be able to buy salvation, which will depend only on one's good works coupled with God's grace. The only buying or selling that will be of avail to men on the Day of Judgement will be that which they shall have made in their present life (9: 111).

The words, nor friendship, signify that there will be no occasion for forming new friendships on that day. Those, however, who will have taken God as their friend in their life on this earth will certainly benefit by that friendship. It is to this fact that the Quran refers when it says: Friends on that day shall be foes to one another, except the God-fearing. (43: 68). The righteous have God as their friend, and He will continue to be their friend on the Day of Judgement.

For (调解) (intercession), see note on 2: 49.
256. Allah—there is no God but Him, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Slumber seizes Him not, nor sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that will intercede with Him 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. His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth; and the care of them burdens Him not; and He is the High, the Great.

262. Important Words:

الحياة (the Living), of which the verb form is حي, i.e. he lived or he has life, is an attribute of God, signifying that God is the only Being Who is deathless and lives by Himself—He needs no support, He is eternal and everlasting (Mufradat & Lane). This is "life" in the truest sense of the word, and such life is enjoyed by God alone.

القادر (Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining) is another attribute of God. The word is derived from قام i.e. he stood erect. القادر means, the Being Who not only stands by Himself, requiring the support of none, but Who supports all others (Mufradat & Aqrab).

السما (slumber) is the noun-infinitive from سلم i.e. sleep or slumber took hold of him. السما means, heaviness of limbs and eyes preceding sleep; sleep or slumber itself; negligence or unguardedness (Aqrab).

الكرسي (knowledge) is derived from كرستا. They say كرستا i.e. he raised the walls of a house. كرسي means, a throne or a chair or a stool, in fact, anything used for sitting on; buttress of a wall; knowledge; dominion and power. Hence, الكرسي means, men of learning (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

This verse is known as آية الكرسي (Ayat al-Kursi) and is considered to be one of the most important verses, beautifully describing the unity of God and His great attributes. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the Ayat al-Kursi was the loftiest verse in the Quran (Muslim). The verse supplies an answer to an implied question. Even if Muslims made the sacrifices required of them in 2:255, the task before them was so great that, based on worldly calculations, there appeared no hope of success for them. How then is the promised victory to come? The verse under comment provides a telling answer. The world was not without a Master. The destinies of its people were controlled by a Being Whose power was limitless, Whose knowledge knew no bounds, Who was ever vigilant, ever watchful, in Whose hands were the entire resources of the earth and the heavens. If such a Being willed the triumph of a party, who was there to thwart His way? The promised victory must come.
257. There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; so whoever refuses to be led by those who transgress, and believes in Allah has surely grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

For a detailed treatment of the subject of intercession see note on 2: 49. The reason why no one shall be allowed to intercede for any person except with the permission of God is that nobody knows what is in the minds of men and consequently none is in a position to intercede for another. God alone knows the secrets of men’s hearts and hence there can be no intercession except by His permission, for He alone knows who is deserving of it.

The clause, they encompass nothing of His knowledge, means that God’s knowledge is unlimited; while the knowledge of others, whoever they may be, is limited; even Prophets know no more than what is apparent of the spiritual condition of their followers.

The word (knowledge) may signify either knowledge or power; both give equally good meanings and are almost equally applicable. Allah’s knowledge is as extensive as His power. Knowledge and power are indeed the two great pillars on which the throne of God and, for that matter, the controlling power of everyone in authority rests.

263. Important Words:

(those who transgress) is derived from i.e., he transgressed; he exceeded the just limit. Hence is primarily one who exceeds the bounds laid down for him. The Devil (i.e., the Evil One) or such men as turn others from the right path as well as all idols come under the word Fāghūt. The word is used both as singular and plural as in 4: 61 and 2: 258.

The enunciation: The injunction to make special sacrifices in the cause of religion and to fight the enemies of Islam who had transgressed against the Faithful was likely to cause the misunderstanding that Allah desired Muslims to use force for propagating their religion. The verse under comment removes this misunderstanding. The verse under comment removes this misunderstanding. The object for which Muslims have been commanded to take up arms against the disbelievers is not to force them to accept Islam, but only to check mischief and put a stop to persecution. The verse enjoins Muslims in the clearest and strongest of words not to resort to force for converting non-Muslims to Islam. In the face of this teaching embodied in the words, There should be no compulsion in religion, it is the height of injustice to accuse Islam of countenancing the use of force for the propagation of its teaching.

The verse not only gives the commandment that in no case is force to be resorted to for the purpose of converting non-Muslims to
258. *Allah is the friend of those who believe*; He brings them out of darkness into light. And those who disbelieve, their friends are the transgressors who bring them out of light into darkness. These are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.*

Islam, but also gives the reason why it should not be used, saying: *Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; i.e., the true path has become distinct from the wrong one and therefore there is no justification for using force. Islam is a manifest truth. Anyone who sincerely desires to see this truth can easily see it; but if there is a person who does not desire to see it, no force can possibly make him do so. All that we have to do is to point out its beauties to non-Muslims; it rests with them to accept it or reject it as they like. حَرَّم or faith as defined by Islam consists in believing in a thing with the heart or the mind and expressing that belief with the tongue. No force on earth can bring about that change.*

The person who sticks to true faith and shuns false ones is here represented as laying hold of a strong حَرَّم (‘unsaa) which word, as shown above, gives a number of meanings. Taking it in the first-mentioned sense i.e., the handle of a mug, etc. the Quran compares Islam to the pure life-giving liquid which is put into a mug, and the believer is represented as taking fast hold of the handle thereof. Taking the word in the second sense, i.e., anything which is grasped and clung to for support, the true faith is represented as something on which complete reliance can be placed in all circumstances. If one adheres to it, there is no fear of one's stumbling or falling down. Following the third significance, i.e., a pasture that remains green even in time of drought, Islam has been likened to a grazing ground the herbage of which is everlasting. There can be no spiritual famine in Islam. Following the last-mentioned meaning of حَرَّم Islam is represented as a store-house of spiritual treasures that are without equal.

264. Commentary:

The preceding verse spoke of "truth" and "error" as resulting from belief in Allah and belief in تَاغِت respectively. The present verse further develops the idea. According to Arabic idiom, the expression, to bring out of darkness into light, means "to lead to success and happiness not only in the spiritual but also in the physical sense"; and the opposite of it means, "to lead to failure and grief."

The word تَاغِت, explained under the preceding verse, here mainly refers to such mischievous leaders as turn people away from the right path. Through them disbelievers are being led to failure and grief and are also gradually losing whatever light of faith they possessed before the advent of the Holy Prophet. Their rejection of him has also led them to disown many truths which they acknowledged before. Add to this their deprivation of the light of the New Faith and the darkness becomes complete. On the contrary, Islam is not only bringing new light to its adherents but is also bringing them success and happiness.
259. Hast thou not heard of him who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had given him kingdom? When Abraham said, 'My Lord is He Who gives life and causes death,' he said, 'I also give life and cause death.' Abraham said, 'Well, Allah brings the Sun from the East; bring it thou from the West.' Thereupon the infidel was dumbfounded. And Allah guides not the unjust people.

265. Commentary:

The preceding verses spoke of the great rise and success in store for Muslims—their being brought out of darkness into light. Now the Quran proceeds to illustrate the promised rise and advancement. It takes us back to the days of Abraham.

An incident in the life of the great Patriarch has been cited to illustrate the truth of the statement made in the previous verse, viz., that God is the friend of believers; He helps them against their enemies and shows them the way of success, leading them out of darkness into light.

Abraham was a native of Ur of the Chaldees. His people worshipped the stars and their chief god was the Sun. Their greatest god was Merodach (or Madruk), who was originally the god of the morning and the spring sun. He was also called Bel i.e. Lord (Enc. Bib. and Enc. Bel. Eth. ii. 296).

Abraham was hostile to the worship of idols and false deities and vehemently preached against them. He once set fire to a house which contained wooden images. On another occasion, he broke certain idols to pieces and burned them, whereupon he was produced before the king, whose name is recorded as Nimrod (Gen. 10:8, 9 and Jew. Enc. under Abraham) and who was also worshipped by the people as a representative of their deities. The king, it appears, threatened Abraham with ruin and death, to which Abraham firmly and boldly replied that he could do him no harm, for it was His Lord God Who granted life and caused death. As the king laid claim to godhead, he wrathfully rejoined that it was he who exercised these powers. Now Abraham knew that Nimrod and his people believed that all life depended on the Sun, so if it was true that it was the king who controlled life and death, it meant that even the Sun was under the control of the king and that the final power of life and death attributed by Nimrod and his men to the Sun was a mere farce. So he pertinently asked the king to send back the Sun from the West to the East (i.e. put it aside), for in such case the Sun could not be recognized as the final controlling power. The king was in a fix. He could not say that he did not possess the power to send back the Sun, for that would have exposed him. At the same time he could not say that it was he who caused the Sun to rise from the East and set in the West, for his people looked upon the Sun as the supreme deity, superior to the king himself, and if he had claimed any power over the Sun, he would have surely roused the ire of his people against him. So he was dumbfounded and knew not what reply to make.
260. Or like him who passed by a town which had fallen down upon its roofs and exclaimed, 'When will Allah restore it to life after its destruction?' Then Allah caused him to die for a hundred years; then He raised him, and said, 'How long hast thou remained in this state?' He answered, 'I have remained a day or part of a day.' He said, 'Nay, thou hast remained in this state for a hundred years. Now look at thy food and thy drink; they have not rotted. And look at thy ass. And We have done this that We may make thee a Sign unto men. And look at the bones, how We set them and then clothe them with flesh.' And when this became clear to him, he said, 'I know that Allah has the power to do all that He wills.'

266. Important Words:

- خواری (fallen) is derived from خور. They say خور خویه i.e. (1) the house fell down in ruins; (2) the house became empty and untenanted (Aqrab).

- عروش (roofs) is the plural of عرش (roof). They say عرش i.e. he built a house. عرش means: (1) the roof of a house; (2) the throne or the ceremonious chair of a king; (3) the pillar, etc. supporting a thing; (4) honour and prowess; (5) leaders and chiefs among men; (6) tent, canopy, shed etc. affording shade; (7) trellis supporting vines (Aqrab & Lane).

- نسیة (have rotted) is derived from نس. They say نس i.e. it passed through a time extending over years; (2) it (food, etc.) became altered and rotten by the lapse of years or absolutely. نسیة gives the same meaning as نس (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The preceding verse contained one illustration of how Allah brings His friends out of darkness into light. The present verse cites, as hinted in the words, or like him, another illustration of how He breathes new life into a people after they have fallen and become degraded.

The ruined town referred to in the verse is Jerusalem which was laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar. The person who, as the verse says, passed by it was Ezekiel, the Prophet; and the words, which had fallen down upon its roofs, hint that it was soon after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar that Ezekiel passed by the town. Ezekiel was among the Israelite captives whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away to Babylon and who, in accordance with an ancient custom, were made to pass by the ruins of the town so that they might witness
with their own eyes how their city had been laid in ruins by the conqueror. Ezekiel, who was a great well-wisher of his people, was immensely pained to see the ruins of the sacred city and pathetically asked God when the time would come when the ruined city would be restored to life, i.e., when its inhabitants, the children of Israel, would come back to it, re-build it and make it prosperous once more. This prayer, it appears, was heard by God Who showed him in a vision that the restoration asked for would come in a hundred years.

The clause, 

then Allah caused him to die for a hundred years,

does not mean that Ezekiel was actually made to die and then raised to life again. It was, in fact, a vision which Ezekiel saw (Ezek. 37). The Quran sometimes mentions scenes seen in a vision as if they had actually happened, without stating that they were witnessed in a vision or a dream (e.g. 12: 5). What actually happened was that Ezekiel saw in a vision that he had died and remained dead for a hundred years and then had come back to life. As he was the representative of his people, his death signified the death of the Israelites. Thus God informed him through this vision that the children of Israel would remain in their state of captivity and lifelessness for a hundred years, after which a new life would be given them and they would return to inhabit their sacred city. And this dream or vision actually turned out to be true. For Jerusalem was first invaded by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. and again in 587 B.C., when after a long siege the city was totally destroyed by his general in 586 B.C. Ezekiel probably saw the vision in 586 B.C. The city was re-built about 100 years after its destruction and thus the vision came true.

It is wrong to think that God actually caused Ezekiel to die and that he remained dead for a hundred years and was then brought back to life; for that would have been no answer to his prayer, which did not pertain to the death and resurrection of any individual but to that of a town which was lying in ruins.

The words, which had fallen down upon its roofs, point out that Ezekiel saw the ruins soon after the destruction (not necessarily the complete and final destruction) of the town when the fallen roofs were still to be seen under the debris of the walls.

The words, 

I have remained a day or part of a day,

are intended to express indefiniteness of time and mean, according to the Quranic usage, that Ezekiel did not know how long he had remained in that state. The words have been used in this sense in another passage of the Quran as well: They said, We have tarried a day or part of a day. Others said, Your Lord knows best the time you have tarried (18: 20). Again, They will say, We tarried a day or part of a day, but ask those who keep count (23: 114). In fact, (day) here does not mean a day of 24 or 12 hours but time absolutely (see 1: 4). The clause, I have remained a day or part of a day, may also refer to the time for which Ezekiel slept or the time he took in seeing the vision or the dream. Apparently Ezekiel thought that he was being asked about the duration of the time of the vision.

The clause, 

Nay, thou hast remained in this state for a hundred years,

points out that although in one sense he had remained in that state for a hundred years (for he had dreamt that he had been dead for a hundred years), yet the statement that he had tarried for a day or part of a day, was also correct, for the time spent in seeing the vision was naturally very short. To bring home this fact to the mind of Ezekiel, God directed his attention to his food and drink and to the ass. That his food and drink had not become stale and that his ass was still alive showed that he had really tarried only for a short time. The words, and look at thy ass, also
And remember when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, show me how Thou givest life to the dead.’ He said, ‘Hast thou not believed?’ He said, ‘Yes, but I ask this that my heart may be at rest.’ He answered, ‘Take four birds and make them attached to thyself. Then put each of them on a hill; then call them; they will come to thee in haste. And know that Allah is Mighty and Wise.’

indicate that Ezekiel saw the vision while sleeping in his fields with his ass by his side, for while in captivity the Israelites were made to work in the fields as farmers.

The words, that We may make thee a Sign unto men, show that Ezekiel was to be made a Sign to men inasmuch as his vision, according to which Jerusalem was to become re-inhabited by the children of Israel, was to come true. The words, look at the bones, are intended to echo the words used by the children of Israel in those days of misery, viz. that they had become like dry bones and there was no hope of their being ever endued with new life (Ezek. 37:11, 12). The words along with the accompanying clause meant that God had power to clothe the bones with flesh and to breathe new life into them. The bones were first to be set or placed in position and thereafter clothed with flesh i.e., the Israelites, then like dead bones, were first to be brought back to their town and then the process of the clothing of the bones with flesh, i.e., the rebuilding of the town, etc., was to be completed.

The vision of Ezekiel has been mentioned in the Bible in chapter 37 of his book.

267. Important Words:

(Thou givest life to the dead). For the meaning of حيّ (life) and موت (death) and مولى (dead person) see 2:20; 2:29; 2:57 and 2:74.
Commentary:
This verse provides yet another illustration of the process of life and death arranged by God in this world. In other words, the rise of a fallen nation is further discussed. Abraham asked God to show him how He caused a people to come to life after they had become fallen and degraded.

The difference between إيمان (belief) and طاعة (heart being at rest) is that in the former state one simply believes that God can do a thing, while in the latter one receives the assurance that the thing would be done in his case also. Abraham did indeed believe that God could bring a dead people to life, but what he desired was the personal satisfaction of knowing that He would do so in the case of his own posterity as well; hence the words, so that my heart may be at rest.

The verse proceeds to describe a vision of Abraham. By asking him to take four birds, God hinted that his posterity would rise and fall four times. This rise and fall was witnessed twice among the Israelites, and the same phenomenon was to be repeated among the followers of the Holy Prophet of Islam who was descended from Abraham through Ishmael. The power of the Jews, the progeny of Abraham through Isaac, was crushed twice, first by Nebuchadnezzar and then by Titus (the Quran, 17:5–8; the Bible, II Kings ch. 25 and Enc. Brit. under Jews); and each time God raised them after their fall, the second revival having been brought about by the acceptance of Christianity by the Roman Emperors. As to the power of Islam, it was first rudely shaken when Baghdad fell to the arms of the Tartars, after which it again revived owing to the conquerors being won over to Islam. The second fall came later when there was a general and wholesale decline of Muslims both in the spiritual and the political field. The final rise is being arranged by God through the Ahmadiyya Movement founded by Ahmad, the Promised Messiah.

Referring to the verse under comment, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "We are more deserving of entertaining ﷺ than Abraham" (Muslim). Here ﷺ does not mean "doubt" but an intense hidden desire anxiously awaiting fulfilment, for the Holy Prophet never entertained any doubt. This shows that Abraham also never doubted and his question was not prompted by doubt but simply by an anxious desire. He had firm faith in the power of God and fully believed that He could restore a fallen people to prosperity; what he wanted was simply the satisfaction of his hidden desire, i.e., an assurance that God would do so in the case of his people also. The word طاعة therefore here only means the feeling of anxiety in the mind or the state of commotion or disturbance of the heart and mind (Lane).

The double fall and subsequent rise of the Israelites and of the posterity of Ishmael making the total number of such phenomena four may be interpreted in another way also. The Israelites were a fallen people before Moses and God raised them through him. They fell again before the time of Jesus and were again given new life through him. Similarly, the Ishmaelites were a fallen people before the advent of the Holy Prophet who gave them new life, and they are again a fallen people now when they are being given a new life by Ahmad, the Promised Messiah.

Many Commentators have translated ﷺ as, "cut them into pieces and mince them", but this is clearly wrong; for as explained under Important Words above ﷺ (with ﷺ as the central root letter) means "inclining" and not "cutting," particularly when it is used with the preposition ﷺ. So the expression طاعة ﷺ would mean "make them inclined towards thyself," so that they may become attached to thee. In this case the placing of ﷺ of the four birds each on a hill would mean, putting each
36. The similitude of those who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah is like the similitude of a grain of corn which grows seven ears, in each ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies it further for whomsoever He pleases; and Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing.  

263. They who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah, then follow not up what they have spent with taunt or injury; for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.  

262. separate bird on a separate hill, and not placing portions of the minced meat thereon. The commandment to place the four birds separately on separate hills is to point to the fact that the rise and fall of the progeny of Abraham would take place at four distinct and separate times. The word جزء has been used in this sense elsewhere also (15: 45).

268. Commentary:  
In the foregoing verses, it was pointed out that it is a law of God that He gives new life to deserving nations after they have become dead, and the case of the Israelites was mentioned as an instance. It was further indicated that the progeny of Abraham would rise four times, the Israelites and the Ishmaelites each rising twice. Now, in order to prepare Muslims for the promised rise, God reverts to the means of national progress and exhorts the Faithful to spend freely in the cause of Allah, pointing out that their case is like that of a seed which is multiplied 700 times and even more. Thus 700 times is the least reward that will be given to Muslims, and there is no limit to what God will bestow over and above this. History shows that this promise was fulfilled to the very letter; for the reward which God gave to the early Muslims in this world was not only 700 times of what they spent in the cause of Allah but immeasurably greater; and the reward in the world to come will certainly be greater still.

269. Important Words:  
"لَا يَعْفُونَ مَا أَنْفَقوْنَ لَّا أَذَىٰ لِهِمْ أَجْرَاهُمْ" (taunt). They say i.e. (1) he did him a favour; (2) he talked of, or referred to, the favour he had done him and thereby taunted him with it (Aqrab). So من means both a favour as well as a reference to it with a view to taunting.

Commentary:  
Every good may be abused, and the abuse of spending in the cause of Allah is to follow it with من i.e. boastfully speaking of one's services, and لَا أَذَىٰ i.e. following up a good act with an injury. Those who expend their wealth in the cause of Allah, are prohibited from making unnecessary mention of the money they spend and the services they render to Islam; for doing so would amount to من (taunt). Similarly they are forbidden to demand anything in return for their contributions; for this would
264. A kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury. And Allah is Self-Sufficient, Forbearing. 270

amount to "injury". Some men expect worldly advantages or try to seek help in their mundane affairs in return for their services in the cause of religion, and if such help is not forthcoming, they are displeased; or sometimes they desire to exact some work from those who are engaged in the service of religion and whom they help with money. All this would come under the definition of the word اذى; for such demands cause great injury and annoyance. Whether in the help of the community or of an individual, Islam condemns resort to اذى and مان. It enjoin us to serve, but expects us to forget that we are rendering a service, for that would mar the good effect thereof.

270. Important Words:

غني (Self-Sufficient) is from the verb غني which means, be was or became free from want; he was in a state of competence or sufficiency; he was rich and wealthy. Thus غني means, one free from want; one who is in a state of competence or sufficiency; one who is rich and wealthy. غني is one of the names of God, meaning the Self-Sufficient; One Who has no need of anyone in anything (Lane).

Commentary:

The divine attribute of Self-Sufficient has been used to suggest that if money spent in the cause of God is to be followed by "taunt" and "injury," it need not be spent at all, for He is Self-Sufficient. He needs no money. The order to spend is meant for the good of those who spend. So if the act of spending is abused and becomes a source of demoralization, God does not approve of such spending. The attribute حليم (Forbearing) which also means "wise" and "intelligent" has been used here to suggest that the injunctions to spend money in the cause of God are given not because He stands in need of money but because He, the Wise God, knows that such acts are conducive to the good of man himself, the significance of "Forbearing" hinting that though God is slow in punishing, yet if such men continue undoing their own good actions by injuring the feelings of others, He would have to chastise them.

The clause, A kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury, signifies that it is better to refrain from spending at all, if spending is to be followed by injury. In that case one should say نول مسروق i.e. a kind word of sympathy or excuse to the person who asks for help, rather than give him help and then follow it up with injury. One should also observe an attitude of غفرة (forgiveness) which literally means "covering up" i.e. one should cover and conceal the want of the person who comes for help and refrain from talking about it to others so that he may not feel ashamed. Or غفرة may signify forgiveness on the part of him who asks for help i.e. he should forgive the person who expresses his inability to render help. Again, in case the spending spoken of in the verse refers to spending in national needs, نول مسروق (kind word) would mean expression of good opinion, i.e., if one cannot spend without following it up with injury i.e. without criticizing those responsible for national expenditure, one had better refrain from spending at all.
265. O ye who believe! render not vain your alms by taunt and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men, and he believes not in Allah and the Last Day. His case is like the case of a smooth rock covered with earth, on which heavy rain falls, leaving it bare, smooth and hard. They shall not secure aught of what they earn. And Allah guides not the disbelieving people. 271

271. Important Words:

(to be seen) is derived from رأى i.e. he saw with his physical or mental eyes. (to make) means, to make a show of goodness or virtue without there being any sincere or genuine feeling behind it, simply to be seen of men (Aqrab & Mufradät).

(smooth rock) is in the measure of being derived from مفران i.e. it became clear or pure and was free from dirt, etc. مفران besides being used in the singular number is also the plural of مفراه meaning, a smooth and hard rock (Aqrab).

(heavy rain) is derived from ويل i.e. he beat or battered him with a rod continuously. ويل means, the sky poured forth heavy rain (Aqrab).

(bare, smooth and hard) is from ملادأ. They say ملادأ i.e. the material meant for producing fire gave out a sound but no spark. ملادأ means, the earth became hard. ملادأ means, he turned away the beggar without giving him anything. ملادأ is, therefore, spoken of such rock or piece of ground as is hard and smooth and grows nothing (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse makes it clear that a Muslim who follows up his charity with taunt and injury undoes his own good act and will have no reward with God. He is like a disbeliever who spends merely to be seen of and praised by men. The words, and he believes not in Allah and the Last Day, have been added because sometimes even a believer does a deed to be seen of and praised by men. For instance, it is on record that once a Companion of the Holy Prophet was seen strutting before the hostile Quraish at Mecca. When the Prophet saw the man thus walking, he said, "this gait is hateful to God, but on the present occasion it is not so." In fact, there had been an outbreak of fever among the Companions who were greatly weakened thereby, and the aforesaid Muslim walked with a boastful gait in order to make a display of his strength so that the enemy might not think that the Muslims had been weakened by fever. This turned an ordinarily reprehensible act into a praiseworthy one. Elsewhere Muslims have been bidden to spend their money not only secretly but also openly (2: 275), and the object underlying this injunction is that other Muslims,
And the case of those who spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of Allah and to strengthen their souls is like the case of a garden on elevated ground. Heavy rain falls on it so that it brings forth its fruit twofold. And if heavy rain does not fall on it, then light rain suffices. And Allah sees what you do.  

"See 2:262.

seeing a brother of theirs expending money in the cause of God, may be induced to follow his good example. But he who has no faith in God expends his money openly solely with the object of winning the good opinion of men, and such a one has no reward with God.

The concluding portion of the verse likens a disbeliever to a smooth rock which is not fit for producing a crop; but sometimes, when it is covered with a layer of dust, some corn may grow on it, i.e., when circumstances are favourable and such person does some really good deed, he derives some benefit from it. But when he spends money merely for the sake of display and show, his good deeds are wasted, just as a heavy rain washes away the dust from the surface of a smooth and hard rock, leaving it bare and unproductive.

272. Important Words:

بَنيَّةً (strengthen) is derived from بنيت which means, he or it subsisted or lasted; he or it became fixed or stationary at a place; he was firm, stable, steadfast and unwavering. الامّت الأزمنة means, the matter became proved and determined. النيت (thabbatah) means, he made a person or thing fixed and stationary, rendering him or it unable to move; he imprisoned him or inflicted on him a crippling injury. الاليت الحق means, he strengthened or reinforced the truth with clear arguments. النيت (thabbatah) means, he made a person or thing firm, steadfast, unwavering and fixed; he strengthened him or it so as to make him or it fit to endure all trials and shakings (Aqrab & Lane).

يراب (elevated ground) is derived from الربا. They say it i.e. the money increased and became augmented. الربا means, the child grew up. الربا means, he climbed the height. الربا or الربا means, a hill or elevated ground (Aqrab). الربا (interest) is also from the same root and is so called because it is looked upon as a sure and unfailing means of increasing and multiplying wealth.

Commentary:

Spending money in the cause of Allah leads to the strengthening of the soul. The man who strives in the cause of God by spending his wealth imposes a burden on himself which makes him still more firm and steadfast in his faith. Besides, as he helps others with his money, God helps him and protects him from harm.

The hearts of the believers who spend freely in the cause of God are like elevated ground to which heavy rain, which sometimes proves harmful for low-lying grounds, can do no harm. On the other hand, it is benefited by rain, whether it is heavy or light.

In the verse under comment rain represents charity. Those who spend large amounts are referred to in the words "heavy rain," while those who can afford to spend only small amounts in the cause of Allah are referred to in the words "light rain" (see also 9:79).
267. Does any of you desire that there should be for him a garden of palm trees and vines with streams flowing beneath it, and with all kinds of fruit for him therein—while old age has stricken him and he has weak offspring—and that a fiery whirlwind should smite it and it be all burnt? Thus does Allah make His Signs clear to you that you may ponder.\(^{273}\)

Both classes of men are benefited, inasmuch as they are granted more and more power to do good deeds and receive an ample reward from God, Who does not look to the amount of the money spent in His cause but to the proportion it bears to the money retained by the spender for his worldly needs. The word ظل (light rain), besides including the lightest of rains, also means "dew" (Lane) and has been used to point out that even the smallest amount spent in the cause of Allah has its reward.

273. Important Words:

- ذرَأ (offspring) is derived from ذرأ (or ذرأ). The verb ذرأ means, he sprinkled or scattered. They say ذرأ للذره في الأرض, i.e., he scattered the seed in the soil. ذرائلات means, the vegetation sprouted forth from the ground. Similarly ذرأ means, he increased a thing, etc.; or He (God) created. ذرة, of which the plural is ذرأ, means, small ant; motes or dust particles that float about in the air.

Commentary:

By means of the similitude contained in this verse, a believer is reminded that if he spends his property for show or follows up his charity with taunts and injury, all that he has spent will be wasted, and on the Day of Judgement he will find nothing good in store for him. His case will be as wretched as that of an old man with little children and large property which as the result of an accident is suddenly destroyed, leaving him not only without means of sustenance for himself but also without provision for his children. When a man cannot bear to see himself and his little children go unprovided for in this life, which is after all a very short period, how can he bear that his work for the cause of Allah—a provision for his everlasting life in the next world—should be undone by his own action?
268. O ye who believe! spend of the good things that you have earned, and of what We produce for you from the earth; and seek not what is bad to spend out of it when you would not take it yourselves except that you connive at it. And know that Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.

269. "Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins upon you what is foul, whereas Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty. And Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing.

274. Important Words:

- تحموا (seek) is derived from تجمم ام, i.e., he sought it. Тجمم تلماعا مر، means, he sought and singled out that person for attacking with his spear. تجمم الامر, means, he sought and singled out the affair. تجمم ل الحلة, means, he performed what is termed تجمم for his Prayers, i.e., instead of performing the prescribed ablution with water he sought dust and touching it with his hands passed them over his face, etc. (Aqrab & Mufradát).

- خبث (bad) is derived from خبت, i.e., he or it was or became bad or foul or abominable or wicked or filthy or impure (Lane).

- تضموا (connive) is derived from تجمم ف الخイラم, which again is derived from تجمم i.e., it became hidden and concealed. تجمم في الكلام, means, he made his speech obscure, and abstained from making it clear in meaning. تجمم, means, he closed or shut his eyes; he connived at something so as to practically treat it as something unseen or hidden. تجمم في القيم, means, he demanded a lowering of the price of a thing owing to its badness. تجمم عن في القيم, means, he connived at the bad quality of the thing and was not strict in settling its price (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

The verse implies that believers should not only spend in the cause of Allah but should spend what is good and pure; for even a lawfully-earned property might include things that are bad. They should not deliberately select worthless and worn-out things for the purpose of charity. Old and second-hand things may indeed be given to the poor, but such things should not be specially selected or singled out for this purpose. Indeed, a believer can be said to have properly discharged his duty for "spending" in the cause of Allah only if he spends "good things."

275. Important Words:

- فقر (poverty). The verb فقر (faqara) means, he dug into the ground; he bored a hole into a pearl, etc.; he cut into and penetrated a thing. فقر (faqara), means, he became poor and needy. فقر (faqara), means, he had a complaint of his vertebrae. فقر signifies, poverty; want or need; care and anxiety or disquietude of mind. فقر, of which the plural is فقراء is one who is
270. He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good; and none would be reminded except those endowed with understanding.

Commentary:

The most handy weapon for Satan is to suggest to the people that if they spend their wealth in charity, they will become poor. But this is a most foolish suggestion; for, if people obey Satan, the result will be i.e. national interests will suffer and the country will definitely decline in prosperity; and if the country declines, individuals cannot remain unaffected. Again, if we do not help our less fortunate countrymen, they will be tempted to resort to ; i.e. foul and unfair means, and the community will become degraded in the eyes of others.

Two pairs of words occur in this verse and their order deserves notice. According to their significance, فضل (bounty) corresponds to فقر (poverty) and مغفرة (forgiveness or the covering of shortcomings) corresponds to نعمة (foul or infamous conduct). Now, following the above significance of the words, the word فضل ought to have preceded the word مغفرة. But this order has not been observed in the verse, the reason being that whereas the first result of accepting Satan's suggestion, as mentioned in the present verse, is فقر and then comes نعمة, the first and immediate consequence of one's spending one's wealth in charity is مغفرة and then comes afterwards.

Another reason of this order is that Satan cares more for wealth than good name; hence in his case فقر precedes نعمة. But the righteous care more for God's forgiveness than for worldly prosperity, hence in their case the precedence of the former to the latter.

Forgiveness from Allah as promised here signifies that not only will men deal kindly and magnanimously with those who spend their wealth in charity, but God also will deal kindly with them. If a man helps the poor, people generally connive at his faults. Similarly, God will pardon his sins and forgive his shortcomings. Nay, He will do more. He will bestow grace and bounty on him, i.e., He will make him prosper and thrive as a result of his charity. The verse also hints that if, in spite of the evil suggestions of Satan, we spend our wealth for the good of humanity, not only shall we prosper individually but also rise as a nation.

Finally God is واسع (Bountiful), hence His bounty will have no limit. He is also عالم (All-Knowing), hence He will help righteous men in ways beyond their wildest imagination.

276. Commentary:

The verse points out that the injunction regarding spending wealth in charity which is the secret of national advancement is based on wisdom. The word حكمة (wisdom) also alludes to the fulfilment of the prayer which Abraham had offered to God for the raising of a Prophet among the Meccans, who should teach them the Book and Wisdom (2:130).

The people who receive wisdom receive "an abundant good" and are thus sure to thrive and prosper if they act on it.
271. And whatsoever you spend or whatsoever vow you vow, Allah surely knows it; and for the wrongdoers there shall be no helpers.\\n
272. If you give alms openly, it is well and good; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, it is better for you; and \(\text{He will remove from you many of your sins. And Allah is aware of what you do.}\)
273. "It is not thy responsibility to make them follow the right path; but Allah guides whomsoever He pleases. And whatever of wealth you spend, it is for yourselves, while you spend not but to seek the favour of Allah. And whatever of wealth you spend, it shall be paid back to you in full and you shall not be wronged."

Following these different senses and also keeping in view the different meanings of the word (will remove), the clause may be rendered in four different ways:

1. He (God) will certainly remove from you your sins.
2. He will remove from you many or some of your sins.
3. He will expiate many or some of your sins for you.
4. He will certainly obliterate or efface from you, your sins.

In the first and the fourth rendering, the particle has been treated as redundant, used for the sake of emphasis only, and therefore it has been omitted in the translation and the word "certainly" has been added. But if we take the word in the sense of "many" or "some," the meaning of the sentence will be as given in the second and the third rendering.

In the case of the second rendering, the idea is that if we practise charity, those of our sins which are committed against the rights of God will be pardoned, but not those which are committed against the rights of men, for which other acts of virtue have been recommended. In the case of the third rendering, the idea is that on the basis of charity practised in accordance with the injunctions of the Quran, God will so arrange that sins committed by the giver of charity against the rights of men will be pardoned by the very men who are sinned against.

But as it is possible that even after a man has been pardoned his sins may continue to rattle in his own mind, so God has promised to show a further favour to those who practise charity according to the teachings of Islam. This promise is implied in the word (efface and obliterate) which is intended to hint that God will make them forget their sins and thus obliterate and efface from their minds all traces of the sins committed by them. This idea has been expressed in the last rendering. Thus a single small sentence has been so worded as to cover all the possible forms of forgiveness from its lowest phase to its highest manifestation.

279. Commentary:

As the verse relates to believers, the word occurring in it does not mean "showing the right path" for believers have already accepted guidance. It means "making them follow the right path." It is indeed God alone Who can enable believers to continue treading on the right path and protect them from the dangers of the way. See also 2:6.

The Quran has here selected the word (wealth) instead of any other word meaning wealth or property; for this word not only signifies "property" but "good and well-earned property." Nay, it signifies even more, for it extends to "anything and everything good." The choice of this word thus greatly extends the scope of charity and does not
274. These alms are for the poor who are detained in the cause of Allah and are unable to move about in the land. The ignorant man thinks them to be free from want because of their abstaining from begging. "Thou shalt know them by their appearance; they do not beg of men with importunity. And whatever of wealth you spend, surely Allah has perfect knowledge thereof."

280. Important Words:
- ضرب (move) is from ضرب i.e. the thing moved. ضرب means, he struck or beat him with a sword or a stick, etc.
- ضرب في الأرض means, he set out on a journey through the country or he journeyed through it (Aqrab).
- نتف (abstaining) is derived from نتف i.e. he abstained from doing what is unlawful or improper. نتف in verb form also gives the same meaning with greater effort. لغة means, abstaining from the gratification of low desires. So نتف means, abstaining from what is improper or unlawful (Aqrab).
- سهيم (appearance) is derived from سهيم which is again derived from سهم. They say سهيم i.e. he branded the horse with some distinguishing mark or sign. سهيم or سهيم means, a distinguishing sign or mark, or general appearance serving as such (Aqrab).

Commentary:
Circumstances sometimes compel people to remain confined in a place where they are unable to earn their living. Such men deserve help from the better-off members of the community. Two kinds of people come particularly under this verse: (1) Those who voluntarily stick to a place owing to the love of a holy man and never quit his company so that they may listen to whatever he says and observe whatever he does and then impart the knowledge thus acquired to others. A remarkable example of persons of this class was Abū Hurairā, who embraced Islam only three years before the death of the Holy Prophet, but thereafter close to the Mosque at Medina so that he might remain in constant contact with his beloved Master. The result was that he reported to the world a much larger number of the sayings and doings of the Holy Prophet than those reported by even such Companions as had embraced Islam long before his conversion.
38 275. "Those who spend their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, have their reward with their Lord; on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve."

(2) Sometimes a Muslim becomes confined to a place owing to the hostility of disbelievers and, being surrounded by persecutors, he has often to suffer extreme hardships and remain without necessaries of life. Such men are also among the fittest objects of help.

People generally help those who beg for help, ignoring those who need help but, through modesty or shyness, do not ask for it. The Quran exhorts Muslims not to confine their charity to those who beg, but also to look for those who are really needy and whom a sense of honour or modesty prevents from begging.

The words, "thou shalt know them by their appearance," contain a tribute to the Holy Prophet, who is here spoken of as being able to know such persons as are in want but refrain from disclosing their needs to others; and believers are exhorted to follow the example of the Holy Prophet in this respect. Abü Huraira relates a personal incident which beautifully brings out this characteristic of the Prophet. He says that one day he was suffering from extreme hunger but, as Islam did not approve of begging, he could not ask anybody for food, and at the same time he would not leave the Prophet's mosque for fear of losing his company. At that time Abü Bakr happened to pass by and, in order to draw his attention to his own famished condition, Abü Huraira asked him to explain a verse of the Quran which dealt with charity. Abü Bakr, failing to understand his real object, explained to him the verse and passed on. Then came 'Umar, and the hunger-stricken Abü Huraira approached him also with the request to explain the verse. 'Umar too failed to catch his purpose and, explaining to him the verse, went on his way. The Holy Prophet, who at that time happened to be within hearing inside his house, opened his window and with a bowl of milk in his hand, called Abü Huraira and smilingly asked him whether he was hungry. And, receiving a reply in the affirmative, he further asked him to invite all the seven men who happened to be present in the mosque at that time. Before handing the cup of milk to Abü Huraira, the Holy Prophet offered it to those seven men who were also hungry like Abü Huraira. All the seven drank milk out of the bowl but, says Abü Huraira, it remained as full as ever. Then the Prophet gave it to Abü Huraira who drank his fill. When Abü Huraira could drink no more, the Holy Prophet took the bowl and drank the remaining milk (Tirmidhi ch. on Zuhd).

The verse incidentally praises those who abstain from begging and hints at the impropriety of begging as the words "(abstaining from an improper or unlawful thing) and ... (with importunity)" clearly indicate. The Holy Prophet greatly disapproved of begging and there are diverse sayings of his to that effect.

281. Important Words:

ء (with) signifies, with, besides, at, near, by, or in the presence of, etc. It also implies possession, as one says .
276. Those who devour interest do not rise except as rises one whom Satan has smitten with insanity.

That is because they say: 'Trade also is like interest'; whereas Allah has made trade lawful and made interest unlawful. So he to whom an admonition comes from his Lord and he desists, then will that which he received in the past be his; and his affair is with Allah. And those who revert to it, they are the inmates of the Fire; therein shall they abide.  \[282\]

Commentary:

Islamic commandments have been so made as to meet the exigencies of all times and all seasons. For instance, lunar months which rotate all through the year have been appointed for the observance of fasts and the performance of Pilgrimage, so that Muslims may keep fasts and perform Pilgrimage both in summer and winter, spring and autumn. Similarly, the five daily Prayers and the two supererogatory Prayers \textit{tahajjud} and \textit{fajr}, which are said respectively in the latter part of the night and in the forenoon, are so timed that a Muslim practically performs Prayers at all hours of the day and night. Similarly, charity is to be performed during both day and night, so that this righteous act of man may cover every hour of his life.

Observe also the beautiful order of the words. The word "secretly" corresponds to night, and the word "openly" to day. Thus a Muslim has to expend his wealth in the cause of Allah not only in such a way and at such a time that others may be induced to follow his good example by noticing his charity, but also at such a time and in such a way that even the recipient of his charity may not know the donor.

It may be noted here that alms are of two kinds: (1) obligatory \textit{zakat}, and (2) supererogatory \textit{sadqa}. \textit{Zakat} is collected by the State from every man of a prescribed measure of wealth and is then spent by the State on helping the poor and needy, orphans, widows and wayfarers, etc. In this case the recipients do not know any particular donor and thus preserve their sense of self-respect. But as \textit{Zakat} is collected by the State, people are apt to look upon it as a tax and not as charity. So Islam has instituted \textit{Sadqa} also which is voluntary and is given to individuals out of a desire to help the poor and needy. Thus \textit{Sadqa} engenders feelings of sympathy among the well-to-do towards their brethren and feelings of gratefulness among the poor for their benefactors. It also serves to distinguish sincere believers from the insincere.

282. Important Words:

\texttt{ربوا} (interest) is derived from \texttt{ر \textit{bala} i.e. the money or property increased.
and became augmented. رابا means an excess and an addition; an addition over and above the principal sum; interest. The Hadith defines كل فرض جز معه قروبا as رابا رابا every loan advanced to draw profit comes under the definition of interest (سغمان).

تحبب (has smitten) is derived from خلافه i.e. he struck or beat him violently; he trod him under his feet vehemently. خلاف اليل means, he walked about in the darkness of the night without finding the true way. خلافه means, he struck or beat him violently. خلافه الشيطان means, Satan struck him and afflicted him with hurt or injury; Satan prostrated him (أقراب).

البس (insanity) is derived from بسه. They say بسه he touched it; or he touched it with his hand. بسه المرض أو العمر فلنا means, disease or old age touched him i.e. came on him. بسه الشيطان يسبب وعذاب means, Satan brought pain and trouble on him. البس means, any pain or trouble, etc. that comes to a man by coming in contact with someone or something; it also signifies madness or insanity (أقراب & Lane).

Commentary:

The prohibition against lending money on interest is preceded by a long exhortation to exercise charity. When a person becomes accustomed to spending his wealth in charity and alms, it becomes easier for him to lend money free of interest.

The Quran prohibits all kinds of interest. In modern times, however, business has become so inseparably mixed up with interest that it appears impossible to avoid interest altogether. But if a change of system as well as or surroundings and circumstances were brought about, business without interest would establish itself in the world as was the case in the days when Islam was in the ascendant.

The clause, those who devour interest do not rise except as rises one whom Satan has smitten with insanity, means that just as a madman does not see the consequences of his actions, similarly those who lend money at interest become careless of consequences. They keep in view only their own immediate interests and do not care, and in fact generally become incapable of caring, for the great harm which they do to society and the world at large. Interest also encourages a person or a government to incur debt beyond his or its capacity and in this way also blinds them to consequences. Another way in which interest causes a touch of insanity is to weaken the sense of goodness and beneficence in man by making him over-engrossed in money-making. Interest also leads to war. Money-lenders are always creating circumstances which may cause conflict between one nation and another so that war may break out and the belligerent nations may be compelled to borrow money from them. Interest also helps to prolong war by encouraging belligerent nations to borrow money beyond their capacity. Again, interest helps the accumulation of wealth in a few hands and thereby most injuriously affects the distribution of wealth and the balance of society. Yet another manifestation of madness caused by interest is that those who pay interest have their sense of dignity lowered and they contract the habit of carelessness and hastiness, thus acquiring a resemblance to one stricken by madness. See also 2: 280 below.

The words, trade also is like interest, represent the pet argument of the supporters of interest. They say interest is nothing but a form of trade. Just as in trade one invests money with a view to increasing and multiplying it, so does one in lending money at interest. But deeper thinking would reveal that there is a world of difference between the two. While interest is attended by all the evil consequences briefly referred to above, trade is not.

The words, then will that which he received in the past be his, mean that if one accepts
277. Allah will abolish interest and will cause charity to increase. And Allah loves not anyone who is a confirmed disbeliever and an arch-sinner.\textsuperscript{283}

 guidance from God and desists from charging interest in future, the past will be forgiven him and God will make good the loss he may thus suffer by other means.

 It should be remembered that any sum stipulated to be received or given over and above what one advances or receives as a loan is interest, whether the dealing is with an individual or a bank or a society or a post office or any other organisation. Interest is not confined to money. It extends to any commodity which is given as a loan with the condition that it will be returned with an agreed excess.

 Finally, it may be noted that in view of the peculiar conditions of the present times, when there is a vicious network of the interest system surrounding us and Islam is in a greatly weakened condition, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement has declared that if a person is forced to accept interest he may do so and then spend the money thus received on (a) the propagation of Islam, and (b) paying off any interest that he may similarly be forced to pay. He should, however, scrupulously avoid spending such money on himself or his family or using it in any other way. (Fatāwā & Alfaḍl)

283. Important Words:

(abolish) is derived from which means, he abolished or annulled or obliterated a thing; he annihilated it; he rendered a thing deficient and deprived it of its blessing of increase (Aqrab).

(will cause to increase) is from the same root as (interest) for which see 2: 276.

Commentary:

The verse hints not only that Allah is abolishing interest and declaring it to be unlawful but that a time is coming when interest will be blotted out from the world and charity and alms will take its place. This promise was first fulfilled by the ascendancy of Islam in the East and the West, and now that the Promised Messiah, with whose advent the second and universal rise of Islam has been prophesied, has appeared, the promise will again be fulfilled by the re-ascendancy of Islam in the four corners of the world.

The words, Allah will abolish interest and will cause charity to increase, also contain the secret of world prosperity. If nations desire to prosper, they should stop the giving and taking of interest and practise charity instead. It is of interest to note that the word (will cause to increase) is from the same root as (interest). The clause thus beautifully hints that whereas the world looks upon the taking of interest as a means of increase, the real means thereof lies in charity. The words also mean that God, in His dealings with men, will deal kindly by those who spend their wealth in charity so that they will eventually prosper and thrive, while those who lend or borrow money at interest will be punished by God.
278. Surely, those who believe and do good deeds, and observe Prayer and pay the Zakāt, shall have their reward from their Lord, and no fear shall come on them, nor shall they grieve. 284

279. O ye who believe! fear Allah and relinquish what remains of interest, if you are believers. 285

280. But if you do it not, then beware of war from Allah and His Messenger; and if you repent, then you shall have your original sums; thus you shall not wrong, nor shall you be wronged. 286

284. Commentary:

The verse points out that abstaining from interest and giving money in charity are highly righteous deeds and the righteous will have their reward with God. The verse also declares that in order to attain salvation (1) one must have true faith, and (2) do righteous deeds; and of the righteous deeds the verse singles out the two most important ones: firstly, the observance of Prayers, which pertains to the rights of God; and secondly, the giving of Zakāt which pertains to the rights of men. The noble spirit underlying the commandment relating to Zakāt runs counter to the evil spirit underlying the practice of giving and taking interest.

285. Commentary:

The verse hints that the taking of interest is against God-fearingness. The Creator loves goodness and beneficence towards the poor and the needy, fair and equitable distribution of wealth among people, and peace among the nations of the world; but the system of interest strikes at the very root of these blessings. The closing words of the verse hint that the taking of interest is also against true belief.

286. Important Words:

اذن (then beware of) is derived from اذن i.e. he gave ear or listened to it or him; he permitted or allowed him. أذن (taadhdhana) means, he made him to know the thing; or he notified or announced it to him. حرب (war) is from حرب i.e. he deposed him of his wealth and property, leaving him without anything. حرب (hariba) means, he became greatly angry, or wrathful. رأس (your original sums). رأس is the plural of رأس meaning: (1) head; (2) the upper or higher part or end of a thing;
(3) chief or leader of a society. رأس الشهر means, the first day of the month. The word رأس also signifies the thing itself; as they say هم فئم رأس i.e. this is an independent species in itself. رأس المال means, the original sum without interest; principal; capital. The Arabs say جم مرفق رأس i.e. he lent me a loan of ten pieces of money without interest (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

The verse declares that the taking of interest is tantamount to waging war against God. It may be inferred from this that those among Muslims who lend money at interest should be boycotted by the rest of the community. History bears testimony to the fact that such Muslim States as borrowed or lent money at interest were ruined.

It is often objected that no trade or commerce is possible without interest. This is not correct. There is no natural relation between trade and interest. The latter has become unconsciously associated with the former, as Western countries have based their commercial system on credit. If this had not been so, commerce would not have been dependent upon interest. Only a few hundred years ago Muslims were responsible for a large part of the world's commerce, and yet they carried it on without interest. They used to borrow money even from the poorer classes by way of partnership loans, and the commerce carried on by them thus contributed directly to the welfare of those classes. Interest is not at all essential for commerce, but as commerce is now being carried on, on the basis of interest, it appears as if without interest it would come to a standstill. No doubt, a change in the system would at first be inconvenient but the system of commerce depending upon interest can certainly be discarded.

Interest is, in fact, a leech which is fast sucking away the blood of humanity, especially of the lower and middle classes. Even the upper classes are not entirely secure against its poison, but they are deriving a false enjoyment from it like the proverbial leopard who ate away his own tongue by rubbing it against a rough stone, foolishly thinking it to be the blood and flesh of another animal. Unfortunately those who are willing to forego it are too weak to withstand the force of the current system.

The system of credit prevailing in Western countries is destructive of the peace of the world in two ways. On the one hand, it helps the accumulation of wealth in a few hands and, on the other, it facilitates war. No government can be imagined as entering upon a great war unless it relies upon its ability to raise money by means of loans carrying interest. Long and devastating wars are made possible only by the institution of interest. If huge loans on interest were not possible, many countries would refuse to enter what appeared to be a long war; and if they entered such wars at all, they would certainly hasten to withdraw from them long before they actually terminated, for their treasuries would become empty and their people would revolt in protest against the criminal waste of men and money. But the system of what appear to be easy loans makes it possible for governments to carry on ruinous struggles as they are able to obtain the sinews of war without having to resort to a system of direct taxation. The people of belligerent countries do not at the moment feel the burden which is laid on their backs, but after the war is over their backs are bent double under the staggering weight of national debts and future generations are kept busy reducing the weight. Take, for instance, the case of the last Great War. If huge loans had not been possible, the result of the war would still have been the same, but the devastation and the heavy indebtedness of the different countries would have been avoided. Nay, the War itself might have been avoided; and even if
281. And if any debtor be in straitened circumstances, then grant him respite till a time of ease. And that you remit it as charity shall be better for you, if only you knew.  

282. And fear the day when you shall be made to return to Allah; then shall every soul be paid in full what it has earned; and they shall not be wronged.

287. Commentary:  
The preceding verse enjoined the taking back of the original sums only. The present verse further exhorts the creditor to grant delay to a debtor in straitened circumstances. Creditors are exhorted to deal kindly and beneficently by their brethren so that God may also deal by them kindly. They should remember that if they have advanced loans to others, God has also advanced certain loans to them by conferring on them His numberless favours and bounties; and if they have a right to charge interest, God has also a right to make heavy demands from them, but He does not. And if He did, what would be the fate of man?

288. Commentary:  
The verse sums up the discussion on the subject of taking interest by warning the people that the day is coming when they will be made to stand before God and render an account of their deeds. They should remember the principle, “Do as you would be done by.” The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, “None of you can be deemed to be a true believer, unless he likes for his brother what he likes for himself” (Bukhārī & Muslim).
9 283. O ye who believe! when you borrow one from another for a fixed period, then write it down. And let a scribe write it in your presence faithfully; and no scribe should refuse to write, because Allah has taught him, so let him write and let him who incurs the liability dictate; and he should fear Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything therefrom. But if the person incurring the liability be of low understanding or be weak or be unable himself to dictate, then let someone who can watch his interest dictate with justice. And call two witnesses from among your men; and if two men be not available, then a man and two women, of such as you like as witnesses, so that if either of the two women should err in memory, then one may remind the other. And the witnesses should not refuse when they are called. And do not feel weary of writing it down, whether it be small or large, along with its appointed time of payment.

This is more equitable in the sight of Allah and makes testimony surer and is more likely to keep you away from doubts; therefore omit not to write except that it be ready merchandise which you give or take from hand to hand, in which case it shall be no sin for you that you write it not. And have witnesses when you sell one to another; and let no harm be done to the scribe or the witness. And if you do that, then certainly it shall be disobedience on your part. And fear Allah. And Allah grants you knowledge and Allah knows all things well.

289. Important Words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>عشيء يُراقب (someone who can watch his interest)</td>
<td>he who protects or watches one's interests (Aqrab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>رفيق (means, friend; helper; guardian of one's affairs)</td>
<td>}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commentary:

As the preceding verses prohibit interest and enjoin that only the original sum taken as a loan be returned to the creditor, the Quran now fittingly turns to the subject of loans not carrying interest. The verse enjoins that all transactions regarding loans should be committed to writing. It is really amazing, and is indeed a wonderful testimony to its divine origin, that the Quran, which was revealed about 1,350 years ago when the art of writing was yet in its infancy, should lay so much stress on writing down all transactions.

The verse should not be interpreted to signify that only such transactions should be committed to writing as have a fixed term for the paying back of a loan. The injunction is general and is meant to obviate or minimize disputes so as to leave no room for doubt as to whether any amount has really been lent and as to the amount of the money lent. The words, for a fixed period, have been added to emphasize the additional fact that whenever a loan is advanced a term must be fixed.

The verse further enjoins that when a transaction is made on credit, the document drawn up should be written by a third person so that there may be little chance of fraud and neither of the parties may have a cause of complaint against the other, both standing on the same level.

The borrower, and not the lender, is to dictate because: (1) it is the borrower who incurs the liability, and justice demands that the words defining the liability should not only be well known to, but also selected by him; (2) the document is to be deposited with the lender and not the borrower. So the borrower has been asked to dictate so that the fact of his having dictated may serve as a proof of the correctness of the amount and the condition about payment, and he may have no ground to deny it.

The clause, he should not diminish anything therefrom, have been added because loans may be of different kinds. They may not always be in cash and may be for long terms and there may also be certain conditions attached to them. In such cases it sometimes happens that in drawing up documents people resort to trickery and leave loop-holes. So borrowers (who have to dictate) have been warned against such evil practices and have been enjoined to fear God and dictate with honesty and justice.

In the clause, and call two witnesses from among your men, the word “your” has been most wisely added to imply that the witnesses should not be strangers but should be known men residing in the same locality so that, if need arises, they may be easily summoned to give evidence. The words “such as you like,” point to the fact that the witnesses, whether men or women, should be desirable persons and should enjoy the confidence of both parties.

The clause, and let no harm be done to the scribe or the witness, signifies that if the scribe is a professional man, he should be duly paid for his services; otherwise wrong would be done to him. Similarly, a person should not be compelled, so far as possible, to become a witness if it causes him loss of any kind. Again, the scribe or the witnesses should also be paid their travelling and other necessary expenses when they are summoned before a Qādi or judge. The words also hint that the witnesses and the scribe should not be forced or threatened or bribed or otherwise influenced to suppress the truth or tell a falsehood when called upon to give evidence.
284. And if you be on a journey, and you find not a scribe, then let there be a pledge with possession. And if one of you entrusts another with something, then let him who is entrusted surrender his trust and let him fear Allah, his Lord. And conceal not testimony; and whoever conceals it, his heart is certainly sinful. And Allah is well aware of what you do. 290. Important Words:

_and_ (pledge) is derived from _rahān_. They say _i.e._ he deposited the thing with him or gave it in his possession as a pledge or security for a debt, etc. _rahān_ is one who makes such a pledge and _rahān_ mean, the thing so pledged; the thing placed or kept in custody in lieu of a debt, etc. _rahān_ which is the noun-in infinitive from _rahān_ (rahānā) which is the noun-in infinitive from _rahān_ (rahānā) mean, the act of pledging; also the thing pledged. _rahān_ is also the plural of _rahān_ (Aqrab & Lane).

_āman_ (trust) and _awkw_ (is entrusted) and _awkw_ (entreats) are all derived from the same root. _āman_ means, he trusted or he entrusted. _āman_ means, he trusted him with that; he deposited it with him as a trust. _āman_ means, the thing committed to the trust and care of a person; also honesty, faithfulness and trustworthiness (Aqrab).

Commentary:

If a scribe is not available, loans may be advanced in the form of pledges, one party receiving the loan of money and the other the thing pledged in lieu of this loan. This form of practical transaction, the verse goes on to explain, will be in the nature of an _‘amān_ i.e. a trust or deposit affecting both parties. By classing a loan with a trust it is hinted that loans should be returned with the same care and the same honesty with which property deposited as a trust is returned on demand.

The words, and conceal not testimony, either refer to the testimony of such witnesses as may be present at the time of the pledge, or it may refer to the testimony of the parties themselves. When no other witness is available, the parties are themselves treated as such and may be called upon to give a true account of the affairs on oath.

The expression, his heart is sinful, signifies that he who conceals testimony commits a sin which has not a temporary effect but vitiates the innermost recesses of his heart. Nay, it is a sign of the fact that his heart has already become vitiated.
285. To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; and whether you disclose what is in your minds or keep it hidden, Allah will call you to account for it; then will He forgive whomsoever He pleases and punish whomsoever He pleases; and Allah has the power to do all that He wills. 291

291. Commentary:

In this and the following two verses, with which the present Sūra concludes, the subject of ṭazkiyyah or purification has been dealt with as promised in the prayer of Abraham (2: 130). By reminding us that to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, the Quran teaches us that since everything is God's, we must avoid all those things which He requires us to avoid and adopt all those which He requires us to adopt. If we obey the commandments of God, which are meant for our own good, He will cause us to thrive and prosper, for He is the controller of all causes and all effects. The verse embodies the great secret of attaining purification. That secret is, that if you wish to become pure, you should begin with the root, i.e., you should make your hearts pure. Says the Holy Prophet: "In the body of man there is a piece of flesh; if this piece of flesh is sound, the whole body becomes sound; if it is corrupt, the whole body becomes corrupt. Behold! It is the heart" (Bukhārī).

The particle ٓ (for) in the Arabic clause rendered as, Allah will call you to account for it, means: (a) by means of or on the basis of; (b) or because of. Following the first meaning, the verse would mean "Allah will call you to account by means of it or on the basis of it" i.e., your actions will be judged on the basis of that which is in your hearts. They will be weighed from the point of view of your motives. This is another way of saying, in the words of the Holy Prophet, i.e. Surely, the actions of men will be judged by the intention or the motive with which they are performed (Bukhārī). Following the second meaning of the verse, it would mean, "Allah will call you to account for it or because of it" i.e., no human thought will be lost, however hidden it may be and that it will be requited or pardoned as Allah may will it.

In connection with the words, whether you keep it hidden, it should be remembered that God will not call man to account for passing or momentary thoughts that sometimes cross his mind, for they are beyond one's control. In 2: 287 we read, "Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity," and it is certainly beyond our "capacity" to check the fleeting thoughts that occasionally flash across our minds. It is only the evil thoughts that we cherish and harbour in our minds, such as malice, envy, etc., and the evil designs that we knowingly evolve and contemplate that we shall be called to account for. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that God has commanded the angels saying: "If a servant of mine thinks of doing an evil deed, do not write it down against him; but if he carries out his intention, then write it down. And if he intends to do a good deed, but abstains from doing it, write it down as one good act; and if he actually does a good deed
286. This Messenger of Ours believes in that which has been revealed to him from his Lord, and so do the believers: all of them believe in Allah, and in His angels, and in His Books, and in His Messengers, saying, ‘We make no distinction between any of His Messengers’; and they say, ‘We hear, and we obey. We implore Thy forgiveness, O our Lord, and to Thee is the returning.’

then let it be noted as ten acts of virtue” (Tirmidhi).

The expression, whomsoever He pleases, does not mean that God acts, as it were, arbitrarily without law or purpose. In the Quranic idiom the expression, “the will or pleasure of God,” rather denotes the existence of a natural law (7:157). But as in the case of Allah it is His will which stands for His law, therefore the Quran uses this expression to point out that (1) God is the final authority in the universe; and that (2) His will is the law; and that (3) His will manifests itself in a just and benevolent manner, for He is the possessor of perfect attributes (17:11).

292. Important Words:

غفران (Thy forgiveness). غفران is the noun-infinitive from حفر غفران for which see 2:59 and 2:200. غفران on the part of God signifies, covering man with mercy and forgiveness and saving him from the punishment of sins. It is used in the infinitive form for the sake of emphasis, words like “I or we implore” being understood before it.

Commentary:

The mention of the believers along with the Prophet has a special significance in the verse; the purifying influence of the Holy Prophet has brought into existence a class of men who have become purified both in belief and in deeds, thus fulfilling the object for which the Prophet for whom Abraham had prayed was to make his appearance.

Good deeds are indeed the principal means for the attainment of purification, but they have their origin in the purity of the heart, which can be attained only by holding true beliefs. Hence the verse details the fundamental points of belief which the Holy Prophet taught his followers, i.e., belief in God and His angels and His Books and His Messengers, mentioned in their natural order.

Among the points of belief detailed here, one is that true believers say, We make no distinction between any of His Messengers. This means that true believers should accept all the Messengers of God, without exception, and should make no distinction between them by accepting some and rejecting others. There is in this food for thought for those Muslims who reject the Promised Messiah, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement whom God raised in fulfilment of the prophecies of the Holy Prophet and who came to demonstrate the truth of Islam by cogent reasons and powerful Signs.

Another very important means of attaining purification is prayer. The verse represents true believers as offering prayer to God
287. "Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity. It shall have the reward it earns, and it shall get the punishment it incurs. Our Lord, do not punish us, if we forget or fall into error; and our Lord, lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay upon those before us. Our Lord, burden us not with what we have not the strength to bear; and efface our sins, and grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us; Thou art our Master; so help us Thou against the disbelieving people.  

in the ennobling words, We hear and we obey. We implore Thy forgiveness, O our Lord, and to Thee is the returning. This prayer contains four basic elements of purification: (1) man should ever be prepared to listen to God's commandments; (2) he should be ever ready to obey His commandments, whatever the circumstances; (3) he should always be asking for God's forgiveness for his sins and shortcomings; and (4) he should never forget that he will one day return to, and stand before, his Maker and will render an account of his works.

293. Important Words:

責任 (responsibility). They say حلف. i.e. he broke the thing. امر (command), means, he confined or detained or debarred him; he held him in custody or he restrained him. امر الخيمة means, he provided the tent with a peg or a rope for tying. امر (isr) or امر (agr) or امر (ar) means: (1) a burden which restrains one from motion; (2) a burdensome covenant or a heavy responsibility the breaking of which makes one deserving of punishment; (3) a sin or an offence; and (4) grievous punishment of a sin (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

The clause, Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity, is a powerful refutation of the doctrine of Atonement. It embodies two important principles: (1) That the commandments of God are always given with due regard for human capacities and weaknesses. (2) That purification in this world does not necessarily signify complete freedom from all kinds of failings and shortcomings. All that man is expected to do is sincerely to strive after good and avoid sin to the best of his power, and the rest will be forgiven him by the Merciful God. So no Atonement is needed.

The word كسب (earns) has been used here with regard to the doing of good deeds and أكلب (incurs) for the doing of evil deeds. They are from the same root but the latter denotes greater exertion. Thus the words hint that a man will be rewarded for good deeds even if they are done casually and without concentrated effort, while he will be punished for his evil deeds only if they are committed deliberately and with concentrated effort.

In ordinary circumstances, نسيان (forgetfulness) and خاطأ (error) are not punishable, for they lack intention or motive which are necessary for punishment. But here the words denote a forgetfulness and an error which
might have been avoided, if due care had been exercised.

As explained under Important Words above, the word لازم (responsibility) gives a number of meanings all of which are applicable here. Hence, the verse may also be translated as:

(a) Impose not on us a sin, i.e., enable us to avoid sin and prevent us from the doing of deeds which might make us stumble; (b) Do not punish us if we commit some sin or break some covenant; (c) Taking the expression لازم لعهد لآ تحمل طليا to mean, as it literally does, do not make it ride us or do not mount it on us, the clause may also be rendered as, do not make a responsibility or a covenant mount on us as Thou didst mount it on those before us. The simile is beautiful. Divine covenants are meant to help the people in their onward march; but sometimes, through abuse or breach, they become a burden, instead of a help, thus turning into a rider in place of a riding beast. Muslims are taught to pray against such an eventuality.

The words, lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay upon those before us, do not mean that Muslims have been taught to wish for lighter burdens. The facts of history belie that inference. The words only mean that God may help Muslims to fulfil their responsibilities and to avoid sins as well as the consequences thereof. The previous peoples were entrusted with some responsibilities and given certain commandments which were all for their own good, but many of them failed to fulfil them and also rejected Islam to which they had been invited and thus turned a blissful guidance into a veritable means of incurring God's displeasure. Thus it was that they were virtually laid under an ifr or a burdensome responsibility. Muslims, being the bearers of the final and universal Shari'at, have been exhorted to set a better example and pray to God for success in their great task and in the fulfilment of their heavy responsibilities. The laying of burden or burdensome responsibility has been attributed to God just as in the Quranic idiom خلافة (misguidance) is sometimes attributed to Him for which see 2:7.

The clause, lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay on those before us, may also refer to Christians particularly who by declaring the Law to be a curse converted a divine mercy into an ifr, i.e., a burden and a punishment. Muslims are thus taught to pray that for them the Shari'at may always remain a mercy. In this case the verse comes as a fitting preamble to the succeeding Sura of which Christianity forms the special theme.

The words, and efface our sins and grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us, comprises three important invocations placed in perfect order. They not only correspond to the preceding three prayers but also constitute a perfect manifestation of a perfect treatment on the part of a perfect Master. تألفت means that God may efface our sins and leave out no trace of them to be seen by men. أخلاص means that He may not only efface our sins but also grant us forgiveness so that He Himself may treat them as non-existent. And تحبنا means that God may not only efface our sins and forgive us but also show positive mercy to us.

The concluding clause, help us Thou against the disbelieving people, provides a fitting ending to the Sura. The Muslims are out for a great struggle. The entire world of كفر (disbelief) is arrayed against them and the field of work, as hinted in Abraham's prayer (2:130), is wide and far-stretched, extending over (1) heavenly Signs, (2) laws and covenants, (3) wisdom and philosophy, (4) morals and spirituality, and (5) general progress. This was a stupendous task and unless God came to their help, there was little hope for that tiny Muslim community that was just emerging into existence. But God did come to their help.
CHAPTER 3

ĀL 'IMRĀN
(Revealed after Hijra)

Connection with the Preceding Chapter

This chapter has a twofold connection with the preceding chapter, Al-Baqara, i.e. (1) there is a link between the whole chapter, Āl 'Imrān and the whole chapter, Al-Baqara, and (2) there is a link between the concluding portion of Al-Baqara and the opening verses of Āl 'Imrān. In fact the order in the Quran is of two kinds: either the topic with which one chapter is concluded is continued in the following chapter, or the subject-matter of the whole preceding chapter is dealt with in the next. This twofold connection exists between Sūras, Al-Baqara and Āl 'Imrān.

The connection of the whole subject-matter of Āl 'Imrān with that of Al-Baqara mainly consists in a description of the causes that led to the transfer of prophethood from the Mosaic to the Islamic dispensation. This was the main theme of Al-Baqara, and in explanation the degenerate condition of the Jews was dealt with at some length in that Sūra. But in Al-Baqara little light was shed on Christianity, which constitutes the culmination of the Mosaic dispensation. This omission could have given rise to doubts in the minds of some people that though Judaism which constituted the beginning of the Mosaic dispensation had become corrupt, its culmination, the Christian faith, was still pure; and hence, there was no necessity to introduce and establish a new religion—Islam. To remove this seemingly legitimate doubt, the hollowness of the current Christian doctrines has been fully exposed in Āl 'Imrān. But as the Christian faith seeks to base its superiority as much on the nobility of its detailed practical teaching as on the excellence of its tenets and doctrines, so after Āl 'Imrān this subject has been dealt with in chapter Al-Nisā' to which reference will be made at its proper place. Anyhow, the falsity of the Christian doctrines having been established in Āl 'Imrān, the chapter proceeds to show that, as the Christian faith which had reformed and regenerated Judaism had itself become corrupt and degenerate, it could not prove a bar in the way of the introduction of a new and better dispensation. On the contrary, it constituted a strong testimony to the need for the introduction of a new Law. Consequently, the divine attributes of "Living" and "Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining" in the very beginning of Āl 'Imrān are intended to repudiate Christian doctrines.

The second kind of connection viz. that of the concluding portion of Al-Baqara with the opening portion of Āl 'Imrān is apparent from the fact that the former Sūra had concluded with some prayers in which prayer for national reformation and for the triumph of Islam over its enemies formed the main subject; and by placing the divine attributes of "Living" and "Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining" in the beginning of Āl 'Imrān, Muslims have been assured that God will certainly come to their aid and that by His help alone can success be achieved,
because He is being "Living" and "Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining." His power knows no weakening. Similarly, verse 5 of the present chapter, which purports to say that a grievous punishment is in store for those who have rejected the Signs of God and that God possesses the power to take revenge, points to the acceptance of the prayer embodied in the concluding words of the last chapter i.e. *So help us against the disbelieving people.*

**Title and Date of Revelation**

This Sūra is known by several names in the Ḥadīth. Like Al-Baqara, it is also known by the name Al-Zahrā (the Bright One) which is indicative of the strong similarity existing between the themes of the two Sūras and their subject-matter. The chapter is also known by the names Al-Ammān (Peace), Al-Kanz (the Treasure), Al-Muʿīna (the Helper), Al-Mujādala (the Pleading), Al-Istighfār (the Seeking of Forgiveness), and Ṭayyība (the Pure). The Sūra was revealed at Medina.

**Subject-Matter**

This chapter, like its predecessor, opens with the abbreviated letters *Alif Lām Mim* (I am Allah, the All-Knowing) which is intended to draw our attention to the divine attribute of knowledge; and mention of the attributes "Living" and "Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining" is meant to point out that in this Sūra the divine attribute of knowledge has been substantiated by God's attributes of "Living" and "Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining" i.e. the fact that God is "Living" and "Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining" constitutes proof of His being "All-Knowing", because death and decay are born of lack of knowledge. He Who is "Living" and "Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining" will necessarily be "All-Knowing" because if there had been another "all-knowing" being like Him, he too would have possessed the power to provide means for his everlasting subsistence (2: 3). Then the chapter goes on to say (a) that whereas the Torah and the Gospels have proceeded from a true source, the followers of these Books, Jews and Christians, have strayed away from the right path as regards their doctrines and deeds; (b) that consequently divine punishment would overtake them, and (c) that the belief that connection with these Books will save them from God's punishment is a vain hope, because these Books having become abrogated, are unable to satisfy the needs and requirements of the time (4—7). Further the Sūra says that there is going to be a sort of spiritual duel between the Quran and these Books and that in this duel the Quran will prove to be far superior to them and will prevail over them when set against them because it embodies teachings which the latter lack (8—12). The Sūra proceeds to tell Muslims that they should banish the doubt from their minds that, in view of the numerical superiority of Jews and Christians and the preponderance of the means at their disposal, Muslims would not prevail against them, because God had already granted them predominance over enemies who were also more powerful and larger in number. The same phenomenon will be repeated now. Further, God says that national victories do not result from material means but from the superiority of national morals. Hence final victory will come to Muslims because, though they lack the former they are in ample possession of the latter (13—18). Again, the Quran says that belief in the Oneness of God forms one of the important and major means of victory, and with this Muslims have been blessed. So as Muslims possess true religion, no power on earth can defeat them (19—20). The chapter proceeds to dwell
upon the theme that nobody can prevail against God and His Messenger because opposition to
them means opposition to justice and justice cannot suffer defeat (21—23).

Furthermore, the chapter says that the enemies of Islam labour under the delusion that
their national usages and customs are superior to those of Muslims. They seem to ignore the
fact that in this world there is no escape from the law of cause and effect, and they cannot hope
to succeed by flouting this law (24—28). It further says that there exists a great difference
between the good morals of Muslims and the bad morals of disbelievers; the former, therefore,
should always be on their guard against being influenced by the depravity of the latter lest they incur God’s wrath (29—31). The Sūra continues the subject and develops it
further when it says that the way to progress and prosperity for Muslims does not lie in imitating
other peoples but in strictly following Islam and the Holy Prophet (32—33). The above statement
is not an empty assertion, because history bears testimony to the fact that victory has always
come by following God’s Messengers (34—35). After this a clear and detailed exposition of the
real subject is taken in hand with a brief reference to the beginning of Christianity, the refutation
of which is the main theme here (36—64). Then the attention of the People of the Book has
been drawn to the fact that when Muslims also believe in the truth of the origin and source of
their faith, there is no reason for them to fight each other. On the contrary, they should both
preach to disbelievers the doctrine of the Oneness of God, on which they agree, and keep
within bounds their respective doctrines where they disagree (65). Then some light is
thrown on the evil consequences of differences and enmity which possess no reasonable basis,
and it is made clear that such enmity leads to foolish beliefs and dulls the brain and impairs
righteousness (66—81). The Quran further says that every Messenger has always had a pledge
taken from his followers that when God bestows on them “Book and Wisdom,” they should
also accept the truth that follows in its wake, failing which God’s punishment would descend
on them (82—90); and the chapter warns Christians that they cannot hope to remain the “chosen
ones” of God and retain His love if they refuse to accept the New Truth. Muslims, however,
adhere to this teaching and believe in all the Messengers and, in fact, no other course is acceptable
to God. It asks how a person who has subscribed to the view that truth has always continued
to be revealed by God can now, with justification, defy this principle; and declares that, if
one does so, one will certainly incur God’s displeasure and His punishment (91—92). Then the
Sūra goes on to say that real good consists in sacrificing that thing in the way of God which
is most dear to one and thus real sacrifice is the sacrifice of one’s feelings, customs and beliefs
(93). It further says that matters regarding which the People of the Book dispute and quarrel
with Muslims carry no weight because originally some of them were regarded as permissible by
their own forefathers. If the latter succeeded in obtaining salvation in spite of them, why
cannot Muslims? (94—96). The subject is further developed where God says that Muslims and Jews have a meeting-point in Abraham, and since it was Abraham who laid the foundations
of the Ka’ba, why should the Israelites quarrel with Muslims on the basis of unreal and unsubstantial differences and why should they prefer deception and tyranny to cool and dispassionate consideration of truth (97—100). Then a note of warning is sounded to Muslims
that the People of the Book have gone so far in opposition to them that, if they had their way,
they would certainly lead them astray. But Muslims cannot go astray because they are the
recipients of God's new revelation. They are, therefore, admonished to put up patiently with all opposition and oppression, strengthen their connection with God and establish their mutual relations on a firmer basis because they will stand in sore need of a united front when confronted with a severe attack from Christians (101—110). Muslims are further told that before that time comes, they should strengthen their ranks by conveying the message of Islam to as many people as possible and this should be done in two ways: (a) there should be a special party of preachers among Muslims who should dedicate their lives to the propagation of Islam; (b) Muslims should preach their faith as best they can. Herein lies the success of Islam (111). Muslims are further warned against harbouring the delusion that, in the event of their fight with Christians, the Jews would help them. On the contrary, the latter would spare no pains to harass and oppress them. They would, however, fail to do Muslims any real harm and would themselves meet with disgrace and humiliation (112-113). The Quran does not fail to recognize good wherever it is found and says that all the People of the Book are not bad. Some among them are good and these will get their reward from God (114—116). But those who are evilly disposed will come to grief and will be disgraced. Muslims are admonished to have nothing to do with such people lest they become influenced by their bad morals. They should, however, have no fear of them, because they would not be able to do Muslims any substantial harm (117—121).

Then a brief reference is made to the Battle of Badr, and Muslims are told that, just as in the face of extremely adverse circumstances God protected and helped them against the idolaters of Mecca at Badr and vouchsafed them a clear victory over them, the same will happen with regard to the People of the Book. God's mercy and forgiveness will accompany Muslims and His punishment will fall on their enemies (122—130). Muslims are further told that Jews and Christians depend for their power and might on interest. But the taking and giving of interest runs counter to good morals. They should, therefore, derive their power from helping the poor (131—133). Secondly, Christians depend on Atonement, a doctrine born of the view that repentance will not be accepted. By taking interest the People of the Book oppress God's servants and by subscribing to the dogma of the non-acceptance of repentance they declare God to be cruel like themselves. Muslims are enjoined to avoid this doctrine and to ask forgiveness of God if they happen to commit a sinful act (134—137). They are further comforted by the knowledge that God has always destroyed the enemies of His Messengers. They should do their duty, make suitable sacrifices and employ the material means at their disposal and leave the rest to God. He would see that victory comes to them; they are only required to make as much effort as should demonstrate the depth and sincerity of their faith (138—144). Further, God says that in the vast chain of truth, the Holy Prophet is but a link and if he should happen to die or be killed in battle (though in conformity with God's promise he could not be killed), Muslims should not lose heart because believers have, throughout the ages, been fighting the enemies of truth in adverse circumstances and as a result have always achieved both worldly and spiritual prosperity (145—152). Then the incident of Uhud is mentioned and the lesson is driven home to Muslims that sometimes a slight exhibition of weakness results in dire consequences (153—156), and they are admonished that on such occasions of crisis they should completely avoid mutual recrimination as it is calculated to undermine national spirit; and he
who does so is not a friend of his community (157—159). Another rule of conduct to be observed is that in time of warfare leaders should behave more leniently than usual towards their followers and should have proper regard for their susceptibilities, so that the enemy may get no opportunity to create discord among them and all things should be done after mutual consultation (160). Then the former subject is repeated, viz., that no success is possible without God's help, therefore the demands of religion and morality should not be disregarded from considerations of petty worldly gains (161—164). God then reminds Muslims of the great good He has done to them inasmuch as He has raised for them a perfect Messenger. They should follow him and eschew the path of disturbers of peace that they may achieve success (165—169). Then the Quran lays down a great principle, viz., that those who lose their lives while fighting for the cause of truth are entitled to special respect. It is these people who get eternal life and it is they who exhibit such morals as give life to their community (170—173). After that we are told that in every community there are some weak people, so we should not be afraid of the existence of some weak members in our ranks (174—180). Again, a reference is made to the People of the Book and we are told that their religious condition has become so corrupt that, while on the one hand they claim to be God's own chosen people, on the other, they hesitate to spend their money in His way. Muslims are enjoined to take a lesson from this (181—183). The moral depravity of these people is further contrasted with their claim that they are commanded to give their allegiance only to that Messenger who should demand the greatest sacrifice of them. God says that such Messengers did appear among them, but they refused to accept them (184—185). The theme of sacrifice is further developed where God says that it is foolish to be afraid of making sacrifices for national causes. The greatest of sacrifices is to suffer death, but death is sure to come upon every one, with the difference that the good continue to make progress even after death. Why then should one be afraid of it? (186). Muslims are then warned that they will have to be tried; and they should not think that they would achieve success without passing through the ordeal of trials and tribulations (187). God further says that He had commanded the People of the Book to preach and propagate these teachings but, when they themselves consigned them to oblivion, how could they preach them to others? These people seek to be praised for deeds which they have not done. But instead of praise they will meet with disgrace and destruction because he who does not live up to his professions is never honoured (188—190). In the next few verses the special qualities and characteristics of true believers are described and Muslims are taught certain prayers, the offering of which is essential for progress and prosperity (191—195). They are told that if they pray with sincerity, their prayers will be accepted and, with God's help, they will defeat and bring low their enemy, however strong (196—199). But all the People of the Book are not bad. Though a majority of them are bad, some of them are good. These latter will get their reward from God (200). The Sūra concludes with rules of conduct by observing which Muslims can achieve success and predominance (201).
1. In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.\(^{293}

2. \(\text{اَلْفَّاَلَّمَامَهُ}^{293a}\)

3. \(\text{اَللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ}^{294}\)

\(^{293}\) Commentary:
See note under 1:1

\(^{293a}\) Commentary:
See note under 2:2

\(^{294}\) Important Words:
For the meaning of \(\text{الْحَيُّ}^{294} \) and \(\text{الْحَيُّ}^{294} \) see 2:256.

Commentary:
The verse contains a strong refutation of the divinity of Jesus. This doctrine being one of the main topics dealt with in this chapter, the Sūra fittingly opens with such attributes of God as cut at the very root of this doctrine. These attributes i.e. (1) the Living or the Ever-Living, and (2) the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining, prove on the one hand that God, the possessor of these attributes, should need no partner or helper; and on the other that Jesus, who was subject to the law of birth and death, being thus neither ever-living nor self-subsisting and all-sustaining, could not be divine.

These attributes also prove the hollowness of the doctrine of Atonement which is a corollary of the above doctrine. Jesus, it is said, suffered death to atone for the sins of mankind. If that is so, he could not be God, for God is Ever-Living and cannot suffer death, permanent or temporary. It is futile to say that the death of Jesus meant only the separation of the god-Jesus from his physical habitat. The connection between the god-Jesus and his physical body was, according to Christian belief, in its very nature, a temporary one and was bound to break one day, even if Jesus had not died on the Cross. So the mere breaking up of this connection could serve no useful purpose. It must be some other death which brought redemption to his sinful followers. That death, according to the Christians themselves, came upon Jesus when after his crucifixion he descended into Hades or Hell (Acts 2:31 and the Book of Common Prayer, Article on Religion, III). Thus, far from being immune from death, which is God’s exclusive prerogative, Jesus suffered death both in its literal and figurative sense. He not only died but descended into Hades. Again he not only suffered from grief and pain but also disgrace and humiliation.

Similarly, the attribute of \(\text{الْحَيُّ}^{294}\) (the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining) proves the falsity of the Christian doctrine. God, being Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining, should not only live by Himself without the support of any other being but all others should receive support from Him. But Jesus can never be
4. "He has sent down to thee the Book containing the truth and fulfilling that which precedes it; and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel before this, as a guidance to the people; and He has sent down the Discrimination."

proved to possess these attributes. Like other mortals, he was born of a woman, lived on food and drink, suffered pain and humiliation, asked others to pray for the alleviation of his sufferings, and finally, as the Christians say, died on the Cross. The New Testament bears ample testimony to all these facts. But God being Ever-Living, Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining is above all this.

295. Important Words:

 الحق, (containing the truth). "حق" (proper, true, authentic, genuine, substantial or real; or it was or became an established or confirmed truth or fact; or it was or became binding, incumbent or due. So "حق" means, a truth; an established fact; a right; equity and justice; a thing that is decreed or destined; a thing suitable to the requirements of wisdom, justice, truth and right. "حق" is one of the names of God, meaning the Really Existing God; or the Creator according to the requirement of wisdom, justice and right. The word is also applied to the Quran and the religion of Islam (Lane). See also 2: 181.

القوران, (Torah) is so called probably because in its pristine purity reading it and acting upon its teaching kindled in the heart of man the fire of divine love. Possibly, the word also contains a hint that bright prophecies about the advent of the final Law-giving Prophet lie hidden in the Book. In Hebrew the root meaning of the word is "to teach," the word Torah meaning, "instruction or precept or law" (Gesenius). Torah is the name applied to the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The name may have its origin in the popular Jewish belief that "the original Pentateuch, like everything celestial, consisted of fire, being written in block letters of flame upon a white ground of fire" (Jew. Enc. xii. 197.). The name Torah is also sometimes applied to the Ten Commandments.

الإنجيل, (Gospel) is probably of Greek origin from which the English form "Evangel" (good news) is derived. The word Evangel was formerly freely used in place of Gospel, but is now archaic. In Arabic النجيلة (najila) means, his father begot him. النجيلة means, he laid bare or disclosed the thing. النجيلة means, he tore open or ploughed the land for the purpose or sowing seed. النجيلة (najila) means, the man’s eyes were large and beautiful. The word which, according to Aqrab, is a Greek word undervived from any Arabic root, means: i.e. good news.

الصدأ, (fulfilling). See 2: 42.
5. Surely, those who deny the Signs of Allah shall have a severe punishment. And Allah is Mighty, Possessor of the power to requite.\(^{296}\)

Commentary:

The expression بُيِّنَ الرِّيْبَ which rendered as “containing the truth” (lit. “with truth”) means: (1) that the Quran comprises true teachings which are based on eternal truth and are incapable of being successfully assailed; (2) that the Quran has been sent rightly, meaning that the first recipients of it were the fittest people to receive it; (3) that it has come in the fulness of time and fulfils a true need; (4) that it has come to stay and no effort on the part of its opponents can succeed in destroying or tampering with it. See Important Words above.

The saying of the Holy Prophet ٱلْخَلْقِ (Discrimination). See 2: 54.

The word جَمِيعُ the noun-infinitive from جَمِعَ which means “good news,” and the Gospels are so called because they contained not only “good news” for those who accepted Jesus, but also because they contained prophecies about the advent of the Greatest of the Prophets whose coming Jesus described as the coming of the Lord Himself (Matt. 21: 40) or as the advent of the kingdom of God (Mark, 1: 15). They also contain prophecies about the advent in the Latter Days of Jesus’ own counterpart, the Promised Messiah.

The clause, He sent down the Torah and the Gospel before this as a guidance, means that before the Quran was revealed, the Torah and the Gospels provided spiritual guidance for men but that their place was now taken by the Quran which has come as a guidance for all time and all mankind.

The words, and He has sent down the Discrimination, placed at the end of the verse refer to the Quran, the coming down of which has already been mentioned in the beginning of the verse. The idea has been repeated here to point out that the Quran has come to take the place of the previous scriptures, the word “Discrimination” also pointing to the same fact. The word may also refer to the heavenly Signs vouchsafed to Islam to establish its truth.

For an explanation of the term صدوق (fulfilling) see 2: 42.

296. Important Words:

\(^{296}\) ذَرَاءٍ اِتْمَامٍ (Possessor of the power to requite).
6. Surely, "nothing in the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Allah." 297

7. "He it is Who fashions you in the wombs as He wills; there is no God but He, the Mighty, the Wise." 298

Commentary:

After the coming down of the Quran as a "Discrimination" and as "fulfilling" what is in the previous scriptures, referred to in the preceding verse, the persistent rejection of the Holy Prophet becomes indeed deserving of great punishment, and the verse points out that the God of Islam being "Mighty" and "Possessor of the power to requite," those who have rejected the truth must be prepared for divine requital.

297. Commentary:

God is not only Mighty and the Possessor of the power to requite but He is also All-Knowing, which is a necessary attribute for the successful exercise of power and the infliction of punishment. The verse thus constitutes yet another argument against the alleged divinity of Jesus. Nothing is hidden from God, His knowledge encompassing everything; but Jesus, according to his own admission, did not know many things (Mark 11:12,13). He even did not know when the Judgement Day was to be (Matt. 24:36). Such lack of knowledge is evidently incompatible with the dignity of God.

298. Important Words:

"صُور" (fashions) is derived from مأر. They say مإرالثي meaning: (1) he made the thing inclined; (2) he divided or cut the thing into parts or pieces. "صُور" means, he fashioned it; he gave it a shape. "صُور" means, he fashioned it and gave it a definite shape. "صورة" means, the image or form or shape of a thing by which it is distinguished from other things (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

"صُور" (fashions) and خالق (creating) are two different things as is clear from 7:12 and 82:89. "صُور" which takes place before خالق means creating a thing and giving it a general physical form, whereas خالق signifies detailed formation and the endowing of a child with moral and spiritual faculties. Thus خالق and صور are inter-related like body and soul. Medical research has shown that there exists some subtle relationship between the physical features of a man and his morals. The clause, "He it is Who fashions you in the wombs," would, therefore, mean that after God brings into existence a body in the womb, He endows it with faculties and capacities necessary to fulfil its destiny. So it is...
8. He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book; in it there are verses that are decisive in meaning—they are the basis of the Book—and there are others that are susceptible of different interpretations. But those in whose hearts is perversity pursue such thereof as are susceptible of different interpretations, seeking discord and seeking wrong interpretation of it. And none knows its right interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, 'We believe in it; the whole is from our Lord.'—And none heed except those gifted with understanding. —299

the womb of his mother that the foundations of a man's future are laid, and it is to this fact that the Holy Prophet referred when he said that when the formation of the child in the womb begins, the angels ask God whether they should write it down as lucky or ill-fated (Bukhari).

As the formation of the child takes place in the womb of the mother, naturally it is affected by its environment, i.e., the physical and moral condition of the mother. So Jesus, whose body, like that of other human beings, was formed in the womb of a woman, could not escape being affected by the limitations and failings inherent in woman. Now as the Bible holds woman to be morally inferior to man, for it was through Eve that Satan deceived Adam (Gen. 3:12, 13), Jesus could not but have partaken of the failings and weaknesses of his mother. Thus the fatherless birth of Jesus proved, if anything, that Jesus was by nature more inclined to sin than other men. This is why, in his discussion with the Christians of Najran, the Holy Prophet pointedly referred to the birth of Jesus as an argument disproving his divinity. He is reported to have said to them: “Do you not know that it was a woman who conceived Jesus, just as a woman conceives a child, and then she was delivered of him just as a woman is delivered of a child” (Jarir, iii. 101).

The clause, there is no God but He, has been placed as a natural consequence of the preceding clause. When it is God Who fashions children in the wombs of their mothers, no child born of a woman could claim to be divine.

299. Important Words:

(decisive in meaning) is derived from which again is derived from which means, he decided or he judged; he prevented or restrained or withheld. means, he rendered it firm, stable and secure; he restrained it. Hence means: (1) that which has been made secure from change or alteration; (2) that in which there is no ambiguity or possibility of doubt; (3) that which is clear in meaning and decisive in exposition (Aqrab, Mufradât & Lane).
means, he interpreted the dream. تأويل means; (1) interpretation or explanation; (2) conjecture about the meaning of a speech or writing; (3) turning away a speech or writing from its right interpretation; (4) interpretation of a dream; (5) end, result or sequel of a thing (Lane & Aqrab). In the present verse the word تأويل occurs twice, the first-mentioned giving the second or the third meaning, while the second-mentioned gives the first or the fifth meaning.

سمايغات (susceptible of different interpretations) is the plural of مشابهة which is derived from مشابه. They say مشابه i.e. he made it to be like that; he likened it to that. مشابه means, he rendered the affair confused or obscure or ambiguous to him. مشابهالرجال means, the two men were so like each other that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. مشابهة means, mutually resembling. Thus the expression مشابهة is used about (1) that phrase, sentence or verse which is susceptible of different, though concordant, interpretations; or (2) that whose parts resemble or are concordant with one another; or (3) that whose true significance bears a similarity to a sense which is not meant; or (4) that of which the true meaning is known only by referring it to what is termed متعلق (decisive); or (5) that which cannot be rightly understood without repeated consideration (Aqrah, Lane & Mufradat).

Commentary:

The verse, which was revealed when a party of Christians from Najrān visited the Holy Prophet in Medina (Jarir), serves a fourfold purpose: (1) it gives the genesis of the later Christian doctrines and explains how the true original doctrines became perverted; (2) it tells how the critics of Islam, particularly the Christians, distort true Islamic teachings in order to find an excuse for attacking Islam; (3) it warns Muslims to take a lesson from the history of Christians; and (4) it supplies a sure and trustworthy principle of interpreting revealed Books, or, for that matter, any writing or speech, in a right manner.

What proved the perversion of the Christian faith was that expressions like “son of God” etc. used metaphorically were taken literally and the simple and straightforward faith of Jesus was transformed out of all recognition, the متعلق being given the place of معجم.

Again, it is on record that when the party of
Christians, referred to above, visited the Holy Prophet and had a discussion with him on the godhead of Jesus, they, like clever casuists, who when it suits their purpose tear a passage from its context and then base their arguments on it, asked the Holy Prophet if the words كلمة الله (word of God) and روح (spirit) were used about Jesus in the Quran, and, receiving an answer in the affirmative, joyfully exclaimed that the divinity of Jesus was thereby proved. They did not care to ponder over the explanation of these words in their context, which did not at all bear out the sense which they thought they possessed. It is to such objectionable practices that allusion is made in this verse, which lays down the golden rule that, in order to prove a controversial point, the decisive and clearly worded parts of a scripture should be taken into consideration, and that if they are found to contradict the construction put upon a certain ambiguous passage quoted in support of an argument, that interpretation should be rejected and the passage should be so interpreted as to make it harmonize with the decisive and clearly worded parts of the text.

This golden rule should always be observed whenever it is required to interpret or explain a passage which is susceptible of several interpretations and is not easily comprehensible. Its observance is all the more necessary when a seemingly difficult and knotty verse of the Quran is sought to be explained. Any interpretation which clashes with other verses of the Quran and runs counter to the clearly worded parts thereof should be rejected and only that interpretation which is in harmony with its basic principles should be accepted.

According to the verse, the Quran has two sets of verses. Some are حكمة (decisive in meaning) and all other interpretations should be dismissed as incorrect. It is on record that one day the Holy Prophet, on hearing people disputing about the interpretation of certain verses of the Quran, angrily said: “Thus were ruined those who have gone before you. They interpreted certain parts of their scriptures in such a manner as to make them contradict other parts. But the Quran has been so revealed that different parts of it should corroborate one another. So do not reject any truth by making one part contradict the other. Act on what you understand thereof and refer that which you do not understand to those who know and understand it” (Musnad).

The above hadith also refutes the theory of abrogation, for it speaks of the Quran as a Book of which all parts corroborate one another and condemns those who think that some of its verses contradict others. To Ahmad, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, goes the credit of exploding the so-called abrogation theory. He and his disciples have given convincing explanations of those verses which were previously regarded as abrogated.

It may be noted here that in 39:24 the whole Quran is called حكمة and in 11:2 all the Quranic verses have been described as حكمة. This should not be taken as contradicting the verse under comment, according to which some verses of the Quran are حكمة and others حكمة. The apparent inconsistency is easily explained. So far as the real significance of the Quranic verses is concerned the whole of the Quran is حكمة (decisive), inasmuch as all its verses contain decisive and eternal truths. In another sense, however, the whole of the Quran is حكمة (i.e. mutually resembling) inasmuch as the Quranic verses have been so worded as to give, at one and the same time, several meanings equally true and good. The Quran is also حكمة (i.e. mutually resembling) in the sense that there is no contradiction or inconsistency in it, its different verses
9. "Our Lord, let not our hearts become perverse after Thou hast guided us; and bestow on us mercy from Thyself; surely, Thou alone art the Bestower."³⁰⁰

affording support to one another. But parts of it are certainly understood or interpreted for different readers according to their mental and spiritual capacities, as the present verse points out.

As regards prophecies, those that are couched in plain and direct language, susceptible of only one meaning, would be regarded as understood or interpreted and those that are described in figurative or metaphorical language, capable of more than one interpretation, would be regarded as understood or interpreted. The prophecies described in metaphorical language should, therefore, be interpreted in the light of the prophecies that have been clearly and literally fulfilled and also in the light of the basic and fundamental principles of Islam. For an example of understood or interpreted prophecies, the reader is referred to 58:22; whereas 28:86 contains a prophecy.

The term understood or interpreted may also be applied to such verses as embody full and complete commandments while understood or interpreted verses are those which give only part of a certain commandment, and require to be read in conjunction with other verses to make a complete injunction.

Moreover, understood or interpreted (decisive verses) generally deal with the Law and the doctrines of Faith, while understood or interpreted generally deal with topics of secondary importance or describe incidents in the lives of Prophets or the history of peoples and, while so doing, sometimes make use of idioms and phrases capable of different meanings. Such verses should not be so interpreted as to contradict the clear-worded tenets of the Faith.

The Arabic clause which has been translated as, and none knows its right interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, 'We believe in it; the whole is from our Lord,' may be rendered in two ways, according as the pause is made after the word الله (Allah) or after the word العلم (knowledge). If the pause is made after the word العلم (knowledge), the clause would be translated as above and the term understood or interpreted would in this case apply to verses pertaining to events of the past or verses containing general exhortation. If, however, the pause is made after الله (Allah), the term understood or interpreted would refer to prophecies of which the real interpretation is known to God only. In this case the clause would be translated as, "and none knows its interpretation except Allah; and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say, 'We believe in it, the whole is from our Lord." Grammatically both constructions are correct.

Finally, it may be noted that the use of metaphors, the main basis of understood or interpreted verses, in religious scriptures is necessary; (1) to assure vastness of meaning in the fewest of words; (2) to add beauty and grace to the style; and (3) to provide for the people a trial of faith without which spiritual development and perfection is not possible.

³⁰⁰ Important Words:

Bestower (وهب) is derived from وهب which means, i.e. he gave or he bestowed. وهب which is the noun-infinitive from وهب means: (1) the act of giving a person something without receiving anything in return; (2) the thing so given. وهب which is the intensive form of وهب (giver) means, one who gives greatly and extensively,
10. 'Our Lord, *Thou wilt certainly assemble mankind together on the Day about which there is no doubt; surely Allah breaks not His promise.'

**Commentary:**

The verse, which comprises a very important prayer, comes as a fitting sequel to the preceding verse. It points out the great truth that not unoften a people receive a favour or blessing from God, which sometimes later proves a means of stumbling for them. They abuse the favour of God or misinterpret divine guidance and thus bring about their ruin. This is what happened to the Christians; and Muslims are warned to be watchful against this source of error and ever to pray to God to protect them against it. See also 1: 7.

The verse also hints that dissension and straying away from the truth would be the lot of Muslims if they subordinated decisive verses to those ambiguous, and fundamentals to matters of secondary importance. This is why the Holy Prophet used to recite this prayer constantly, which fact implied an instruction to his followers to do the same. Indeed, there could be no greater tragedy than, having once found the right path, to go astray, and, having once received divine favour, to become the object of His anger.

The verse also draws attention to the fact that the error of interpreting certain words in a manner which is at variance with the general meaning (see preceding verse) can only be avoided through the purification of the heart and through prayer. The right knowledge of the Quran is vouchsafed only to those who are pure of heart. In this connection see also 56: 80.

**301. Important Words:**

- جامع (wilt assemble) is derived from جمع, i.e. he collected or he assembled. جمع also means, he assembled and arranged the thing. جامع is called جامع because He will bring together all men on the Day of Judgement and will give them their reward or punishment as they deserve. The central mosque of a town is also called جامع because people gather there for Prayers, particularly for Friday Prayer from the entire neighbourhood. جمع (Friday) is also so called because on that day people assemble for the weekly worship (Taj & Aqrab).

- مَعْدَد (promise) is derived from مَعَدَد he promised. Generally مَعَدَد means, he promised a good thing; and مَعَدَد means, he threatened with something evil. مَعَدَد means, time or place of promise or appointment (Aqrab). It also means, promise (Lane).

**Commentary:**

The prayer contained in the preceding verse becomes all the more essential because man has to give an account of his actions before God on the Day of Reckoning when He will bring together men of all ages and all lands. An examination is a very hard thing but it becomes harder still if held in the presence of a gathering comprising the whole of mankind.
11. Those who disbelieve— "Their possessions and their children shall not avail them at all against Allah; and it is they that are the fuel of the Fire." 302

12. *Their case* is like the case of the people of Pharaoh and those before them; they rejected Our Signs; so Allah punished them for their sins, and Allah is severe in punishing. 303

302. **Important Words:**

"(shall avail)" is derived from غنى, i.e. he became free from want; or he was in a state of competence or sufficiency; or he became rich. "_REPO means, he made him free from want; or put him in a state of sufficiency or competence; or he made him rich. ما يضي عجل هذا means, this shall not suffice or satisfy thee; or shall not stand thee in good stead; or shall not avail or profit thee (Tāj).

**Commentary:**

As these verses have particular reference to Christians, the word "disbelievers" occurring in this verse may apply to them. Thus the verse contains a great prophecy; for though at the time of its revelation Christians were not strong or numerous, yet the time was to come when they were destined to be so. Indeed they became the wealthiest people in the whole world and their progeny has spread over entire continents. But that cannot protect them from God's punishment. Their very wealth and number have become the cause of their destruction and, as predicted in the verse, they are now being punished with fire in the form of shots, shells and incendiary bombs. The verse may also refer to the Day of Judgement, spoken of in the preceding verse, when nothing shall avail the Christian nations against the punishment of God.

The verse may also apply to the infidels of Mecca, all of whose efforts against the Holy Prophet came to naught, whose wealth fell into Muslim hands and whose children joined the fold of Islam in large numbers. In this case "fire" would mean either the fire of Hell or the fire of war which they themselves had kindled against Islam but which finally proved their own ruin.

303. **Important Words:**

"(case)" is the noun-infinitive from داب. They say داب i.e. (1) he laboured and strove hard and exerted and wearied himself in the work; (2) he remained constant in it. داب means, working hard and constantly; habit, custom or manner; case, affair or condition (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

In the previous verse disbelievers were warned that their wealth and their numbers would prove of no avail against God's punishment. The present verse points to the fact that this warning was no idle threat. Disbelievers in the past had met with a similar fate. Just as the efforts of Pharaoh and his people against Moses proved futile and their wealth, numbers...
13. Say to those who disbelieve, 
"You shall be overcome and gathered
unto Hell; and an evil place of rest
it is".304

14. Certainly there was for you a Sign
in the two armies that encountered
each other, one army fighting in the
cause of Allah and the other disbelieving,
whom they saw to be twice as
many as themselves, actually with their
eyes. Thus Allah strengthens with
His aid whomsoever He pleases. In
that surely is a lesson for those who
have eyes.305

and power could not save them from destruction,
so would the endeavours of those who rejected
the Holy Prophet not only fail to retard the
progress of Islam but would pave the way for
their own ruin.

304. Important Words:
\(\text{حشرونه} \) (gathered) is derived from
\(\text{حشر الناس} \) i.e., he gathered.
\(\text{حشروا} \) means, he gathered together the people; he forced them
to emigrate i.e. he banished them.
\(\text{حشر الحش} \) means, he drove the gathering from one place
to another.
\(\text{Drawer الوش} \) means, the
animals were gathered and made to depart;
they died or perished.
\(\text{يوم الحبال} \) means, the
Day of Congregation i.e. of Resurrection
(Aqrab).

305. Important Words:
\(\text{عمرة} \) (lesson) is the noun-infinitive from
\(\text{عبره} \). They say i.e. he crossed it, or
he passed over it from one side to the other.
\(\text{عبره} \) therefore means, (1) an admonition or
exhortation; (2) an admonition or exhortation
by which one takes warning; (3) a thing by
the state or condition of which one is
admonished, reminded, directed or guided
(Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:
This verse refers to the Battle of Badr in
which 313 ill-equipped and ill-armed Muslims
inflicted a crushing defeat on a well-equipped
and well-armed Meccan force, 1,000 strong.
This fulfilled two prophecies—one contained
in an earlier revelation of the Quran and the
other in the Bible. The Quranic revelation
said: Do they say, 'We are a victorious host?'.
Nay, the hosts will be routed and will show their
backs . . . . The day when they will
be dragged into the Fire on their faces, (and it
will be said to them) 'taste ye the touch of burning'
(54: 46-49). And the Biblical prophecy
said: "In the forest of Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanim. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of a hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail; and the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken it" (Isa. 21:13-17).

In accordance with this prophecy, about a year after the flight of the Holy Prophet from Mecca, the power of Kedar (the progenitor of the Meccan tribes) was broken at Badr and their glory departed. The Quranic prophecy was also literally fulfilled; for, after the Meccan host was routed at Badr the ring-leaders of the Quraish who fell in the battle, had to be actually dragged along the ground and cast into a well for burial. It was on this occasion that, addressing their dead bodies the Holy Prophet said, "God has made true the promise He had made to us. Have you also found to be true that which was promised to you?" (Bukhârî).

The Quran describes the Day of Badr as the day of "Discrimination" (8:42), because on that day a great prophecy, accompanied by great results, was fulfilled in extremely unfavourable circumstances. The defeat of the infidels was as unexpected and complete as was the victory of the Muslims. Truly has the Battle of Badr been reckoned among the greatest battles in history. It virtually decided the fate of the Meccans and of the whole of Arabia. The power of the Quraish was broken for ever and the New Faith rose high and powerful in the land; and all this came about exactly as it had been prophesied.

The clause, *whom they saw to be twice as many as themselves,* points out that the Meccan army appeared to the Muslims to be less than their actual strength i.e. only twice instead of thrice the number of the Muslims, as was actually the case. This was quite in harmony with divine will which designed that the encounter should take place and the few weak and ill-equipped Muslims, seeing the full strength of the enemy, should not become discouraged (8:45). What happened was that one-third of the Meccan army was behind a rising piece of land and the Muslims could see only two-thirds of them i.e. 600 or twice as many as their own number. The Muslims were thus naturally heartened by seeing the Meccan army only twice their own number because they knew that in fulfillment of His promise (8:67-68) God would surely vouchsafe to them victory over an enemy double their number.

The words, *actually with their eyes,* have been added to point out that it was not in a vision or a dream that the Muslims saw the disbelievers to be less than their actual number but in a state of actual wakefulness, which naturally proved more heartening than would have been the case if they had seen them so only in a dream or vision, which very often has an interpretation other than what actually appears.
15. "Beautified for men is the love of desired things—women and children, and stored-up heaps of gold and silver, and pastured horses and cattle and crops. That is the provision of the present life; but it is Allah with Whom is an excellent home."

306. **Important Words:**
- **تهريهات** (desired things) is the plural of **تهريه** being derived from **تهري** i.e. he desired it; he desired it eagerly and intensely; he longed for it. **تهري** means:
  1. desire, or intense desire, or longing for a thing;
  2. the thing desired or the object of desire. Sometimes the word is used in a bad sense indicating a low desire or gratification of venereal lust (Aqrab & Lane).
- **قطرارج** (heaps) and **قطرانة** (stored-up) are both derived from **قطر** i.e. the man possessed, or came into possession of, great wealth. **قطرانة** means, he tied up the thing, or he vaulted it. **قطرانة** is the plural of **قطر** meaning, heaped-up wealth. It also signifies a measure varying in weight and value at different times and in different countries. When added to **قطرانة** intensifies the meaning, pointing to the greatness of heaped-up wealth. It also means, collected together or stored-up, giving also the sense of completeness and perfection (Aqrab & Lane).

**Commentary:**
The verse enumerates some of the things of this world which engross man's attention and often turn him away from God. These are particularly the things to the acquisition of which men, more specially in Christian countries, have applied their time and energy. As already pointed out, it is the Christians that are chiefly addressed in this Sura. Islam does not prohibit the use, or even the seeking, of the good things of this world, but it certainly condemns the action of those who become engrossed in them and make them the very object of their life. Elsewhere the Quran refers to the Christian people as "those whose efforts are all lost in the life of this world" (18:105).

As to the question, who is the "beautifier" referred to in the clause, beautified for men, it may be noted that though the natural beauty in all things comes from God, yet here the "beautifier" is Satan, for in the present verse the question is not of "simple beauty" but of "engrossing beauty," not simply of the desired things of the world but of the abnormal love for them; and it is certainly Satan who endows the things of this world with engrossing beauty and creates in the hearts of men special love for them. God is only the beautifier of good deeds and good things, and the creator, in the heart of man, of dislike for evil ones (49:8, also 16:64).
16. Say, 'Shall I inform you of something better than that?' For those who fear God, there are gardens with their Lord, beneath which rivers flow; therein shall they abide; and pure spouses and Allah's pleasure. And Allah is Mindful of His servants.

17. Those who say, 'Our Lord, we do believe; forgive us, therefore, our sins and save us from the punishment of the Fire.'

307. Important Words:

- **رضوان** (pleasure) is derived from **رضي** i.e. he was pleased; he was well pleased; he was satisfied or contented; he regarded (him) with good-will or favour. **رضوان** which is the noun-infinitive from **رضي** means, the state of being well pleased; satisfaction; good-will (Lane). As **رضوان** signifies abundant pleasure or satisfaction, the word has come to be used in the Quran in connection with God only (Mufradat). **رضوان** is also the name of the keeper or guardian-angel of Paradise (Lane).

Commentary:

Though Islam does not object to the acquisition of the good things of this world, yet the good things of the life to come are far greater and nobler for man. And greater still is the pleasure or good-will of God which the Quran mentions as the greatest blessing (9:72). For one who succeeds in attaining it, even worldly things become a source of peace of mind. The Companions of the Holy Prophet attained it (9:100) and so they have been rightly called “the best people” (3:111).

308. Important Words:

- **ذنب** (faults) which is the plural of **ذنب** (fault) is derived from the root **ذناب**. They say **ذنب** (ذنابا-ه) i.e. he followed his tail, not quitting its track; he followed him in any case, never quitting his track, the word **ذنب** (ذناب) meaning a tail, or, in man, the part of the body corresponding to the tail. **ذنب** (ذناب) means a fault, a misdeed, an offence, a thing for which one is blamable, if one does it intentionally. It differs from **اذم** (sin) in that whereas **ذنب** may be either intentional or committed through inadvertence, **اذم** is peculiarly intentional (Lane). According to Al-Râghib, **ذنب** means, such errors and mistakes as bring about a harmful result or make one liable to be called to account (Mufradat). Really **ذنب** (ذناب) signifies such failings or shortcomings as adhere to human nature, just as **ذناب** (tail, or in man, the corresponding part of the body) adheres to the body i.e. natural failings and shortcomings in man.
18. aThe steadfast, and the truthful, and the humble, and those who spend in the way of God, and those bwho seek forgiveness in the latter part of the night.309

19. Allah bears witness that there is no God but He—and also do the angels and those possessed of knowledge—cMaintainer of justice; there is no God but He, the Mighty, the Wise.310

309. Important Words:
الامار (latter part of the night) is the plural of اسم (i.e. the time before dawn). اسم is in the plural number but has been translated as singular for the sake of convenience. اسم also means, the side or end of a thing (Aqrab).

Commentary:
The qualities or attributes of a true believer mentioned in this verse represent four stages of spiritual progress: (1) When a man embraces true faith, he is very often subjected to persecution; therefore, the first stage through which he has to pass is that of "patience and steadfastness."
(2) When persecution comes to an end and a believer is free to act as he pleases, he carries into practice the teachings which he was unable fully to act upon before. Thus the second stage relates to "living truthfully" i.e. living up to one's conviction. (3) When, as a result of faithfully carrying out the commandments of their Faith, true believers attain to power, even then humility does not take leave of them. They remain as "humble" in spirit as ever. (4) Nay, their sense of service still increases. They "spend" whatever Allah has given them for the welfare of humanity. But, as the concluding words of the verse point out, all this time they continue praying to God in the stillness of the night to forgive any falling short, on their part, of the high ideal of the service of humanity.

A true Muslim is expected to display all these qualities. He must show an unflinching patience and steadfastness under the severest trials and must live up to his conviction and carry into actual practice the noble ideals of his religion. Again, he must spend what God has given him of wealth, knowledge, influence, etc., in the service of humanity and must at the same time never be remiss in the discharge of the duties he owes to God. He should not only pray during the fixed hours of the day but should also pass parts of his nights in prayer and worship of the Lord. Special stress is laid in the Quran on the Prayer in the latter part of the night (17: 80; 73: 3-7).

The word اسم (lit. latter parts of nights) has been used in the plural number to hint that a true believer should not be satisfied with praying in the latter part of the night only once or twice but should make it a habit to rise regularly for the Tahajjud Prayers.

310. Commentary:
The one central and indisputable fact in nature and the basic principle of every true religion is the Unity of God. The whole creation and the
20. Surely, the true religion with Allah is complete submission. And those who were given the Book did not disagree but after knowledge had come to them, out of mutual envy. And whoso denies the Signs of Allah, then surely Allah is quick at reckoning.

311. Important Words:

(complete submission) which is derived from which again is derived from signifies: (1) complete submission to God; (2) the religion of Islam, the latter meaning being also based on the first-mentioned meaning (Tāj). See also 2:113.

Commentary:

The verse throws light on the fact that though other religious systems also claim to inculcate belief in the Oneness of God and submission to His will, yet it is only in Islam, the religion brought by the Holy Prophet, that the idea of submission to God's will has found its consummation; for complete submission requires complete manifestation of God's attributes and it is in Islam alone that such manifestation has taken place. So Islam alone of all religious systems deserves to be called the religion of God in the real sense of the term. All true religions were indeed more or less Islam in their original form and their adherents Muslims in the literal sense of the term, but not till the time when religion became complete in all its different aspects was any faith given the name of Islam, which was reserved for the final dispensation perfected in the Quran.

The clause, And those who were given the Book did not disagree but after knowledge had come to them, out of mutual envy, signifies that if Jews and Christians had been truly submissive to the will of God, as they claim to be, they would not have refused to accept Islam, which is submission to divine will in its completest and most perfect form. By their rejection of Islam they have brought ruin upon themselves and have been deprived of God's grace and bounties of which they had had an ample share before.
21. But if they dispute with thee, say, ‘I have submitted myself to Allah, and also those who follow me.’ And say to those who have been given the Book and to the unlearned, ‘Have you submitted?’ If they submit, then they will surely be guided; but if they turn back, then thy duty is only to convey the message. And Allah is Watchful of His servants.

22. Surely, those who deny the Signs of Allah and seek to kill the Prophets unjustly, and seek to kill such men as enjoin equity—announce to them a painful punishment.

312. Important Words:
- ايمين (the unlearned), see 2:79.
- الذين أخذوا الكتاب (those who have been given the Book) i.e. the People of the Book. The two expressions i.e. ايمين and الذين أخذوا الكتاب comprise the whole of mankind. ايمين are those people who possess and profess to follow a revealed scripture; and الذين أخذوا الكتاب are those who accept and follow no such Book.

Commentary:
If the People of the Book and those who follow no revealed scripture were to submit to God, they would surely accept the Holy Prophet and be rightly guided, the former because clear prophecies are found in their scriptures regarding him and the latter because of the combined testimony of nature, human conscience and common sense. Submission to God is the source of all true guidance. One stumbles and loses the right path only when one deviates from the course of submission, bowing to authorities other than God.

313. Important Words:
- يقتلن (seek to kill). See 2:62.
- يبشرهم (announce to them). See 2:26

Commentary:
Disbelievers are here warned that if they do not accept the Signs of God and persist in rejecting and fighting His Messengers and are not prepared to accept the arbitrament of divine revelation and of reason, they cannot escape divine punishment. No Prophet of God, whatever circumstances faced him, ever failed in his mission. No amount of persecution or attempts to murder the Prophets ever succeeded in arresting or retarding the progress of their faith. The history of religion provides a standing testimony to this fact; and the Holy Prophet of Islam—the Greatest of all Prophets—was not going to be an exception. The expression يبشرهم translated as "announce to them a painful punishment" literally means, "give them the glad tidings of a painful punishment." The word يبشر (give
23. Those are they whose deeds shall come to naught in this world and in the next, and they shall have no helpers.

24. Dost thou not know of those who have been given their portion of the Book? They are called to the Book of Allah that it may judge between them, but a party of them turn away in aversion.

Glad tidings) has been used with a twofold purpose: (1) to signify that the promised punishment is extraordinarily great, the word بثارة literally meaning a news that changes the colour of the skin of the listener; (2) to point to the fact that the disbelievers have been deprived of a great blessing. They were invited to God's favour which was truly glad tidings but, having rejected it, they incurred His wrath and brought punishment on their heads.

314. Commentary:
Disbelievers have no faith in the retribution of the life to come; so as a proof of the fact that their deeds will not avail them at all on the Day of Resurrection, they are told that in the present life also their efforts to destroy Islam will prove futile and this will be evidence of the fact that in the life to come their works will be of no use to them. Two facts have been foretold, one relating to this life and the other to the life to come. When the former turns out to be true, the latter will also have to be regarded as true. It must not, however, be thought that all the works of disbelievers will come to naught; for, elsewhere the Quran says, Whosoever does a tittle of good will have its reward (99: 8). This shows that the present verse refers to such works only as are performed to destroy or weaken Islam or such works as are opposed to the teachings of Islam.

315. Commentary:
The expression, portion of the Book, may refer to (1) the prophecies contained in the Bible concerning the Holy Prophet which formed a portion of the Book; or (2) the genuine portion of the Bible, because only a part of it had remained safe from interpolation and this alone could be called a part of the true Book; or (3) the expression may also mean that as compared with the Quran, which is the Book par excellence, being the eternal and perfect divine Book, the Bible is but a portion and a part. In view of these different explanations, the verse would give different meanings: (a) that when the attention of Jews and Christians is drawn to the prophecies embodied in their scriptures they refuse to be guided by them. Or (b) that if the People of the Book had adhered to the genuine portion of their own scriptures, the criteria laid down therein for testing the truth of a claimant to prophethood would have surely led them to accept the Holy Prophet. Or (c) that if they had faithfully acted on the teachings of their own scriptures which was in fact a part of the perfect and eternal teachings contained in the Quran, they would have certainly recognized the truth of the New Faith.
25. That is because they say, \( \text{a'The Fire shall not touch us, except for a limited number of days.' And what they used to forge has deceived them regarding their religion.} \)

26. How \( \text{will they fare} \) when We will gather them together on the Day about which there is no doubt; and when every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned, and they shall not be wronged?

27. Say, \( \text{'O Allah, 'Lord of sovereignty, Thou givest sovereignty to whomsoever Thou pleasest; and Thou takest away sovereignty from whomsoever Thou pleasest. Thou exaltest whomsoever Thou pleasest and Thou abasest whomsoever Thou pleasest. In Thy hand is all good. Thou surely hast power to do all things.'} \)

\( \text{316. Commentary:} \) Both Jews and Christians persuaded themselves to believe that they would be safe against the punishment of the Hereafter, the Jews thinking themselves immune owing to their being the favoured ones of God on account of their being the descendants of His Prophets, and the Christians deluding themselves with the idea that Jesus, "the son of God," had washed away their sins with his supposed death on the Cross. The false notion of each proved their ruin.

\( \text{317. Commentary:} \) The People of the Book are here called upon to imagine how they will fare when they will have to render an account of their deeds before God on the Day of Judgement and will find to their mortification that the fact of their being descendants of God's Prophets or their belief in the crucifixion of Jesus will not save them from the punishment of Hell.

\( \text{317a Commentary:} \) See under next verse.
28. "Thou makest the night pass into the day and makest the day pass into the night. And Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and bringest forth the dead from the living. And Thou givest to whomsoever Thou pleasest without measure."  

318. Commentary:

This and the preceding verse point to the immutable divine law that nations rise and fall as they conform to, or defy, the will of God, Who is the source of all power and glory. They also refer to the fulfilment of a great prophecy. A nation which had enjoyed temporal and spiritual sovereignty for a long time was going to be abased, because it had persistently violated the divine law and had become spiritually dead; and in place of it another nation, till now very low in the scale of humanity, was going to be raised to the highest pinnacle of temporal and spiritual power. The sovereignty or kingdom mentioned in the preceding verse refers to both the temporal and spiritual kingdom which was promised to the progeny of Abraham and which the Israelites had enjoyed for a long time. That kingdom was now going to be transferred to the House of Ishmael to find its completest manifestation in Islam. A living nation had suffered death and another, as good as dead, had arisen into life.

The word الیم (night) represents prosperity and power, and الیم (night) signifies the loss of power combined with decline and decadence. By using this simile, the Quran draws attention to the fact that a people who wish that the night of woes and miseries should never overtake them and that they should ever continue to enjoy the day of prosperity and glory, should so place themselves in front of the Divine Sun as to continue to be illuminated by its ever-effulgent light. In this connection it may also be noted that the Quranic expression, Thou makest the night pass into the day and makest the day pass into the night, does not merely signify alternate ending and beginning of day and night but also the conversion of part of the day into night and vice versa, thus hinting at the lengthening of the one at the cost of the other.

The clause, And Thou givest to whomsoever thou pleasest without measure, holds out a promise to Muslims that the glory of Islam will be unparalleled and will last for ever. Islam will never be displaced as a religion and Muslims will always continue to be one of the most exalted peoples of the earth till the end of time. The appearance of Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, at a time when the temporal power of Islam was at its lowest ebb and Muslims had also become morally and spiritually degenerate, was in fulfilment of this very promise. Through him Islam has found a new life. It will now bloom and blossom till whole nations shall come under its spiritual sway, and Muslims shall regain their pristine glory and shall become the most dominant people on the face of the earth.
29. Let not the believers take disbelievers for friends in preference to believers,—and whoever does that has no connection with Allah—except that you cautiously guard against them. And Allah cautions you against His punishment; and to Allah is the returning.\(^{319}\)

30. Say, \(b\) Whether you conceal what is in your breasts or reveal it, Allah knows it; and He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And Allah has power to do all things.\(^{320}\)

\(^{319}\) Important Words:

- حَرَّمَةُ اللهِ (His punishment): The noun-formative from حَرَّمَةُ اللهِ (nafusa) which literally means, it was or became loved and highly esteemed. حَرَّمَةُ اللهِ (naftsa) means, he was tenacious or niggardly of it. حَرَّمَةُ اللهِ means, the soul; the spirit; the mind; the body; a person or being; a person's or being's self; brother or relative, or one belonging to one's own religion; purpose, will or desire; punishment, etc. (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

With the advent of political power to Islam, as promised in the preceding verses, the contracting of political alliances became necessary for the Muslim State. The verse under comment embodies the guiding principle that no Muslim State should enter into any treaty or alliance with a non-Muslim State which should in any way injure, or conflict with, the interests of other Muslim States. The interests of Islam should transcend all other interests.

The phrase, \textit{in preference to believers}, means:

1. that Muslims should not form friendly relations with disbelievers in preference to believers, shunning the latter and seeking the former; (2) that they should not form any connection with disbelievers in a way that may harm the interests of Muslims. They are, however, free to contract friendly relations with such non-Muslims as are friendly to them, according to the exigencies of time and circumstances (60:9, 10).

The verse also instructs Muslims to be on their guard against the plots and machinations of disbelievers. The expression, \textit{except that you cautiously guard against them}, refers not to the power of the enemy but to his cunning against which Muslims should always be on their guard.

The clause, \textit{Allah cautions you against His punishment}, may also be translated as “and Allah cautions or warns you concerning Himself”, meaning that if you do not faithfully accept the guidance of God, and make friends with disbelievers in preference to believers, you will lose God, Who will in that case have no connection with you.

\(^{320}\) Commentary:

This and the succeeding verse are addressed to the enemies of Islam. They are warned
31. Beware of the Day "when every soul shall find itself confronted with all the good it has done and all the evil it has done. It will wish there were a great distance between it and that evil. And Allah cautions you against His punishment. And Allah is Most Compassionate to His servants.321

32. Say, "If you love Allah, follow me: then will Allah love you and forgive you your faults. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful."322

33. Say, "Obey Allah and His Messenger:" but if they turn away, then remember that Allah loves not the disbelievers.323

that all their open or secret machinations against Islam shall come to naught, for the obvious reason that the Almighty and the All-Knowing God had promised to protect it.

321. Important Words:

روا (Most Compassionate) is one of the attributes of God. It is derived from رأي meaning, he pitied him or had compassion on him; he pitied or compassionated him tenderly or in the utmost degree (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

For the meaning of the clause, And Allah cautions you against His punishment, see 3:29 above.

322. Commentary:

The verse is most important inasmuch as it pertains to the attainment of the love of God which is considered by Islam to be the highest goal of human life. It constiutes an open and unqualified challenge to mankind, particularly to Christians, who claim to be under the direct leadership of the "son of God," while they and the Jews both call themselves "the children of Allah and His beloved ones" (5:19). The verse emphatically declares that the goal pertaining to the attainment of divine love is now impossible of achievement except by accepting Islam and following the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him). Those who seek to love God and attain to His nearness must follow the guidance of the Prophet of Islam, which will make them the beloved ones of God. This is the only door now left open for the attainment of divine love; and as God loves only pure souls, such men as sincerely follow Islam and act upon its teachings will be purified by Him and have their faults forgiven them.

323. Commentary:

In contrast to the previous verse, the present verse tells us of the end of those who do not
34. Allah did choose Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imran above all peoples.\(^{324}\)

love God and refuse to obey Him and His Messenger. They are disbelievers and are deprived of God’s love.

324. **Important Words:**

'Imran (‘Imrān) may possibly refer to two persons: (1) Amram of the Bible, who was a son of Kohath and a grandson of Levi. He was the father of Moses, Aaron and Miriam, Moses being the youngest of the three (Jew. Enc. under Amram; also Exod. 6:18-20); (2) ‘Imrān, the father of Mary, mother of Jesus. This ‘Imrān was the son of Yoshhim or Yoshim (Jarir & Kathir).

**Commentary:**

From this verse onward the Quranic narration narrows down specifically to the Christian people, the present verse beautifully beginning with the mention of Adam and ending with that of “the family of ‘Imrān.” ‘Imrān, as stated above, was (1) the name of the father of Moses and (2) of the father of Mary. The Quran has chosen this name with a twofold purpose: (1) to include, besides Moses, a reference to Aaron, the elder brother of Moses, and (2) to use it as a sort of preamble for introducing the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and, through it, that of Jesus himself. The repetition of the name “‘Imrān” in the verse following the succeeding one also points to the same conclusion.

It is significant that whereas the verse mentions the names of Adam and Noah singly and individually, it refers to Abraham and ‘Imrān as heads of families. This has been done in order to point out that the latter names include references to certain individuals from among their progeny. Thus the expression “family of Abraham” not only refers to Abraham personally but also to his sons and grandsons, Isha‘ael, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. It may also include a reference to the Holy Prophet of Islam who was likewise descended from Abraham. Similarly, the words “family of ‘Imrān” refer to Aaron, Moses and Jesus. ‘Imrān himself is not included, as he was not a Prophet. See also 3:36.

The verse also helps to clarify the meaning of such Quranic expressions as “Allah chose or exalted this or that person or this or that people above all peoples,” for, here Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of ‘Imrān have all been spoken of as being chosen above all peoples. As all these cannot possibly be above all others, for that would be a contradiction in terms, the only inference is that each one of the above-mentioned individuals and families was exalted above the men or the peoples of his or their age only and not above the peoples of all ages.

The verse also serves to point out that just as Adam and Noah and Abraham and the children of ‘Imrān were successful in spite of the opposition of the people, so will God make the Prophet of Islam successful in spite of the hostility of the enemies of Islam and will prove that he and his Companions were His chosen people.
35. A "race, co-related with one another. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

36. *Remember* when the woman of 'Imrān said, 'My Lord, I have vowed to Thee what is in my womb to be dedicated to Thy service. So do accept it of me; verily, Thou alone art All-Hearing, All-Knowing.'

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325. Commentary:

The word دُرِيَّةُ (a race) has been put in the verse not as خَالٍ but as خَالٍ، مَيَّا. The verse must, therefore, be considered a part of the preceding one and would literally mean, "while these were or are a race co-related with one another," the inference being that the individuals and families mentioned in the preceding verse were chosen by God because they all belonged to the same stock, the stock of good and righteous people.

326. Important Words:

- مُرَّ (dedicated to special service) is derived from مَرْ or مَرْ (woman) means, a man. حَرَّ or حَرَّ (a race) means, a woman; a perfect woman; a wife (Lane).

- عِمَانُ (Imrān). In the present verse the word is either the abbreviated form of عِمَانُ (the family of 'Imrān, father of Moses) just as they use the word "Israel" for "the children of Israel" (see 2: 41), or it refers to 'Imrān, the father of Mary. See also 3: 34

Commentary:

In this verse the mother of Mary whose name was Hanna (Enc. Bib.) has been spoken of as اَمَانُ (woman of 'Imrān) while in 19: 29, Mary herself has been addressed as اَمَان (sister of Aaron). 'Imrān (Amram) and Aaron were respectively the father and brother of Moses, while he had also a sister named Miriam. Being ignorant of Arabic idiom and Quranic style, Christian writers, who ascribe the authorship of the Quran to the Holy Prophet, think that in his ignorance he confused Mary, mother of Jesus, with Mary or Miriam, the sister of Moses. Thus they pretend to have discovered a serious anachronism in the Quran—an absurd charge, inasmuch as quite a number of passages can be cited to show that the Quran considers Moses and Jesus as two Prophets separated from each other by a long line of Prophets (e.g. 2: 88; 5: 44–46).
These Christian writers are not the first to make this "discovery." The "credit" for it goes to the Christians of Najrān who, as long as 1,350 years ago, raised the same objection and received a prompt reply. It is on record that when the Holy Prophet sent Mugbira to Najrān, the Christians of that place asked Him: "Do you not read in the Quran Mary (mother of Jesus) being mentioned as the sister of Aaron, while you know that Jesus was born a long, long time after Moses?" "I did not know the answer," says Mugbira, "and on my return to Medina I enquired about it of the Holy Prophet who readily answered, 'Why did you not tell them that the Israelites used to name their children after their deceased Prophets and saints?'" (Tirmidhi). In fact, there is actually a tradition to the effect that the husband of Hanna and the father of Mary was named ‘Imrān whose father (i.e. Mary’s grandfather) had the name Yoshhim or Yoshim (Jarir & Kathir). Thus this ‘Imrān is different from the ‘Imrān who was the father of Moses and whose own father was Kohath (Exod. 6: 19-20).

The fact that Hanna’s husband, or for that matter Mary’s father, has been named Joachim in the Christian scriptures (Gospel of the Birth of Mary and the Enc. Brit. under Mary) should not perplex us as Joachim is the same as Yoshim mentioned by Ibn Jarīr as the father of ‘Imrān. The Christian scriptures give the name of the grandfather instead of the father, which is not an uncommon practice. Besides, there are instances in the Bible of one person being known by two names. Gideon, for instance, was also called Jerubbaal (Judg. 7:1). So there should be no surprise if the second name of Joachim happened to be ‘Imrān.

Moreover, like individuals, families, too, are sometimes known after the names of their distinguished ancestors. In the Bible the name Israel sometimes stands for the Israelites (Deut. 6: 3, 4) and Kedar for the Ishmaelites (Isa. 21: 16; 42: 11). Similarly, Jesus has been called the son of David (Matt. 1: 1). So the words امرأة عمران (family of ‘Imrān) may also mean امرأة عمران (family of ‘Imrān) i.e. a woman from the family of ‘Imrān, or a perfect woman from the family of ‘Imrān. This explanation finds further strength from the fact that the words امرأة عمران (family of ‘Imrān) have been used by the Quran only two verses before the present one. So the word امرأة (family) was dropped here owing to the nearness of reference. And it is admitted that Hanna, the mother of Mary, who was the cousin of Elisabeth (John’s mother) belonged to the House of Aaron and through him to that of ‘Imrān (Luke 1: 5, 36.)

The vow of Mary’s mother seems to have been taken under the influence of the Essenes who were generally held in high esteem by the people of that time, and who practised celibacy and excluded women from their membership, and dedicated their lives to the service of religion and their fellow-beings (Enc. Bib. and Jew. Enc.). It is remarkable that the teachings of the Gospels have much in common with those of the Essenes. It is also clear from the meaning of the word امرأة as given under Important Words above, that Mary’s mother had vowed the dedication of her child’s life to the service of the temple, and as such she intended the child never to marry, which shows that Mary was meant to belong to the priestly class. This is why, elsewhere in the Quran, she is called the sister of Aaron and not of Moses (19: 29) though both were real brothers, for whereas Moses was the founder of the Jewish Law, Aaron was the head of the Jewish priestly class (Enc. Bib. and Enc. Brit. under Aaron). Thus Mary, mother of Jesus, was the sister of Aaron not in the sense that she was his real sister but in the sense that, like Aaron, she also belonged to the priestly order.
37. But when she was delivered of it, she said, 'My Lord, I am delivered of a female,'—and Allah knew best what she had brought forth and the male she was thinking of was not like the female she had brought forth—' and I have named her Mary, and I commit her and her offspring to Thy protection from Satan, the rejected.'

327. Important Words:

Mary was the mother of Jesus. She was probably named after the sister of Moses and Aaron, known as Mariam (later pronunciation Miriam). The word, which is probably a compound one consisting of מ and נ possesses, in Hebrew, a variety of interpretations, some of them being "bitter sea"; "drop of the sea"; "star of the sea"; "bitterness"; "mistress" or "lady". From two alternative roots Mariam might also mean, "the rebellious", or "the corpulent" (Enc. Bib. under Mary). It also means "exalted" (Cruden's Concordance). Muslim traditionists ascribe to the word the meaning of "pious worshipper" (Kashshaf).

(accepted) is passive participle from גלפ. They say גלפ i.e. he pelted him with stones; he smote and killed him; he drove him away; he cursed him; he boycotted or forsook him; he reviled or abused him. גלפ means, the man said a thing on conjecture. גלפ means, he put up a stone at the tomb to serve as a sign. גלפ means: (1) one whom God has driven away from His presence and mercy i.e. the one rejected; (2) one whom God has cursed; (3) one who has been forsaken and abandoned; and (4) one who has been pelted with stones (Aqrab & Lane). It also means, one driven away or deprived of all goodness and virtue (Mufradät).

Commentary:

Mary's mother had made the vow in the hope that she would be blessed with a son whom she would dedicate to the service of God. Instead a daughter was born to her. So she was naturally perplexed.

The words, Allah knew best what she had brought forth, form a parenthetical clause spoken by God whereas the following words, the male was not like the female, may be taken to have been either spoken by God or by Mary's mother. Most probably they are God's words and mean as rendered in the text, that the female child she had brought forth was superior to the male child she desired to have. If taken to have been spoken by Mary's mother, they would mean that the female child she had given birth to could not be like the male child she desired, inasmuch as a boy only was fitted to do the special service to which she desired to dedicate him.

The clause, I have named her Mary, contains an implied prayer to God to make the girl as exalted and as good and virtuous as the name Mary, meaning exalted or a pious worshipper, signified.

The words, I commit her and her offspring to Thy protection from Satan, the rejected, offer some difficulty. If Mary's mother intended her child to be dedicated to the service of God, she must have known that the child would remain unmarried for life. What is, then, the sense in offering prayer for the child's offspring? The most probable explanation is that God had told her in a vision that her daughter would grow up to womanhood and would
have a child, whereupon she prayed that Mary and her child might both be granted God's protection from Satan, the rejected. In spite of this, however, she appears to have left the future of Mary in God's hand and dedicated her, as she had originally intended, to the service of God (3: 38; 3: 45; also Gospel of the Birth of Mary). This must have been an exceptional case, for ordinarily only males were eligible for such dedication. The assumption that Mary's mother had a vision that her daughter would have a son is not unfounded. It finds mention in the Gospel of Mary (3: 5) though perhaps in a somewhat different form.

There was nothing unusual about the prayer of Hanna, Mary's mother, that Mary and her offspring might be protected from satanic influences. All pious parents are actuated by such a desire for their children and pray that they should grow up to lead good and virtuous lives. But unfortunately this simple and natural prayer of Mary's mother, coupled with a saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect that Mary and her son Jesus were free from the touch of Satan, has given rise to widespread misunderstanding and has been the basis of an entirely erroneous and misleading belief among a section of Muslims, besides affording to Christians a welcome excuse for attack on Islam. A section among the latter-day Muslims has come to believe that all mortals born of a woman are likely to come under the influence of Satan except such as possess moral and spiritual qualities like unto those possessed by Mary and her son. Arabic language is not wanting in instances where a person is named not in his individual capacity but as representing a class of people (Kashshāf & Manāwī). The names of Jesus and Mary have been specifically chosen because of the aspersion cast at them by the wicked Jews. Another equally good interpretation is that the words "no child is born" occurring in this hadith are, as hinted above, not general but have been used in a restricted sense, signifying not all children absolutely but only such children as were born out of wedlock in the days of Jesus, and the name of Mary has been added because it was her abnormal conception that occasioned such birth of Jesus. Another saying of the Holy Prophet supports this interpretation. Says he, "every child is born in the likeness of Islam; it is only his parents that make him a Christian, a Jew or a Fire-Worshipper" (Bukhārī). So the "touch" of Satan referred to in the foregoing hadith cannot be general; it must be taken in a restricted sense.
38. So her Lord accepted her with a gracious acceptance and caused her to grow an excellent growth and made Zachariah her guardian. Whenever Zachariah visited her in the chamber, he found with her provisions. He said, ‘O Mary, whence hast thou this?’ She replied, ‘It is from Allah.’ Surely, Allah gives to whomsoever He pleases without measure.\(^{328}\)

That Jesus and his mother are not alone in being free from the touch of Satan is clear from a number of Quranic verses and several sayings of the Holy Prophet. To quote only one instance from each, the Quran says: (O Satan,) surely thou shalt have no power over My servants, except such of the erring ones as choose to follow thee (15: 43). And the Holy Prophet says: “If a person goes in unto his wife praying, ‘O my Lord, keep me away from Satan and so too, keep away the child you grant me,’ and the wife conceives on such an occasion, the child born will be free from the touch of Satan” (Bukhārī).

As for himself personally the Holy Prophet says, “Every one of you has a satan attached to him (who tries to lead him astray) but God has helped me against my satan who has turned a Muslim i.e. obedient and submissive” (Musnad). This means that so far as the Holy Prophet was concerned Satan had become virtually non-existent. This is certainly a much more exalted position than mere protection against the attack of Satan. Truly has the Prophet remarked, “If Moses and Jesus had been alive, they would have found themselves forced to follow me” (Kathīr).

Finally, it may be noted that though Islam declares all Prophets of God to be virtually safe from the influence of Satan, the Bible does not ascribe this protection to Jesus; for the New Testament clearly states at a number of places that he was tempted by the Devil for no less than forty days (e.g. Mark 1: 12, 13).

328. Important Words:

- كفّلني (made him her guardian) is derived from كفّل. They say كفّل i.e. he was or became responsible for him; he became زيد’s guardian. كفّل خالد زيدا means, he made Zaid the guardian of Khalid; he gave Khalid in the guardianship of Zaid (Aqrab).

- زكريا (Zachariah or Zacharias) was the name of an Israelite holy person whom the Quran presents as a Prophet (6: 86-90) but of whom the Bible speaks only as a priest (Luke 1: 5). The person presented as a Prophet by the Bible is Zechariah (the Book Zerh. 1: 1; mark the difference in spelling) of whom the Quran, however, makes no mention. زكريا of the Quran was the father of يحيى (John) who was a cousin of Jesus.

- الحرام (chamber) is derived from حرب. حرام means, a room in the uppermost story of a house; a chamber to which one ascends by stairs; the chief sitting place in a room or a house; the place or niche where the ɪmām stands while leading the Prayers in a mosque; a mosque or a place of worship (Aqrab & Lane). الحرام (chamber of Prayer or the place of the ɪmām in a mosque) is probably so called because it is...
39. There and then did Zachariah pray to His Lord, saying, "My Lord, grant me from Thyself pure offspring; surely, Thou art the Hearer of prayer."

40. And the angels called to him as he stood praying in the chamber: "Allah gives thee glad tidings of Yahyā, who shall testify to the truth of a word from Allah,—noble and chaste and a Prophet, from among the righteous."

Commentary:
Many fantastic stories have been woven round Mary's reply to Zachariah's question as to whence she got the gifts he found lying about her. The gifts were evidently brought by worshippers visiting the place and there was also nothing extraordinary in her reply that the gifts were from Allah, for every good thing that comes to man is really from God, He being the final agency. In fact, from a girl of Mary's religious upbringing any other reply would rather have been surprising. The accounts of Mary having been provided with heavenly fruits by angels are, therefore, nothing but the figment of the Commentators' own minds and find no support whatsoever from the Quran or the sayings of the Holy Prophet. The pious reply of the child, however, made a deep impression on the mind of Zachariah and awakened in the depths of his soul the latent and natural desire of possessing a similarly virtuous child of his own.

The words, Surely Allah gives to whomsoever He pleases without measure, are most probably the words of God and not those of Mary. But if they are Mary's words, they make her reply all the more impressive and Zachariah's earnest prayer, referred to in the following verse, all the more justified.

329. Commentary:
Deeply touched by the little girl's reply, Zachariah was moved there and then to pray to God to be blessed with a pious child like Mary. The prayer was probably repeated over a length of period as it is mentioned in varying words in different parts of the Quran (3: 39; 19: 5-7; 21: 90). This finds further support in the fact that whereas the first prayer was offered when Mary was yet a child, the birth of a son to Zachariah actually took place when Mary had grown up to womanhood, Jesus and John (Yahyā) being nearly of the same age. Or what is equally probable, the prayer of Zachariah was accepted at the very beginning and God gave him the promise of a child at the very first prayer offered; but, after the manner of pious men, he still continued to pray for the bestowal of the promised gift.

330. Important Words:
Yahyā (Yahyā or John) is the name of the Prophet who appeared before Jesus to serve
41. He said, "My Lord, how shall I have a son, when age has overtaken me, and my wife is barren?" He answered, 'Such is the way of Allah: He does what He pleases.'

as his harbinger in fulfilment of the Biblical prophecy (Mal. 3:1 and 4:5). The Hebrew form is רָעָא which in that language means, God has been gracious (Enc. Brit.). The name Yahiya was given by God Himself and was meant to point to a distinctive characteristic of his (19:8). In Arabic the word is derived from the root حَيَّاء (life) and means, he lives or he shall live. The implication in the name was that he would not die in childhood but would live to the age of manhood or that he would lead a righteous life. The fact that Yahiya did not die a natural death but was killed (Matt. 14:10) shows yet another implication in the name i.e. that he would die the death of a martyr and would thus live for ever in the sight of God. Says the Quran, Think not of those who have been slain in the cause of Allah as dead: Nay, they are living in the presence of their Lord and are granted gifts from Him (3:170). Yahiya is probably the only known Israelite Prophet who was actually killed, as hinted in the Quranic verse, We have not made anyone before him of that name (19:8; cf. Luke 1:61).

(Chaste) is derived from حَمْرَة (noble or great), and حَمْرَة (chaste or refrainer from evil passions), and نَيْ (Prophet) and من المُلْمِنَ (righteous), agrees with that given in Luke (1:13—17, 76). In Luke we have, "He (John or Yahiya) shall be great in the sight of God... he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink... he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost... and he shall be called the prophet of the Most High." The Quran also describes Yahiya as one who shall testify to the truth of a word from Allah (3:40). And John came in exact fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord come" (Mal. 4:5). The Quranic expression حَمْرَة in the sense of "concealer of a secret" also points to the above description, for Yahiya (John) was the bearer of the hidden news of the coming of Jesus.

331. Important Words:

(son) is derived from حَمْرَة i.e. he became excited by lust or carnal desire.
42. "He said, 'My Lord, appoint a token for me.' He replied, 'Thy token shall be that thou shalt not speak to men for three days except by signs. And remember thy Lord much and glorify Him in the evening and in the early morning.' 

Commentary:

Zachariah's question contained in the words, how shall I have a son? implies no disbelief on his part in God's promise, as alleged by the Bible (Luke 1:20). It is simply a spontaneous expression of innocent surprise at the divine promise. It also contains a veiled prayer that he might live long enough to see the child born and grow up into a young man. Zachariah has referred to his old age and the barrenness of his wife to make God's mercy take a practical shape all the more speedily.

The expression such as may be rendered in three ways: (1) thus Allah does what He pleases; (2) this is really so, but Allah does what He pleases; (3) such is the way of Allah, He does what He pleases.

332. Commentary:

It appears from the Bible that tokens or signs for the fulfilment of certain prophecies used to be fixed in former times. Sometimes certain phenomena of nature were fixed as such tokens. For instance, Gen. 9:17 fixes the rainbow as a token for the fulfilment of God's promise that there shall be no more flood to destroy the earth. God also appointed the observance of circumcision as a token for the bestowal of the blessings which He promised Abraham and his seed (Gen. 17:11). Again, the observance of the Sabbath was fixed as a sign for the divine covenant made with the Israelites (Exod. 31:13-17). Similarly, at Zachariah's request God appointed a token for the fulfilment of His promise. Zachariah was to abstain from speaking for three days, and then was the promise to be fulfilled. He was not deprived of his power of speech, as the Gospels seem to allege, as a punishment for his not believing the words of God (Luke 1:20-22).

As to the question why the token of keeping silent and refraining from the use of the tongue was fixed for Zachariah, it may be briefly noted that, firstly, it was intended to afford Zachariah a suitable opportunity for passing his time in meditation and prayer—a condition particularly helpful in attracting divine mercy and grace. Secondly, refraining from speech has also been found helpful, in some cases, in making one regain lost vitality and health. The practice seems to have been in vogue among the Jews of those times (19:27) and is even now resorted to by certain people among Hindus and others. Islam does not recognize such practices as tend to suspend the useful activities of man, but it certainly discourages talkativeness (Tirmidhi, ch. on Birr wa'l-Sila).
43. And remember when the angels said, 'O Mary, Allah has chosen thee and purified thee and chosen thee above the women of all peoples.'

44. 'O Mary, be obedient to thy Lord and prostrate thyself and worship God alone with those who worship.'

45. 'This is of the tidings of things unseen which We reveal to thee. And thou wast not with them when they cast their arrows, as to which of them should be the guardian of Mary, nor wast thou with them when they disputed with one another.'

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333. Commentary:

As Yāhūyā (John) was the forerunner of Jesus (Mal. 3:1; 4:5), the Quran has first mentioned the prophecy relating to him and then has proceeded to give a detailed account of the birth and prophethood of Jesus along with a brief mention of his mother, Mary, which is meant as a preliminary to the real subject. In the present verse the word "chosen" has been used twice. This is not without purpose. In the first instance the word has been used in regard to Mary without reference to any other person, signifying her exalted position absolutely; while in the second case it has been used to express her high position in relation to the other women of her time. It need not be mentioned that, according to the usage of the Quran, the word ālamīn (peoples) does not here refer to all times and all ages, but only to the specific time in which Mary lived. See also 2:48.

The use of the word ālām (angels) in the plural number is also not purposeless. If the mere conveying of a message was intended, only one angel could act as a message-bearer.

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333A. Important Words:

ارکم (worship God alone). See 2:44.

334. Important Words:

القلم (their arrows). تَأْمُّل (an arrow). They say i.e. he cut the thing. "قلم" means, he clipped the superfluous part of the nail (Aqrāb). "قلم" means:
(1) a reed used for writing after being pared or shaped into a pen i.e. a reed-pen;
(2) a headless arrow used for drawing lots;
(3) an arrow or a dart (Aqrāb). It was customary among Arabs to use arrows for drawing lots as well as in gambling, etc.
When the angels said, ‘O Mary, Allah gives thee glad tidings of a word from Him; his name shall be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honoured in this world and in the next, and of those who are granted nearness to God.’

Commentary:
Many of the facts which the Quran has brought to light regarding Mary are not found in the previous scriptures. Hence, they are here spoken of as “things unseen.” As narrated in the verses that follow, Mary had become pregnant, while leading a life of dedication in the temple. The priests grew most anxious when they came to know of the startling fact. They feared scandal and disputed among themselves and cast lots to decide as to who should take charge of her and arrange her disposal in marriage with some suitable person. One Joseph, a carpenter, as mentioned in the Gospels, was hit upon as a suitable person to be her husband and was persuaded to accept the awkward situation. All this was naturally done in secret and so it was a thing unseen which the Quran has brought to light.

335. Important Words:
- **الكلمة** (word) means, a word; an expression; a proposition; a sentence; a saying; an argument; an assertion; an expression of opinion (Lane); also, a decree; a commandment (Mufradât). See also 2:38.
- **المسيح** (Messiah) is derived from **سمح** means, he wiped off the dirt from the thing with his hand; or he passed his hand over it. **سمح إليه** means, he passed his hand, wetted with water, over the thing. **سمح به** means, he anointed him or it with oil. **سمح في الأرض** means, he set forth journeying through the land. **سمح الله** means, he compassed or went round the House of God. **سمح لـ أي** means, he struck him with the sword and killed him. **سمح الله** means, God created him blessed and goodly; and contrarily, God created him accursed and foul. **سمح** therefore, means: (1) one anointed i.e. wiped over with some such thing as oil; (2) a king; (3) one beautiful in the face; (4) one who journeys or travels much; (5) one very truthful; (6) one erring greatly; (7) one created blessed and goodly; (8) one created accursed and foul (Lane).

Jesus is probably a Hebrew name in which it has the form يسوع or from which the inverted Arabic form is يسوع. In Arabic the word may be considered to have been derived from the root عيس or عيس عيس. **يسوع** means, white camels, the whiteness of whose hair is mixed with a dark shade, and these are looked upon as particularly good animals. **يسوع** means, the man managed his property well. **يسوع** means, he improved and bettered his life (Aqrab & Lisān). Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua and Jeshua (Enc. Bib.).

**ابن سمع** (son of Mary) is a surname of Jesus known in Arabic as كنعان. Jesus has been called **ابن مريم** probably because, being born
without the agency of a male parent, he could not but be known after his mother. For the word Mary see 3: 43.

Commentary:

The word كُلَّمة (word) as used in this verse requires some explanation, particularly because it has been quoted by Christian missionaries in support of the ridiculous allegation that by using it the Quran has recognized the sonship of Jesus. The occasion on which the verse was revealed would throw some light on the significance of the word.

The first 83 verses of this سورة were revealed when the Christian deputation from نجران visited ﷺ and had a discussion with the Holy Prophet about the status and personality of Jesus. Being silenced on other points, they asked the Holy Prophet whether the word كالما had been used in the Quran concerning Jesus, and, receiving a reply in the affirmative, they triumphantly shouted that they had won and rose to depart without waiting for the explanation of this much-misunderstood word. The occasion and circumstances of the revelation of the relevant verses clearly show that they were revealed not in support, but in refutation and repudiation, of the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus. The words كُلَّمة (word) and دُرُخ (mercy) occurring together in 4: 172 make it clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that they have been used to destroy and repudiate the doctrine of the divinity and sonship of Jesus rather than establish it. The full verse referred to above runs as follows: O People of the Book, exceed not the limits in your religion, and say not of Allah anything but the truth. Verily the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a Messenger of God and a fulfilment of His word (كلمة) which He sent down to Mary and a mercy from Him. So believe in Allah and His Messengers and say not, ‘They are three.’ Desist, it will be better for you; verily Allah is the only one God. Far is it from His holiness that He should have a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and sufficient is Allah as a guardian. The words speak for themselves.

Curiously enough, some Christian writers have asserted that the Holy Prophet did not understand the real significance of the word كالما. The word is Arabic; and to say that an Arab of the Holy Prophet's knowledge and intelligence did not know the meaning or significance of this word is simply absurd. It is a fact that neither the Holy Prophet nor any of his followers ever attached to this word any extraordinary significance which might exalt Jesus over the rest of humanity. Large numbers of Christians have accepted Islam in the past. While studying the Quran, they must have come across this word several times but none of them ever took it in the sense in which our Christian critics pretend to take it, and none of them ever believed in the godhood of Jesus on account of this expression having been used in the Quran.

The great lexicographist, the author of تاج الدوائر, says that Jesus has been called كالما Allah because his words were helpful to the cause of religion. Just as a person who helps the cause of religion by his valour is called سايف الله (the sword of God) or أسد الله (the lion of God), so is the expression كالما Allah. According to the same authority, Jesus was called كالما Allah also because his birth did not take place through the agency of a male parent but by the direct "command" of God (19:21, 22).

Besides the literal meanings given above the Quran has used this word in the following senses: (1) "a sign" as in 66:13 and 8:8; (2) "punishment" as in 10:97; (3) "plan" or "design" as in 9:40; (4) "glad tidings" as in 7:138; (5) "creation of God" as in 31:28 and 18:110; (6) "a mere word of mouth" or "a mere assertion" as in 23:101.
47. "And he shall speak to the people in the cradle and when of middle age, and he shall be of the righteous."

Taken in any of the above senses, the word (Kalima) in no way gives to Jesus a status higher than that of other Prophets.

Again, if Jesus has been called Kalima (word) in the Quran, the Holy Prophet has been called dhikr i.e. a book or a good speech (65:11, 12), which evidently consists of many Kalimas (words). In fact, if Kalimat Allah is taken in the sense of "word of God", the utmost we can say is that God expressed Himself through Jesus just as He expressed Himself through other Prophets. Words are nothing but a vehicle for the expression of thoughts. They do not form part of our being nor do they become incarnated.

The personal pronoun in the expression איה (his name) occurring in the verse, being in the masculine gender, evidently cannot refer to Kalima, which is in the feminine gender. It can only refer to the person about whom the glad tidings was given. The relevant clause of the verse may, therefore, also be rendered as "O Mary, Allah gives thee glad tidings with a word (i.e. by means of a revelation) from Him; his (i.e. the promised one's) name shall be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary."

Jesus has been called Masih (Messiah) in this verse and the word Masih, as given under Important Words above, means one who travels much. Thus Jesus was given this name because he was to travel much. But if in pursuance of the Gospel narrative, Jesus' ministry be admitted to have been confined to only three years and his travels to only a few Palestinian or Syrian towns, the title of Masih in no way fits him. Recent historical research, has, however, established the fact that after having recovered from the shock and the wounds of crucifixion, Jesus travelled far and wide in the East and finally reached Kashmir to give his message to the lost tribes of Israel who lived in these parts. In this connection see also 23:51, where Jesus is spoken of as having been afforded shelter in a hilly tract of land. Masih (Masih) also means "one anointed."

As the birth of Jesus was out of the ordinary and was liable to be looked upon as illegitimate, therefore, to remove this possible accusation, he was spoken of as "being anointed" with God's own anointment, even as all true Prophets of God are anointed. Jesus has been so spoken of also because, like a thing anointed with oil, the water of sin could not penetrate him. It could only just touch his skin but could not sink into it nor remain there (Matt. 4:1-11). In contrast to it, the high spiritual rank of the Holy Prophet of Islam may be judged from a well-known saying of his wherein he says that his Satan had turned Muslim and urged him to do nothing but good (Mussad & Muslim), meaning that not only could no satanic touch harm him but that Satan had become virtually non-existent for him. Nay, it means even more; for, the words signify that the Holy Prophet had been provided with such a powerful spiritual transformer that even satanic suggestions were converted into veritable forces of virtue in him.

The expression, of those who are granted nearness to God, also gives to Jesus no higher position than that of a righteous servant of God. All people advanced in righteousness have been spoken of in the Quran as being granted nearness to God (56:11, 12).

336. Important Words:

الهد (cradle) is the noun-infinitive from the
verb مهذ. They say مهذ المكان i.e. he made the place plain, even or smooth for himself. مهذ فرذًا means, he spread a bed for himself and made it even and smooth. مهذ لفمه خرفا means, he prepared good things for himself. مهذ مثال سنة means, he prepared or established for him a high station or position. مهذ لفمه خرفا also means, he gained or earned or sought to earn sustenance, etc. for himself. مهذ means, a place prepared for a child and made plain, even or smooth that he may sleep in it; a child's cradle; a bed; a thing spread to lie, recline or sit upon; a piece of plain ground or a smooth expanse (Lane & Aqrab). In its verbal senses the infinitive مهذ would also mean, making a thing even and smooth; preparing a thing; preparation; gaining or earning a sustenance, etc.

كيل (of middle age) is the noun-infinitive from كيل i.e. he was or became of middle age. أكثه ال الرجل means, the man attained middle age. أكثه ال النبات means, the plant became tall and full grown and blossomed. كيل means, one who is of middle age, or one who is of the age when a person's hair becomes intermixed with hoariness; or one who is between thirty or thirty-four and 51 years of age (Lane & Aqrab); or one who is between 40 and 51 years of age (Tha'labi).

**Commentary:**

It is evident that by the words, he shall speak, the Quran does not mean simple utterance of words; for such speaking is done by all children and all grown up men except the few congenitally dumb. The expression is, therefore, meant to refer to a particular kind of speaking i.e. speaking wisely or speaking words of wisdom. Similarly the clause, in the cradle and when of middle age, refers to the two periods of childhood and manhood when Jesus would speak words of wisdom, thus indirectly hinting that he would not die young but would live to a good ripe age. According to Ibn Qayyim, a scholar of great eminence, some scholars have denied the crucifixion and (the so-called) ascension of Jesus at the age of 30 or 33 on the ground that Jesus was, according to the Quran, to speak to men when he was a كيل i.e. of middle age. This shows that these scholars look upon Tha'labi's definition as the correct one. See Important Words above.

That Jesus spoke words of wisdom in his childhood has nothing miraculous or supernatural about it. Many intelligent and well brought up children speak like that. Luke supplies an instance of how Jesus spoke in childhood: "And when they had fulfilled the days, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem. And it came to pass that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" (Luke, 2:43—47).

The Quranic reference to the two distinct periods of Jesus' life may also be taken to hint that his speaking in the latter period was to be of a different nature from that in the former. In the latter period he was to speak to men as a Prophet of God. Thus the glad tidings given to Mary consisted in the fact that Jesus was not only destined to be an intelligent child but was also to live to a ripe age as a righteous servant of God.

It should, however, be noted that the expression "in the cradle" does not necessarily mean childhood. The word كيل (cradle) has not been used in the verse literally but only broadly to signify the period of unripe age i.e. that preceding كيل or full-grown manhood. In fact, as shown under Important Words, كيل does not originally mean a cradle. That meaning is rather secondary, the primary meaning being the state or period of preparation when one is, as it were, being prepared and
48. She said, 'My Lord, how shall I have a son, when no man has touched me?' He said, 'Such is the way of Allah, He creates what He pleases. When He decrees a thing, He says to it, 'Be' and it is.'

made even and smooth for the duties of ripe age. The fact that the Quran has mentioned the two periods (i.e. "in the cradle" and "middle age") side by side also shows that there is no intervening period between them. The entire period before 26 (middle age) is that of 43, i.e. a period of preparation; otherwise the verse would become a dispraise rather than praise; for in that case the insinuation would be that Jesus did not speak wisely in the period lying between childhood and middle age.

Finally, it may be noted that, according to the Quran and authentic Hadith, Jesus did not die on the Cross at the age of 33 but lived up to a very old age, but of this we would speak later at its proper place.

337. Commentary:

The news of a son, however happy in ordinary circumstances, greatly perplexed Mary who was not only as yet unmarried but was also meant to remain so for life. The verse reflects her justified perplexity. It also shows that Jesus had no father, as hinted in Mary's words, no man has touched me. Having been dedicated to the service of the temple, Mary could not, consistently with her vow of celibacy, marry. If she was to marry and have children in due course, there was no occasion for her to be surprised when the birth of a child was announced to her by the angel in a vision. No normal girl would be surprised, if she were told in a vision that a son would be born to her; for she would naturally infer that the promised child would be born to her after marriage. In the Gospel of Mary, the vow of celibacy is clearly referred to. In chapter 5 of the said Gospel we read that when the high priest made a public order that all the virgins living in the temple who had reached their fourteenth year should return home, all the other virgins yielded obedience to this command, but Mary the virgin of the Lord alone answered that she could not comply with it; and for this refusal of hers she assigned the reason that both she and her parents had devoted her to the service of the Lord, and that she had vowed virginity to the Lord, which vow she was resolved never to break (Gospel of Mary, 5:4, 5, 6).

Mary’s subsequent marriage with Joseph was thus contrary to the vow and against her own wish. She was, however, compelled by circumstances to marry when found with child. The priests had to arrange her marriage with Joseph in order to avoid scandal. It does not, however, appear from the Gospels how Joseph was prevailed upon to consent, for he was obviously in the dark about her being pregnant at the time of marriage (Matt. 1:18, 19). Presumably some plausible excuse was found to justify the breaking of the vow.

Christians and Jews are both agreed that the birth of Jesus was something out of the ordinary—the Christians holding it as supernatural and the Jews as illegitimate (Jew. Enc.). Even in the family birth register, Jesus’ birth was
49. "And He will teach him the Book and the Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel;" recorded as such (Talmud). This fact alone should constitute a sufficient proof of Jesus' birth being out of the ordinary. But it was neither supernatural nor illegitimate. To quote only one medical authority: "Medical men have not ruled out altogether the possibility of natural parthenogenesis or the production of a child by a female, without any relation to a male. Such a statement off-hand appears ridiculous, yet its possibility, from a purely biological standpoint, under certain conditions, cannot be disregarded. Dr. Timme calls attention to this possibility as the result of a certain type of tumors, known as arrhenoblastoma (from the Greek words for "male" and "germ") which are occasionally found in the female pelvis or lower body. These tumors are capable of generating male sperm-cells. Naturally, if these male sperm-cells were alive and active and came in contact with the female's own egg-cell or ovum, conception might occur. There is nothing illogical in this process of reasoning . . . Dr. Timme states that there are twenty authentic cases reported in Europe in which an arrhenoblastoma had been found to develop male sperm-cells. . . . The arrhenoblastoma is a tumor that contains blastodermic cells. . . . These cells are creative structures and are capable of development at any time and the fact, therefore, that arrhenoblastoma containing these "embryonic cells" might create testicular tissue, capable of producing male sperm-cells seems scientifically not impossible. . . . If living male sperm-cells are produced in a female body by arrhenoblastoma, the possibility of self-fertilization of a woman, even though a virgin, cannot be denied. That is to say, her own body would produce the same result as though sperm-cells from a man's body had been transferred to hers in the more usual way, or by a physician's aid" (American Medical Journal).

There are cases on record of children having been born without fathers: "A young girl of great moral purity became pregnant without the slightest knowledge of the source . . . . There is a case of pregnancy in an unmarried woman, who successfully resisted an attempt at criminal connection and yet became impregnated and gave birth to a perfectly formed female child" (Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine by George M. Gould, A.M., M.D., and Walter L. Payle, A.M., M.D., published by W. B. Saunders & Co., London).

338. Commentary:

The word كتاب (Book) signifies both "the Book" and the "art of writing." If the word be here taken to mean "the Book," then it would apply to the "Torah," the Law of Moses, and in this case the concluding words, "the Torah and the Gospel" would be taken as explanatory, the word "Torah" standing for the "Book" and the word "Gospel" for "Wisdom."
50. **And will make him a Messenger to the children of Israel, (to say):** I come to you with a Sign from your Lord, which is, that I will fashion out for you a creation out of clay after the manner of a bird, then I will breathe into it a new spirit and it will become a soaring being by the command of Allah; and I will heal the night-blind and the leprous, and I will quicken the dead, by the command of Allah; and I will announce to you what you will eat and what you will store up in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you, if you be believers.  

339. **Important Words:**

- **خلق** (I fashion out) is derived from خلق. They say خلق meaning: (1) he measured it, or he determined its measure or proportion (e.g. they say خلق الاتم meaning, he determined the leather with a view to cutting it); (2) he designed or fashioned or planned it; (3) he made it according to a certain measure or design; (4) He (God) produced or created or brought into existence a thing or being without there being any previously existing pattern or model or similitude i.e. He originated it; (5) he forged or fabricated a story or a lie, etc.; (6) he made a thing smooth, even and equable (Lane & Lisan).

- **الطين** (clay) is derived from طين i.e. he made his work or deed good; he performed or executed his work or deed well. طين means, God created him with a disposition or adaptation to that which is good i.e. created him with a good natural disposition. طين means, he coated or plastered it with clay or mud. طين means, clay, earth, mould, soil or mud.

- **طية** means, any material substance of which anything having form consists; the natural constitution or disposition of a thing. The term طية is sometimes used to signify Adam (Lane). Figuratively it may signify such persons as possess docile natures suitable for being moulded into any good shape like pliable clay.

- **طير** (bird) which is the plural of طير (a bird) and is also sometimes used as singular is derived from طير i.e. (1) he or it flew or moved in the air by means of wings; (2) he or it ran or moved quickly or fled. طير means, his reason fled. طير means, the she-camel conceived. طير لكل منهم سهم means, the share of each came to him. طير is both the plural of طير (bird) and the noun-infinite from the verb طير. طير means: (1) flying birds, insects, etc.; (2) a flying bird, insect, etc., for طير is sometimes also used as singular; (3) as an infinitive-noun طير would also give the different meanings conveyed by its verbal forms (Lane).

- **هيئه** (manner) is the noun-infinite from هيل. They say هيل meaning, the man was or became of good form and appearance or other properties denoted by هيل, the noun-infinite. هيل means, he desired or longed to see or find him or it. هيل means, he gave him
or he made him have a garb or guise, etc.; he prepared or arranged it and put it in a good state. "I mean, he became prepared for the thing or the matter. "I mean, form, fashion, appearance or figure; guise or garb; state, condition or case; manner, mode or quality (Aqrab & Lane).

(I heal) is derived from چل i.e. he was or became clear or free from a thing. چل من المرض i.e. he became free from disease i.e. he recovered from it. "I mean, he cured or healed him of the disease; he declared him innocent or free from the defect attributed to him; he acquitted him (Aqrab & Lane).

(blind) is derived from چل i.e. he became blind; or his eyes did not see at night. چل من البیل also means, he was or became deprived of reason or understanding. چل من البیل means, the day became overcast with clouds. چل means, one who cannot see at night; one who is born blind; one who becomes blind afterwards; one who is deprived of reason and understanding (Aqrab & Mufradat).

(leprous) is derived from چل i.e. he was or became affected with چل (leprosy) viz. a sort of whiteness that appears upon parts of the body by reason of a corrupt state of health or constitution. The moon is sometimes called the چل because of its white hue. چل means, a land of which the herbage has become depastured at several places so that it has become bare thereof (Aqrab & Lane). A variety of leprosy of the Hebrews (probably identical with modern leprosy) was characterized by the presence of smooth, shining, depressed white patches or scales, the hair on which participated in the whiteness, while the skin and adjacent flesh became insensible (Webster).

(you will eat) is derived from چل i.e. he ate; he ate up; he devoured; he consumed; he wore away, etc. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "I mean, I have been commanded to emigrate to a town (Medina) which shall devour (i.e. subdue and conquer) other towns (Lane).

Commentary:

With this verse begins an account of Jesus' ministry as a Prophet of God. By using the words, a Messenger to the children of Israel, the verse makes it clear that Jesus' mission was confined to the House of Israel. He was not a World-Messenger. In fact, as the Gospel itself states, he expressly ordered his disciples not to preach his message to any but the Israelites: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, 'Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'" (Matt. 10: 5-6). It cannot be argued that this prohibition was confined to the lifetime of Jesus and that after his death his disciples were at liberty to preach to all the nations of the world, for this supposition is belied by the Gospel itself: "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matt. 10: 23). According to this verse, the followers of Jesus were enjoined to confine their preaching to the children of Israel till the time of his second coming. The same injunction is contained in Matt. 15: 24; 18: 11, 12; 19: 28; Acts 3: 25, 26; 13: 46; Luke 19: 10; 15: 4; 22: 28—30.

Only in Matt. 28: 19 there appears some ambiguity about the mission of Jesus but on deeper reflection it becomes clear that here too it is the tribes of Israel that are meant, and not all peoples and all nations. The early disciples understood these words of Jesus in this very sense: "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that
arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only” (Acts 11:19).

For a clear understanding of the other parts of the present verse i.e. making birds of clay, etc., it is necessary to remember that it was Jesus' habit to talk in parables—a way of talking which was predicted in the previous scriptures to be a characteristic of his speech. Says the Gospel: “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables” (Matt. 13:34, 35). Later historians also have referred to this peculiar characteristic of Jesus: “In his popular addresses Jesus would make free use of parables. He spoke in parables to all classes but especially to the people. Without parables he was not wont to speak to them” (Enc. Bib. under Jesus). With this torch-light of history in our hands, it does not remain difficult for us to understand or explain the “signs” of Jesus as mentioned in the present verse.

There is no mention in the Bible of the miracle of creating birds popularly believed to have been performed by Jesus. If Jesus had really created birds, there is no reason why the Bible should have omitted to mention it, particularly when the creation of birds was a miracle the like of which had never been shown before by any Messenger of God. The mention of such a miracle would certainly have established his superiority over other Prophets and would have lent some support to the claim to divinity which has been foisted upon him by his later followers. Of the different meanings of خلق (khalq)—measuring, determining, designing or fashioning; making and creating, etc.,—given under Important Words above, it is in the former sense that this word has been used in this verse. In the sense of “creating” the act of خلق has not been attributed in the Quran to any other being or thing except God. In fact, the Quran has laid the greatest emphasis on this exclusive attribute of God Who has been again and again declared to be the sole “Creator” of all things. All others to whom creation has been attributed are declared by the Quran to have been themselves created by God and to be devoid of all power to create anything (e.g. see 13:17; 16:21; 22:74; 25:4; 31:11, 12; 35:41 and 46:5). Even the silly notion that the power of creating, though the unshared prerogative of God, might have been temporarily delegated by Him to another is rejected by the Quran with the contempt it deserves (39:30 & 16:72).

In the light of the above explanation, and keeping in view the figurative sense of “clay,” for which see Important Words above, the clause, I will fashion out for you a creation out of clay after the manner of a bird, then I will breathe into it a new spirit and it will become a soaring being, would mean that if ordinary men of humble origin but possessing the inherent power of growth and development came into contact with Jesus and accepted his message, they would undergo a complete transformation in their lives. From men grovelling in the dust and not seeing beyond their material cares and mundane concerns, they would become converted into birds soaring high into the lofty regions of the spiritual firmament. And this is exactly what happened. The humble and despised fishermen of Galilee, under the impat of the ennobling teaching of their Master, began soaring like birds, preaching to the world of Israel the word of God and bravely facing all sorts of hardships and privations and making sacrifices that should adorn the history of any nation. Says Jesus: “I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink;
nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matt. 6:25, 26).

The miracle relating to the making of birds from clay may be interpreted in another way as well. In the time of Jesus people had a special liking for the practice of occult sciences—hypnotism, mesmerism, etc. So it is possible that God granted him special power of this kind in order to impress the people and make them believe in him. In this case the sign of making birds would mean that Jesus made small clay models of birds and then through a sort of mesmerism made them appear to fly in the air. But this did not convert them into really living birds; for as soon as the influence was removed, they fell down to the ground like so many lumps of earth. This miracle of Jesus was more or less like the miracle of the rod of Moses which was temporarily made to look like a real serpent but was actually not so. But whatever the significance of the sign, it was performed, as the verse clearly puts it, by the command of Allah, and Jesus possessed no power of creation. (For fuller description see Izâla by Ahmad, the Promised Messiah).

As for healing the blind and the leprous, it appears from the Bible that persons suffering from certain diseases (leprosy, etc.) were considered unclean and were therefore not allowed to come in contact with other men. If, therefore, the word یِیُسُ (blind) be taken to mean "I declare to be free", the clause would signify that the legal or social disabilities and disadvantages under which persons suffering from such maladies laboured were removed by Jesus. If, however, the word be interpreted as "I heal," then the clause would mean that Jesus used to heal persons suffering from these diseases. But as indicated above, Jesus used to speak in metaphors. So just as the "creation" spoken of is spiritual creation, the diseases mentioned are spiritual diseases. The Prophets of God are spiritual physicians; they give eyes to those that have lost spiritual sight, and they give hearing to those who are spiritually deaf, and they restore life to those who are spiritually dead (see also Matt. 13:15). In this case the word یِیُسُ (blind or one who is blind at night) would stand for such person as possesses the light of faith but being weak, cannot stand trials. He sees in the day time i.e. so long as there are no trials and the sun of faith shines forth unclouded; but when the night comes on i.e. when there are trials, and sacrifices have to be made, he loses his spiritual vision and stands still (cf. 2:21). Similarly, the word یِیُسُ (leprous) would, in the spiritual sense, stand for one who is imperfect in faith, having patches of diseased skin among healthy ones. But even if these words be taken in their physical sense, Jesus is proved to possess no peculiar power. All Prophets heal diseases and ailments by the power of prayer. In this case, however, the word یِیُسُ (blind) would be taken in the sense of one who cannot see at night or one whose sight is weak.

The clause, I will quicken the dead, does not mean that Jesus actually brought the dead to life. Those actually dead are never restored to life in this world. Such a belief is diametrically opposed to the whole Quranic teaching (23:100, 101; 21:96; 39:59, 60; 2:29; 40:12; 45:27). The sayings of the Holy Prophet are also clear on this point. For instance, it is related that when Jâbir's father, who was a Companion of the Holy Prophet, was killed in the Battle of Uhud and the lad was much grieved, the Holy Prophet consoling told him that God had lovingly spoken to his father in the other world and had asked him to beg of Him anything he liked, for that would be given
him. Thereupon Jābir's father said, "Grant me, my Lord, another lease of life on earth that I may again be killed in Thy way." God replied, "I would certainly have done so, but the word has gone forth from Me that the dead shall not be sent back to the earth" (Tirmidhī & Mājah).

That the so-called dead who are reported to have been raised by Jesus were not actually dead is clear from the Gospels as well. The incident described in Matt. 9: 23-25 sheds some light on it. As a matter of fact, Prophets are only sent to give life to those who are spiritually dead. Jesus, Moses, Abraham and, above all, the Holy Prophet of Islam brought about a complete change in the lives of their followers. This, in religious language, is termed raising the dead to life. Literally, too, the word مَرْتَنَّ (the dead) does not necessarily mean those physically dead. It is also used about those who are dead spiritually, morally or intellectually. The Quran freely speaks of the quickening of the dead in the sense of granting life to the spiritually dead (e.g. 3: 28; 6: 123; 8: 43; 25: 50; 36: 71). In 8: 25 the Holy Prophet himself has been spoken of as giving life to the dead. Says the Quran: O ye who believe; respond to Allah and the Messenger when he calls you that he may give you life. Here it is spiritual and intellectual life that is meant, for Muslims do not believe that the Holy Prophet ever brought an actually dead person to life.

The miracles of Jesus, as mentioned in this verse, have been stated in a natural order. First of all is mentioned the change in the outlook and way of life of those that came in contact with him. From men of the world, they became men of God. They rose from the dust and began soaring in the air. Then are mentioned some of the more common spiritual diseases of which Jesus cured the people; the blind were given spiritual sight and those having diseased skins were healed. Finally, the spiritually dead are declared to have received through Jesus a new life. Thus not only a natural order but a sort of progressive order is found in the verse, the climax, so far as individual reformation is concerned, being reached with the miracle relating to the quickening of the dead. But if the verse be interpreted literally, no arrangement seems to exist in the order in which the miracles are described here, i.e., (1) the creation of birds out of clay; (2) the healing of the blind; (3) the healing of those suffering from leprosy i.e. those who had patches of disease on their skin; and (4) the raising of the dead to life.

The true climax, however, reaches in the miracle or sign mentioned in the clause, I will announce to you what you will eat and what you will store up in your houses. According to Abūl Baqā the words بـَيْنَ (news) and أَنـَـَـَ (he gave the news) are used in the Quran for announcing matters of great importance (Kulliyāt). This shows that what Jesus is here represented as announcing to the people are matters of supreme importance to his followers. The language of the verse being parabolic, the word لا كَرْنَ (you will eat) will be taken figuratively, meaning, "you will subdue or conquer" (see under Important Words above). Thus the clause, I will announce to you what you will eat, would mean, "I will let you know what you will subdue or conquer" i.e. "I will announce to you the conquests you are destined to make in future." The other expression, i.e., I will also let you know what you will store up in your houses, would mean, "I will let you know the deeds which you should or would leave behind for posterity."

The entire clause may have yet another meaning. It may mean that Jesus told his disciples: (1) what they should eat i.e. what they should spend to meet their physical needs, and (2) what they should store up i.e. what they should lay up as a spiritual treasure in Heaven. In other words, Jesus told them that their earnings
51. 'And I come fulfilling that which is before me, namely, the Torah; and to allow you some of that which was forbidden to you; and I come to you with a sign from your Lord; so fear Allah and obey me.  \(^{340}\)

should be honestly and lawfully acquired and that they should spend their savings in the way of God, having no thought for the morrow which should be left to God (see Matt. 6: 25, 26 as quoted above).

**340. Commentary:**

Jesus came in fulfilment of the prophecies of the previous Prophets contained in the Torah. But he brought no new Law, being a follower of Moses in this respect. He himself was conscious of this limitation of his authority. Says he: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17, 18).

The expression, to allow you some of that which was forbidden to you, does not, therefore, refer to any change or modification in the Mosaic Law. The reference is only to those things which the Jews had themselves rendered unlawful for themselves. Elsewhere the Quran says, So because of the transgression of the Jews, We forbade them pure things which had been allowed to them (4:161). Again, Truly I am come to you with wisdom and to make clear to you some of that about which you differ (43: 64). These verses show that there were differences among the various sects of the Jews regarding the lawfulness or otherwise of certain things and that by their iniquities and transgressions they had deprived themselves of certain divine blessings. Jesus thus came as a judge to decide in what matters the Jews had deviated from the right path and to tell them that the blessings of which they had been deprived would be restored to them, if they followed him.

Among Islamic sources the following well-known Commentaries support our interpretation of the verse: “Jesus did not abrogate any portion of the Torah; he simply made lawful to the Jews those things about which they used to disagree among themselves through error” (Kathir, under present verse). Again, “The words, that which was forbidden to you, refer to those things which the learned men after Moses had declared to be unlawful, giving the innovation the force of Law; Jesus restored the true commandments of the Torah, as they had been revealed by God” (Muhît). Yet again, “Jesus followed the Law of Moses. He used to observe the Sabbath, and turn his face to the Temple and he used to say to the Jews, I do not teach you even a single word which is not in accord with the Law of Moses; I only remove from you the burden laid on you as a result of the innovations you made after Moses” (Fath).
52. ‘Surely, “Allah is my Lord and your Lord; so worship Him: this is the right path.”’ \(^{341}\)

53. And when Jesus perceived their disbelief, he said, ‘Who will be my helpers in the cause of Allah?’ \(^{342}\) The disciples answered, ‘We are the helpers of Allah. We have believed in Allah. And bear thou witness that we are obedient.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{a5}}: 73, 118; 19: 37; 43: 65. \text{\textsuperscript{b5}}: 112; 61: 15.\)

341. **Commentary:**
This verse clearly refutes the later Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the Sonship of Jesus ascribed to him. Jesus looks upon himself to be as human and as subservient to God as any other mortal.

342. **Important Words:**
حَرَارُ (disciples) is the plural of حَارَ (a disciple) which is derived from حَارَ which means, he or it returned; or he became perplexed. حَارَ (washed) means, he washed the cloth and rendered it white. حَارَ (washed) means: (1) one who whitens clothes by washing them i.e. a washerman; (2) one who has been tried and found to be free from vice or fault; (3) a person of pure and unsullied character; (4) one who advises or counsels or acts honestly and faithfully; (5) a true and sincere friend or helper; (6) a select friend and helper of a Prophet; (7) a relation. The disciples of Jesus were called حَارُ because they helped him in his work, or because they were white or pure of heart, or because they made the hearts of other people white and pure by their noble teachings and good example, or (as some have thought) because some of them were washermen by profession (Lone, Aqrab & Mufradât). The Quran has used the word in the sense of helpers, as the words that follow indicate.

**Commentary:**
In this verse the Quran has cleared the disciples of Jesus of the serious lapses ascribed to them in the Gospels. They were sincere helpers in the cause of God, believing in the mission of Jesus and making no secret of their faith.

The word حَارُ as explained under Important Words above, signifies a reliable helper and disciple of a Prophet. From an authentic saying of the Holy Prophet the word appears to have also been once applied by him to one of his trustworthy and distinguished Companions, Zubair b. ‘Awwâm, who, on an occasion of great danger, went alone boldly in the enemy camp on an extremely cold and dark night and brought back necessary information (Bukhârî).
54. ‘Our Lord, we believe in that which Thou hast sent down and we follow this Messenger. So write us down among those who bear witness.’

55. And ‘they planned and Allah also planned; and Allah is the best of planners.’

343. **Commentary:**

Not only did the disciples of Jesus heartily respond to his call for aid, but also bore witness to his truth both by words of mouth and by their good example and faithful conduct. The verse also makes it clear that the disciples looked upon Jesus as only a Messenger of God with no claim to divinity.

344. **Important Words:**

- مكر (they planned) and مكر (he planned) are from the same root. مكر means, he plotted or planned secretly with a view to circumventing the other; he practised an evasion or a device or a machination; he exercised art or cunning or skill in the management or ordering of affairs with excellent consideration and deliberation; he tried to do harm or mischief secretly.
- مكر (God planned) may also mean, God requited the machination of a person or a people (Lane). See also 2:16. مكر is of two kinds: (1) i.e. a good plan by which a good object is sought, and (2) i.e. an evil plan by which an evil object is sought (Mufradat). In view of the above, the word مكر when used with regard to the enemies of Jesus would signify their wicked designs and evil machinations to destroy his mission and bring him to ruin; and when used with regard to God, it would signify the plan of God to frustrate the evil designs of the Jews and bring punishment on their heads.

**Commentary:**

The Jews had planned that Jesus should die an accursed death on the Cross (Deut. 21:23), but God’s plan was that he should be saved from that death. The plan of the Jews was frustrated and God’s plan was successful, because Jesus did not die on the Cross but came down alive, dying a natural death, full of years, in Kashmir, far away from the scene of his crucifixion.
6 56. When Allah said, 'O Jesus, I will cause thee to die a natural death and will exalt thee to Myself, and will clear thee from the charges of those who disbelieve, and will place those who follow thee above those who disbelieve, until the Day of Resurrection; then to Me shall be your return, and I will judge between you concerning that wherein you differ.'

345. Important Words:

(cause thee to die) is derived from جاقز, i.e. he fulfilled or performed; or he was faithful, etc. تزاس means, i.e. God took away the soul of Zaid, namely, He caused him to die. When God is the subject and a human being the object, تزاس has no other meaning than that of taking away the soul, whether in sleep or death. See note on 2 : 235. So means, I will cause thee to die. Ibn 'Abbas, a cousin of the Holy Prophet and a scholar of great eminence, has translated جاقز as i.e. I will cause thee to die (Bukhari). Similarly, Zamakhshari, an Arab linguist of great repute, says: "The expression جاقز means, I will protect thee from being killed by the people and will grant thee full lease of life ordained for thee, and will cause thee to die a natural death, not by being killed" (Kashshaf). In fact, all Arabic lexicographers are agreed on the point that the word جاقز as used in the aforesaid manner, can bear no other interpretation. Not a single instance from the whole of Arabic literature can be shown of this expression having been used in any other sense. Outstanding scholars and Commentators like (1) Ibn 'Abbas, (2) Imam Malik (3) Imam Bukhari, (4) Imam ibn Ha zm, (5) Imam Ibn Qayyim, (6) Qatada, (7) Wahab, and others are of the same view (see 1. Bukhari, ch. on Tafsir; 2. Bukhari, ch. on Bad' al-Khalq; 3. Biha r; 4. Al-Muhallal, Cairo, i. 23; 5. Ma'ad, p. 19; 6. Manthur ii. 7. Kathir). According to Fath al-Bay'an, those Commentators who have tried to put other meanings into the word جاقز, as used in the aforesaid manner, have done so on account of their belief that Jesus has been taken up to heaven alive; otherwise, the word possesses no other meaning but that of taking away the soul or causing to die. The expression has been used at no less than 25 different places in the Quran and in no less than 23 of them the meaning is to take away the soul at the time of death. Only at two places the meaning is to take the soul away at the time of sleep; but here the qualifying word "sleep" or "night" has been added (6 : 61; 39 : 43).

(will exalt thee). دعالم (will exalt thee). دعلام is the active participle from داعم. They say داعم i.e. he raised him or it; he elevated him or it; he lifted it; he uplifted it; he exalted or honoured him; he took it up, etc. Thus داعم is the antonym of داعم i.e. he put it down; he debased it. The Holy Prophet says:

ان الله داعم بهذا القرآن افنا و قمع افنا i.e. Allah will, by means of this Quran, exalt some peoples and humble others (Majah).
Again he says:

من تواضع الله نعمة الله إلى السماء السابعة

i.e. he who truly humbles himself for the sake of God, God would lift him to the seventh heaven i.e. would exalt him to the highest spiritual station (‘Ummal, ii. 25). The Quran has described the Day of Resurrection as خافضة رامة meaning, it shall debase some and exalt others (56: 4). In the Quran we also have في بيت إذن الله ان ترفع i.e. in houses with regard to which Allah has commanded that they be exalted (24: 37). Again i.e. the righteous work of a man exalts him (35: 11). Even in our daily Prayers we pray اللهم ارضني i.e. O God, exalt me. In fact, when the رفع of a man is spoken of as being to or towards God, the meaning is invariably his spiritual elevation, because God being not material or confined to a place, no physical elevation to Him is possible. Jesus himself has denied the possibility of his rising physically to heaven. Says he: “And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven” (John 3: 13).

Commentary:

This verse has been linked up with the preceding one with the word عل (when), thus indicating that it provides what is known as غور for the concluding clause of that verse i.e. Allah is the best of planners. The present verse thus relates to the occasion when Jesus was being made a victim of the evil machinations of his enemies who were plotting to have him crucified and thereby prove him to have come to an accursed end (Deut. 21: 22, 23). “Nay”, says God to Jesus as stated in the verse under comment, “thine enemy shall not be permitted to kill thee on the Cross and thereby prove thee to be low and debased spiritually. On the contrary, I will cause thee to die a natural death and will exalt thee in My presence...”

This is the only possible meaning of the verse in conformity with the context. Unfortunately, however, the verse is one of those which have heavily suffered from misinterpretation. Meanings have been sought to be put upon its words which they are simply incapable of bearing. It is now an admitted fact that, through the free intermixture of Muslims and Christians and the conversion en masse of hundreds of thousands of Christians to Islam, the belief that Jesus had risen up to heaven alive found widespread credence among Muslims, the misunderstanding of the prophecy about the second advent of Jesus lending support to it.

There is no gainsaying the fact that Jesus is dead, and not alive in heaven. The Holy Propheth is reported to have said, “Had Moses and Jesus been now living, they would have found themselves forced to follow me” (Kothir). He even fixed the age of Jesus as 120 (‘Ummal). The Quran, in as many as 30 verses, has completely demolished the absurd belief of the physical ascension of Jesus and his supposed life in heaven. The arrangement of words in the verse under comment also leaves no doubt about the death of Jesus. Four distinct promises have been made to him in the verse: (1) his being saved from death on the Cross and dying thereafter a natural death; (2) his exaltation in God’s presence; (3) his exoneration from the false charges of his enemies, and (4) the domination of his followers over his rejectors. The last three promises have already been fulfilled; but what of the first? It is idle to speak of خففة which (i.e. the first-mentioned promise to be read after the others) without any justifying reason. It is idle also to claim that خففة here means “I will cause thee to sleep.” The Quranic idiom spurns the idea. Indeed such a meaning makes the verse almost ridiculous.

The verse beautifully describes in four brief words the frustration of the plans of the Jew
57. Then as for those who disbelieve, I will punish them with a severe punishment in this world and in the next, and they shall have no helpers.\(^{546}\)

58. And as for those who believe and do good works, "He will pay them their full rewards. And Allah loves not the wrongdoers."

59. That is what We recite unto thee of the Signs and the wise Reminder. \(^{347}\)

\(^{346}\): referred to in the preceding verse. They had planned (1) to bring about the death of Jesus by crucifixion; and (2) to be thus able to say that because he was a false prophet, he died an accursed death on the Cross (Deut. 21:22, 23). They also sought (3) to bring false charges against him, especially the heinous charge of an illegitimate birth; and (4) to be thus able to compass the destruction of his entire movement. They were completely foiled in all these designs. Jesus died, not on the Cross, but a natural death, respected and revered by devoted followers. He was cleared of the false charges imputed to him and has ever been regarded as one of the sacred band of God's great Prophets. Last of all, his followers have for centuries held his rejectors, the Jews, under their heels.

The words, those who follow thee, originally referred to the Christians and the words, those who disbelieve, to the Jews. Later, however, when Islam made its appearance, the words those who follow thee, naturally came to include Muslims, who believe in the divine mission of Jesus; and history tells us that Muslims and Christians have both dominated the Jews whenever and wherever they have come in contact with them.

The prophecy about giving dominance to the believers in Jesus over his rejectors was, however, to be fulfilled in its completest form at the time of his second advent which has now taken place in the person of Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, whose message is for all the nations of the world. The clause, those who disbelieve, would, therefore, now apply to all those among Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and others who reject the Second Messiah who has come in fulfilment of the prophecies of both Jesus and the Holy Prophet of Islam. No wonder then that the words: "O Jesus, I will cause thee to die (a natural death)............and will place those who follow thee above those who disbelieve" also formed part of the revelation vouchsafed to Ahmad (Izāla, p. 192).

346. Commentary:

The words, those who disbelieve, here refer to Jews, who have suffered great hardships throughout the ages. The tale of their woes and afflictions at the hands of Titus about 70 years after the crucifixion of Jesus pales into insignificance before the sufferings to which they have been subjected in some parts of Europe in our own time.

347. Commentary:

The story of Jesus, as narrated in the Quran
60. Surely, the case of Jesus with Allah is like the case of Adam. He created him out of dust, then He said to him, 'Be', and he was.  

61. "This is the truth from thy Lord, so be thou not of those who doubt."  

is not a mere thing of the past. It is meant to shed new light on events that form the basis of the doctrines of a large section of humanity as well as to provide a lesson for the future.

348. Commentary:

The word مَلَك (case) is used to express resemblance, which may be of different kinds and different degrees. Sometimes, the thing likened is equal to that to which it is likened, sometimes the former is superior to the latter, and sometimes the latter is superior to the former. So it is not necessary that the thing likened to another should be equal, or even similar, to the latter in all respects. The likeness between Adam and Jesus referred to in this verse, may, therefore, not be stretched too far.

In the verse the word 'Adam' primarily stands for man i.e. the sons of Adam generally. Jesus is thus declared to be like other mortals who have all been created from dust (40: 68), and so there can be no divinity about him. If, however, the word 'Adam' be taken to refer to the progenitor of the human race, then the verse would be taken to point to the resemblance between Jesus and Adam in being born without the agency of a male parent. In this case, the fact that Jesus had a mother would not affect the likeness which, as stated above, need not be complete in all respects.

The words, then He said to him, "Be" and he was, show that the command refers, not to the birth of Jesus (for the fact of his creation has already been mentioned in the words i.e. He created him, occurring in the preceding part of the verse) but to his death. The use of the word كُلُك (Be) in relation to death should not sound odd, for, according to the teaching of Islam, death is not the end of life but simply a change, the beginning of a new life. The meaning in this case would be that after having created Jesus and having allowed him the prescribed lease of life in this world, God caused him to die and took his soul away to the next world. The expression, "Be" and he was, may also refer to the creation or birth of Jesus in the sense that, after giving him the human form in the womb of his mother, God said to him "Be" i.e. become quickened with life, whereupon he became alive. Again, the reference may also be to the spiritual life i.e. after creating Jesus in the form of a man God called upon him to become a Prophet, which was the ultimate end of his creation, and consequently he became a Prophet.

Whatever the interpretation, the verse constitutes a clear refutation of the Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus on the plea of his unusual birth.

As for the creation of man from تراب (dust), we shall give a suitable note when we come to the verses directly dealing with the subject.

349. Important Words:

عَتَرَينaining (those who doubt) means: (1) those who doubt; (2) those who contest and raise
62. Now whoso disputes with thee concerning him, after what has come to thee of knowledge, say to him, 'Come, let us call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and our people and your people; then let us pray fervently and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie.'

Commentary:

As حَقَّ (truth) also signifies an established fact or an established truth (2:148 & 3:4), the verse hints that as now the fact has been established beyond doubt or controversy that there was nothing in Jesus above an ordinary mortal, so there is truly no possibility of doubt or difference of opinion in the matter.

350. Important Words:

- نَبِّيُّ (let us pray fervently) is derived from نبي. They say فِنَبِي i.e. he left him to his own will; or he left him to himself; he cursed him. فِنَبِي means, he prayed or supplicated humbly and earnestly and fervently, with energy and effort. فِنَبِي means, he cursed him, being also cursed by the latter. فِنَبِي means, the act of invoking God's curse on each other i.e. on whichever party is the wrongdoer (Aqrab & Lane).

- اَنْتَ وَ اَنْتَ (our people and your people). The words are the plural of نَسِمَة and mean:
  1. our souls and your souls; 2. ourselves and yourselves; 3. our people and your people; 4. our co-religionists and your co-religionists (Lane). See also 2:55 and 3:29. Here, as the context shows, the words give the last-mentioned meaning.

Commentary:

The present discussion on Christian doctrines with which this سورة began has been brought to a close in this verse. The reference, as mentioned above, is to the Christian deputation from Najrān which consisted of sixty persons and was headed by their chief, ‘Abdul Masīḥ known as Al-Aqib. They met the Holy Prophet in his Mosque and the discussion on the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus continued at some length. When the question had been fully discussed and the members of the deputation were found to be still insisting on their false doctrine, the Holy Prophet, in obedience to the divine command contained in the present verse, invited them as a last resort to join him in a sort of prayer-contest technically known as بِأَنْبِيَةٍ i.e. invoking the curse of God on the holders of false beliefs. As, however, the Christians did not appear to be sure of their ground, they declined to accept the challenge, thus indirectly admitting the falsity of their doctrine (Zurqānī, Khamis & Bayān under 3:3). On this occasion, the Holy Prophet brought out ‘Ālī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and ʿUṣāma (Khamīs & Zurqānī) as well as Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and others (‘Asākir) in the field and is reported to have said: "If the Christians had accepted the challenge of بِأَنْبِيَةٍ and agreed to pray to God to send His punishment on the lying party, God would have surely destroyed the liars before a year had passed" (Bukhārī, Muslim & Tirmidhī).

It may be noted that the prayer-contest
63. This certainly is the true account. There is none worthy of worship save Allah; and surely it is Allah Who is the Mighty, the Wise.361

known as مأله is in the nature of seeking God's arbitration in fundamental religious differences. When other methods of settlement fail, the parties approach Almighty God to decide between them according to His eternal scheme of helping the righteous and destroying the wicked. The act of cursing is thus not in the form of abusing but an earnest supplication to God to uphold the truth and destroy falsehood—to amputate the diseased limb in order to save the healthy one. Thus مأله is a very serious affair and should be resorted to in very rare cases, subject to the following conditions, which are deducible from the present verse as well as from the relevant sayings of the Holy Prophet: (1) the point in dispute should be a matter of supreme and fundamental religious importance and should be based on clear scriptural authority; (2) the matter should first be fully argued and discussed between the parties; (3) the مأله should take place only if and when after the aforesaid discussion each party still continues to adhere to its views, definitely holding the other party to be in the wrong; (4) for the actual contest the parties should assemble in a suitable place together with the members of their families and a suitable number of others holding similar views, and there solemnly invoke the curse of God on the party sticking to falsehood.

As to the form or time of punishment which, as a result of مأله, must overtake the offending party, the verse sheds no light. The matter rests entirely with God. From the above-quoted tradition, however, it may be deduced that if any period at all is to be fixed, it should be not less than a year. But the form of punishment must still rest on divine will. The Heavenly Judge reserves the right of deciding each individual case as He thinks fit. The result is left to speak for itself.

It may be noted here incidentally that during the discussions with the Christian deputation from Najrân the Holy Prophet allowed them to pray in His Mosque in their own way, which they did facing the East—an act of religious toleration unparalleled in the history of all religion (Zurqani).

351. Important Words:

- القسم (account) is the noun-infinitive from قسم. They say قسم الشعر i.e. he cut or clipped the hair.
- قسم عليه (narrated) means, he related or narrated the news to him.
- قسم انثر means, he followed after his track, or he followed him step by step.
- قسم (qasas) means, the act of narrating; narration or account; track or footsteps.
- قسم (qiṣas) with different vowel point, is the plural of قسم meaning, a story, a narrative, etc. (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

This verse partially repeats the sense of verse 3:61 above in order to impress upon the reader that the discomfiture of the Christian deputation in the challenge of مأله mentioned in 3:62 sets the seal upon the conclusion that Islam has truly triumphed over Christianity, and that there is no god but Allah Who, being "Mighty and Wise," needs no son or helper.

As stated in the verse, the facts narrated in the above verses constitute "the true account" about Jesus and not impossible things which his followers out of excessive love, or his enemies out of inveterate hatred, have attributed to him.
64. But if they turn away, then remember that Allah knows the mischief-makers well.

65. Say, 'O People of the Book! come to a word equal between us and you—that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for Lords beside Allah.' But if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we have submitted to God.'

352. Commentary:

The clause, then remember that Allah knows the mischief-makers well, embodies a solemn warning. God being All-Knowing, each and every act of the wrongdoers is known to Him and He will judge them accordingly.

353. Important Words:

رب (Lord) is the plural of راب (Lord) for which see 1:2. It means, lord, master or owner; a chief or ruler to whom obedience is rendered; one who fosters, brings up, or nourishes (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse is wrongly considered by some to provide a basis for a compromise between Islam on the one hand and Christianity and Judaism on the other. It is argued that if these faiths become united in the doctrine of the Oneness of God, the verse permits the sacrifice of other Islamic teachings as being of comparatively little importance. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Quran, the Hadith, and the facts of history are all united in belying this ridiculous assumption. It is simply unthinkable that compromise in matters of faith could be allowed by any religion worth its name, particularly with a people who, in the immediately preceding verses, have been severely condemned for their beliefs and who are so forcefully challenged to a prayer-contest to invoke the curse of God upon those who lie in their beliefs. The Holy Prophet, while writing his missionary epistle to Heraclius, used this very verse, yet he forcefully invited the latter to accept Islam and threatened him with divine punishment if he refused to do so (Bukhārī). This shows beyond doubt that the mere fact of his believing in the Oneness of God, could not, according to the Holy Prophet, save Heraclius from God's punishment.

Elsewhere the Quran emphatically declares that surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam (i.e. complete submission); and whose 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). Can anything be clearer?

The truth is that this verse is intended to suggest an easy and simple method by which Jews and Christians can arrive at a right decision regarding the truth of Islam. Christians, in spite of claiming belief in the unity of Godhead, felt satisfied in believing in the divinity of Jesus; and Jews, notwithstanding their claim to be monotheists, gave blind allegiance to their priests and divines, practically placing them in the position of God Himself.
CH. 3  

66. 0 People of the Book! why do you dispute concerning Abraham, when the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Will you not then understand? 354

The verse exhorts both these communities to come back to their original belief in the Oneness of God and give up the worship of false deities who stand in the way of their accepting Islam. Thus, instead of seeking a compromise with these faiths, the verse virtually invites Christians and Jews to the faith of Islam, by drawing their attention to the doctrine of the Oneness of God which, at least in its outer form, the common fundamental doctrine of all, could serve as a meeting ground for further approach.

It was exactly on these lines that Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, in his "Message of Peace," made an offer to the Hindus of India to enter into an agreement with the Muslims of his way of thinking to the effect that they (Hindus) would respect and honour the Holy Prophet of Islam and would look upon him as a true Messenger of God, even as he and his followers believed in Rama and Krishna as God's Elect.

Special emphasis has been laid in the verse under comment on the Oneness of God—a doctrine on which in theory all revealed religions seem to agree, but regarding the details of which no two faiths are found to concur. Most religions claim to be monotheistic; but under the outer veneer of monotheism, polytheism very often lies hidden in most hideous forms. It is the simple faith of Islam alone which is really and truly monotheistic in all its aspects and which strongly condemns the association with God of anything or any being in His person, attributes, worship or works. It is most unfortunate, however, that in spite of Islam being such a strictly monotheistic faith, a section of present-day Muslims has drifted away into the quagmire of what cannot but be termed idol-worship in the wider sense of the word.

Incidentally, it may be noted that the letter mentioned by Bukhari and other Muslim traditionists as having been addressed by the Holy Prophet to Heraclius in the words of this verse inviting him to accept Islam has recently been discovered and found to contain the exact words quoted by Bukhari (R. Rel. vol. v. no. 8). This furnishes a strong proof of the essential authenticity of Bukhari and, for that matter, of other accepted works of Hadith.

354. Commentary:

As the context shows, the words, concerning Abraham, mean concerning the religion of Abraham. He was neither a follower of the Torah nor a follower of the Gospel; for both these Books were revealed long after him. Still the People of the Book disputed among themselves as to the religion of Abraham, each party claiming that he believed as they did.
67. Behold! you are those who disputed about that whereof you had knowledge. Why then do you now dispute about that whereof you have no knowledge at all? Allah knows, and you know not.  

68. Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was ever inclined to God and obedient to Him, and he was not of those who associate gods with God.

69. Surely, the nearest of men to Abraham are those who followed him, and this Prophet and those who believe; and Allah is the friend of believers.

355. **Commentary:**
The verse administers a rebuke to the Jews with whom disputations about religious questions had become a habit and a pastime. The rebuke purports to say: Is not your appetite for bickering and quarrelling about Biblical principles and tenets, with which you are at least conversant to some extent, satisfied that you have begun to meddle with matters about which you know nothing? The reference is either to the Quranic teaching or to their claim about Abraham referred to in the preceding verse.

356. **Important Words:**
حنيفًا (ever inclined to God). See 2:136.

**Commentary:**
If Abraham can be said to belong to any of the present faiths, it is Islam; for, (1) Islam is a name with a meaning bearing on the inner spirit of the faith—submission or obedience to the will of God; (2) Abraham himself used the word سلم for himself and also for his son Ishmael, from whom the Holy Prophet of Islam is descended (2:129); and (3) he prayed that from among his progeny a people may come forth (2:129). But he was obviously not a Muslim in the sense that he followed in detail the religion brought by the Holy Prophet.

The clause, he was not of those who associate gods with God, is a sort of rebuke to Jews and Christians who, in spite of calling themselves monotheists, virtually practised polytheism and still did not hesitate to claim Abraham as one of themselves.

357. **Important Words:**

**Commentary:**
Though in a technical sense Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian nor yet a Muslim for he lived long before these faiths came into existence, yet taking in view the inner spirit of the faith he was certainly most nearly related to Islam and its Holy Founder. Jews...
70. aA section of the People of the Book would fain lead you astray; but they lead astray none except themselves, only they perceive not.358

71. bO People of the Book! why do you deny the Signs of Allah, while you are witnesses thereof?359

72. cO People of the Book! why do you confound truth with falsehood and dhide the truth knowingly?360

and Christians had no right to claim him as their spiritual progenitor when all their beliefs and practices were at such variance with his teaching.

358. Commentary:
The simplicity, straightforwardness and perfection of the faith of Islam very often create such strong feelings of appreciation in the hearts of the People of the Book that they feel irresistibly drawn towards it but, being inimical and jealous, their appreciation often takes the queer though not unpsychological course that they begin to wish that Muslims may become like themselves.

Taking the word " lead you astray" in the sense of ruin (see 2:27), the expression " lead you astray" may also be rendered as " lead you to ruin." and the next clause, but they lead astray none except themselves, may in that case mean that by seeking to ruin the Muslims, they only ruin themselves, because the rise of one's enemy signifies one's own fall.

359. Commentary:
Rejection of God's Signs is a heinous crime for anyone, but it becomes still more heinous for him who is a direct witness thereof.

360. Commentary:
By means of the signs mentioned in their scriptures about the Holy Prophet, the People of the Book could easily know that Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him!) was indeed the Promised Prophet, yet because of enmity and jealousy they would not recognize him and insisted on mixing up truth with falsehood rather than accept the truth in its unalloyed purity.
73. And a section of the People of the Book say, 'Believe in that which has been revealed unto the believers in the early part of the day and disbelieve in the latter part thereof; perchance they may return.'

74. 'And obey none but him who follows your religion; — Say, 'Surely, the true guidance, the guidance of Allah, is that one be given the like of that which has been given to you' — or 'they would dispute with you before your Lord.' Say, 'All bounty is in the hand of Allah. He gives it to whomsoever He pleases. And Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing.'

361. Commentary:
This verse refers to one of the attempts of the Jews to lead Muslims astray. This attempt pertained to a clever ruse on their part to strike a blow at the growing power of Islam. The Jews were held in esteem by the pagan Arabs for their religious learning. They took undue advantage of this and thought of a device to turn Muslims away from their faith by outwardly embracing Islam in the early part of a day and recanting it in its latter part, seeking in this way to make the unlettered Arabs believe that something must have been seriously wrong with Islam, otherwise these learned men would not have so hurriedly given it up. Devices like these have been employed by the enemies of truth in all ages, but they have never succeeded.

362. Commentary:
The construction of this verse, though seemingly rather complicated, is designed to make it capable of different interpretations. We will give here those most apparent:

(1) The clause, And obey none but him who follows your religion, is a continuation of the concluding clause of the preceding verse. Thereafter comes a parenthetical clause beginning with the words, Say, surely the true guidance, and ending with the words, the like of that which has been given to you. Then comes again the speech of the Jews in the words, Or they would dispute with you before your Lord, the verse finally ending with the divine commandment, Say, All bounty, etc. The style is peculiar to the Quran and is intended to produce a good psychological effect.

The words, that one be given the like of that which has been given to you, which Muslims are bidden to say are in fitting contrast to the words of the Jews quoted in the beginning of the verse i.e. obey none but him who follows your religion. Jews make God a national deity, debarring all others from His favours, whereas Muslims believe in Him as the Lord of all, basing His right to greatness on the
75. **He chooses for His mercy whomsoever He pleases. And Allah is Lord of exceeding bounty.**

**Commentary:**

The word "bounty" here refers to the gift of revelation. The People of the Book are told that if God is pleased to grant prophethood to a people other than themselves, they can have no cause to grumble nor any ground for complaint. The word "exceeding" (lit. great) hints that since God is "Lord of exceeding bounty," it is in the fitness of things that His gifts and favours should descend on all peoples, at one time on this people and at another on that. The word also hints that God being "Lord of exceeding bounty" the time had now come for one universal dispensation for all mankind.

(3) Yet another interpretation is obtained, if the speech of the Jews is taken to end with the words, *obey none but him who follows your religion*, the succeeding clauses being considered to be all divine speech put in the mouth of believers. In this case the words would be considered to be understood before the clause and the entire expression would mean, "so they should accept it, or they should dispute with you before your Lord," signifying that, as true guidance is the guidance contained in the Quran, so either the Jews should accept it or they and Muslims should place their case before God for decision i.e. they should have a prayer-contest with them and pray to God to help the righteous and destroy the wicked as already explained in 3:62.

(2) According to another interpretation, only the words which in this case would be translated as "Say, the true guidance is the guidance of Allah," would be considered as being parenthetical and the following words i.e. *that one be given the like of that which has been given to you*, etc., would be taken to form part of the speech of the Jews. In this case the clause would signify that the Jews say to one another that the guidance that has come to the House of Israel, or the favours that have been bestowed on them, can never be vouchsafed to any other people. They are the exclusive privilege of Israel.

(1) Furthermore, they believe that the fold of Islam, which is Allah's universal guidance, is open to all peoples. The words of the Jews, *Or they would dispute with you before your Lord*, mean that if the Jews follow any dispensation other than their own, they would thereby prove their own guilt in the sight of God, for in that case they would be tacitly admitting that the door of God's favours is open to others as well, and thus they would make themselves liable to punishment for rejecting Islam. The words, *All bounty is in the hand of Allah*, mean that the bestowing of the gift of prophethood upon a people is in the hand of God alone and He confers it on those who are deserving of it.
76. Among the People of the Book there is he who, if thou trust him with a treasure, will return it to thee; and among them there is he who, if thou trust him with a dinár, will not return it to thee, unless thou keep standing over him. That is because they say, 'We are not liable to blame in the matter of the unlearned;' and they utter a lie against Allah knowingly.\footnote{Commentary: The words, We are not liable to blame in the matter of the unlearned, refer to a notion prevalent among Jews in the time of the Holy Prophet that it was no sin to rob the gentile Arabs of their possessions, because the latter followed a false religion. The Jews believed that they were at liberty to do as they liked concerning Muslims and would not be called to account for it. Possibly they deduced this queer doctrine from the Jewish law of usury, which makes an invidious distinction between a Jew and a non-Jew regarding the giving and taking of interest (Exod. 22: 25; Lev. 25: 36, 37; Deut. 23: 20, 21). Another meaning of this verse is obtained if we take the words "trust," "treasure," "dinár" etc. in a figurative sense. The Bible contains not only prophecies about the Holy Prophet of Islam but also clear injunctions to the People of the Book to accept him when he made his appearance. This was in the nature of a "trust" with them. But when the Promised Prophet appeared, they refused to surrender that trust, except a few of them who accepted Islam. These it is that are spoken of as returning the treasure they are trusted with, whereas those who not only rejected the Holy Prophet but even refused to admit that their scriptures contained any prophecies about him are likened to such as would not even return a "dinár" entrusted to them unless you keep standing over them i.e. unless you force them in argument to admit the truth.}

77. Nay, but whoso fulfils his pledge and fears God—verily, Allah loves the God-fearing.\footnote{Commentary: In this verse believers are exhorted not to follow the bad example of Jews but to deal equitably with all peoples alike. All treaties and covenants and all obligations should be loyally fulfilled and all pledges properly redeemed. The verse also refutes the Jewish notion that they are superior to other nations and lays down the golden rule that all human beings as such are equal and it is only personal qualities that make a difference. In fact, all rivalry between different nations and the consequent tension and war are the result of the pernicious notion that some nations are superior to others by virtue of their descent.}
78. As for those who take a paltry price in exchange of their covenant with Allah and their oaths, they shall have no portion in the life to come, and Allah will neither speak to them nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them; and for them shall be a grievous punishment.

79. And, surely, among them is a section who twist their tongues while reciting the Book: that you may think it to be part of the Book, while it is not part of the Book. And they say ‘It is from Allah;’ while it is not from Allah; and they utter a lie against Allah knowingly.

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366. Commentary:

Those who break God's covenant and withhold true evidence really do so only to earn worldly benefits, which are indeed a paltry price.

The word خُلَاق literally meaning an abundant portion of what is good (see 2:201), has been used here to show that disbelievers will not have a portion of good works large enough to secure salvation for them; otherwise the Quran makes it clear that no work of man, whether good or bad, is truly lost (e.g. 99:8, 9).

The words, Allah will neither speak to them nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, mean that God will not speak to them words of kindness and will not look upon them with mercy and compassion. In fact, the looking of God upon a person cannot but mean the bestowing of His grace and favour upon him. The breakers of God's covenants and the withholders of true evidence will not receive such a look from Him. The words, nor will He purify them, mean that He will not adjudge them as pure.

367. Commentary:

The clause, who twist their tongues while reciting the Book, alludes to an evil practice of some Jews in the time of the Holy Prophet. They would recite a passage in Hebrew in such a manner as would deceive the hearers into believing that it was the Torah that was being recited. The word “Book” used thrice in this verse means “a passage in Hebrew” in the first place and “the Torah” in the last two. The passage is spoken of as “the Book” because the Jews tried to make it appear as such.
80. It is not possible for a man that Allah should give him the Book and dominion and prophethood, and then he should say to men, 'Be servants to me and not to Allah;' but he would say, 'Be solely devoted to the Lord because you teach the Book and because you study it.'

368. Important Words:

 salah (solely devoted to the Lord) is the plural of رابِّي اَنْ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ الَّذِي اَنْعِمَ رَبُّكَ عَلَيْكَ وَالْحُكْمَرَ (long-bearded) and شَرِّافِي (having long hair) are derived from شَرَاف (beard) and شُرْف (hair) respectively. Keeping in view the different meanings of رب (see 1:2 and 3:65) the word رابِّي would mean, one who devotes himself to religious service, or applies himself to acts of devotion; one who possesses a knowledge of God; one who is learned in religious matters; a good or righteous man; a worshipper of the Lord; a teacher of others who begins to nourish people with the small matters of knowledge or science before taking the great ones; a learned man who not only practises what he knows but also instructs others; one of high rank in knowledge; a lord or master; a leader; a reformer (Lane, Sibwaih & Mubarrad).

The expression لا كَانَ (it is not possible for him) is, according to Arabic idiom, used in three senses: (1) it does not become him; as in the hadith ما كان لابن أبي حذافة أن يصل بن يدي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم i.e. it does not become the son of Abū Quhāfa (i.e. Abū Bakr) to lead the Faithful in Prayers in the presence of the Prophet of God (Bukhārī); (2) it is rationally impossible for him to do so; or, it does not stand to reason that he should have done so; (3) he cannot possibly do so, i.e., it is physically impossible for him to do so. It is in the second sense that the expression has been used in this verse. See also 2:35.

Commentary:

It is quite inconceivable that a man whom God has raised as a Prophet and to whom He has given a revealed Book for the guidance of men should teach them to take him as God beside Allah. Such a supposition would imply a serious reflection on God Himself Who chose for His Messenger a man who undid the very work which he had been commissioned to do, and who, instead of calling upon men to worship God, set himself up as God and called upon them to adore him. Such a thing can never occur. A Prophet would always exhort men to become the devotees of God only.

The words, because you teach the Book and because you study it, show that it is the duty of all those who succeed in acquiring spiritual knowledge to impart it to others and not to let men grope in the darkness of ignorance.
81. Nor is it possible for him that he should bid you take the angels and the Prophets for Lords. Would he enjoin you to disbelieve after you have submitted to God? ²³⁶⁹

R. 9 82. 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.' ³⁷⁰

³⁶⁹. Commentary:
It is an act of great infidelity to regard angels and Prophets as Lords, and to put them in the place of Almighty God. A true Prophet cannot be guilty of such an offence. It is the height of unreason to believe that a person whose very mission is to turn infidels into believers and who does not hesitate to defy the whole world for the achievement of this noble end should first make men the devotees of God and then seek to turn them into his own adorers.

³⁷⁰. Important Words:
ميثاق الاليم (covenant from the people through the Prophets) literally means, covenant of the Prophets. According to Arabic usage, the expression ميثاق الاليم (lit. Allah took the covenant of the Prophets) may refer either to a covenant which the Prophets of God entered into with Him, or to a covenant which God took from the people through their Prophets. In this verse the words are used in the latter sense, which is supported by another reading of ميثاق الاليم as reported by Ubayy bin Ka'b and Abdullah bin Mas'ud, i.e., ميثاق الاليم اوروا الكتاب meaning, the covenant of those who were given the Book (Muhit). This rendering is supported by the words that follow i.e. and then there comes to you a Messenger fulfilling what is with you, because it was to the people and not to their Prophets that the Messenger of God came. The meaning given above gains further support from the fact that as other Prophets were dead at the time of the Holy Prophet, they could naturally render him no help and there was thus no sense in taking any covenant from them to this effect.

Commentary:
This verse is considered to apply to other Prophets in general and to the Holy Prophet in particular. Both applications are correct. The verse lays down a general rule. The advent of every Prophet takes place in fulfilment of certain prophecies made by a previous Prophet in which he enjoins his followers to
83. Now *whoso turns away after this, then, surely, those are the transgressors.* 371

84. Do they seek a religion other than Allah's, while to Him submits whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him shall they be returned? 372

accept the next Prophet when he makes his appearance. If the Prophet comes in fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the scriptures of one people only, as was the case with Jesus and other Israelite Prophets, then only that people are bound to accept and help him; but if the scriptures of all religions predict the coming of a Prophet, as in the case of the Holy Prophet, then all nations are bound to accept him.

The Holy Prophet appeared in fulfilment of the prophecies not only of the Israelite Prophets (Isa. 21:13-15. Deut. 18:18; 33:2. John 14:25, 26; 16:7-13) but also of the Aryan Seers and Buddhist and Zoroastrian Sages. We have the following prophecy in Dasātīr, the sacred scripture of the Parsis: "When the people of Iran will begin to do evil deeds, there shall appear from among the Arabs a man whose followers shall abolish the crown, the throne, the kingdom, and the religion of Iran. The headstrong shall become humble and a house without idols shall take the place of idol-houses and fire-temples, and to it they shall turn their faces in worship" (Safrang Dasātīr, p. 188, Sirājī Press, Delhi). The words are too clear to need comment. A similar prophecy is found in Jāmāspī, a work of Jāmāsp, the first successor of Zoroaster (Jāmāspī, published by Nizām al-Mashā'ikh, Delhi, 1330 A.H.).

The word مسلمًا (fulfilling; for the meaning of which see 2:42) has been used here to denote the criterion by which a true claimant to prophethood is distinguished from a false one. But if the word is taken in the sense of "verifying or confirming or declaring to be true" as is sometimes done, this verification or confirmation can be no test of knowing a true Prophet from an impostor, for even an impostor can declare the previous scriptures to be true. The word has, therefore, been rightly translated here as "fulfilling" for it is only by "fulfilling" in his person the prophecies contained in the previous scriptures that a claimant can prove his truth, it being beyond the power of an impostor to fulfil the previous prophecies in his person.

371. Commentary:
The word تآق دَّر (transgressors) used in this verse may also be rendered as disobedient or breakers of promise. Both these meanings are applicable here.

372. Commentary:
As in the physical world man must submit to the laws of nature, whether he wills it or not, and he knows by experience that such submission is useful for him, it is only reasonable that in spiritual matters also, wherein he has been granted a certain amount of freedom, he should obey the laws and commands of Allah and thus win His pleasure to his own eventual benefit.
85. Say, "We believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us, and that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and to Him we submit."

86. And who whatsoever 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.

373. Commentary:
The Jews refused to believe in non-Israelite Prophets as the words, obey none but him who follows your religion (3:74) show. In the present verse the charge has been pressed home to Jews that whereas they rejected all but the Israelite Prophets, Islam requires its followers to believe in all the Prophets of God, irrespective of the country or the race or the community to which they belonged or of the time in which they lived. Again, Islam requires them not only to believe in the Prophets that have passed away but also in any that may appear in future. A great contrast indeed, between the catholicity of Islam and the narrow-mindedness of Judaism!

The words, We make no distinction between any of them, should not be understood to mean that Islam considers all Prophets to be of equal spiritual rank. This view is contrary to 2:254 in which some Prophets have been declared to possess a higher spiritual rank than others. So the words refer only to discrimination as regards believing in them and not as regards their rank.

374. Commentary:
The Jews and Christians used to say that they were not bound to accept Islam, because it was the Quran that verified the Torah and the Gospel and not the Torah and the Gospel that verified the Quran. Apart from the fact that the Quran does not "verify" the previous scriptures, in the sense in which they understood it, their sense of false security has been shattered in this verse and it has been declared unequivocally that Islam is now the only religion acceptable to God. Even if the word اسلام (Islam) is here taken to signify not "the religion of Islam" but "submission and resignation to the will of God," the present verse makes it binding on the People of the Book to accept Islam, as it alone now represents the will of the Supreme Being.
87. How shall Allah guide a people who have disbelieved after believing and who had borne witness that the Messenger was true and to whom clear proofs had come? And Allah guides not the wrong-doing people.\(^{375}\)

88. Of such the reward is that on them shall be the "curse of Allah and of angels and of men, all together."\(^{375A}\)

89. They shall abide thereunder. Their punishment shall not be lightened nor shall they be reprieved;\(^{375B}\)

90. Except those who repent thereafter and amend. And surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.\(^{376}\)

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\(^{375}\) Commentary:
Certainly a people who at first believe in the truth of a Prophet and proclaim their belief openly and become witnesses of heavenly Signs but afterwards reject that Prophet through fear of men or other worldly considerations lose all title to be again guided to the right path. The verse lays down a general principle that God lets a person go astray only when the latter knowingly allows disbelief and wickedness to get hold of him and does not try to improve his ways.

\(^{375A}\) Commentary:
For an explanation of the expression, the curse of Allah and of angels and of men, see under 2:162.

\(^{375B}\) Commentary:
See 2:163.

\(^{376}\) Commentary:
The curse and punishment spoken of in the preceding verses are conditional and will last as long as the condition that has brought them about lasts.

The words, and amend, show that mere repentance and sorrow at what is past is not sufficient to secure divine forgiveness. Sinners must not only express genuine regret for past faults but also promise to abandon evil ways in future. Nay, they should do more. They should try to reform others as well, for the word إصلاح rendered as "amend" not only signifies amending one's own ways but also reforming others (see 2:161). If a person is really sincere in his repentance and realizes the true value of virtue, he cannot stop at being good himself but would also try to make others good, if only to protect his own environment.
91. "Surely, those who disbelieve after they have believed and then increase in disbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted, and these are they who have gone astray.\(^{377}\)

92. As for those who have disbelieved, and die while they are disbelievers, there shall not be accepted from any one of them even an earth-full of gold though he offer it in ransom. It is these for whom shall be a grievous punishment, and they shall have no helpers.\(^{378}\)

R. 10 93. "Never shall you attain to righteousness unless you spend out of that which you love; and whatever you spend, Allah surely knows it well.\(^{379}\)

\(^{377}\) Commentary: The verse does not mean that the repentance of apostates shall in no case be accepted because this inference runs counter to 3: 90 according to which repentance is acceptable at every stage. So the reference in the words, their repentance shall not be accepted, is to those persons only who make a profession of repentance but are not sincere in it, and, instead of reinforcing their profession by bringing about a real and practical change in their lives, actually increase in disbelief. The words, these are they who have gone astray, placed at the end of the verse corroborate this inference, for they show that in spite of a lip-profession of repentance they still continue to follow a course of error. Such repentance cannot be genuine and hence cannot be accepted.

\(^{378}\) Commentary: This verse further explains the true significance of repentance. So long as death does not overtake one and the door of performing good works is open, the door of repentance is also open. But in no case will mere lip-repentance of disbelievers or their alms be accepted. If there is no faith in the heart, mere giving of alms or mere apparently good works cannot win the pleasure of God, even if one spends large quantities of gold.

\(^{379}\) Important Words: \(\text{الْكَانَةَ} \) (righteousness) means, goodness of a high order (Mufradāt). The Holy Prophet has explained the word \(\text{الْكَانَةَ} \) as \(\text{صَنَعَ الخَلْقَ} \) i.e. the excellence of moral qualities (Muslim & Musnad). See also 2: 45, 178. As true belief is the basis of all goodness, so the word \(\text{الْكَانَةَ} \) may also be taken to mean true belief.

Commentary: Since the word \(\text{الْكَانَةَ} \) means, goodness or righteousness of a high order or excellence of morals, the verse purports to say that though God is cognizant of, and suitably rewards, each and every thing that one spends in the cause of Allah, yet the goodness of a high order,