76. He replied, 'Did I not tell thee that thou wouldst not be able to keep company with me in patience?'  

77. Moses said, 'If I ask thee concerning anything after this, keep me not in thy company, for then thou shalt have got sufficient excuse from me.'  

78. So they went on till, when they came to the people of a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to make them their guests. And they found therein a wall which was about to fall and he repaired it. Moses said, 'If thou hadst desired, thou couldst have taken payment for it.'


**Commentary:**  
This part of Moses' Vision corresponds to the second part of the Holy Prophet's Vision. In his Vision the Prophet saw a man calling him from across the road and then he was offered a cup of wine which he refused to accept. Gabriel told him that the man who called him was Satan and that the cup of wine signified deviating from the right path (Jādir). Similarly, in the second part of his Vision Moses was shown a young man which, in the language of dreams signifies, among other things, ignorance, power and love of sensuous pleasures. Moses' objection to the killing of the young boy by the righteous servant of God in his Vision meant that Islam would require its followers to bring a veritable death over their carnal desires and passions but that the pleasure-loving Jews and Christians would find fault with this Islamic commandment. The expression لَمْ يَسْتَجِبَ i.e. so they journeyed on, which has been used several times in these verses is exactly the expression used by the Archangel Gabriel for the Holy Prophet in his Vision, namely, إِلَّا أَطْلَقْ إِلَّا أَطْلَقْ i.e. go on, go on.  
The words, when they met a young boy, he slew him, may refer to the murder by a party of Muslims of that arch-enemy of Islam, Ka'b bin Ashraf, the ring leader of the Jewish miscreants of Medina (Hishām).  
This verse also makes clear that the Journey of Moses of which an account has been given in these verses was undertaken in a vision because no sane person while awake would kill a man without legitimate cause.  

2115. **Commentary:**  
This verse shows that the followers of Moses—the Jews—would repeatedly break their solemn agreements with the Holy Prophet till a complete rupture of mutual relations ensued.  

2116. **Commentary:**  
The words أَهْلَ الْبَرْسُ (people of a town) in a dream signify, one or more nations; and asking for their hospitality means, seeking
79. He said, 'This is the parting of ways between me and thee. I will now tell thee the meaning of that which thou wast not able to bear with patience. 2117

80. 'As for the boat, it belonged to certain poor people who worked on the sea; and I desired to damage it, for there was behind them a king, who seized every boat by force. 2118

their co-operation in a righteous cause. In this sense of the words, the verse would mean that Moses and the Holy Prophet would seek the co-operation of Jews and Christians in the cause of God but it would be denied to both of them. That the Jews flatly refused to give any co-operation or assistance to Moses when he asked them to go with him to conquer Canaan is clearly stated in the Quran (5: 22-25). The Holy Prophet also failed to receive the co-operation of Christians in even such a noble cause as the establishment of the Unity of God on earth. Says the Quran, 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 besides Allah. But if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we have submitted to God (3: 65).

According to Ta'tīr al-Anām, wall (wall) in a vision with a breach in it denotes a leader of a people or a learned man who has lost his property and the repairing of it signifies the restoration of the property of that leader.

In view of these interpretations, the words, And they found therein a wall which was about to fall, signify that Jewish and Christian religious leaders would lose all influence over their followers; and the repairing of the wall denotes that that influence would be rehabilitated. These words may also refer to the progress made by the Israelites through Moses and by the Ishmaelites through the Holy Prophet. The words, if thou hadst desired, thou couldst have taken payment for it, may mean that the business instinct of the Jewish and Christian peoples would grow so strong that they would not do anything without demanding remuneration for it.

2117. Commentary:

When the righteous servant of God (the Holy Prophet) saw that Moses, i.e. his followers, in spite of his earnest appeal for their co-operation in the propagation of the ideals which were common between them, would not give up their attitude of sullen aloofness and hostility, he realized that he would have to sever all connection with them.

2118. Commentary:

With this verse begins an explanation of the foregoing incidents as given by the holy man of Moses' Vision.

The words, 'poor people' here represent the meek of heart whom material prosperity and abundance of wealth do not prevent from taking care of and sympathizing with the needy and the destitute and from associating with them. The expression 'a king' denotes
81. 'And as for the youth, his parents were believers, and we feared lest he should cause them trouble through rebellion and disbelief,'

82. 'So we desired that their Lord should give them in exchange a child better than he in purity and closer in filial affection.'

The expression (his parents) here means the human body and soul, because the parents or the source from which spring all moral qualities is the combination of the human body and soul which is man himself. The killing of the youth in the Vision signifies bringing under proper control unbridled human passions and lessening their vehemence and intensity. Thus the killing of the young man by the holy man of God so that he should not lead his parents to rebellion and disbelief, as seen in his Vision by Moses, signifies that man has been gifted with great natural powers to perform the highest deeds of virtue and that in order to bring these powers into play, the faculties of activity, power and ignorance have been implanted in him. Man can fulfil the great object of his life by making use of these powers which spring from a combination of the human body and soul. But if these powers are not kept under proper control, they lead man to disbelief and transgression. These powers have been brought under proper control and their undue vehemence curbed by the commandments and ordinances which God has revealed to the Holy Prophet as signified by the killing of the young boy by the holy man in Moses' Vision.

2119. Commentary:
As explained under 18:75 above (youth) in a vision signifies, activity or buoyancy, power and ignorance; and the word as also shown under the same verse means, diminishing or lessening the effect or vehemence of a thing. In view of this significance of these words, the killing of the youth would signify the lessening or diminishing the evil effects of ignorance, too much power and uncontrolled buoyancy.
83. 'And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the town, and beneath it was a treasure belonging to them, and their father had been a righteous man, so thy Lord desired that they should reach their age of full strength and take out their treasure, as a mercy from thy Lord; and I did it not of my own accord. This is the explanation of that which thou wast not able to bear with patience.'

The followers of Moses gave free play to their low passions and, abandoning themselves to a life of ease and pleasure, exceeded all bounds of moderation and sobriety.

2121. Commentary:
As already pointed out (the wall) represents the elders of the Jews i.e. Moses, Jesus (18 : 78) and Abraham of whom the Quran says, "and in the next he will surely be among the righteous" (2 : 131).

By (treasure) is meant the treasure of divine knowledge which was vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus.

The verse purports to say that God preserved in the Quran the great treasure of spiritual knowledge which was vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus (98 : 4) and which was in danger of being lost because of the irreligiousness of the Jews and their engrossment in worldly affairs so that, when they awaken to a realization of truth, they may accept it.

The words, as a mercy from thy Lord, mean that the preservation by God of the imperishable part of the teachings of Moses and Jesus in the Quran was an act of mercy on His part because the Jews by their repeated rebellion and transgression had forfeited all title to divine mercy. But despite their iniquities God had mercy on them and preserved their own treasures of spiritual knowledge in the Quran for their guidance.

The words, I did it not of my own accord, mean that the Holy Prophet had no hand in the preservation of this great treasure of divine knowledge. A reference to this fact has also been made in the words, "Nor does he speak of his own desire" (53 : 4).

After a perusal of the incidents mentioned in the preceding verses and their explanation it becomes abundantly clear that the Vision of Moses has been mentioned here to point to the following facts:

(a) That it was decreed and was in the fitness of things that the Holy Prophet should appear after Christians who constitute the second part of the Mosaic Dispensation had become corrupt.

(b) That because Islamic teaching was based on laws and principles which differed fundamentally from some principles of the Mosaic Law, true and real co-operation between Jews and Muslims was impossible, but salvation without subscribing to Islamic principles was also unthinkable.

(c) That Jews and Christians would refuse to accept the Holy Prophet and would follow their own separate course but they will have to give their allegiance to him in the long run.

(d) That, after a long and fatiguing journey and after having despaired of obtaining real peace and contentment of mind through their own unaided efforts, Jews and Christians
would be compelled to take stock of their whole position with the result that they would realize that as their religion had long outlived its usefulness they should have given it up long before.

(e) That after the dawning of this realization upon them, the prophecies concerning them which have been preserved in the Quran will lead Jews and Christians to accept the Holy Prophet.

(f) That after having accepted Islam they will submit themselves to limitations and restrictions which it has imposed upon man to regulate his moral conduct, and that by subduing their unrestrained passions they will become resigned to divine decree and thus will draw upon themselves God's grace and will bathe in the sea of His Mercy.

In fact, the Isrā' of Moses constituted a beautiful prelude to the coming Islamic Dispensation which was to supplant the Mosaic Law.

2122. Important Words:

(Dhu'l Qarnain). Dhu'l Qarnain is derived from qarāna. They say, i.e. he connected a thing with a thing. means, horn; edge; border of the rising sun; trumpet of the Last Judgement; nobleman; one's equal in age; a generation of men; people of one time; people of a time among whom there appears a Prophet of God; century; age (Lane & Aqrab). See also 6: 7.

Commentary:

Before proceeding to know and establish the identity of Dhu'l Qarnain it is necessary to state the reasons why at all his story has been related in the Quran and why it has found such prominent mention in the present Sūra. A pointed reference has already been made in this Sūra to the two periods of the great material progress of Christian nations. Its opening verses give a somewhat detailed account of the Dwellers of the Cave. We are told that in the early days of Christianity, Christians were true and righteous followers of their Faith. Even in later years when they came to acquire great political power but lost much of their former spiritual vitality and religious fervour, they did not altogether become divorced from their religion because till that time they had retained some faith in Jesus and because also a new Dispensation which demanded their allegiance had not yet come into force.

After the story of the Dwellers of the Cave an account of the Isrā' (الاسراءُ) or Spiritual Journey of Moses which represents the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam has been given in some detail in order to show that with the Holy Prophet's appearance the first period of the material prosperity and progress of the Christian people would come to an end and though it would still be possible for them to make some progress they would reach the zenith of their material glory and greatness for a second time long after his advent. Spiritually, however, they would be a dead people and without the Holy Prophet's acceptance there would be no redemption for them. This second period of material pomp and grandeur and the spiritual death of the Christian people are represented in divine Scriptures by the phenomenal rise to power of Gog and Magog which forms one of the central themes of the present Sūra. Because politically Gog and Magog and Dhu'l Qarnain are inseparably linked with each other, as will appear from the following
paragraphs, Dhu’l Qarnain’s account also has been given at some length in this Sūra.

Now as to Gog and Magog. These names were given to certain tribes who lived in the extreme north-west of Asia and eastern Europe. The fertility of the Asiatic plains led these tribes to make inroads into the south and south-west of Asia. If these incursions had been uniformly successful the whole course of subsequent human history would have completely changed and, like the marauding Aryans before them, these people would also have settled in Asia and would have been converted to the various religions of the East. But, as is explained in the following verses, Dhu’l Qarnain set up a formidable barrier which prevented their spreading into Asia and thus compelled them to move further West. Thus they became hedged in between the extreme north-west of Asia and eastern Europe and instead of penetrating into Asia they spread into other parts of Europe. There they came into contact with Christianity which they accepted and made their national Faith. But these people never ceased to cast longing eyes on the fertile lands of Asia and to cherish an intense desire to conquer them. The sense of frustration at their failure to fulfil their heartfelt desire deepened with every generation till it developed into a feeling of political hostility towards the Asiatic peoples which burst forth in its full fury in the last three centuries. Thus Dhu’l Qarnain’s efforts to check these people from spreading into Asia, in a way, led to the great spiritual havoc caused among mankind by Dajjāl which is the second name of Gog and Magog. As both Gog and Magog and Dhu’l Qarnain are intimately connected with each other, Dhu’l Qarnain has found a mention in the Quran along with the account of the second rise to power and prosperity of Christian nations who, in our age, represent Gog and Magog.

Who is this Dhu’l Qarnain to whom the present and the following several verses refer and when and where did he live? Before an answer to this question is attempted it must be pointed out that the Quran is not a book of history. It does not merely record an historical event to establish its authenticity. The so-called stories mentioned in the Quran are, in fact, so many prophecies about future events. The story of Dhu’l Qarnain also belongs to the same category. It is not merely an account of the military exploits of a great and noble conqueror who lived in the past but it contains also a prophetic reference to another great historical personage, a World Reformer, who was to appear in some future time—our own time. About the appearance of this Reformer who has been called “the Promised Messiah and Mahdi” repeated mention has been made in Muslim Scriptures (Bukhārī, Māja etc.). Thus the story of Dhu’l Qarnain possesses both an historical and a spiritual significance and therefore deserves special study.

Dhu’l Qarnain was the founder of the Medo-Persian Empire which represented the two horns of the ram of Daniel’s famous dream. Daniel says: “I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great” (Dan. 8 : 4). Quite in harmony with this part of Daniel’s dream, the Quran mentions three journeys of Dhu’l Qarnain (vv. 87, 91, 94). This fact lends powerful support to the inference that Dhu’l Qarnain is the descriptive name of a king of Media and Persia. And of all kings of Media and Persia, the description given in the Quran most fitly applies to Cyrus. He ascended the throne of Persia after the death of his father and subsequently conquered Media which was a greater kingdom than Persia, and thus was fulfilled the second part of Daniel’s dream: “and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one
The Quran has mentioned four distinctive marks of Dhu'l Qarnain: (1) He was a righteous servant of God, and he was blessed with divine revelation (vv. 87, 92 & 99). (2) He was a great conqueror and a kind and just ruler; and he treated the nations he conquered most benevolently (vv. 85, 89). (3) He marched to the West and made great conquests till he came to a place where he found the sun setting in a pool of murky water and then he turned to the East and conquered and subdued vast territories (vv. 85, 87, 88, 89). (4) Last of all he went to a midway region where lived a savage people and where Gog and Magog made inroads, and he built a wall there to stop these inroads (vv. 94—98). Now of the great monarchs and famous military captains of ancient times Cyrus possesses in the greatest measure the four above-mentioned qualifications. He therefore more than anybody else deserves to be considered as the Dhu'l Qarnain of the Quran.

The first distinguishing mark of Dhu'l Qarnain mentioned above is that he was a righteous man of God and was blessed with divine revelation. The Bible agrees with the Quran in this respect. The Bible says:

That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus whose righthand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, ....... that thou mayest know that I, the Lord which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel....... Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing saying: Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem which i. in Judah (Isaiah, 44: 28; 45: 1-3; Ezra. 1: 1-2 & 2 Chron. 36: 22-23).

Thus according to the Bible Cyrus was Jehovah's "friend", His "anointed" and "shepherd" and "performed all His pleasure" (Jew. Enc., vol. 4, p. 404 & Enc. Bib., vol. 1, col. 980).

Dhu'l Qarnain's second characteristic according to the Quran is that he was a great conquerer and ruler of vast territories. About this the Bible says:

Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem ....Whose hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates....... I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places (Ezra 1: 2; Isaiah 45: 1-3).

In this respect history also supports the Quran and the Bible: It represents Cyrus as a great conqueror and a very humane ruler who treated the nations he conquered most generously and in return received their most willing allegiance:

I knew that there were some who willingly obeyed Cyrus, that were many days' journey, and others that were even some months' journey distant from him, some, too, who had never seen him and some who knew very well that they never should see him; and yet they readily submitted to his government; for he so far excelled all other kings, as well as those that had received their dominion from their fore-fathers, as those that had acquired it by their own efforts........ More
than this he was most humane. His shield is stained by no horrible deeds of blood, of frightful revenge and cruelty.... He spared and made gifts to conquered enemies.... Because no wide stream of blood separated him from the vanquished, he found the only possible basis for his giant structure in the raising of the conquerors and the conquered to equal privileges. Who is there that approaches him? He is not only beloved by his own people as a father incomparable in every way.... He was not the product and child of his age but its creator and father. (Historians' History of the World, under Cyrus).

Dhu’l Qarnain’s third outstanding mark mentioned in the Quran is that he conquered and established a vast empire in the East as well as in the West. Now it is a well-known fact of history that Cyrus ruled over vast territories which extended to the waters of the Black Sea in the West and to the confines of Afghanistan, Samarcand and Bukhara in the East. About his conquests in the West it may briefly be stated that he had hardly become the ruler of Media and Persia when Croesus, the King of Lydia (Asia Minor), from his capital, Sardis, instigated the rulers of Babylon, Egypt and Sparta, and rose against him but within a few days suffered a crushing defeat and opened the way for Cyrus' conquests up to the banks of the Black Sea. Cyrus conquered Babylon, Nineveh and Greek colonies which had extended to the north of Asia Minor to the Sea of Marmora. Thus he reached that pool of murky water which was situated to the West of that country.

About Cyrus’ conquests in the East the Historians' History of the World (vol. 2, under Cyrus) says:

How far to the East Cyrus extended his dominion we do not know, but it is probable that all the countries to the East which are mentioned in the older inscriptions of Darius as in subjection or rebellion were already subject in the time of Cyrus. In this case Chorasmia (Kharezm, the modern Khiva) and Sogdiana (Samarcand and Bukhara) belonged to him. He doubtless ruled also over a large portion of modern Afghanistan.

The following extract also from the Historians' History of the World (under Cyrus) throws further light on the vast range of the conquests of Cyrus in both the West and the East.

But Cyrus finding, in like manner, the nations of Asia independent and setting out with a little army of Persians, obtained the dominion over the Medes by their own choice, and over the Hyrcanians in a similar manner; he subdued the Syrians, Assyrians, Arabians, Cappadocians, both the Phrygians, the Lydians, Carians, Phoenicians and Babylonians; he had under his rule the Bactrians, Indians and Cilicians as well the Sacians, Paphlagonians and Magadidians and many other nations of whom we cannot enumerate even the names. He had dominion over the Greeks that were settled in Asia and going down to the sea over the Cyprians and Egyptians. These nations he ruled though they spoke neither the same language with himself nor with one another; yet he was able to extend the fear of himself over so great a part of the world, that he astonished all and no one attempted anything against him.... without a struggle the greatest empires, the two conquerors of Nineveh, surrendered to him both themselves and their own kings in chains, as had been done to none other; even Tyre, that proud and mighty city, unconquered and unconquerable, with whose lion-courage his predecessor and his successor, Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander alik., wrestled so fiercely and so long, did homage to him of her own free will. Above all, the little people of the Jews hailed him at the waters of Babylon as they had done no mortal before or since, as the victor and rescuer, the liberator and saviour.

The fourth notable feature of Dhu’l Qarnain referred to in the Quran is that after his conquests he turned his attention to a midway region. Here lived a half savage people who were the target of constant attacks by Gog...
and Magog and he built a wall to stop these inroads. Now in order fully to understand and appreciate this Quranic passage it is necessary to know who Gog and Magog were. About these people the Bible says:

Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophecy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal: and I will turn thee about and put hooks into thy jaws... Persia, Cush and Put with them (Ezekiel 38:2-6).

This shows that according to the Bible, which is our first and main source of information about Gog and Magog, Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk which are all situated in northern regions were the homeland of these people.

History supports this Biblical account about Gog and Magog. Magog is mentioned in Genesis 10:2 as the second son of Japheth, between Gomer and Madai. Gomer representing the Cimmerians who lived to the east of Asia Minor and Madai the Medes, Magog must be a people located east of the Cimmerians and west of the Medes. But in the list of nations (Gen. 10) the term connotes rather the complex of Barbarian peoples dwelling at the extreme north and north-east of the geographical survey covered by the chapter... In Ezek. 39:6 Magog occurs as the name of a northern people, the leader of whom is Gog and in Revelation Gog and Magog are considered as a comprehensive term for the powers of evil. Josephus identified them with the Scythians, a name which among classical writers stands for a number of unknown ferocious tribes. According to Jerome Magog was situated beyond the Caucasus, near the Caspian Sea. This also is the same northern region where the Scythians lived. Herodotus indicates that these nomads (Scythians) came through the natural gate between the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, the pass of Darband (Jew. Enc., under Gog and Magog & Historians' History of the World, vol. 2, p. 582).

Now as quoted above from the Bible, Gog and Magog had conquered Persia and it is a well-known fact of history that "Persia fell into the hands of the Scythians or Median Emperor who ruled Ecbatana from whom it was delivered by Cyrus the Great (Historians' History of the World, vol. 2, p. 589).

So it seems quite clear that the Scythians or Gog and Magog occupied territories to the north and north-east of the Black Sea and that they came from these territories through the pass of Darband and invaded and conquered and ruled over the Persians and that Cyrus had defeated them and delivered the Persians from their clutches.

As to the last point about Dhu'l Qarnain—that he built a strong wall as a barrier against the inroads of Gog and Magog—we find that exactly at the place which according to Herodotus was the pass through which the Scythians made raids upon Persia stood a wall, the famous wall of Derbent. The Encyclopaedia Britannica (under Derbent) refers to this wall as follows:

Derbent or Darband, a town of Persia, Caucasus, in the province of Daghestan, on the western shore of the Caspian... And to the south lies the seaward extremity of the Caucasian wall, 50 miles long otherwise known as Alexander's wall, blocking the narrow pass of the Iron Gate or the Caspian Gate. This, when entire, had a height of 29 feet and a thickness of about 10 feet, and with its iron gates and numerous watch-towers formed a veritable defence of the Persian Frontier.

This extract shows that there existed a wall which served as a barrier against, and protected Persia from, the attacks of the Scythians in the north. It is generally believed that this was built by Alexander the Great but this popular belief is against proven facts of history. Alexander defeated Darius in the summer of 330 B.C., but this defeat did not give him possession of the whole of Persia. Without pausing to take rest he proceeded to subdue
85. "We established him in the earth and gave him the means to accomplish everything." 

The whole country, but had hurriedly to come back to quell a revolt in his rear. After this he marched on to Kabul, where he had to face another revolt in his army and it was only in the winter of 329 B.C., that he could come to India. He finished all this journey in such haste that some historians have doubted whether it could have been accomplished in such a short time. Anyhow, it is admitted that he fought his way to India and did not stop anywhere. From India he returned in 324 B.C. to Persia, where he had again to face a revolt in his army. After subduing it he started for home and died on the way in June, 323 B.C. (Enc. Brit., 14th edition, vol. 1, pp. 569, 570). These facts show that his military expeditions were like a whirlwind and he conquered a large part of the world in a very short time. Amidst these whirlwind expeditions he could not give attention to any vast project such as the building of a large wall of the nature of that under discussion. The popular notion that Alexander had built this wall seems to have arisen from the fact that Muslim Commentators of the Quran mistook Dhu'l Qarnain for Alexander.

But if Alexander did not build this wall it does not prove that Cyrus built it. We are not in possession of quite incontestible and conclusive historical evidence to show that Cyrus did build this wall. Our conclusion that he was its builder is based only on the following circumstantial evidence:

(a) Darius about whom Cyrus had seen a vision that his wings would overshadow Europe and Asia ascended the Persian throne after the death of the son of Cyrus. In order to break the power of the Scythians Darius passed through Greece and attacked them from across Europe. It is inconceivable that Darius should have undertaken such a long, arduous and round-about journey to attack these people from across south-east Europe when they lived very near him in the north. The inevitable conclusion is that the existence of a huge wall which only Cyrus before him could have built had made it impossible for him to cross over to the other side with a large force. Nor was it possible for him to demolish it or take his army safely through its gates. So in order to fulfil his mission the only possible and wise course open to Darius was to attack the Scythians from the side of Europe.

(b) If there existed no impassable barrier of the nature of that under discussion it is inconceivable that, wise and far-seeing strategist as he was, Darius should have adopted a circuitous route of thousands of miles across Europe to attack the Scythians, leaving his own country exposed to their attacks from across the border.

(c) The fact that before the time of Cyrus the Scythians made constant and uninterrupted raids on Persia but after his conquests these raids completely ceased leads to the very probable conclusion that he must have set up a barrier which effectively checked these attacks, and that the barrier must be the famous wall at Derbent, mistakenly known as Alexander's wall.

2123. Commentary:

It has been made clear in the note on Dhu'l Qarnain that Cyrus was blessed with every kind of means for his great conquests.
86. Then he followed a certain way.

87. Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it setting in a pool of murky water, and near it he found a people. We said, 'O Dhu'l Qarnain, either punish them, or treat them with kindness.'

88. He said, "As for him who does wrong, we shall certainly punish him; then shall he be brought back to his Lord, Who will punish him with a dreadful punishment."

and that God Himself directed all his ways and had given him all the kingdoms of the earth (Isaiah 45: 13 & Ezra 1: 2).

The words signifi the rise of Cyrus to power took place under exceptional circumstances.

The words (everything) mean everything necessary for the accomplishment of his task.

2124. Important Words:

(pool of murky water). is derived from . They say i.e. he cleansed the well of its black, fetid mud. means, the well had in it black mud in abundance. means, a man of evil eye who injures with his eye him whom he sees and admires. The words mean, a well or a spring or pool foul with black, fetid mud (Lane). See also 15: 29.

Commentary:
The words i.e. the place where the sun set; signify the westernmost parts of Cyrus' Empire or the north-western boundary of Asia Minor and refer to the Black Sea because it formed the north-western boundary of the Empire of Cyrus. The verse refers to the expedition which Cyrus undertook against his enemies in the West. "Soon after the conquest of the Median empire Cyrus was attacked by a coalition of the other powers of the East-Babylon, Egypt and Lydia, joined by Sparta, the greatest military power of Greece. In the spring of 546 Croesus of Lydia began the attack and advanced into Cappadocia, while the other powers were still gathering their troops. But Cyrus anticipated them; he defeated Croesus and followed him to his capital. In the autumn of 546 Sardis was taken and the Lydian kingdom became a province of the Persians......During the next few years the Persian army suppressed a rebellion of the Lydians. The King of Cilicia voluntarily acknowledged the Persian supremacy" (Enc. Brit., & Historians' History of the World, under Cyrus).

The words, "he found it (the sun) setting in a spring of murky water," signify that it is not a small pool to which they refer. The waters referred to are so extensive that if one were to take his stand on the shore at the time of sunset, the sun would appear to be setting in the sea.

2125. Commentary:
The words, then shall he be brought back to his
89. "But as for him who believes and acts righteously, he will have a good reward, and we shall speak to him easy words of Our command." 2126

90. Then indeed he followed another way.

91. Until, when he reached the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had made no shelter against it. 2127

92. Thus indeed it was. Verily, We encompassed with Our knowledge all that was with him. 2128

Lord, indicate that Cyrus believed in life after death. He was a follower of Zoroaster and of all religions, second only to Islam, Zoroastrianism has lain the greatest stress on life after death. "There can be no doubt that Cyrus and his Persians, like Darius at a later period, were faithful believers in the pure doctrine of Zoroaster, and disdainfully regarded foreign cults" (Jew. Enc., vol. 4, p. 404).

2126. Commentary: This verse sheds some light on the humanity of Cyrus and on his kind and benevolent treatment of the races he conquered. See also 18:84.

2127. Commentary: This verse refers to Cyrus' expedition to the East—to Afghanistan and even Baluchistan. The words, on a people for whom We had made no shelter against it, signify that at that time the Afghans were an uncivilized people. They did not live in houses made of brick and stone but in huts and tents. The words may also apply to Baluchistan. But very sketchy references about Cyrus' expeditions to Afghanistan and Baluchistan are found in books of history. Contemporary historians, most of them being Greek, have given detailed accounts of the conquests of Cyrus in the West but have very little to say about his conquests in the East. They do not go beyond remarking that in the East Cyrus attacked regions in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan. But as Seistan then formed a part of the Persian empire we are inclined to the view that the verse can apply to Baluchistan also because the words, for whom We had made no shelter against it, give an apt description of this barren and arid country, full of deserts and rocks. The verse may also apply to the people who lived in the plains which have extended for hundreds of miles to the east of Seistan and Herat and to the north of Duzdab up to Meshed.

2128. Commentary: The words, We encompassed with Our knowledge all that was with him, mean that Cyrus in his expeditions was under divine protection. These words agree with the Biblical statement viz., "I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight" (Isaiah 45:2).
93. Then he followed another way.  

94. Until, when he reached the place between the two mountains, he found, beneath them, a people who would scarcely understand a word.  

95. They said, 'O Dhu'l Qarnain, verily Gog and Magog are creating disorder in the earth; shall we then pay thee tribute on condition that thou set up a barrier between us and them ?'  

96. He replied, 'The power with which my Lord has endowed me about this is better, but you may help me with physical strength, I will set up between you and them a rampart.'  

2129. Commentary:  
The verse refers to Cyrus' third expedition to the north of Persia—to the territory between the Caspian Sea and the Caucasian mountains.  

2130. Commentary:  
The verse means to say that the people of these regions spoke a different language from that of Cyrus but living in the immediate neighbourhood of Persia and, having constant contact with the Persians and the Medians, they had learnt to understand and speak their language, though very imperfectly and with very great difficulty. The region in which the wall was built was bounded on one side by the Caspian Sea and on the other by the Caucasian mountains. These two served as two barriers for it.  

2131. Commentary:  
The people who lived on the route of the depredatory incursions of Gog and Magog into Persia asked Cyrus to build a wall across the pass through which they made their raids.  

2132. Commentary:  
Cyrus said to the inhabitants of the place that he had the plan of the wall and other necessary material ready with him but they must provide human labour. The word فَرَأ means physical strength i.e. human labour.
97. 'Bring me blocks of iron'. They did so till, when he had levelled up the space between the two mountain sides he said, 'Now blow with your bellows'. They blew with bellows till when he had made it red as fire, he said, 'Bring me molten copper that I may pour it thereon.'

98. So they (Gog and Magog) were not able to scale it, nor were they able to dig through it.

99. Thereupon he said, 'This is a mercy from my Lord. But when the promise of my Lord shall come to pass, He will break it into pieces. And the promise of my Lord is certainly true.'

2133. Commentary:
In addition to human labour Cyrus demanded iron and molten copper from the inhabitants of the place. Copper, unlike iron, does not rust and when it is mixed with iron the mixture becomes all the more hard and defies rusting and corrosion. In order to keep the pass open for traders and commercial travellers Cyrus wanted to construct gates in the wall and for that purpose he required iron and molten copper.

2134. Commentary:
When the building of the wall was completed the raids of Gog and Magog from the north ceased. The wall was too thick to be broken through and too high to be scaled. It was, as already stated, 29 feet high and 10 feet thick and had iron gates and watch-towers. It effectively defended the Persian frontier.

2135. Commentary:
The words, This is a mercy from my Lord, throw much light on the humility and piety of Cyrus. Like a righteous servant of God he claimed for himself no credit for his vast conquests but ascribed all that he was able to achieve to the grace and mercy of God. Cyrus thus behaved like the true believer that he was.

The words, But when the promise of my Lord shall come to pass, show that Cyrus had been informed by revelation that sometime in future Gog and Magog would again spread to the South-East and this wall would then fail to retard or check their progress. This is the significance of the words, "He will break it". In 21:97 we are told that Gog and Magog would spread their tentacles all over the world. Metaphorically the “breaking of the wall” may also mean the decline of the political power of Islam, particularly of the Turks in Europe. With the weakening of the Turkish power the way for Christian nations of Europe to conquer the East became quite clear.
100. And on that day We shall leave some of them to surge against others, and the trumpet will be blown. Then shall We gather them all together. 2136

101. And on that day We shall present Hell, face to face, to the disbelievers. 2137

102. bWhose eyes were under a veil so as not to heed My warning and they could not even hear. 2138

2136. Commentary:
The verse means to say that at the time of the rise to power of Gog and Magog all peoples of the world will come together and the whole world will become like one country. Nation will fight against nation and kingdom against kingdom and malice, hatred and iniquity will abound. The reference evidently is to the present age.

The rise of Gog and Magog or the Christian nations of the West to great power is also mentioned in 21: 97 where it is stated that, breaking through all barriers and impediments, these nations will occupy every position of power and eminence. They will quickly spread all over the world by means of their sea-power (جـد in 21 : 97 means a high wave). When they have attained great power and have spread all over the world and the nations of the world have paid homage to them, then will the divine promise about their destruction be fulfilled. The coming of divine visitation will be so sudden and swift that they will be taken completely by surprise and in utter dismay and bewilderment they will say to themselves that they never expected punishment to come upon them so soon. The present verse and vv. 21 : 97, 98 point to the fact that Gog and Magog will come not through a breach in any wall but over the waves of the seas, in steamships, and will hold sway over all the oceans of the world. They will scour the seas and their sea-journeys will be very quick, easy and comfortable. This prophecy of the Quran has met with remarkable fulfilment in our own time. The Western Christian nations have scaled all the heights of material power. Great has been their rise and greater will be their fall!

2137. Commentary:
Those will be terrible days. The fire of Hell will be kindled for the sinful. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and man will consign God to oblivion and, sinking in sin and iniquity, he will render himself deserving of divine punishment.

2138. Commentary:
The verse means to say that at that time worship of God will totally disappear from among the Christian peoples and love of Mammon will take the place of love of God in their hearts. They will completely forget
their Creator and will attribute all their
great achievements to their own skill and
effort.

The words, and they could not even hear,
mean that their hearts will become so much
rusted and corroded that they will lose all
attachment for the word of God and will
refuse to listen to it.

The foregoing verses refer to the great material
progress and widespread conquests of Gog and
Magog—Western Christian nations—and their
utter disregard for God and religion. We
have also been told that, elated with their
political power and military glory, they will
give themselves up to a life of pleasure and
sin and as a result will bring the wrath of God
upon themselves and their prosperity will give
place to decline and degradation. Then in despair
and despondency, as hinted at in Moses’ Vision,
they will turn to God and, having realized the
error of their ways, will come back to the
“junction of the two Seas” i.e. they will accept
the Holy Prophet. The following prophecy
of the Bible forms a befitting sequel to the
account of Gog and Magog and indicates
the time of their rise to power and greatness:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of
his prison. And shall go out to
deceive the nations which are in the
four quarters of the earth, Gog and
Magog, to gather them together to
battle; the number of whom is as
the sand of the sea (Revelation
20: 7-8).

By “the thousand years” are meant the
thousand years of the Hijra—Emigration
of the Holy Prophet to Medina in 622 A.D.
The above passage along with chapters 38
and 39 of Ezekiel makes it quite clear that
the rise of Gog and Magog was to have begun
in the 17th century A.D. and to have reached
its zenith in our own time.

The account of Dhu’l Qarnain will remain in-
complete unless the reason is given as to why it
has been assigned such a prominent place in the
Quran, when as a fact of history it does not
appear directly to concern us nor does its
narration benefit us materially or spiritually.
In fact, it is more for its spiritual than for
its historical importance that the story of Dhu’l
Qarnain has been given so large a space in the
Holy Book. The Quran is not a book of
history. The stories of past Prophets and other
historical incidents have not been mentioned in
it to acquaint us with events which took place in
the remote past. They are so many prophecies
about future events. Some of these prophecies
have already been fulfilled in the person of
the Holy Prophet while others await fulfilment
in some future time. The account of Dhu’l
Qarnain, like other similar Quranic accounts,
embodies a great prophecy which has been
fulfilled in the person of Ahmad, the Holy
Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.
Ahmad was the Dhu’l Qarnain of our age.
Whereas the Quranic account of Dhu’l Qarnain
historically applies to the great Persian monarch
Cyrus, spiritually it applies to Ahmad. Thus
besides its historical value the story is pregnant
with great spiritual import. It implies a great
prophecy to the effect that, just as in the
6th century B.C. Cyrus saved Persia from the
depredatory raids of Gog and Magog, by
erecting a barrier of brick and stone in their
way, another Dhu’l Qarnain will save the soul
and spirit of mankind, from the devastating
moral assaults of Christian nations of the West
who are the descendents of Gog and Magog.
He will accomplish his great and noble
task by the help of divine knowledge and
the Signs that God will show at his hands.
The nature of the work entrusted to both
these Dhu’l Qarnains bears a striking likeness
to each other, only the one was in the mundane
sphere, the other in the spiritual. The Prophet
Ahmad possessed many physical and spiritual
resemblances with the great Cyrus. Like
Cyrus, he was called the Messiah and like
103. Do the disbelievers think that they can take My servants as protectors instead of Me? Surely, "We have prepared Hell as an entertainment for the disbelievers."

104. Say, 'Shall We tell you of those who are the greatest losers in respect of their works?

105. "Those whose labour is all lost in search after things pertaining to the life of this world, and they think that they are doing good works." 2140

106. Those are they who disbelieve in the Signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him. So their works are vain, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall give them no weight. 2141

2139. Commentary:
The verse speaks of those people who look upon Jesus as their saviour and as the son of God and to whom reference has already been made in the beginning of this Chapter. This shows that the foregoing verses also deal with the same people—Christian nations of the West.

2140. Commentary:
The verse means to say that these people look upon the acquisition of material comforts and worldly benefits and upon making new inventions and discoveries to add to those comforts as the sole aim and object of their life. They have no place for God in their hearts.

2141. Commentary:
As all their labour is for this life and they have completely disregarded the life to come, so no sign or trace of their works will be left in this world and on the Last Day also their deeds will prove quite futile.
107. That is their reward—Hell: because they disbelieved, and made a jest of My Signs and My Messengers.\textsuperscript{2142}

108. Surely, those who believe and do good deeds, will have Gardens of Paradise for an abode.

109. \textsuperscript{a}Wherein they will abide; they will not desire any change therefrom.\textsuperscript{2143}

110. Say, \textsuperscript{b}‘If the ocean became ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord came to an end, even though We brought the like thereof as \textit{further help}.’ \textsuperscript{2144}

\textsuperscript{a}11:109; 15:49. \textsuperscript{b}31:28.

\textsuperscript{2142. Commentary:} 
As these people turned their backs upon God and did nothing to win His pleasure, they can expect no reward in the Hereafter. On the contrary, they will burn in the fire of Hell which will be the natural consequence of their disbelief and evil deeds and of their mocking at the Signs of God and defying His Messengers.

\textsuperscript{2143. Commentary:} 
With the decline of Christian nations will begin the progress and advancement of Muslims and on the ashes of their departed glory will be laid the foundations of a new and better world order. At last the believers will get the reward of their sacrifices and sufferings but their sacrifices in the way of their Lord will know no end. The Faithful will feel such peace of mind and happiness in their sacrifices that they will not like to change this blessed state of spiritual bliss.

\textsuperscript{2144. Commentary:} 
Christian nations of the West boast of their great inventions and scientific discoveries and seem to labour under the misconception that they have succeeded in fathoming the secret of creation itself. But, says the verse, this is nothing but a vain boast. God’s secrets are so inexhaustible and He has endowed His creatures with such wonderful powers and attributes that far from fathoming the secret of creation, what these people will be able to discover after all their striving will not be even as much as a drop in the ocean.

The verse also hints that those will be the days of publicity and innumerable books on all sorts of subjects will be published but even then the vast ocean of knowledge will remain unfathomed.
111. Say, "I am only a man like yourselves; but I have received the revelation that your God is only One God. So let him, who hopes to meet his Lord, do good deeds, and let him join no god in the worship of his Lord."

2145. **Commentary:**

The Holy Prophet is here commanded to say to the disbelieving Christian people that, even after having disclosed so many secrets of the unknown and having made great prophecies about the ultimate triumph of his cause and the downfall of Christian nations, he cannot claim to be a son of God or to have been endowed with divine powers. He is but a human being and his greatest merit lies in his being the bearer of the divine Message. If disbelievers too desire to be blessed with revelation, they should also give up associating false gods with Allah. Then will God bestow His favours upon them and lay open to them the treasures of heavenly secrets.

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the recitation of the last ten verses of this Chapter makes one secure against the spiritual onslaughts of the Dajjāl. This shows that the Dajjāl and Gog and Magog are one and the same people—Christian nations of the West; the Dajjāl representing the evil aspect of their religious propaganda and Gog and Magog their material and political predominance.
CHAPTER 19
MARYAM
(Revealed before Hijra)

Title and Date of Revelation

As this Sūra primarily deals with the story of Mary round which revolve all the other incidents mentioned in it and as it particularly draws our attention to the distinctive features of Mary’s character and personality, it bears the title of Maryam, despite the fact that great Prophets of God like Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Ishmael and other Divine Messengers like Idrīs, Zachariah and Yaḥyā have also found prominent mention in the Sūra.

The consensus of opinion among such Companions of the Holy Prophet as have expressed any view about the date of the revelation of this Sūra, regards it as of Meccan origin. ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd who was one of the earliest Companions of the Holy Prophet holds the view that Bani Isrā‘il, Kahf and Maryam were among the Sūrās that were revealed very early in the Holy Prophet’s ministry (Bukhārī). Christian writers such as Rodwell, Wherry and Muir, also consider it as having been revealed at Mecca. It is a well-known fact of history, related by the historian Ibn Ishāq, that when in the early days of Islam the persecution of Muslims exceeded all bounds and life at Mecca became quite unsafe for them, some of them were asked by the Holy Prophet to emigrate to Abyssinia. Realizing that the persecuted Muslims had found safe refuge in a foreign land and that their evil designs to nip the young and tender plant of Islam in the bud had been frustrated, a deputation of Meccans led by the famous ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ went to Abyssinia to ask the Negus, its Christian king, for extradition of the Muslims who had taken refuge in his country, and in order to excite his jealousy told him that they did not accord to Jesus and Mary that high spiritual status in which they were held by the Christians and even defamed and disgraced them. Before, however, granting the deputation’s request, the Negus asked Ja‘far, the leader of the refugee Muslims, as to what he had to say in the matter. Upon this Ja‘far recited those verses (from 17th to 41st verse) of this Sūra which shed full light on the true status of Jesus and his mother. On hearing the Quranic verses the Negus was greatly moved and he said that his own belief about Jesus and Mary was not a whit different from that of the Muslims. Consequently he flatly refused to accede to the request of the Meccans and assured the Muslims that they could live in his country in perfect security and freedom.

From these incidents it becomes quite clear that this Sūra was revealed before the emigration of Muslims to Abyssinia. The emigration, as historically proved, took place in the fifth
year of the Call and the Muslims must have taken some months to learn and memorize it. Thus taking all relevant historical data into consideration the fact becomes established beyond all reasonable doubt that this Sūra was revealed at Mecca in the first half of the fifth year or probably towards the end of the fourth year of the birth of Islam. Muir, however, against all proved facts of history holds the view that the Sūra was revealed towards the closing years of the Holy Prophet's life at Mecca while Wherry is of the opinion that it was revealed in the fifth or sixth year of the Call i.e. about a year after the emigration of Muslims to Abyssinia. But both these views are evidently wrong, being inconsistent with reliable historical evidence mentioned above.

The reluctance of these gentlemen to accept an established fact of history and their attempt to adumbrate quite an untenable theory is not without reason. Before the emigration of Muslims to Abyssinia the Holy Prophet had preached his mission in Mecca for about four years while the Word of God was continuously being revealed to him but it had lacked any detailed reference to Christian dogmas and doctrines. But all of a sudden a few months before the emigration took place the revelation came thick and fast denouncing and demolishing these false doctrines till a whole Sūra (the present Sūra) dealing with them became revealed. This fact was not accidental. It was designed and deliberate. The Muslims were about to emigrate to Abyssinia, a Christian country. The Revealer of the Qur'ān knew that in their new place of emigration they would come in contact with Christians and would have to discuss Christian beliefs. So by the revelation of this Sūra, the Muslims were armed with a full and thorough refutation of all basic Christian doctrines in advance. This fact pointed to an inescapable inference that the Qur'ān was the revealed Word of the All-Knowing God Himself. The inference was so patent and irresistible that in order to minimize its importance Muir and Wherry had to have recourse to a novel, albeit, unfounded theory.

Connection with the Preceding Sūrās

The connection of this Sūra with the Sūrās that precede it i.e. Bānī Isrā‘īl and Kahf, consists in the fact that some account of the rise and progress of Jews and Christians was given in those two Sūrās. In fact in those two Sūrās it was stated that the rise of Islam would closely resemble that of the Jewish Dispensation. In Sūra Bānī Isrā‘īl we were told that Jews would suffer national eclipse twice and twice would they rise to power and glory, and that the followers of Islam would also meet a similar fate. Like the Jews they would rise to prosperity twice and twice like them would they decline and fall. It may be mentioned here that in the era of the Prophets David and Solomon when the political power of the Israelites had reached its zenith, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonia destroyed Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish temporal and spiritual power and glory, and carried away into captivity a large number of Jews, their royal family and even some of their Prophets. This catastrophe took place about the year 586 B.C. After long years—in 516 B.C., however, they were brought back to Jerusalem by Cyrus, the king of Media and Persia, and the city was rebuilt.

Jerusalem was destroyed for the second time by Roman forces under Titus in 70 A.D., amid circumstances of unparalleled ferocity and horror, and the Temple of Solomon was burnt down.
This second destruction of Jerusalem brought about the complete and irrevocable ruin of the temporal power of Jews, and they became dispersed all over the world (Jew. Enc. & Enc. Bib., under “Jerusalem”), till in 1947-1948, through the machinations of British and American Governments the State of Israel came into being. These two destructions of the Jewish temporal power correspond to the two destructions of the temporal power of Islam. Its first destruction took place when in 1258 A.D. Baghdad, the centre of the political power and glory of Muslims, was laid waste by the Tartar hordes under Halâkâ Khan who put to the sword the entire royal family and killed in cold blood about two million Muslims. The second eclipse of the political power of Muslims began towards the latter half of the last century. Better days, however, seem now to have dawned on them. See also 17:6-9 & 105.

In Sûra Kahf the same subject was dealt with at some greater length, viz., that after their second national degradation the Israelites would rise to great progress and prosperity and would spread in the world by accepting Jesus Christ, their Messiah and the last Prophet of the Mosaic Dispensation, and that an analogous phenomenon awaited the Islamic Dispensation. And as in the case of the Mosaic Dispensation the “Dwellers of the Cave” became the means and instrument of the rise to prosperity and power of Christianity, which in fact, is a branch of Judaism, so would Islam attain the heights of glory and eminence and would prevail over other Faiths through the missionary efforts of the followers of the Messiah of the Islamic Dispensation who from time to time would have to seek refuge in places of shelter from persecution and oppression.

Then towards the close of Sûra Kahf mention was made of the Isrâ’ (Spiritual Ascension) of Moses which symbolically hinted that jealousy and hatred would arise between the Mosaic and Islamic Dispensations. The Mosaic Dispensation would begin to view with envy the rise of the followers of Islam who unfortunately lulled into a false sense of security would relapse into complacency. Their adversaries—the followers of Jesus Christ—the standard-bearers of the Mosaic Dispensation in the time of the Messiah of Islamic Dispensation—taking full advantage of this complacency of the Muslims would vanquish them and break their power.

Then to further elucidate the similarity between the two Dispensations a brief mention was made of how through Dhu’l Qarnain the Jews regained their lost glory. This implied that when the power and glory of Islam would sink to its lowest ebb, God would save its followers from national ruin through a Dhu’l Qarnain—the Promised Messiah, who would lead them to renewed glory and prosperity. See 18:84.

Thus both Sûras, Bani Isrâ’il and Kahf, dealt with the striking parallelism that existed between the two Dispensations, laying added emphasis on the fact that just as the Mosaic Dispensation got a new lease of life through Jesus who was the culminating point of that Dispensation, in the same way Islam would regain its departed power and glory through its own Messiah, the Khâtim al-Khulafâ’ i.e. the greatest Khalifà of the Prophet of Islam. But as real opposition to Islamic Dispensation at the time of its decline was to have come from the followers of Jesus Christ, so was Islam, at the time of its resuscitation, destined to meet real opposition from the same people—the followers of Jesus Christ. Thus the lesson was brought home to Muslims that Christianity was the real enemy of Islam.
After having explained in Sūra Kahf that Muslims would sustain national eclipse at the hands of followers of the Messiah of Mosaic Dispensation and would regain their lost glory under the guidance and lead of the Messiah of the Islamic Dispensation, the present Sūra proceeds to give a brief history of the Christian Faith. It does so to tell Muslims that the renaissance of Islam through the Promised Messiah would also take place largely on the lines on which the birth, rise and spread of Christianity had taken place.

The present Sūra thus constitutes a third link in the chain in which Sūrās Banū Isrā‘îl and Kahf form respectively the first and second links. In fact, these three Sūrās deal with the same subject and follow the same pattern in dealing with that subject.

The concluding connection between Sūra Kahf and the present Sūra is that whereas towards the end of Sūra Kahf great emphasis was laid on the Shari'at and Divine Unity, the present Sūra opens with the subject of Jesus’s birth and other relevant and important incidents in his life because Jesus’s birth and his death were to give rise to two very dangerous misconceptions regarding the Shari'at and Divine Unity and it was necessary to remove these two misconceptions.

Subject-Matter

In the abbreviated letters at the head of the Sūra a comparison has been instituted between Christian and Islamic doctrines and attention has been drawn to the fact that while originally Christianity was a Divine religion, later on some false doctrines and dogmas found their way into its teaching. As these doctrines run counter to Divine attributes therefore, a brief account of Jesus’s birth has been given to refute them. This account is preceded by a brief mention of Prophet Zachariah, because according to Biblical prophecies Prophet Elijah was to have descended from heaven “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5); and Jesus on being asked by the Jews about Elijah who was to have appeared before him answered that he was John who had come in his power and spirit (Matt. 11:14, 15; 17:12; Mark 9:13), and that Elijah was not to have come from heaven but like all mortals was to have been born of an earthly mother in the form of another man who was John (Matt. 11:11; Luke 7:28).

While giving an account of Jesus, the Qur‘ān proceeds to describe the manner of his birth before beginning to deal with his claims and his teachings, because with the unusual birth of Jesus without the agency of a human father the foundations were laid of the transfer of prophethood from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael. The details of the implied significance of this exceptional manner of birth are briefly as follows:—

Abraham had two sons—Ishmael and Isaac—from his two senior wives. Ishmael was the first born and Isaac the second son. Abraham had received Divine promises regarding both these sons. Promises about Ishmael are embodied in Gen. 16:10-12; 17:18, 20, while prophecies foretelling the future of Isaac are to be found in Gen. 17:19-21. There is, however, a joint prophecy about both Ishmael and Isaac in Gen. 22:17, 18. When these verses are read in conjunc-
tion with Gen. 17:21, it becomes quite clear that while the covenant with Abraham was to have begun with Isaac it was to have found its consummation in the progeny of both the brothers. The inference is patent that the final manifestation of the covenant was to have taken place in the progeny of Ishmael. But because the full implementation of the covenant required its transfer from the progeny of Isaac to that of Ishmael and because this transfer was bound to cause severe disappointment to the progeny of Isaac, it was essential that the transfer should have taken place gradually and in stages.

It is to this important fact that verses dealing with the birth of Jesus refer. It is hinted in these verses that persistent violation of “the covenant” on the part of Jews brought the Divine decree into operation that henceforward the covenant shall be fulfilled through the progeny of Ishmael. The procedure adopted for bringing about this consummation was this: A virgin was made to give birth to a child who subsequently became the last Successor of Moses. This fact constituted a final warning to Jews that by the birth of Jesus, their last Prophet, without the agency of an Israelite father the covenant with the progeny of Isaac had become reduced to half, but inasmuch as the blood of no Israelite father ran in the veins of Jesus, only that part of the covenant which subsisted through the mother who was an Israelite remained in operation. Thus the exceptional manner chosen for Jesus’s birth implied that the period allotted to the progeny of Isaac for the fulfilment of the Divine covenant had terminated, half of it having ended with Jesus’s fatherless birth and the other half with his followers having given up the practice of circumcision which was the physical sign and mark of that covenant (Gen. 17:23). Thus completely and for ever the progeny of Isaac became deprived of “the covenant”.

Then the Qur’ān proceeds to relate some incidents in the life of Jesus and with arguments based on truth and reason exposes the untenability of the false claims that his followers have attributed to him.

After this a reference to the fulfilment of the covenant through Isaac and Moses has been made after which mention is made of Ishmael. Chronologically, however, Ishmael should have been mentioned before Moses but as Moses constituted a most important link of that part of the covenant which was fulfilled through Isaac his mention preceded that of Ishmael.

Then a brief reference to the Prophet Idrīs is made and the words: “And We raised him to a high place” have been added to denote his very high spiritual station. These words point to a spiritual resemblance which Idrīs had with Jesus, viz., that he was spiritually taken up to heaven (Gen. 5:24). Idrīs is Enoch of the Bible and about Enoch the Bible says that he walked with God (Gen. 5:22) which means that in him Divine attributes found manifestation of a very high order. Analogous expressions have been used about Jesus in the New Testament. But whereas on the basis of such expressions Jesus has been raised to the pedestal of Divinity by his misguided followers, in the presence of similar expressions about Enoch (Idrīs) the latter is considered to be entitled to no higher place than that of a mere human being or at best a Prophet of God. In fact, Enoch seemed to enjoy a certain spiritual superiority over Jesus, inasmuch as according to the Bible he went up to heaven alive and like God, the Father, never tasted of death (Heb. 11:5)
After this the Sūra reinforces the argument against the godhead of Jesus by saying that if all the Prophets from Adam to Noah and from Noah down to the last Israelite Prophet before Jesus were mere human beings, then why should Jesus who was also only a Prophet of God be invested with Divine attributes and be regarded as God? After this an implied mention is made of the birth of a new Mission and a new Faith and attention is drawn to the fact that circumstances attending the birth of Jesus i.e., his fatherless birth, imply the advent of a Promised Teacher—the Holy Prophet. But it is stated with regret that those to whom this Teacher will address his Message will, because of their pride in their large numbers and great material power, oppose and persecute him. They will not realize that numbers do not prove anything and material power should not deceive them. They are warned that if they rejected the new Message their numbers and their power will not avail them in any manner. They indulge in all sorts of vain talk and refuse to listen to the Holy Prophet. But when as a result of their defiant and persistent rejection of truth and persecution of the Holy Prophet Divine punishment descended upon them, their faculties of seeing and hearing will become sharpened and they will begin to see the evil consequences of their misdeeds and will hear everything clearly and fully. But that will only be a time of vain regret for them. Their power shall break and their glory depart and the possession of the earth shall be given to the followers of the Holy Prophet who will make proper use of it.

As the Resurrection and the existence of life after death were to be widely denied in the Latter Days by Christians with whom the Sūra particularly deals, much stress has also been laid on rewards and blessings of the Hereafter, and stale and hackneyed arguments of disbelievers against life after death exposed and refuted. The disbelievers, the Sūra says, seem to derive false comfort from their wealth, material means and large numbers and adduce these things as an argument in support of their denial of the life after death and their belief that what really matters is the present life. To this foolish and vain argument of disbelievers the Qur'ān replies that truth must eventually triumph and disbelief come to grief and that till that time the real thing to see is who takes his stand on reason, suffers for his cause and sets a noble example. Surely, he who possesses these pre-requisites will ultimately succeed even in this world. The disbelievers should not be deceived by the apparent weakness of believers. Truth always progresses gradually and in stages but it most surely prevails and triumphs in the end.

Next, we are told that disbelievers are always involved in Shirk (associating false gods with God) and regard it as a source of great strength. On the contrary, it always proves to be a source of disgrace and humiliation for those who practise it. The very thing that disbelievers regard as a source of strength proves to be a source of weakness for them. The Sūra then proceeds to say that when disbelievers are defeated in argument they have recourse to violence. The Holy Prophet is told to ignore the violence of disbelievers, as resort to force on their part will lead only to victory and predominance of believers. It will afford them a legitimate cause to take up arms in self-defence and God being always on their side they will surely win, and thus the adoption of an unjust and aggressive attitude on the part of disbelievers will recoil on their own heads and will lead to their eventual destruction.
The Sūra ends with an answer to an implied objection of the Jews, viz., why has Hebrew been discarded in favour of Arabic as a vehicle for the revelation of Quranic teaching? To this objection the Sūra returns the answer that the Arabs are the first addressees of the Qur'ān and it is quite natural that a Message should be addressed to a people in their own tongue so that they may easily understand it and after having understood it should convey it adequately and successfully to others, because it is after a Message has been addressed to a people and after having understood it they reject it, that heavenly punishment overtakes them.
1. "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful."


**Commentary:**

See 1:1.

A brief note here on abbreviated letters which have been placed at the beginning of some Sūrās of the Qur’ān and which are known as the Muqatta‘āt i.e. letters used and pronounced separately, is called for. The Muqatta‘āt are abbreviations for specific attributes of God and the subject-matter of a Sūra before which they are placed has a deep connection with the Divine attributes for which they stand. The various Muqatta‘āt have not been haphazardly placed at the beginning of different Sūrās, nor are their letters combined arbitrarily. There runs a deep and far-reaching connection between the various sets of Muqatta‘āt and the letters of which they are made also serve a definite purpose. Sūrās 2 & 3 are prefaced with the abbreviated letters لم (Alif Lām Mīm), indicating a kinship between their contents. Chapters 4, 5 & 6 have no Muqatta‘āt placed at their beginning which means that the subject-matter of these three Chapters is subordinate to and follows the pattern of that of the preceding two Sūrās. Chapter 7 begins with the abbreviated letters لم (Alif Lām Mīm Ṣād) which combination has the additional letter ص. The next two Chapters (8 & 9) have no Muqatta‘āt and the following three Chapters (10, 11 & 12) have the abbreviated letters الر (Alif Lām Rā) placed at their beginning and the 13th Chapter begins with الر (Alif Lām Mīm Rā) i.e. with the addition of م to الر. Chapters 14th and 15th have again the combination الر in their beginning which shows that there exists a certain similarity of subject-matter among all these Sūrās. Chapters 16th, 17th and 18th have no Muqatta‘āt before them which again shows that the subject-matter of these three Sūrās is subordinate and similar to that of the preceding Sūrās. Chapter 19th is headed with ي (Alif Uim Mīm Ṣād) and deals with a particular subject, i.e. the Christian dogmas of Salvation and Atonement. The next six Sūrās have no abbreviated letters at their beginning, ب at the head of 20th Chapter, not being treated as Muqatta‘āt. The following three Sūrās are known as the Sūrās of دس (Ṭā Sin) group. With the 29th Chapter the Qur’ān reverts to the same subject which has already been dealt with in Sūrās 2 & 3 but in a new form and to fulfil a new need and serve a new purpose, and, therefore, this Chapter again has the Muqatta‘āt لم (Alif Lām Mīm) in its beginning. The next three Chapters (30, 31 & 32) follow suit and the five Chapters following these Sūrās have no Muqatta‘āt. Chapter ص (Ṣād) begins with the abbreviated letter ص (Ṣād) and the next Chapter (39th) has no Muqatta‘āt.
The following seven Surās open with the abbreviated letters (Hā Mīm), only Chapter 42 having the letters (Ain Sin Qāf) added to Ḥā (Hā Mīm). They are known as Surās of Ḥā group. The next three Surās, viz., 47th, 48th & 49th again have no Muqattā’āt in their beginning. The 50th Chapter is the last Chapter which has an abbreviated letter i.e. ق (Qāf).

This somewhat detailed examination shows that three main categories of Muqattā’āt have been used in the Qur’ān and that the Surās having the same category of Muqattā’āt have been placed together which is a further indication of the fact that the subjects dealt with in such Surās bear a close resemblance to each other and that the Muqattā’āt placed in their beginning serve as a key to their subject-matter.

It is also pertinent to note that there is one thing which is common to all those Surās that have Muqattā’āt. They open with the subject of the revelation of the Qur’ān and this is no mere chance.

The system of using abbreviations (Muqattā’āt) was in vogue among the Arabs and at present is very popular in Western countries and in its imitation in all Eastern countries.

According to Ummi Hānī, a cousin of the Holy Prophet, he is reported to have said that in the combined letters the letter ك stands for كاف (the All-Sufficient), ح for هاد (the Guide), ع for عليم (the All-Knowing), and ص for صادق (the Truthful). According to Ibn ‘Abbās, however, the letter ك stands for كبير (the Great), ح for هاد (the Guide), ع for عليم (the All-Knowing) and ص for صادق (the Truthful). Ibn Mas‘ūd and some other Companions interpreted these combined letters as الملك (the King), الله (God), العزيز (the Mighty) and المصصور (the Fashioner). ‘Alī sometimes would preface his prayer with the words: يا كهیفصص (Path).

Different combinations of abbreviated letters signify different subjects and the subject-matter of a particular Surā at the beginning of which a particular combination is placed is governed by it. It has been explained above that the abbreviated letters stand for Divine attributes, but which particular letter stands for which particular Divine attribute becomes clear only by a deep study of the subject-matter of the Surā at the beginning of which those letters are placed. The explanation of كهیفصص as given by the Holy Prophet in the ḥadith narrated by Ummi Hānī must necessarily be accepted as the best and should be preferred to all other explanations. But in this explanation the letter ك has been left out which shows that it does not signify any Divine attribute but has been used only as a letter of interjection, joining the first two Divine attributes with the last two. Thus the explanation of the combined abbreviated letters would read like this: مكتبة یکاف يکهد یکعلیم یکصادق i.e. “Thou art Sufficient for all and Thou art the true Guide, O, All-Knowing, Truthful God.” Or expanding its sense a little further the expression would mean, “Thou O God, Who knowest all my secrets and art true to Thy promises and art a true Friend, Thou alone canst satisfy all my needs and Thou alone canst guide me.”

The four Divine attributes as represented by the combined letters كهیفصص expose the falsity of the basic Christian doctrine of Atonement, i.e. salvation through the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus which forms one of the principal subjects of the Surā under comment. And if the doctrine of Atonement is proved to be
3. This is an account of the mercy of thy Lord shown to His servant, Zachariah.\textsuperscript{2148}

false, the whole structure of the doctrines of the Trinity and godhead of Jesus would automatically fall to the ground.

Of these four attributes علم or عالم (All-Knowing) and صادق (Truthful) are the principal and basic attributes and هاد and كاف are subordinate ones and flow from the former two and are their inevitable manifestation and result. If God is علم (All-Knowing), then there is no place for the dogma of Atonement because this dogma presupposes that God had designed to carry on the business of the world according to a certain plan but His knowledge being defective that plan failed to function and, therefore, God was compelled to offer His own son for sacrifice to save the world. The failure of God's plan contradicts His attribute “All-Knowing” and when God's knowledge is shown to be defective, He cannot claim to be كاف (All-Sufficient) because the Being Who is علم (All-Knowing) must necessarily be كاف (All-Sufficient).

In the same way the attribute صادق (Truthful) and its subordinate attribute هاد (Guide) demolish this dogma. If God is not the true Guide and salvation without a belief in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus is impossible, then all Divine Messengers will have to be accepted as so many liars and cheats because, contrary to Christian belief, they preached and taught that salvation was possible only through right beliefs and righteous actions; and a reflection on the truthfulness of God's Messengers constitutes a reflection on the truthfulness of God Himself and consequently on His being هاد i.e. the true Guide. Thus in this combination of abbreviated letters a hint is given that in dealing with the beliefs and doctrines of Christians, the best way to drive home to them the untenability of their doctrines is to dwell and lay emphasis upon Divine attributes, particularly on the attributes which are represented by the four letters ص, خ, ه, ك.

In fact the best and most effective argument to show that the doctrine of Atonement is entirely unfounded, is to prove that Jesus did not die on the Cross and if this thesis is proved, then the question that by his crucifixion he carried away the sins of humanity does not arise. For a detailed and full discussion, however, of the subject that Jesus did not die on the Cross but after having remained on it only for a few hours was taken down alive, was kept in a sepulchre and then in fulfilment of his own prophecy, \textit{viz.}, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John. 10: 16), he travelled to Afghanistan and Kashmir to reclaim and retrieve the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel who had been dispersed to these countries by the Babylonian kings, see 23: 51.

\textsuperscript{2148} Commentary:

The account of Zachariah precedes the account of Jesus. This is due to two very valid reasons. Yabýa, the son of Zachariah, and John of the New Testament, was a harbinger of Jesus. He heralded Jesus’s advent and acted as his precursor to give to the Jews the glad tidings that their deliverer was about to make his appearance.
That Yâhîyâ or John was Jesus's harbinger is apparent from the following prophecy of Prophet Malachi: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:5). The words “the great and dreadful day” here signify the advent of Jesus. This is why when Jesus was asked where Elias was who was to come before him, he replied: “And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come” (Matt. 11:14). As according to Malachi’s prophecy Elias must have appeared before the coming of Jesus, it was in the fitness of things that while giving an account of Jesus, the Qur’ân should have made a mention of Yâhîyâ. Secondly, Mary, the mother of Jesus, had unknowingly become the cause of Yâhîyâ’s birth. We are told (3:38, 39) how Zachariah was deeply moved by a pious reply of Mary and prayed to God to be blessed with a good child like her. Thus whereas Yâhîyâ became a harbinger of Jesus, Mary, Jesus’s mother having indirectly become the cause of the birth of Yâhîyâ may as well be said to have become a precursor of Yâhîyâ (John) himself. See also 3:38-42.

The words, “Thy Lord” in the sentence, “This is an account of the mercy of thy Lord,” appear to be misplaced because whereas the account given in the following verses is that of the mercy of God shown to Zachariah the words “Thy Lord” seem to indicate as if some account is about to be given of God’s mercy to the Holy Prophet. In fact these words signify that the account of Divine mercy to Zachariah does imply a mercy to the Holy Prophet also. Prophet Yâhîyâ, as stated above, was a harbinger of Jesus and Jesus was a harbinger of the Holy Prophet. A description of the birth of Yâhîyâ followed by a somewhat detailed description of Jesus’s birth pointed to the fact that by the introduction of the life accounts of these two Prophets who, in a way, acted as his precursors, the minds of men were being prepared for the acceptance of the Holy Prophet of Islam by an implied reference to the following Biblical prophecies:-

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation (Gen. 17:20);

I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth (Deut. 18:18).

The pronoun “thy” may also possess an oblique but beautiful reference to Mecca, the birth-place of the Holy Prophet. Mecca like Zachariah’s wife was barren. For thousands of years it had not heard the voice of God. Now God’s mercy was about to dawn upon it. The barren valley of Mecca was about to give birth to the greatest of Adam’s sons. To this barrenness of Mecca reference is found in Isaiah 54:1.

Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.
4. "When he called upon his Lord, crying in secret.\(^{2149}\)

5. He said, 'My Lord, \(^b\)the bones have indeed waxed feeble in me, and the head glistens with hoariness but never, my Lord, have I been unblessed in my prayer to Thee;\(^{2149A}\)

6. 'And I fear my relations after me, and \(^c\)my wife is barren. \(^d\)Grant me, therefore, a successor from Thyself.\(^{2150}\)

\(^{2149}\) Important Words:

نادي (called upon): نادي الرجل means, he called the man aloud. نادي بسره means, he disclosed his secret. نادي فلانا means, he consulted him (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The words, \textit{when he called upon his Lord}, \textit{crying in secret}, signify that Zachariah had kept concealed in the inmost recesses of his heart a long cherished desire. When he heard Mary's innocent reply to his query (3 : 38), he was deeply touched and he laid bare his heart before his Lord and Creator and his long-suppressed desire assumed the form of prayer that a good and righteous son like Mary might be born unto him to continue prophethood in the Israelite line. Zachariah had understood from Biblical prophecies and heavenly warnings that were administered to the Jews for their repeated rejection of God's Prophets that prophethood was soon to be transferred from the House of Isaac to that of Ishmael. So he gave vent to his feelings in the form of prayer for the birth of a righteous son.

\(^{2149A}\) Commentary:

Besides the rendering given in the text the words ولم اكن بدعائك رب شقيا may mean, "since Thou hast called me and hast made me a Prophet and Thy blessings and favours have covered me, I have never been unsuccessful in achieving my object."

\(^{2150}\) Important Words:

عاقرأ (barren) is derived from عقر. They say عقراء i.e. he wounded him; he wounded him much. عقر الأبل means, he cut the feet of the camel. عقر النخلة means, he cut the upper part of the palm-tree so that it dried up and ceased to yield fruit. عقر المرأة means, the woman became barren. عاقرأ is used both for man and woman and applied to a woman means, barren; that does not conceive or has ceased to conceive; and applied to a man it means, barren; that has no offspring born to him. (Lane & Aqrab).

ولأ (successor) is derived from ول. They say ولأ الرجل i.e. he helped the man; he made friends with him; he loved him. ولأ فلانا means, he followed such a one immediately without anyone intervening between them ولأ means, a friend; beloved one, helper, master; successor or inheritor etc. (Aqrab). See also 2 : 108.
7. 'That he may be heir to me and heir to the House of Jacob. And "make him, my Lord well-pleasing to Thee." 2151

Commentary:

In view of the different meanings of the word 
 waktu (successor) given under "Important Words" above, Zachariah's prayer was for such a son as should prove his true successor and should propagate his mission and inherit the spiritual blessings that God had bestowed on the House of Israel.

2151. Commentary:

The prayer of Zachariah is complete in every respect and possesses all the ingredients of a successful prayer. A successful prayer should be offered with fervour and in humility. The supplicant should confess his own weakness and helplessness. He should have firm faith in the power of God to accept his prayers. Zachariah's prayer fulfils all these conditions. He prays to God in words full of extreme pathos. He invokes Divine mercy by referring to his extreme old age and to the barrenness of his wife. He prays fervently and in all humility. He asks for no worldly gains. He prays only for a righteous heir. He felt that righteousness had altogether disappeared from his family and his relations had consigned God to oblivion. He knew that the House of Israel was about to be deprived for ever of the boon of prophethood but still he had not despaired of God's mercy. He hoped that something yet might happen which should save his people and the House of Israel from utter spiritual ruin. He was extremely anxious that the Israelites might not reject the last Israelite Prophet and might still avert the impending wrath of God. This was Zachariah's wish which he expressed in words full of pathos. He prayed that an heir be born to him who might warn the Israelites to take heed and not to deprive themselves of the light of prophethood by rejecting their own last Prophet. It appears from the Bible that the whole mission of Yahya for whose birth Zachariah had so fervently prayed consisted in preparing the way for Jesus. He says:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire (Matt. 3:11)."

Yahya tried his utmost to make the task of Jesus easy and to prepare the Jews to accept him. But his efforts proved vain. He himself was imprisoned and murdered. His people rejected him as well as his great successor, Jesus. They even sought to kill the latter on the Cross. Zachariah's prayer was only partly fulfilled as Divine decree had also to be implemented. So Yahya was born to Zachariah in fulfilment of his prayer but he (Yahya) failed to soften the hearts of his people. They did not believe in Jesus and thus could not avert the wrath of God and became deprived for ever of the light of prophethood which was the real object of Zachariah's prayer. The Divine will prevailed and prophethood became transferred from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael.
8. God said, 'O Zachariah, "We give thee glad tidings of a son whose name shall be Yahyā. We have not made any one before him of that name." 

2152. Important Words:

- سَمِيَ (of that name) is derived from سَمَأَ. They say سَمِيَ الرجُل زِيَادًا. i.e. he named the man Zaid. سَمَأَ means, it became high.
- سَمَثُتِهُ الْيَطْرِيَّ means, I raised my eye towards him. سَمَثُتِهُ means, competitor or contender for superiority, in eminence or glory or excellence; a like or an equal; a namesake of another.
- هو سَمِيَّ means, he is thy namesake or he is thy equal or like. (Aqrab & Lane)

Commentary:

The two words غلام and يحيي used in this verse are very significant. The word غلام signifies three periods of one's life i.e. childhood, youth and middle age. Applied to Yahyā or John it embodied a prophecy that he shall not die in childhood but shall grow up to be a young man before the eyes of his father and shall live up to middle age and so it actually came to pass. Yahyā lived up to middle age and then was killed by the order of Herod to satisfy the wish of a dancing girl. The word يحيي literally meaning, "he lives" or "he shall live," also implied a great prophecy, viz., that he will die the death of a martyr and thus will become immortalized. Of the martyrs the Qurʾān says: Say not of those who are killed in the cause of Allah that they are dead; nay they are living; only you perceive not (2: 155). Again it says: 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). Thus those who are killed in the way of God get everlasting life and so did Yahyā or John. His ministry terminated in his imprisonment in the fortress of Machaerus, where he was executed by the order of Herod Antipas (Matt. 14: 10 & 11). See also 3: 40.

The words, We have not made anyone before him of that name, do not mean that there had lived before him no man whose name was John. From the Bible it appears that there had been several persons before him who were called John. (II Kings 25: 23; I Chronicles 3: 15; Ezra 8: 12). Nor does the verse mean that John was peerless and was unequalled in every respect. He himself confesses that "there cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (Mark 1: 7). The verse only signifies that in some respects Yahyā had no equal, i.e. he enjoyed a partial superiority in some respects over other Israelite Prophets. Abraham, Moses and Jesus were Prophets of much higher spiritual status than John, the Baptist, who had come only to prepare the way for Jesus (Mark 1: 3). Yahyā was peerless only in this respect that he was the first Prophet to come as a precursor and harbinger to another Prophet—Jesus. And he was peerless in this respect also that he was the first Prophet who came with the power and spirit of another Prophet—Elias.
9. He said, 'My Lord, how shall I have a son when my wife is barren, and I have reached the extreme limit of old age?'

10. The angel bearing the revelation said, "So it is. But thy Lord says, 'it is easy for Me, and indeed I created thee before, when thou wast nothing.'"

2153. Important Words:

( extreme limit) is derived from which means, he behaved proudly and was immoderate and inordinate; he was excessively proud or corrupt; he became advanced in age.

means, the wind blew fiercely. The Quranic expression means, And I have reached the extreme degree of old age, or hardness and dryness in the joints and the bones like dry wood. The word also signifies that state of extreme old age which is incurable (Mufraḍṭ, Lane & Aqrab).

The word as stated above (v.8) implied that Zachariah would see his son grow before his eyes and that he would also be able to train and educate him. The glad tidings was indeed a source of great comfort but at the same time it was a surprise for a man who had reached such an advanced old age as Zachariah.

The words, "How shall I have a son," do not express despair. V.5 above shows that Zachariah had not despaired of God's mercy. On the contrary he had perfect faith in the power of God to grant him a son. Moreover, a true believer never despairs of God's mercy. "None despairs of Allah's mercy save the unbelieving people," says the Qur'an (12:88). The verse only expresses Zachariah's innocent and spontaneous surprise at the greatness of the favour which God was about to bestow upon him. Every person situated as Zachariah was would be naturally surprised at the unusual glad tidings that he had received.

2154. Commentary:

The words, and indeed I created thee before, when thou wast nothing, primarily refer to the spiritual creation of Zachariah rather than to his physical creation. There seems to be no point in referring to an ordinary everyday physical phenomenon of the creation of one individual. If God had intended to refer to the phenomenon of physical creation, He would have referred to the creation of the whole universe and not to the creation of Zachariah alone. In fact, the present verse is an answer to the surprise of Zachariah expressed in the previous verses. Zachariah was promised the birth of a son in his extreme old age. The son was not to be an ordinary one but was to be possessed of great spiritual powers and to be peerless in respect of certain spiritual qualities. So the reference here is to the spiritual birth of Zachariah and to his great moral qualities.

The word "he" in the expression "he said," refers to the angel who brought the glad tidings to Zachariah. In verse 8 Zachariah is mentioned
11. He said, ‘My Lord appoint for me a token.’ God said, ‘Thy token is that thou shalt not speak to the people for “three full days and nights.”’

as having been addressed by God; in the present verse, however, he is described as having been addressed by one angel while in 3:40 it is stated that several angels called to him. These three statements seem to be mutually contradictory and the critics of Islam like Wherry have not failed to represent this fact as such. But in reality there is no such contradiction. According to the Qur’an when a Divine revelation of exceptional importance descends upon a Prophet of God, a number of angels, in accordance with the nature of its importance, are made to accompany it for its safeguarding (35:2) but only one angel representing all of them and on their behalf is entrusted with the duty to convey the Divine revelation to the Prophet. Thus the speaking of one angel means the speaking of all of them and therefore to say that one or many angels spoke to a Prophet makes no difference. Similarly, there is no contradiction in the words “God said” or “the angels said”, because angels only speak to a Prophet as God’s representatives and as His servants convey to him the Divine Message.

2155. Important Words:

\( \text{āya} \) (token). They say \( \text{āya} \) i.e. he put or set up a sign, token or mark by which a person or thing might be known. \( \text{āya} \) means, a sign, token or mark by which a person or thing is known, a message or communication sent from one person to another; a person or individual; a whole company of people; a verse or a Chapter of the Qur’an; a miracle, an evidence or a proof; an example or a warning; a Divine commandment (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradat). See also 2:130.

\( \text{sawwa} \) is derived from \( \text{sawwā} \) which again is derived from \( \text{sawīya} \) which means, it became straight and even and rightly set. \( \text{sawwā} \) means, he made it equal, uniform, even. \( \text{sawīyun} \) means, equal, symmetrical, smooth and even; straight; whole; in good condition. \( \text{sawīl} \) means, a young man uniform in make or symmetrical, without disease and without fault or defect (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Zachariah beseeches God to appoint for him a token or to give him a commandment (the word \( \text{āya} \) also meaning ‘a commandment’ as given under “Important Words” above) by acting upon which he might give palpable expression to his feeling of extreme gratefulness for the most unusual favour God has bestowed upon him.

The commandment enjoining upon Zachariah to abstain from talking and to devote himself fully to the remembrance and glorification of God was a spiritual measure calculated to recuperate his exhausted physical powers. He had not become deprived of his power of speech, as the Gospels seem to suggest, as a punishment for his not believing in the words of God (Luke 1:20—22). See also 3:42.

In view of the meaning of the word \( \text{sawwā} \) given under “Important Words” above, the verse,
12. Then he came forth unto his people from the chamber and asked them in a low voice "to glorify God morning and evening.\textsuperscript{2156}

13. 'O Yahyâ, hold fast the Book'. And We gave him wisdom while yet a child,\textsuperscript{2157}

\[ a \ 3 : 42 ; \ 33 : 43. \]

besides the meaning given in the text, also signifies that Zachariah was commanded by God not to speak to his people for three days and nights while he was without any defect or disease and was in perfect state of health. The very word سويا used in this verse about Zachariah contradicts the Biblical statement of his having been struck dumb.

\textsuperscript{2156} Important Words : 

اورحی (asked in a low voice) is derived from اورحی or اورحی للان i.e. he communicated to him or gave order or made a request by gesture or sign; he talked to him in secret or he talked to him in such a way that others may not hear him; اورحی الله يه means, God sent revelation to him. The real sense of وحی (wahî) which is inf. noun from وحی (wahâ) is to convey one's intention or wish by means of quick signs which may be done by gesture, writing, etc. They say اورحی العمل i.e. he did the thing quickly. اورحی الدواء الموت means, medicine precipitated his death (Lane & Aqrab). See also 5 : 112.

For مصراب (chamber) see 3 : 38.

Commentary : 

During this time when he had to speak to anyone he spoke so low as to be heard only by those very near him. In 3 : 42 the word رمزأ has been used to express the same sense, for رمزأ means to communicate by means of movements of the lips and not to use one's throat. So the Qur'ân repudiates the Biblical suggestion that Zachariah was struck dumb. What actually happened was that he told his people in very low tones that he had been commanded by God to remember and glorify Him and that they should also do the same and not disturb him.

\textsuperscript{2157} Commentary : 

The words, hold fast the Book, show that till the time of Yahyâ the Torah had not been abrogated nor was it about to be abrogated in the very near future. By the word "Book" is here meant the Torah because neither Muslims nor Jews nor Christians believe that Yahyâ was given a Book containing a new Law. Jesus had received baptism from Yahyâ (John) and it is inconceivable that the two Prophets—John and Jesus—who lived at the same time, one (John) should have acted upon the Law of Torah and the other (Jesus) who was John's disciple and had been baptised by him should have been given a new Book and a new Law. Indeed both John and Jesus followed the Law of Moses and none of them brought any new Book.
14. And tenderness of heart from Ourself, and purity, and he was pious.

15. And dutiful toward his parents. And he was not haughty and rebellious.

16. And peace was on him the day he was born, and the day he died, and peace there will be on him the day he will be raised up to life again.

2158. Important Words:

- حناناً (tenderness of heart) is derived from حن which means, he was or became affected with a yearning or an intense emotion of grief or of joy. حنانه means, my heart yearned towards him. حنان means, mercy, compassion or pity; tenderness of heart. A Muslim would pray حنان فما أرب, i.e. I beg Thy mercy, O Lord (Aqrab & Lane).

- زكاة (purity) is infinitive-noun from زك which means, it increased or augmented; it thrro and زك الفضلاً means, the boy grew and thrro; he was or became good or righteous and pure from sin; he enjoyed or led a pleasant, plentiful or an easy life. The difference between زكاء (purity) and تقى (piety) is that whereas the former word means internal purity, the latter generally signifies protection against external evils (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradat).

2159. Important Words:

- براً (dutiful) is derived from بار which means, he treated or behaved towards his father with filial piety, duty or obedience. بار في إيمانه means, he obeyed his Creator. بار عمله means, his work was good or well-performed. باره حجته means, God accepted his pilgrimage. بار (barrun) of which the plural is باراً and therefore means, pious, obedient, dutiful, kind, good or affectionate. البر (barr) and البر (brr) both signify abounding in (brr), the البر (barr) having greater intensification than البر and is one of the attributes of God meaning, the Merciful; the Compassionate God (Aqrab & Lane).

2160. Commentary:

During the first few centuries of its life Islam made very rapid progress. Large numbers of people from every religion—especially from Christianity, entered its fold. They brought with them some very erroneous beliefs about Jesus Christ. As they had not imbibed fully the true spirit of Islamic teachings, their false ideas and beliefs subsequently found their way into Muslim religious literature with the result that they came to form part of the beliefs of Muslims. All these beliefs had been invented to invest Jesus with an extraordinary personality—a personality much above human level. It is these foolish beliefs about Jesus that the Qur’an seeks to demolish in the present Sūra. By instituting a comparison between Ya’qūb, who was a Prophet of an ordinary spiritual stature, and Jesus, it means to suggest that there was nothing in Jesus which distinguished him from other Divine Messengers. We give below some of the spiritual qualities and characteristics of both these Prophets as given in the Qur’an to establish the above fact.
About Jesus it is said that:
1. He was a Prophet of God (3:50).
2. He was of the righteous (3:47).
4. He talked to people as a child i.e. in rather early age (3:47).
5. He was granted nearness to God (3:46).
6. He was kind and dutiful to his mother (19:33).
7. He was kind of heart and compassionate (5:119).
8. He was not haughty and unblessed (19:33).
9. He was blessed by God and was strengthened with the spirit of holiness (2:254; 19:32).
11. His name Messiah was given to him by God (19:8).

By instituting this comparison we should not be understood to mean that Jesus and John were of absolutely equal spiritual standing and there was nothing to distinguish one from the other. Jesus did indeed possess a higher spiritual status than John. What the Qur'an wants to make clear is the fact that there was nothing in Jesus which should raise him to the pedestal of Divinity. He was no doubt a great Prophet of God and was immune from sin but so were all other Divine Messengers, John being one of them. About him Jesus says: “For I say unto you, among those that are born of woman there is not a greater prophet than John, the Baptist” (Luke 7:28).

The verse should not be understood to signify that Prophet Yahyā was not murdered but died a natural death, a view mistakenly held in certain quarters, because it runs counter to an established fact of history. The words “peace was on him” used in the verse seem to have given rise to this manifestly wrong view but they lend no support to it. The word “peace” has not been used in a physical but a spiritual sense. In fact the verse refers to three periods or states of man’s life. The first state begins with his birth and ends with his death. The second state which is called بَرَزْخ (barzakh), literally meaning ‘the period of earning merit or demerit is over’, commences with death and continues till doom. The third state has been called “The Day of Resurrection” in the Qur'an. It is the day of the complete manifestation of God’s glory. It is these three states or periods of man’s existence to which the present verse refers and in all of which, it says, Yahyā will enjoy spiritual peace.
17. And relate the story of Mary as mentioned in the Book. When she withdrew from her people to a place to the east.  

2161. Important Words:

Mary (Mary) is probably a compound word consisting of and and possesses, in Hebrew, a variety of meanings. Some of these meanings are: ‘bitter sea’; ‘drop of the sea’; ‘star of the sea’; ‘bitterness’; ‘mistress or lady’. The word also means ‘exalted’. It may also mean ‘pious worshipper’. From two alternative roots the word might also mean, ‘the rebellious’, or ‘the corpulent’. It seems that among the Jews and the Arabs corpulence was considered as a mark of beauty and girls who were corpulent were considered beautiful and therefore named Maryam. Maryam also seems to be a popular name among the Jews in the time of Jesus. See also 3:37.

East (to the east) means, (1) facing the east; (2) to the east.  

The Book may refer both to the Bible and the Qurʾān.

Commentary:

It seems relevant and necessary to mention, as a prelude to the somewhat detailed account of Jesus’s fatherless birth as given in the next several verses, some facts related about Mary in the Qurʾān and the Bible.

The New Testament sheds practically no light on the life of Mary before she became pregnant. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke give an extremely brief and discursive description of her circumstances before the above important event took place while Mark and John are completely silent over it. According to Matthew, Mary, on being married to Joseph, was found to be with child. Joseph intended secretly to put her away but was refrained from taking this extreme step by an angel saying to him in a dream: “Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife” (Matt. 1:19, 20). According to Luke Mary was a relation of Zachariah’s wife and used to go to their house. Apart from this unimportant additional fact Luke leaves us quite in the dark about Mary’s account prior to her marriage with Joseph. But the Qurʾān gives us a much more detailed account of Mary’s family, the circumstances that attended her birth, the vow of her mother, her childhood being dedicated to the service of the Church and lastly of her having conceived Jesus (3:36, 37, 38).

The present Sūra, however, gives a still more detailed account of Mary having conceived Jesus and of what happened to her and to Jesus after his birth and after he was commissioned with his Divine mission. The Qurʾān has provided us with all necessary details about Mary that have any bearing on the important subject of prophethood which was about to be transferred from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael and which forms the principal thesis of the present Sūra. If anything the Bible has given a very sorry picture of Jesus and his relations with his mother. Whereas the Qurʾān depicts him to be kind, dutiful and very compassionate towards his mother, the Gospels show
that he did not like his mother because she did not believe in him (Matt. 12:46-50). Mark 3:31-35 and Luke 8:19-21 show that besides Mary, Jesus's other relations did not believe in him while the Gospel of John keeps discreetly silent over this painful subject. We also know that the Jews used to taunt Jesus by saying that if his mission was true why his own relations did not believe in him (Matt. 13:55-56). Some of his relations and friends went so far as to lay hold on him for they said that he was beside himself (Mark 3:21). This attitude of disbelief on the part of his relatives towards Jesus had made him so bitter that when he was being taken to Calvary to be put on the Cross and his mother appeared on the scene, he addressed her saying 'Woman, behold thy son!' (John 19:26). And when on another occasion a woman being very much impressed by his discourse said: 'Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked' (Luke 11:27), he retorted: 'Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it' (Luke 11:28), which signified that he could not even bear his mother being praised.

Such is the picture which the Gospels have drawn of the unenviable relations between Jesus and his mother. But the description is not only self-contradictory, it also offends against human nature and intelligence. The Qur'an, however, presents both these blessed and holy persons in quite a different light. Regarding Jesus it says that he was kind and loving, obedient and dutiful to his mother and that he was not haughty and rude (19:33) while about Mary it states that she was a pious, chaste and truthful woman and was a great worshipper of God and that God purified her, accepted her and chose her above the women of the world (3:43, 44; 5:76; 66:13). How great is the difference between the unenviable picture of Mary drawn by the Gospels and the beautiful description given of her in the Qur'an. Whereas the Biblical description is highly derogatory and self-contradictory, the Quranic description is not only consistent with the dignity of a highly righteous woman but is also more akin to truth and facts of history.

As the verse shows Mary withdrew herself to a place to the east. Special mention has been made of "a place to the east" in the verse, in order, perhaps, to point to the time-honoured custom of the Jews that they attached special significance to ٌشرق (East) and considered it sacred. They believed that the birth of the first man took place in the East where God planted a garden. (Gen. 2:8). The Babylonians by whose traditions the Jews became much impressed as they had lived under them as captives also looked upon the East as "the gate of light" (Ezekiel 11:1). Matthew 2:2 and Revelation 7:2 also shed some light on the importance of the East. Both the Jews and Christians hold the East in special respect. They build their places of worship facing the East. This is why special mention has been made in the present verse "of a place to the East" and Mary has been described as having gone to "a place which was facing the East."

For a somewhat detailed note on the early life of Mary see vv. 3:36, 37, 38.
18. And screened herself off from them, then We sent Our "angel to her, and he appeared to her in the form of a perfect man.\textsuperscript{2162}

19. She said, 'I seek refuge with the Gracious God from thee if indeed thou dost fear Him.'\textsuperscript{2163}

\textsuperscript{2162} Important Words:

روحنا (Our angel). For the different meanings of the word روح see 2 : 88; 4 : 172 & 16 : 3.

Commentary:

The expression فتحل لما يشرى سويا signifies that the Divine glad tidings about the birth of a great son was conveyed to Mary not in the form of spoken words which she could hear or which flowed from her mouth. The revelation to her took the form of a dream or vision. She saw in a vision that an angel came to her in the form of a healthy man and conveyed to her the Divine Message about the birth of a son. In fact, it is the word of God which at the time of revelation takes different forms and which when it came to Mary took the form of a man appearing in a dream. So it was no spirit that had entered Mary’s body. The vision was but a manifestation of God’s great power.

Christians try to derive a false satisfaction from the words فتحل لما يشرى سويا alleging that according to the Qur’ān Divine Spirit or God Himself had entered Mary’s body and that as a result thereof she became pregnant and therefore Jesus who was born as the result of that conception was the son of God. The Qur’ān lends no support whatsoever to this blasphemous and preposterous dogma but condemns and denounces it in the strongest possible terms (5 : 73-74; 19 : 89-91). What the verse says is only this that an angel of God (روح means an angel) appeared to Mary in a vision in the form of a man and gave to her the glad tidings of the birth of a son.

Even the Gospels repudiate this fantastic dogma. According to them Mary had become conceived only of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 1 : 18-20; Luke, 1 : 35). Thus according to Christians’ own admission Jesus, at best, was the son of the Holy Ghost. But if they believe that he was the son of God then they shall also have to admit that the Holy Ghost is God. But they accept neither of these propositions. So whereas the Qur’ān strongly condemns and denounces the Christian dogma of sonship of Jesus, the Gospels too do not support it. What the Qur’ān says is simply this that an angel appeared before Mary in the form of a man and gave her from God the glad tidings of the birth of a great son.

\textsuperscript{2163} Commentary:

It is worthy of note here that the Divine attribute الرحمن (Gracious), has been repeatedly used in this Sūra. This Sūra deals with all the basic dogmas of Christianity and it is this attribute of God which cuts at the root of these false doctrines and demolishes them. If God is Gracious, then He can forgive the sins of His servants and if He can forgive their sins, then there is no need for anybody to give his blood in order to save mankind. As is apparent from the previous verse it was a mere vision that Mary had seen, and it generally happens
20. He replied, 'I am only a Messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a righteous son.'

21. She said, 'How can I have a son when no man has touched me, neither have I been unchaste?'

Commentary:

The word ‘Messenger’ shows that the angel was only the bearer of a Divine message and the message or glad tidings which he brought was about the birth of a great son to Mary. So he had come not to give Mary a son but only the glad tidings about the birth of a son.

The expression of the angel to Mary was only in her state of wakefulness and it is therefore quite natural that she sought Divine protection from him.

2164. Commentary:

The incident referred to in this and the preceding verses took place in a vision, and in a vision or dream a person experiences different kinds of sensations at different occasions. Sometimes his feelings and talk in the dream are subject to and under the effect of the dream that he sees while at another time they are not, and he feels and talks as he would feel and talk if he were awake. For example, if in a dream a person is glad over the death of his son, his feelings will be regarded as under the effect of the dream because in his state of wakefulness no sane person would be glad over the death of his son. So if the words spoken by Mary when she saw the angel in her vision were under the effect of the vision, then they would signify that when the glad tidings was given to her about the birth of a son she had a pleasant surprise whether God would work such a miracle as to give her—a virgin—a son. But if the words be regarded as a natural expression on her part when the tidings of the birth of a son was given to her then they would signify that she was completely perplexed and horror-struck at the thought that a son should be born to her—a virgin. In the former case hers would be a very pleasant surprise at the great favour that God was going to do her and in the latter case it would be an expression of bewilderment indicating the horrified state of her mind.

The words 'no man has touched me' show that Mary thought that the glad tidings about
22. "He replied, 'Thus it is'. But says thy Lord, 'It is easy for Me; and We shall do so that We may make him a Sign unto men, and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing decreed.' 2166

the birth of a son to her meant that the child would be born to her without contracting a regular marriage, otherwise there was no sense in her denying having known any man. The words, 'neither have I been unchaste' show that whereas in the previous clause she had denied having known any man lawfully i.e. in a married state, these words refer to her denial of having known any person unlawfully i.e. outside legal wedlock. In her reply to the angel she seemed to be thinking of the circumstances of her life in the Temple and of her vow of celibacy which obviated the possibility of her having any offspring. If she thought that the promise made in the preceding verse referred to the birth of a son as a result of her conjugal relations in some future time, as some Commentators of the Qur'ân think, then there was no occasion for her to express any surprise.

2166. Important Words:

مَقَضِّيْ (decreed) is derived from قَضِيْ. They say قَضِيْ أَمَّا i.e. he decreed or ordained or commanded the thing (Lane). See also 15 : 67.

Commentary:

The words, It is easy for Me, signify that a most unusual and apparently impossible thing such as to cause a child to be born without the instrumentality of a father is quite easy for God to bring about. The expression, that We may make him a Sign unto men, implies the fatherless birth of Jesus. That birth was indeed a great Sign for the Israelites. It pointed to the impending transition of prophethood from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael. It also constituted a warning to the Israelites in the sense that they had become spiritually so corrupt and morally so degenerate that no male among them was fit enough to become the father of a Prophet of God. So God decreed to bring about Jesus's birth independently of a father. Jesus had an Israelite mother only and had no father. As the final step in the process of transition, however, the Great and Noble Messenger who was to follow him was to have neither an Israelite father nor an Israelite mother. He was to appear from another people, from among the Ishmaelites, the brethren of Israelites, in accordance with the Divine promise made to Moses (Deut. 18 : 18). It is in this sense that Jesus has been spoken of as 'a Sign of the Hour' in the Qur'ân (43 : 62), i.e., a Sign of the time when prophethood was to have passed from the Israelites to the Ishmaelites. See also Introduction to this Sûra.

Jesus has also been spoken of as 'as a mercy from Us.' He was a mercy from God in the sense that he taught meekness and humility to the Jews who had become hardhearted and conceited to the core. He was also a mercy in the sense that he came as a forerunner of the Holy Prophet who himself 'was sent as a mercy for all the worlds' (21 : 108). Again Jesus was a Divine mercy inasmuch as he paved the way for the revelation of the Qur'ân which has also been referred to as 'a mercy from the Lord' (29 : 52; 43 : 33). But this use of
23. So she conceived with him and withdrew with him to a remote place.  

The words, ‘That We may make him a Sign unto men and a mercy from Us’ should not be understood to entitle Jesus to any special spiritual status. Other persons and Prophets of God have also been styled ‘as a mercy and a Sign from God’ in the Qur’an (2:260; 7:74; 10:93; 21:108).

The expression, *and it is a thing decreed*, means that God had decreed that a fatherless son would be born to Mary and that this Divine decree was irrevocable. The Qur’an has used two words *قدّر* and *قضى* to express the sense of Divine decree. They are sometimes erroneously taken one for the other. But while *قدّر* means designing or determining, *قضى* means decreeing. When a scheme or plan is only designed to be put into execution, it is called *قدّر* but when it is decreed by God that it should be carried into actual effect, it is named *قضى*. The fatherless birth of Jesus was a *قضى* (Divine decree) of God and not a *قدّر*.

**2167. Important Words:**

*انتبِذت* (she withdrew) is derived from *نُبِذَت*. They say *نُبِذَت* i.e. he cast, threw or flung it away. *انتبِذَ* means, he withdrew or retired aside or apart from others; separated himself from others. *انتبِذَ عن القوم* means, he withdrew or retired from his people. *انتبِذَ مكانًا* means, he retired to a place from his family; he retired to a distant place from his people (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

How Mary came to conceive Jesus without the agency of a husband is one of those Divine secrets which at present may be considered beyond human intellect to fathom. It may be regarded as above the ordinary natural law as we now know it. But the knowledge of man, at best, is limited. He has not been able to comprehend all Divine secrets. There are mysteries in nature which man has not been able to solve as yet; perhaps he may never be able to solve them. Among them may be included the fatherless birth of Jesus. God’s ways are inscrutable and His powers limitless. He Who could create the whole universe by uttering the word, *كن* (be), surely can bring about such changes in matter as should make this apparently insoluble mystery yield to a solution.

Medical Science, however, has not altogether ruled out the possibility, from a purely biological standpoint, under certain conditions, of natural parthenogenesis or the production of a child by a female without any relation to a male. Medical men call attention to this possibility as a result of a certain type of tumours, which are occasionally found in the female pelvis or lower body. These tumours which are known as arrhenoblastoma are capable of generating male sperm-cells. If living male sperm-cells are produced in a female body by arrhenoblastoma the possibility of self-fertilization of a woman, even though 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 usual way, or by a physician’s aid. Recently a group of gynaecologists in Europe have published data to prove instances of child birth where the mother had had no contact with a male (Lancet). For a detailed note on parthenogenesis see 3:48.

Jesus’s birth is perhaps not altogether unique in this respect that he was born without the agency of a human father. Cases are on record.
24. And the pains of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of a palm-tree. She said, 'O! would that I had died before this and had become a thing quite forgotten!'


If we dismiss all these possibilities, then Jesus’s birth will have to be regarded, God forbid, as illegitimate. 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, the birth of Jesus was recorded as such (Talmud). This fact alone should constitute a valid proof of Jesus’s birth being out of the ordinary. Joseph, Mary’s husband, according to the Gospels, had not established conjugal relations with her till after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:25). So the words, ‘she conceived him’, refer to this extraordinary conception of Mary without the agency of any man.

The words, ‘a remote place’, refer to Bethlehem which is about seventy miles from Nazareth to the south. There Joseph took Mary sometime before Jesus’s birth which took place in that town.

2168. Important Words:

مَخَضُّ (pains of childbirth) is derived from مَخَضَّ اللَّبَنِ i.e. he churned the milk and took the butter out of it. مَخَضُّ الشَّيْئَ means, he violently agitation the thing. مَخَضُّ الْعَرَاءَ means, the woman suffered the pains of childbirth. مَخَضُّ means, the pains of childbirth (Lane & Aqrab).

نَسَيَة (a thing forgotten) is derived from نَسَى which means, he forgot the thing. نَسَيَة means, anything forgotten or worthy of being forgotten or anything that must be forgotten. It also means, one who is counted for nothing, who is despised; a thing which the members of a caravan leave behind as worthless or of little use or importance. نَسَيَة also means, a thing that is forgotten or neglected. The use of these two words together in this verse denoting the same sense is intended to intensify the sense of fogetting or neglect (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

As it appears from the Gospels there was no room in the inn in which Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary must have stayed in the open field and Mary might have betaken herself to the trunk of a palm-tree in order to take rest under its shade and possibly also to find some support in her throes of childbirth.

The words, ‘had become a thing quite forgotten’ indicate the extreme severity of the pains of childbirth. In the case of first delivery the throes of childbirth ordinarily are extremely severe and in the intensity of pain women generally give utterance to some such words as those spoken by Mary.
25. Then he (the angel) called her from beneath her, saying, "Grieve not. Thy Lord has placed a rivulet below thee;"  

26. "And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree; it will cause fresh ripe dates to fall upon thee."

So the voice of the angel indicated to her the direction where the fountain lay. One of the fountains was flowing at a distance of about 800 yards to the south-east of Bethlehem and Joseph and Mary, we are told, finding no accommodation in the town had to lie in the open field at some distance from the town.

The verse seems to point to a beautiful likeness which Jesus had with another Prophet of God—Ishmael. We are told that when Ishmael suffered from extreme pangs of thirst in the wilderness of Mecca and his mother Hagar in vain searched for water, the voice of the angel came to her saying that God had caused a fountain of water to flow from under the feet of Ishmael (Bukhārī). The verse thus entitles Jesus to no particular distinction. Apart from the fatherless birth of Jesus the significance of which has been fully explained in the Introduction to the present Sūrah, Jesus possesses no distinction. He was only one of so many Divine Messengers.

2170. Commentary:

According to this verse the birth of Jesus took place at a time when fresh dates are found on palm-trees in Judaea. That season evidently is in the months of August and September but according to the view generally accepted by Christians, Jesus was born on 25th December which day is celebrated all over the Christian world every year with great fervour. Now this Christian view is contradicted not only by the Qur'ān but also by history and even
by writers of the New Testament itself. Writing about the time of Jesus's birth Luke says: “And there were shepherds in the same country (Judaea) abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock's (Luke 2:7, 8). Commenting on this statement of Luke Bishop Barns in his book, *Rise of Christianity*, on page 79 says: “There is, moreover, no authority for the belief that December 25 was the actual birthday of Jesus. If we can give any credence to the birth-story of Luke, with the shepherds keeping watch by night in the fields near Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus did not take place in winter, when the night temperature is so low in the hill country of Judaea that snow is not uncommon. After much argument our Christmas day seems to have been accepted about A.D. 300”. This view of Bishop Barns is supported by writers of the articles on “Christmas” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and Chambers *Encyclopaedia*. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica* we have:

The exact day and year of Christ's birth have never been satisfactorily settled; but when the fathers of the Church in A.D. 340 decided upon a date to celebrate the event, they wisely chose the day of the winter solstice which was firmly fixed in the minds of the people and which was their most important festival. Owing to changes in man-made calendars, the time of the solstice and the date of Christmas day vary by a few days (15th edition, vol. 5, pp. 642 & 642A).

**Chambers Encyclopaedia says:**

In the second place the winter solstice was regarded as the birthday of the sun, and at Rome 25th December was observed as a pagan festival of the nativity of Sol-invictus. The Church, unable to stamp out this popular festival, spiritualized it as the feast of the Nativity of the Sun of Righteousness.

These statements of the two *Encyclopaedias* are further supported by Peake's “Commentary on the Bible”. In this book on page 727 Peake says: “The season (of Jesus’s birth) would not be December; our Christmas day is a comparatively late tradition found first in the West.” Thus recent historical research into the origins of Christianity has established the fact beyond any reasonable doubt that Jesus was not born in December.

How in the light of historical research into the origins of Christianity and Luke’s statement that Jesus was born at a time when “there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night” (Luke 2:7-8) the belief ever came to be entertained by Christians that Jesus was born in December, seems very surprising indeed. According to this statement of Luke Jesus certainly was born in summer when shepherds abide in the field in Judaea, keeping watch over their flocks at night which is only possible in summer. The incident referred to in Luke very probably took place in the month of August or September when fresh dates are found on palm-trees in Judaea. This is the time when according to the Quranic verse under comment Jesus was born and when his mother Mary was directed by God to “shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree; it will cause fresh dates to fall upon thee”. Thus the Gospel of Luke inadvertently has lent wonderful support to the Quranic view about the birth of Jesus having taken place in the month of August or September which is the season of fresh ripe dates in Judaea. Moreover, there is ample and very reliable historical evidence also to show that Jesus was born in the month of August or September. In his “Dictionary of the Bible” Dr. John D. Davis, under the word “year” writes that dates become ripe in
the Jewish month of Elul; and in Peake’s “Commentary on the Bible” (page 117) we have that the month of Elul corresponds to the months of August-September. Furthermore Dr. Peake says, “J. Stewart (When did our Lord actually live?) arguing from an Angora temple inscription and a quotation in an old Chinese classic which speaks of the Gospel story reaching China A.D. 25-28 puts the birth of Jesus in 8 B.C. (Sept. or Oct.) and the crucifixion on Wednesday in A.D. 24.”

From the above statements of the two Encyclopaedias supported by quotations from the “Commentary on the Bible” by Dr. Arthur S. Peake, M.A., D.D., the fact becomes quite clear that Jesus was born in the Jewish month of Elul which corresponds to the months of August-September when dates ripen in Judaea, and not on 25th December as the Christian Church would have us believe. And that is the view expressed by the Qur’ãn.

One more fact in this connection demands careful examination. Some time before Jesus’s birth Joseph had taken Mary to Bethlehem, a town about seventy miles to the south of Nazareth, the native place of Joseph and Mary. Luke states that Joseph did so because with Quirinius as governor of Syria, Augustus Caesar had ordered that all should go to Bethlehem to be enrolled in the city of David (Luke 2:1-4). But history does not support this statement of Luke. No census was ever taken in the year of Jesus’s birth nor was there any governor of Syria of this name at that time. According to Josephus, one of the greatest of all Jewish historians, the first census ever to be taken was held seven years after Jesus’s birth and the governors of Syria ten years before his birth till Herod’s death were Stiplus Wardus, Sentiris and Titnis (Enc. Brit. under “Chronicle”).

It seems incredible that in the face of such reliable historical evidence Luke should have invented this story of the census. There must have been some very compelling reasons for him to do so. It appears that in a desperate search for an excuse to explain why Joseph and Mary undertook such a long and arduous journey to Bethlehem in the latter’s extremely weak state of health and her pregnancy, Luke seems to have stumbled over the fact of a census having taken place in that town which, in fact, had been held seven years after the date that he has assigned to it. He deliberately predated the census by seven years in order to show that both the events—the census and Jesus’s birth, took place at the same time. Writing history about seventy or eighty years after the actual event he perhaps thought that this historical anachronism would not be detected after such a long time. Thus by placing the census, which had occurred seven years later, in the year of Jesus’s birth Luke persuaded himself to believe that he had succeeded in explaining away the fact as to why Joseph had exposed his ailing wife to the rigours of a long and hard journey to Bethlehem in the advanced state of her pregnancy.

But the difficulty still remains that if, as history shows, there had been no census at the time of Jesus’s birth, then why Luke was so anxious to invent the whole story of the journey to Bethlehem and why it was undertaken. In fact the difficulty was of Luke’s own creation. It was this, that while narrating the account of the immaculate conception of Mary he had stated that great and wonderful miracles had begun and had continued to appear till Jesus’s birth. He feared that if no valid reason were given of this journey of Joseph and Mary, then they would be legitimately accused of being weak.
of faith and people would naturally say that after having witnessed so many miracles at the time of the conception they were still afraid of public criticism and scandal-mongering and that in order to hide the fact of conception and later birth they had left Nazareth. But the hard reality was there that they had undertaken the journey to Bethlehem, a far-off place. Luke probably thought that people would rightly ask that if immediately after the conception miracles and Divine Signs had really begun to appear, then where was the necessity for Joseph to conceal Mary’s pregnancy and the subsequent birth of Jesus, and if there existed no such necessity why did Joseph and Mary undertake that hard and fatiguing journey in the state of her extremely delicate health? Thus the invention of great miracles having taken place at the time of the conception forced Luke to forge the event of the census and also the story that he had undertaken the journey to Bethlehem in order to attend it. But he need not have invented or predated the fact of the census. The whole thing was quite simple and could have been easily explained. Luke could easily have written that Mary had miraculously conceived a child while in the Temple and was afterwards married to Joseph who himself was quite convinced of her chastity as he had seen a vision to that effect (see 3:47). But because he feared that he would not be able to convince others of this fact, and because he was afraid of scandal-mongering on the part of the people, therefore, he had to take Mary to a far-off place before her pregnancy had become too patent to be concealed any longer. But this he would not do because in that case the whole story of great miracles having attended Mary’s conception would have gone to pieces. This is how the whole difficulty arose and one invention led to another.

It may be added here that the whole trouble of fixing the date of Jesus’s birth seems to have arisen from a confusion of the date of Mary’s conception. The pregnancy of Mary seemed to have taken place sometime in November or December and not in March or April as the Church historians would have us believe. When after four or five months’ conception pregnancy became too obvious to be concealed any longer, Joseph was prevailed upon to take Mary to his house in the month of March or April of the next year. Thus Christian historians mistake the date when Joseph took Mary to his house for the date of her actual conception which had taken place four or five months earlier. As recent research into the origins of Christianity has proved that Jesus was not born in December but in August-September, therefore the conception could not have taken place in March or April. So the Quranic view that Jesus was born in August or September is based not only on historical facts but is also quite in accordance with Luke’s own narrative and therefore is the only safe and sensible conclusion.

It also appears from the present verse that Mary was lying in a sheltered place in the upper part of the hill and the date-palm was standing on the slope and therefore she could easily reach to its trunk and shake it. That the territory of Bethlehem abounded in date-palms is clear from the Bible (Judges 1:16) and from “A Dictionary of the Bible” by Dr. John D. Davis, D.D.

Moreover, the fact of Mary having been guided to a fountain, as mentioned in the preceding verse, in order to drink of its water and wash herself, points to Jesus’s birth having taken place in the month of August or September because in the icy cold weather of Judaea in December Mary could not have washed herself in the open.
27. “So eat and drink and cool thine eye. And if thou seest any man, say, ‘I have vowed a fast to the Gracious God; I will therefore not speak this day to any human being.’”

28. Then she brought him to her people, carrying him. They said, ‘O Mary, thou hast done a strange thing.’

2171. Commentary:

Some Commentators of the Qur'an are of the view that Mary was commanded completely to abstain from talking. But that is not the case. Like Zachariah she was directed to abstain from talk as far as possible, but not completely, and to devote all her time in the remembrance of God. The expression (and say) itself shows that the command about abstaining from talk was not unqualified. A new baby had been born and as the birth of a new child was likely to attract the casual visitor or the passerby and induce him to ask the mother unnecessary and vexatious questions about its parentage etc.; so in order to cut short the possible embarrassing conversation Mary was commanded to say that she had vowed a fast to the Gracious God that she would indulge in no useless talk. Thus while on the one hand her silence conserved her physical strength, on the other she could have more time to devote to the remembrance of God.

2172. Important Words:

جفت (thou hast done). جفت زيد means, Zaid came. جفت زيداً به means, I came to Zaid. جفت أتولد means, I brought him. جفت بثي means, she gave birth to a child. جفت بثي means, he did, executed or performed a thing; he said or uttered a thing. جفت شيتاً حسبنا means, I did a good thing. The Quranic expression, شيتاً Nara (strange) is derived from خرى (fariya) which means, he was or became confounded or perplexed, and was unable to see the right course. خرى أتانا means, he blamed or censured such a one; خرى الشيئي means, he cut or slit the thing. They say خرى القرى i.e. he effects what is wonderful in his deed. خرى نريا means, a thing forged or fabricated or unknown or unheard of. The words خرى نريا mean, thou hast done a thing hitherto unknown; or a thing deemed strange; or a thing great of magnitude or gravity. خرى applied to a man means, a forger or fabricator of lies. خرى اتري كذبا means, he forged or fabricated a lie or falsehood (Lane & Aqrab).

حمل (carrying him) is derived from حمل. حمل الشيئي means, he bore him on his or its back. حمل المرأة means, the woman became pregnant. حمل القرآن means, he memorized the Qur'an. حمل الحمل means, he helped him or assisted him to lift the load; or he assisted him in his work; he gave him a beast to ride; حملتهم (9:92) means, that thou
shouldst mount them (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradat). See also 7:177.

Commentary:

By the words ‘carrying him’ some people are led to think that the verse refers to the time of the childhood of Jesus when Mary carried him in her arms. But this is an obvious misconception. The verse, in fact, refers to the time when Jesus had attained to prophethood as is clear from vv. 31-34 wherein he says, I am a servant of Allah, He has given me the Book, and made me a Prophet;...and has enjoined upon me Prayer and alms-giving so long as I live. Surely Jesus was not made a Prophet in his childhood, nor did he say his Prayers and give Zakat at that time. It appears from the Gospels that after Jesus’s birth at Bethlehem, in pursuance of a Divine command Joseph had taken him and Mary to Egypt where they lived for some years and it was after the death of Herod that the family came back to Nazareth and dwelt there (Matt. 2:13-23). There was also a Biblical prophecy to the effect that Jesus would come to his people along with his mother riding an ass (Matt. 21:4-7). Jesus and Mary were actually riding asses when they entered Jerusalem. Thus the expression تحمل (carrying him or mounting him) may possibly refer to that prophecy of the Bible.

Moreover the expression تحمل as shown under “Important Words” above, also means, he helped him and assisted him in his work. According to this signification of the word تحمل the verse under comment would mean that Mary came to her people with Jesus while she believed in him and helped him in his mission. The expression serves a two-fold pose. On the one hand it refers to the fulfilment of the Biblical prophecy (Matt. 21:4-7) and on the other disposes of the accusation (also contained in the Bible) that Jesus’s brothers and his mother did not believe in him. In any case this verse does not refer to the childhood of Jesus but to the time when prophethood had already been bestowed upon him and he had begun addressing his Message to his people.

The manner of expression adopted in regard to the birth and prophethood of Jesus is quite like that adopted about John (Yahya) in verses 12th and 13th of the present Sūra. Verse 12 relates to Zachariah having received the happy news of the birth of a son and v. 13 to the period when his son Yahya had become a Prophet, the remaining incidents in Yahya’s life having been omitted because the Qur’ān is not a book of history that it should give the complete picture of the life of a man. In the same way the preceding three verses give a brief description of Jesus’s birth and the present verse comes straight to the time when he had become a Prophet of God. The fact that v. 23 speaks of Mary having withdrawn to a remote place also belies the inference that she had come from that remote place carrying Jesus in her arms.

The words, ‘thou hast done a strange thing’ contain a double taunt. They refer to the calumny of Mary having given birth to an illegitimate son and to Jesus having falsely laid claim to prophethood. As shown under “Important Words” above the word فربى also means a forger of lies. Thus by using this word the elders of the Jewish people called Mary a bad woman and Jesus a forger of lies and a false Prophet.
29. 'O sister of Aaron, thy father was not a wicked man nor was thy mother an unchaste woman!'\textsuperscript{2175}

30. Then she pointed to him. They said, 'how can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?'\textsuperscript{2174}

\textbf{2173. Commentary:}

Some Christian writers in their ignorance of the Arabic language have accused the Qur'an of an historical anachronism inasmuch as it has spoken of Mary as "sister of Aaron". Instead of regretting their own ignorance they seek to find fault with the Qur'an. The question of Mary having been called the sister of Aaron in the Qur'an was put before the Holy Prophet himself and he asked the questioner if he did not know that the Israelites used to name their children after their Prophets and saints (Bayān, vol. 6, p. 16; Jarīr vol. 16, p. 52).

Mary has been here called the sister of Aaron and not that of Moses though both were brothers, for whereas Moses was the founder of the Jewish Law, Aaron was the head of the Jewish priestly class (Enc. Bib. & Enc. Brit. under "Aaron") and Mary also belonged to the priestly order. Tabari has related an incident from the life of the Holy Prophet which gives an insight into the meanings of the Arabic words ˈaḇ (\textit{ab}), ʿām (\textit{ʿamm}), ʾaḥt (\textit{ukht}) etc. When ʾSaḥiyyah, the Holy Prophet's wife, and incidentally a Jewess by descent, once complained to the Holy Prophet that some of his other wives had called her a Jewess in contempt, the Prophet told her to return the taunt by saying that Aaron was her father, Moses her uncle and Muḥammad her husband. Now, the Holy Prophet certainly knew that Aaron was not ʾSaḥiyyah's father nor Moses her uncle. This tradition shows that the application of these Arabic words is by no means confined to the above-mentioned blood relations.

Mary might have been called a sister of Aaron by way of reproach or taunt inasmuch as another Mary, the real sister of Aaron and Moses's step-sister or his sister-in-law, had charged him (Moses) with having unlawfully married a woman (Numbers 12:1). A reference to this accusation is also to be found in the Qur'an in 33:70. Thus the elders of the Jews, by calling Jesus's mother "sister of Aaron," meant that as Mary the sister of Aaron had, by accusing Moses of unlawfully marrying a woman, committed a heinous crime, so did she, like her namesake, commit a heinous act of giving birth to an illegitimate child. See also 3:36.

\textbf{2174. Important Words:}

For ʾahd see 3:47.

\textbf{Commentary:}

The words 'she pointed to him' indicate that Mary knew what answer Jesus would give if the elders of the Jews addressed their question to him. These words may also indicate that Mary knew that if she declared herself innocent nobody would believe her. The only evidence of her innocence was her son. She meant that such a holy and righteous son whom God had endowed with such noble qualities could not be the result of an immoral union and that his
virtues and good qualities by themselves constituted a sufficient vindication of her innocence. So she pointed to him.

The words may also signify that when the Jews accused Mary of adultery she felt embarrassed and pointed to Jesus who had by that time become a Prophet. Some Muslim Commentators of the Qur'an seem to feel a peculiar delight in attributing all sorts of miracles to Jesus. By their misguided esteem for him they have virtually raised him to the pedestal of Divinity. In the words, *How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle*, they seem to have discovered one such miracle of Jesus. Among all men, even among all the great Prophets of God, he alone, they say, could talk while yet a child in the cradle. But the talk which he gave to the elders of the Jews and which is contained in the next four verses (vv. 31-34) could not possibly be the talk of a child. If it was, then the facts described therein were a tissue of lies. Jesus says:

(a) “God has made me a Prophet”; (b) “He has given me the Book”; (c) “He has enjoined me to say Prayers and give the Zakāt”; (d) “He has made me, dutiful to my mother and has not made me haughty”; and (e) “Peace was on me the day I was born, and peace there will be on me the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised up to life again.” All these affirmations from the lips of a child sound like so many lies and who would call these lies a miracle? Jesus was neither a Prophet at that time, nor did he say Prayer or give Zakāt or was given a Book. Moreover, these Commentators appear to ignore the quite obvious fact that at another place in the Qur’an (3:47) this miracle is stated as having consisted in Jesus’s speaking to the people in the cradle and when of middle age (في المهد وكهيل). But talk by a man when he is مهد (of middle age), is no miracle; and by joining the word مهد (cradle) with the word كهيل (of middle age), the Qur’an implies that the talk of Jesus in مهد and when he was كهيل (of middle age) was no miracle in the sense in which it is understood by the Commentators, but it was a miracle in the sense that he spoke words of exceptional wisdom and intelligence in childhood as well as in middle age. The joining of these two words also implied a prophecy that Jesus would not die young but would live up to a ripe age. This prophecy did constitute a real miracle. But if the word مهد were to be taken in the sense of “period of preparation” which is also one of the meanings of this word, the verse يكم الناس في المهده (3:47) would mean that he would speak to people words full of extraordinary wisdom and spiritual knowledge much beyond his years and experience, both in the period of preparation which is youth and in his middle age. Thus the words, *How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle*, present no difficulty. When Mary, on being taunted by the elders of the Jews, directed their attention to Jesus, they disdained to talk to him and contemptuously said, how could they talk to “a child in the cradle” *i.e.* a mere boy, who was born and brought up before their very eyes? Elderly people are wont to talk like that when invited to learn wisdom from one who is much younger to them in age. The words merely constitute an expression of contempt and disdain for Jesus. See also 3:47.
31. He said, 'I am a servant of Allah. He has given me the Book, and made me a Prophet; \textsuperscript{2175}

32. 'And He has made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and has enjoined upon me Prayer and almsgiving so long as I live; \textsuperscript{2176}

33. 'And \textit{He has made me} dutiful toward my mother, and He has not made me haughty \textit{and} unblessed.\textsuperscript{2177}

\textsuperscript{2175} Commentary:

"The Book" refers to the Torah and the verse signifies that God had given Jesus a special knowledge of the Torah which was denied to the elders and learned men of the Jews.

\textsuperscript{2176} Commentary:

This verse implied a mighty prophecy. The prophecy was that Jesus's people would put him on the Cross and compel him to flee his country and seek refuge in a foreign land. But the grace and blessings of God would attend him wherever he would go. After the crucifixion Jesus's mission appeared to have been a complete failure but he travelled to the East—to Afghanistan and Kashmir, where his cause prospered and triumphed. See also 4:158 & 23:51.

\textsuperscript{2177} Commentary:

The present and the preceding two verses refer to a period when Jesus had already become invested with prophethood. It is an insult to human intelligence and common-sense and to belie facts of history and also to betray one's utter lack of knowledge of the Quranic style and Arabic idiom to say that the words of vv. 31-33 were spoken by Jesus while he was yet a child and therefore constituted a great miracle. A mere babe who sucked the breast of his mother could not say that he was a most obedient and faithful servant of God or that God had given him a Book or that he said Prayers and gave alms or that he was dutiful to his mother and was not haughty. All this talk seems to be a tissue of lies. Jesus could not and did not do any of these things while yet a child but rather when he had attained to prophethood. It may be argued that the miracle consisted in the fact that Jesus could talk while yet a baby in the cradle but this purpose could equally have been served by his speaking only a few words. If only he had rebuked the elders of the Jews for calumniating his mother in a single sentence they would surely have been taken aback and completely confounded and the purpose of the miracle would have been fully served. But where was the necessity of putting a long discourse in Jesus's mouth which was not true? The truth is that the miracle did not lie in the supposed infantile talk of Jesus but only in the imagination of the Commentators.

In this and the preceding two verses Jesus has been described as saying that (1) he is a servant of God; (2) God has given him the Book; (3) He has made him a Prophet; (4) He has made
him blessed; (5) He has enjoined upon him Prayer and alms-giving; (6) He has made him dutiful to his mother and that (7) He has not made him haughty and unblest. All these words put in Jesus's mouth by the Qur'an have been amply supported and corroborated by the Bible:

(1) As regards Jesus's being a humble servant of God, subject to human weaknesses and frailties and to the demands and calls of nature and not being God or son of God, the Bible says:

And when he had fasted forty days and nights, he afterwards hungered (Matt. 4:2).

But of that day or that hour knoweth no one,—but the father (Mark 13:32).

And Jesus said unto him, why callest thou me good? None is good save one, that is God (Mark 10:18).

(2) About the fact that Jesus was given a Book which he followed and taught, the Bible says:

Think not that I 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 from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matt. 5:17, 18).

(3) The Bible also supports the Quranic statement that Jesus was only a Prophet of God and not God or the son of God, it says:

And He that sent me is with me (John 8:29).

Neither came I of myself, but He sent me (John 8:42).

He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:15-22).

And the multitudes said, This is the Prophet, Jesus, of Nazareth of Galilee (Matt. 21:11).

(4) About Jesus's being blessed the Bible depicts Elizabeth, the mother of John, as saying to Mary, the mother of Jesus:

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb (Luke 1:42).

And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked (Luke 11:27).

(5) Fifthly, the Qur'an tells us about Jesus that God had enjoined upon him Prayer and alms-giving. About this the Bible says as follows:

And he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed (Luke 5:16).

And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:44).

Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:21).

(6) Last of all Jesus has been described as being humble and blessed with success. In regard to this the Bible says:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls (Matt. 11:29).

Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sittin upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass (Matt. 21:5).

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).
34. ‘And peace was on me the day I was born, and peace there will be on me the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised up to life again.’

35. Such was Jesus, son of Mary. This is a statement of the truth about which they doubt.

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2178. **Commentary:**

The words, *and peace there will be on me the day I shall die*, show that Jesus did not die on the Cross, for death on the Cross, according to the Bible, is an accursed death (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). It cannot be said about a person who died an accursed death that he died a blessed and peaceful death. But the mere fact of a person being put on the Cross or meeting a violent end does not conflict with the idea of peace and blessedness to which this verse refers. It is an accepted fact of history that the Prophet Yahyā was murdered while in jail but the words “peace was on him the day he died” have also been used about him in v. 16 above. So these words have been used about Jesus and Yahyā to show that both these Prophets succeeded in their missions, and a person who succeeds in his mission and whose work is carried on after his death and who is remembered with love and respect cannot be said to have suffered death or to have been deprived of “peace”. Jesus has left behind him a large community of followers and Yahyā’s name is remembered with love and respect. Thus both Jesus and Yahyā died a blessed death and enjoy everlasting peace.

The words “peace was on me the day I was born” may also be understood as containing a hint that the birth of Jesus was out of the ordinary. These words have also been used about Yahyā in verse 16 above because his birth, too, took place in extraordinary circumstances. He was born when his father had reached an extremely old age and his mother was barren.

The expression, *the day I shall be raised up to life again*, may also imply: “The day when I shall be raised again in the form of another Prophet who will testify to my truth.” The implied reference may be to the Holy Prophet who bore witness to the truth of Jesus.

2179. **Commentary:**

Perhaps there is no individual of any prominence in religious history about whom so many and so far-reaching differences exist as about Jesus, the son of Mary. The Jews, the Christians and the Muslims all hold widely different views about Jesus’s birth, the manner of his death, and about the account of his life. The Jews believe that he was born out of legal wedlock and therefore his birth was illegitimate. He was a false Prophet and therefore deservedly met an accursed death on the Cross. The Christians hold that Jesus’s mother became conceived of the Holy Ghost, therefore he was the son of God. He persuaded himself to be put on the Cross and by his death he atoned for the sins of all humanity. He remained dead for three days and then rose up to heaven. He is a part of the Holy Trinity and yet is God Himself. Orthodox
Muslims believe that he was miraculously born without the instrumentality of a father as the result of a special Divine decree. He was an Israelite Prophet. The Jews tried to crucify him but instead succeeded only in crucifying another person who by God's special decree was made to look like Jesus and Jesus bodily went up to heaven where he is sitting by the right hand of God and will some day descend from heaven to win for Muslims the kingdom of the whole world. The so-called modernists among Muslims think that he was the son of Joseph the carpenter, and died a natural death, and so there was nothing miraculous or unusual about his birth, death or his life. He was only an Israelite Prophet. The orthodox Ahmads, however, believe that his birth took place without the agency of a father as the result of a special Divine decree, and that this unusual form of birth constituted a rebuke and a warning to the Israelites that on account of their persistent rejection of truth and God's Messengers, and their immoral practices the whole Israelite nation had been rendered quite unfit to give birth to a Prophet of God and therefore prophethood, in accordance with God's covenant with Abraham, was transferred from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael (see Introduction to this Sūra). They further believe that Jesus was hung on the Cross by the Jews but did not die there and was taken down from it alive and for three days remained in a tomb hewn out of a rock and then travelled to Kashmir to preach his Message to the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. He lived up to the ripe old age of 120 years, died a natural death and lies buried in Khan Yar street in Srinagar, Kashmir. In fact, the existence of so many and so serious differences about Jesus implies a rebuke to Christians that there is nothing certain about their god.

The expression "son of Mary" (ابن مريم) is Jesus's distinctive name. Whereas on the one hand it seems to point to his fatherless birth, on the other it confers on him a name which is incapable of being confused with that of anybody else. The Gospels have also used for Jesus the epithet ابن آدم (son of man) but this epithet has been used in the Bible for other persons also. So ابن مريم (son of Mary) is at once a distinctive and descriptive name of Jesus.

2180. Important Words:

ما كان له (It does not befit the Majesty of Allah). They say i.e. (1) it does not befit him; behave him; it is inconsistent with his dignity; it is not proper for him; (2) it is beyond his power to do so. In the present verse means, it is inconsistent with the Majesty of Allah or it does not befit His Holiness (Aqrab, Lane & Mufradat). See also 2 : 35.

Commentary:

The words express two senses: (a) that He should have a son; and (b) that He should adopt some one as His son. When it is inconsistent with God's Majesty to adopt someone as His son, it is all the more repugnant to His Holiness and Glory to have a real son. These words repudiate the Christian belief, namely (i) that God has adopted Jesus as His son or...
(ii) that Jesus is God's son.

Christians believe that Jesus was God's son. The onus for proving such a manifestly absurd belief lies on them. They base this belief on the assumption that the Bible calls him the son of God. But in the Bible other persons have also been called or addressed as sons of God. Jesus enjoys no special prerogative in this respect and is therefore no more a son of God than those persons who have also been addressed as such.

The Bible says:

(a) "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God" (Luke 20:36);
(b) "For I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn" (Jer. 31:9);
(c) "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9);
(d) "For if you forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matt. 6:14);
(e) "That your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25);
(f) "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things" (Luke 12:30);
(g) "We have one Father, even God" (John 8:41);
(h) "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephes. 4:6);
(i) "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Exod. 4:22).

The Bible rather supports the Quranic statement, viz., it does not befit the Majesty of Allah to take unto Himself a son. He is the One Lord God Who has or needs no son.

It says:

(a) "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4);

(b) "I am the Lord, that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isa. 42:8);
(c) "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord" (Mark 12:29);
(d) "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty" (Jude 1:25);
(e) "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever" (I Timothy 1:17).

The verse under comment gives three reasons why God does not stand in need of a son: (1) if God were supposed to have a son, He must be subject to carnal desires and must have a wife to satisfy them; (2) He must be subject to decay and death because the procreation of species which the attribution of a son to God implies, is the characteristic of mortals; and (3) He must require a helper to assist Him in His work or to continue his work after His death. But God as represented by Islam is completely free from all these defects and therefore needs no son. In fact, the Christian dogma of sonship of Jesus is an insoluble riddle and beyond human comprehension. If Jesus is God's son, then God will have to be admitted as incapable of carrying on the affairs of the universe alone and unaided, and therefore will have to be accepted as imperfect and defective. But because God is perfect and All-Powerful, therefore He needs no son and no helper. Again, according to the Christian dogma each of the three deities, God, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, being perfect can and should carry on the work of the universe unaided and yet these three combine to do the thing which each one is able to accomplish by himself. This is absurd.

Those who are ignorant of Arabic language pretend to find in the word كَانَ (be) a
37. **Said Jesus:** ‘Surely, “Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him alone, this is the right path.”

38. But the parties differed among themselves; so woe to those who disbelieve, because of the meeting of the great day.\(^{2181}\)

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**Commentary**:

The verse means to say that in spite of the fact that the followers of Jesus followed one Book, held the same basic beliefs and their religious practices were almost the same, they differed among themselves. Some of them said that Mary was an ordinary woman who gave birth to the son of God, others believed that she was God’s wife and was therefore Divine. Yet some others among them believed that Jesus was only a man and a Prophet of God. He had, like other Prophets, manifested in himself some Divine attributes, and there were others who said that he was God Incarnate. Some others believed in three separate Divine persons *i.e.* God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, each of them being perfect God; others said that they are only three manifestations of the One God *i.e.* in one capacity God is Father, in another capacity He is Son and in the third capacity He is the Holy Ghost.

So the followers of Jesus, in spite of believing in the same Book and possessing the same basic doctrines and principles of religion became split up into many sects.
39. How wonderful will their hearing and seeing be on the day when they will come to Us! But to-day the wrongdoers are in manifest error. 2182

40. And warn them of "the day of grief when the matter will be decided. But now they are in a state of carelessness, so they do not believe. 2183

41. "It is We Who will inherit the earth and all who are thereon; and to Us will they all be returned." 2184

2182. Commentary:
The verse means to say that the faculties of seeing and hearing of disbelievers will become much more keener and sharper on the Day of Judgment, because the veil will be lifted from their eyes and ears and they will realize that they were in the wrong; but that realization being too late will prove to be of no use to them.

2183. Commentary:
The words اذ قضي الأمر means, (1) when the decree of God will be announced; (2) when decision will be made according to truth and justice.
The expression ومن عليهم وهم لا يؤمنون in addition to the meaning given in the text may also signify that though on the Day of Decision the realization will dawn on disbelievers that they were in the wrong, yet having become accustomed to untruth and disbelief, they will not become reconciled to it and their hearts will continue to suffer from the rust, and they will continue to wander in the wilderness, of disbelief and consequently will suffer Divine punishment.

2184. Commentary:
As the Sura deals with the false Christian beliefs and the rise, progress and prosperity of Christian nations, and with the ultimate destruction of their material might and power the word الأرض (the earth) here signifies the vast parts of the world over which they will hold sway; and the expression من عليها (who are thereon) points to the large numbers of Christian people who at that time will be inhabiting the earth and dominating it.
The verse embodies two prophecies: (a) the Christians will first come to rule over almost the whole earth, and will be dominating it by their large numbers, and (b) then as a result of their disbelief they will be deprived of their world dominion which will ultimately be given to the followers of Islam. It points to the present great material power and grandeur of Christian nations and their subsequent destruction and to the ultimate spread and triumph of Islam. The words, And to Us will they all be returned, signify that Western Christian nations will ultimately accept Islam.
R.3 42. “And relate the story of Abraham as mentioned in the Book. He was a truthful man and a Prophet.”

2185. Commentary:

ابراهیم (Abraham) means the father of nations. Originally Abraham’s name was ابرام (Abram) which may have been derived from ابرم i.e. he twisted it (the rope) well. He made it firm, strong, solid (Lane). Abraham might have been so called because he was endowed to an unusual degree with conversational ability of a high mark. He was an irresistible debater. His talk was very effective and his arguments strong. A reference to this quality of Abraham is to be found in 2:259 and 6:76-81. Or Abram may have come to be called Abraham after God had made His covenant with him and had promised to multiply him exceedingly. God said: “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for father of many nations have I made thee” (Gen. 17:4-5). In the Qur’an also Abraham has been called امة which means, “a nation”, “a people”, “a race” (16:121).

Abraham was a native of Ur of the Chaldees in Iraq. His people worshipped the sun and the stars. Their chief god was Merodach or (Marduk). It was also called Bel, i.e. Lord (Enc. Bib.).

Abraham was a great iconoclast. He preached the Unity and Oneness of God and strongly denounced and condemned idol-worship. By his iconoclastic activities he incurred the enmity of his father and so with his wife and his nephew Lot he had to leave his native place for Canaan which land God had promised to give to his seed (Gen 12:7). When Canaan suffered from a severe famine Abraham left it for Egypt where he married Hagar, the mother of Ishmael. For a detailed account of Abraham see 6:75.

The word صديق (a truthful man) is the intensified form of صدق which is active participle from صدق which means, he spoke the truth (Lane). صدق means one who speaks the truth. صدق being the intensive form of صدق has four meanings; (a) one who very generally and often speaks the truth; (b) one who never tells a lie; (c) one who is so habituated to speaking truth that it becomes impossible for him to tell a lie; and (d) one who is truthful in his talk and substantiates the truth of his talk and beliefs by his actions and deeds. The speaking of truth becomes, as it were, a part of his being, a second nature with him (Lane). This is the highest stage of صدقیت (the quality or condition of being truthful).

The word صدقیت possesses a double connotation. While on the one hand it means one who is highly truthful, on the other it denotes a spiritual rank next only to the rank of prophethood. In fact, every quality possesses two connotations and two uses. It is used as an attribute and it also expresses a rank. In
the present verse صديق has been used to express only the attribute and quality of truthfulness and not the rank of صديق which is included in the rank of النبي (a Prophet) which has also been mentioned in regard to Abraham in this verse. The verse means that Abraham was a Prophet of God and one of his most prominent and distinctive qualities was that he was truthful par excellence.

The Qur'an has laid great stress on the truthfulness of Abraham perhaps because in some future time lies were to be attributed to him by some Commentators of the Qur'an.

It seems appropriate and pertinent to write here a few words about the order and arrangement of the verses of the present Sūra because some Christian writers have found fault with the chronological order of the incidents mentioned in it. In fact the central theme of this Sūra is to disprove and demolish the Christian dogma of godhead of Jesus Christ. The Sūra opens with a brief mention of Zachariah, the father of Yaḥyā who was a fore-runner of Jesus. Zachariah's mention is followed by a concise description of the birth of Yaḥyā. Then a somewhat detailed description is given of the birth of Jesus who was the harbinger of the Holy Prophet and light is shed on the falsity of Christian beliefs and doctrines about him and his mother. This description of Jesus is followed by a narration of some important incidents in the life of Abraham. This seems to be a historical anachronism but in reality it is not. The Qur'an is not a book of history. It sometimes deliberately departs from the chronological order of events. The account of Abraham given in the present and the following verses is a case in point. The account of Jesus is followed by that of Abraham in order to drive home the point that when Abraham, the great progenitor of Moses who was the Founder of the Mosaic Dispensation of which Christianity is only an offshoot, was a firm believer in the Unity of God, how could Jesus depart from the Faith of his forefather, and claim to be God or son of God? Secondly, God had made a promise with Abraham that He would multiply him exceedingly through his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. God's promise with Abraham was fulfilled first through Isaac, and then when Isaac's progeny disobeyed and defied Divine commandments and consistently rejected Divine Prophets and went so far as to kill John and crucify Jesus, God's covenant with Abraham became transferred to Ishmael and was finally and fully fulfilled through the latter's progeny. This is the real reason why the account of Jesus is followed by that of Abraham. After this a brief mention is made of Moses who was a descendant of Jacob and in whom God's covenant with Abraham through Isaac found its highest fulfilment. After dealing with God's covenant with Abraham through Isaac, the Sūra proceeds to make a mention of the Divine promise with Abraham through Ishmael. This is why after Moses mention has been made of Ishmael and this is the significance of the order which the Qur'an has kept in view while giving an account of the life of some Prophets and making only a brief mention of others and this is the right and natural order which should have been observed while dealing with the subject under discussion. The taunt of some Christian critics of Islam that the seeming historical anachronism was due to the Holy Prophet's lack of the knowledge of history is absurd because elsewhere (Chapter Ḥūd) the Qur'an has given the accounts of some Prophets of very remote past in their proper chronological order which fact has been admitted by fair-minded Christian writers themselves.
43. When he said to his father, "O my father, why dost thou worship that which neither hears nor sees, nor can avail thee aught?\[2186]

44. "O my father, there has indeed come to me knowledge such as has not come to thee; so follow me, I will guide thee to an even path;

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2186. **Important Words**:

- \( \text{اب} \) (father) which originally was \( \\text{ابو} \) means, a father; a grandfather; an ancestor; a paternal uncle.
- \( \text{اپ} \) (my father), in reality is \( \text{ابي} \) (my father). According to Arabic usage \( \text{ابي} \) has been converted into \( \\text{ت} \) (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary**:

The point whether Abraham’s \( \text{اب} \) (ab) whose name at another place in the Qur’ān (6:75) has been given as \\( \text{آزار} \) was his father, uncle or grandfather, is much in dispute. In 2:134 Ishmael who was Jacob’s uncle has been spoken of as his \( \text{اب} \) (ab). Whether \( \text{آزار} \) was Abraham’s father or uncle does not possess much significance. From a study of all relevant historical facts, however, we are inclined to the view that \( \text{آزار} \) was Abraham’s father, though according to some Talmudic traditions Abraham’s father had died while he was young and he was left an orphan.

In Genesis (11:26) Abraham’s father’s name has been given as Terah while Luke (3:34) gives it as Thara. The Talmud agrees with Luke and says that his name was Thara. It also gives his name as Zarah. Eusebius, the father of ecclesiastical history, however, gives Athar as the name of the great Patriarch’s father (Sale). This shows that even among the Jews there existed no unanimity of views as to the name of Abraham’s father. The fact that Eusebius followed neither Genesis (11:26) nor (Luke 3:34) indicates that he had very strong reasons to differ from these two well-known sources. The two names, Athar of Eusebius and \\( \text{آزار} \) of the Qur’ān closely resemble each other. The Quranic version is therefore much more reliable and akin to reality than that of the Bible. See also 6:75.

The attributes “All-Hearing” and “All-Seeing” are among the most important Divine attributes. It is our conviction that God sees us when we are in trouble and hears our prayers when we pray to Him which is really at the root of our belief in God. If once we cease to believe in these two attributes, we cease to believe in God. But these two attributes are here further complemented by a third—the attribute \( \text{غني} \) which means, One Who has no need of others and is Self-Sufficient but Whose help others need and upon Whom they are dependent. If God is not \( \text{غني} \) and cannot come to our help when we need it, then His attributes “All-Seeing” and “All-Hearing” are of no use. Abraham has indeed adduced a most convincing and unassailable argument against idol-worship, viz., if the idols do neither see when their votaries are in trouble, nor hear their prayers when they call on them, nor do they come to their help when they need it, then what sense or purpose there is in worshipping such useless things?
45. 'O my father, worship not Satan; surely Satan is a rebel against the Gracious God; 2187

46. 'O my father, indeed I fear lest a punishment from the Gracious God seize thee and thou become a comrade of Satan.'2188

2187. Commentary:

عبادة which is noun-infinitive from the verb عبد does not consist only in prostrating before God or an idol, but also signifies, blindly or unthinkingly following a person or accepting an idea or belief without subjecting it to sane and searching criticism. This significance of the word is clear from the verse itself, because nobody has ever been seen to worship Satan in the sense that he prostrates before him and prays to him. It also appears from this verse that the word شيطان (Satan) here does not mean 'the Devil' or even the idols. Here it only signifies evil inclinations, wrong ideas and beliefs and bad associates and evil spirits. According to these meanings of the words عبد and شيطان the verse would signify that one should not follow blindly or unthinkingly evil inclinations, wrong beliefs or bad friends or associates. Such an attitude on one's part is tantamount to giving them Divine status and to worshipping them.

The word عصي which is noun-infinitive from the verb عص، (rebel) also indicates that شيطان in this verse does not signify idols made of wood or stone because idols of stone do not disobey God. From the previous verse one may have been led to think that Abraham had advised his father against idol-worship only. This verse belies that idea and indicates that he advised him also against blindly following evil inclinations, wrong beliefs and association with evil persons. The word شيطان (Satan) includes all these things.

2188. Commentary:

The linking of عذاب (punishment) with the Divine attribute الرحمان (the Gracious) in this and other verses of this Sūra appears to be somewhat incongruous and inconsistent. Punishment seems more appropriately related to God’s other attributes such as الجبار (the Subduer), المكرب (the Most Supreme), ذو انتقام (the Avenger) etc. In fact, every punishment is the result of the defiance or disobedience of a particular Divine attribute. Sometimes a person is punished because he defies the Divine attribute الغيفر (the Great Forgiver), at another time punishment comes upon him because he disobeys the Divine attribute الكريم (Most Generous) and so on. In this verse, in fact in the whole Sūra, شرك i.e. idolatry, has been repeatedly denounced and condemned in the strongest and most scathing terms and the Divine attribute الرحمان i.e. the Gracious, has also been mentioned again and again because شرك (idolatry) in every shape and form is the direct result of denial of رحمة i.e. Divine Grace. The two great idolatrous peoples—the Hindus and the Christians, have hopelessly fallen victim to the most degraded form of idolatry because they both deny رحمة i.e. Divine Grace—the former
47. He replied, 'Dost thou turn away from my gods, O Abraham? If thou cease not, I shall surely cut off all relations with thee. Now leave me alone for a long while.'

48. Abraham said, 'Peace be upon thee. I will ask forgiveness of my Lord for thee. He is indeed gracious to me.'

by believing in the indestructibility and eternity of matter and soul and the latter by subscribing to the foolish doctrine that salvation is impossible without Atonement. So the mentioning together of the Divine attribute الرحمن (the Gracious) and Divine punishment shows that it is not سامه (Divine Grace), which is the cause of Divine punishment, rather it is its denial and rejection.

شيطان (Satan), as stated above, may signify man's evil inclinations and propensities, his bad friends and associates and evil spirits that cast their shadow upon him and lead him deeper and deeper into sin and transgression.

2189. Important Words:

لأحتمک (I shall surely cut off all relations with thee) is derived from رجوم. They say رجوم i.e. he stoned him to death; he murdered him; he accused or slandered him; he cursed him; he abused him; he drove him away; he cut off all relations with him (Lane & Aqrab).

لأهیمنا i.e. I was made to live long with such a one. تعلی العیش means, he lived long. تعلی بشیئی means, he enjoyed a thing. ملیا means, a while or a long time. سَفَلَتٌ من اللیل means, a large part of the night passed away. المنظره ملیا means, he waited for him for a long time (Aqrab).

Commentary:

All the different meanings of the word رجوم, mentioned above, are applicable here. In spite of Abraham's talking to his father with affection and considerateness, the latter lost his temper and told him to go away from him and leave him alone. This is often the case with those who have no arguments but only physical force to prove their claim.

2190. Important Words:

حیث (gracious) is derived from حفی (hafiya). They say حفی فلیا i.e. he gave such a one. حفیه من الشیئی means, he refused to give him the thing. حفی به means, he honoured him; he showed him much honour and kindness and affection and regard for his circumstances; he behaved towards him with benevolence and solicitude and manifested joy. حفی عنه means, he asked or inquired much respecting him or it. حفی means, kind; gracious; affectionate; having much regard for another person's circumstances; going to the utmost in asking or inquiring etc. (Lane & Aqrab). See also 7:188.
49. 'And I shall keep away from you and from that which you call upon beside Allah; and I will pray unto my Lord; it may be that in praying to my Lord, I shall not be disappointed.'

50. So when he had separated himself from them and from that which they worshipped beside Allah, We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob and each of them We made a Prophet.

51. And We granted them abundantly of Our mercy; and We bestowed upon them a true and lasting renown.

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2191. Commentary:
In this verse Abraham seems to be referring to his emigration to Canaan. It is on record that Abraham went from Iraq to Canaan and from there to Egypt. He left his father and people behind him in Iraq.

2192. Commentary:
Ishmael has not been mentioned here, though he was the eldest son of Abraham. This is done for two reasons: (1) Isaac and Jacob have been mentioned by the way only as subordinate Prophets while Ishmael has found a separate and independent mention in v. 55 below. This shows that Ishmael possessed a higher spiritual status than both Isaac and Jacob. (2) Ishmael has been mentioned after Moses because the latter was the greatest representative of the House of Isaac. As the result of repeated defiance of the commandments of God and rejection of His Messengers by the Jews, prophethood became transferred from the House of Isaac or Israel (or from the Mosaic Dispensation) to that of Ishmael, so mention has been made of him after Moses in v. 55 and that is the right place where he should have been mentioned.

2193. Important Words:
لسان (renown) is derived from لسان (lasina) which means, he was or became extremely eloquent or perspicuous in speech. لسان فلورنا (lasana) means, he was more eloquent than such a one; he got the better of him in speech. لسن المقرن means, the scorpion bit him. لسان means, speech, tongue, style; language; information; news, tidings; renown or reputation. لسان العرب means, the classical language of the Arabs. لسان القوم means, the spokesman of the people. لسان الصدق means, good or lasting reputation, renown or remembrance. When a noun is prefixed to the word صدق governing it in the genitive case, it gives the idea of everlastingness.
52. And relate the story of Moses as mentioned in the Book. "He was, indeed, a chosen one; and he was a Messenger, a Prophet." 2194

Commentary:

The account of Abraham is followed by that of Moses—Isaac and Jacob having been mentioned only casually and by the way in v. 50 above. In Moses God's covenant with Abraham about the progeny of Isaac found its fullest and completest manifestation. The visible mark of this Divine covenant was the bestowal of Canaan on Abraham's progeny (Gen. 17:8) which took place in the time of Moses's Successor. The Israelite Prophets who came after Moses were only Reformer-Prophets who carried on and fulfilled his work and mission. This is why, after Moses, God adverts to His Promise to Abraham about Ishmael which saw its sublimest and most complete and perfect manifestation and consummation in the Holy Prophet of Islam who was a descendant of Ishmael.

The words, he was a Messenger and a Prophet, explain and remove a popular misconception. According to popular notion a Messenger (rashid) is one who brings a new Law and a new Book and a Prophet (nabi) is one who is commissioned by God only for the reformation of his people. He also receives Divine revelation but brings no Law or Book containing new commandments and ordinances. According to this popular notion every Messenger is necessarily a Prophet but not every
53. "And We called him from the right side of the Mount and We made him draw near to Us for special communion." 2195

The verse under comment, however, demolishes this wrong notion because if a نبي (Messenger) is one who brings a new Book and a new Law and as such is necessarily a نبي (Prophet), then the addition of the word نبي to the word رسول in this and other verses is superfluous and redundant. In fact, every رسول is a نبي and every نبي is a رسول. These two words represent two aspects of the same office and two functions of the same person. A Divine Reformer is a رسول inasmuch as he receives Messages from God (رسالت meaning a message) and he is a نبي in the sense that he conveys those Messages to the people to whom he is sent (بوت meaning the conveying of a message). Thus every رسول (Messenger) is a نبي (Prophet) because after receiving Divine Messages he conveys them to his people and every نبي is a رسول because he conveys to his people those Messages which he receives from God. Only the functions of نبي follow those of رسول. In his capacity as نبي he first receives Messages from God and then in his capacity as نبي he conveys them to his people. This is why here and everywhere in the Qur'an when these two words—رسول and نبي occur together, invariably the word نبي follows the word رسول because that is the natural order. See also 7: 158, 159; 19: 31, 55. The bringing of a new Book or a new Law, therefore, is not the necessary concomitant of a نبي or a رسول. A نبي or a رسول may or may not bring a new Law. All Messengers (رسول) and Prophets (نبي) are of two categories—(a) those that bring a new Book and a new Law and (b) those that do not. This classification of نبي and رسول into two categories is supported by the Qur'an itself. See 5: 45.

2195. Important Words:

ايمن (right) is derived from يمن i.e. God blessed such a one. يمن means, (1) blessed; (2) right as opposed to left (Aqrab). The word ايمن may qualify both طور (Mount) جانب or Naja (for special communion) is derived from Naja. They say ايمن الرجل i.e. he discoursed secrets with the man, or simply he discoursed with him. Naja الرجل means, he talked with the man in private, or he discoursed secretly with him. See also 4: 115 & 12: 81. الناقة النجية means, one with whom secrets are discoursed or simply one who is discoursed or talked with. It also means, one who walks quickly. الناقة النجية means, a quick-footed she-camel (Aqrab).

Commentary:

According to the two meanings of ايمن given under "Important Words" above, the first part of the verse would mean: (a) We called him from the right side of the Mount; (b) We called him from the blessed side of the Mount; or (c) We called him from the side of the blessed Mount.
54. And We bestowed upon him, out of Our mercy, his brother Aaron as a Prophet.\textsuperscript{2196}

55. And relate the story of Ishmael as mentioned in the Book. He was indeed strict in keeping his promise. And he was a Messenger, a Prophet.\textsuperscript{2197}

\textsuperscript{2196} Commentary:

In 20:30 Aaron has been described as helper (وزير) of Moses and in the present verse it is said that God bestowed Aaron upon Moses. This shows that Aaron was a follower of the Law revealed to Moses and held a subordinate position to him. It can safely be inferred from this that one Prophet can be subordinate to another Prophet.

\textsuperscript{2197} Commentary:

God was well pleased with Abraham. He chose him and his seed for the bestowal of His special favours and blessings and for that purpose He established a covenant with him. The covenant is given in the Bible as follows:

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation (Gen. 17:19, 20).

The covenant began with Isaac and in fulfilment of it God raised a long line of Prophets among his descendants, and also gave them worldly dominion, power and wealth. The covenant found its highest fulfilment in Moses. When, however, the long line of Prophets who came after Moses as his Successors terminated with Jesus, the second part of the covenant which was to be fulfilled through Ishmael came into operation and prophethood passed from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael and this was quite in harmony with the covenant which God had established with Abraham regarding the conferring of His favour upon him and his
56. "He used to enjoin Prayer and alms-giving on his people, and was well pleasing to his Lord.\textsuperscript{2198}

57. And relate the story of Idrīs as mentioned in the Book. He was a truthful man, and a Prophet.\textsuperscript{2199}

progeny. This is why after Moses mention has been made of Ishmael. The account of Ishmael is introduced with the words \textsuperscript{20} and relate which shows that one chapter of religious history — that of the House of Israel, is closed and a new one has begun. The Christians have been further told in this verse that the Divine covenant has not terminated with Jesus but in keeping with the promise of God with Abraham has only been transferred to the progeny of Ishmael.

\textsuperscript{2198} \textbf{Commentary}:

Ishmael was the progenitor of the Holy Prophet of Islam and in Islam very great stress has been laid on the observance of the five daily Prayers and on alms-giving.

\textsuperscript{2199} \textbf{Important Words}:

Idrīs (Idrīs) is derived from درس (dāras) which is the transitive form of درس (dār) i.e. he read the book or he read it repeatedly so as to remember it; or he made it easy to remember by much reading; or he learned or studied it. درسا الكتب (dārasa-hī al-kitāb) or درسه الكتب (dārṣa-hī al-kitāb) means, he taught him the book (Lane). إدريس (Edris) which means, one who reads much or teaches much is derived from إدريس which means, instruction or dedication (Enc. Bib.). Moreover, the account of Enoch given in the Bible and in Jewish religious literature closely resembles that of Idrīs as given in the Qur’ān. In the Bible we have: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him (Gen. 5: 24). In Targum, a famous book of Jewish traditions he has been called a holy man of God whom He gave the titles of “Safra Rabba” and “Mēṭātron” (both words meaning a learned man or religious savant) and took up to heaven (Jew. Enc.). In the Jewish book named “Sefer Hanok” (the book of Hanūk) it is written that inhabitants of the earth became
And 'We exalted him to a lofty station.

These are the people whom Allah bestowed His blessings from among the Prophets, of the posterity of Adam, and of the posterity of those whom We carried in the Ark with Noah, and of the posterity of Abraham and Israel; and they are of those whom We guided and chose. When the Signs of the Gracious God were recited unto them, they fell down, prostrating themselves before God and weeping.

wicked, therefore God took up Ḥanūk to heaven and made him a guardian of the heavenly treasures and the chief of angels. In another book named “Ḥayye Ḥanok” it is written that he was a holy and righteous priest whom God sent to the world for its reformation, but when it became full of sins, God raised him up to heaven (Jew. Enc.). This account of Enoch resembles very much the picture of Idrīs as given in the Qur’ān in the words: He was a truthful man and a Prophet and We exalted him to a lofty station. These commendatory expressions about Idrīs serve to demolish the false notions held about Jesus. The godhead of Jesus, more than anything else, rests on the belief that he was taken up to heaven alive. Now if, as Christians believe, God took up Jesus to heaven according to the present verse, Idrīs too was exalted to a very high station in heaven, and according to the Bible Enoch (Idrīs) also walked with God and was taken up to heaven (Gen. 5:24). If Jesus could be regarded as Divine and is entitled to a special spiritual status on the assumption of his having been taken up to heaven, then Idrīs of the Qur’ān or Enoch of the Bible, on that very score is entitled to even a higher spiritual station. If Jesus has been called son of God in the Bible, Enoch has been called the father of the sons of God in Jewish literature. The Book of Enoch which was originally written in Hebrew and later on was translated into Greek and then into Latin contains a full account of Enoch’s life. Its translation in Russian makes very useful and interesting reading.

Ishmael and Idrīs have been mentioned together in the verse under comment and in 21:86, the only two places where mention has been made of Idrīs in the Qur’ān. It is so because Ishmael bears a very close resemblance to him. According to the Qur’ān Ishmael was a truthful man and so was Idrīs. God had raised Idrīs to a lofty spiritual station and so had He raised Ishmael. About Enoch we read in the Bible that God walked with him (Gen. 5:24) and about Ishmael the Bible says: “Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!” (Gen. 17:18).

Commentary:

This verse explains two things: (1) The Prophets whose names have been mentioned in it were righteous and holy men. But in spite of
60. Then there came after them descendants who neglected Prayer, and followed evil desires. So they will meet with destruction.\footnote{2201}

61. Except those who repent and believe and do good deeds. These will enter Heaven and they will not be wronged in the least—\footnote{2202}

\footnotetext{2201}{\text{Important Words:} \\
\text{غُيُو} (destruction) is derived from \text{غَيَّر} which means, he erred; he deviated from the right way or course; he persisted in ignorance, he failed in attaining his desire; he acted ignorantly from misbelief; he perished (Lane & Aqrab). See also 7:17.}

\footnotetext{2202}{Commentary: \\
In fact negligence and remissness in observing Prayers makes a person ignorant of Divine attributes and kills in him the desire to establish his connection with the Creator which in turn throws him into the clutches of the Devil. And whereas negligence in invoking Divine mercy and praying to God leads to failure, the pursuit of evil desires results in apathy towards true knowledge and indulgence in obscenities and idle pursuits; and all these things combined together bring about complete moral and spiritual ruin.}

\footnotetext{\text{7:170}}{a} \footnotetext{\text{6:49; 18:89; 25:71; 34:38.}}
62. "Gardens of Eternity, which the Gracious God has promised to His servants in the unseen. Surely His promise must come to pass.\textsuperscript{2203}

63. "They will not hear therein anything vain; but only greetings of peace; they will have their sustenance therein, morning and evening.\textsuperscript{2204}

64. "Such is the Heaven which We give for an inheritance to those of Our servants who are righteous.\textsuperscript{2205}

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\textbf{2203. Commentary:}

The words بنات عدن signify Divine favours and blessings which know no end or diminution.

The expression بالغيب signifies that the Faithful will get Gardens of Eternity because they believed in things which they did not see—God, angels, Hereafter etc. Or it may signify that they will get gardens when there will be no apparent signs of their ever getting them.

The word مُثِيَ (must come to pass) signifies that the fulfilment of the Divine promise is as sure as if it has already come to pass. It may also signify that the Faithful will be given Gardens of Eternity without any wish or desire on their part.

\textbf{2204. Commentary:}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{a}: استثناء متصل, or استثناء منقطع. In the former case the verse would mean that the apparently superfluous talk would also be productive of peace and will result in something useful and beneficial. In the latter case it would mean that the believers will hear nothing vain and useless but will live in perfect peace because there will be peace all round them. They will live in the presence of God Who is peace (59:24) and reside in the abode of peace (6:128) and angels will enter upon them with greetings of peace (13:25). For a full discussion about استثناء منقطع see 2:35.
\item \textit{b}: The verse may also signify that the believers will attain such a high stage of righteousness in the Gardens of Eternity that they will hear no disparaging talk about one another i.e. there will be found absolutely no suspicion of any kind.
\item \textit{c}: The sentence, They will have their sustenance therein, morning and evening, means that the believers will constantly hear the sweet voice of God, enjoy His sight and will receive the message of eternal peace. The word "sustenance" covers and applies to all these things.
\end{itemize}

\textbf{2205. Commentary:}

The word نور signifies that the believers being God's own beloved children will get Paradise as of right. The word incidentally implies permanence of the gifts of Paradise and constitutes a refutation of any exclusive title of Jesus to be the son of God.
65. And angels will say to them, 'We do not come down save by the command of thy Lord. To Him belongs all that is before us and all that is behind us and all that is between; and thy Lord is not forgetful.'

66. He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of all that is between the two. Serve Him, therefore and be steadfast in His service. Dost thou know anyone equal to Him?

67. And says man, 'What! when I am dead, shall I be brought forth alive?'

68. Does not man remember that 'We created him before, when he was naught?'

2206. Commentary:
This verse explains vv. 13:24-25 wherein it is said: And angels shall enter unto them from every gate, saying 'Peace be unto you, because you were steadfast' and signifies that the angels would say to the Faithful that they did not bring them greetings of peace of their own accord but with the express command of God, their heavenly Father, and on His behalf.

The words "And thy Lord is not forgetful" mean that God has not forgotten His promise that "He will raise from among the brethren of the Israelites (i.e. the Ishmaelites) a Prophet like unto Moses and will put His words into his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that He shall command him" (Deut. 18:18).

2207. Commentary:
الإنسان (man) does not here mean man in general but a particular class of men, viz. those who doubt the existence of the life after death. In fact, there are very few people in the world who totally deny the existence of the Hereafter. It is not by their words of mouth but by their actual actions and deeds—their entire engrossment in material pursuits, that they express their doubt or denial of the life beyond the grave. The interrogative form of the words used in the verse shows that such people suffer merely from a lack of certainty with regard to life after death and not that they totally deny it. As the سُنَّة deals with Christian dogmas and doctrines, so the present and the following several verses deal also with the doubts of Christians about life after death.

2208. Commentary:
The word شَيْئًا مَذْكُورًا here signifies شَيْئًا كُبْرَأً i.e. anything worth mentioning or having any significance or importance. This meaning is supported by 76:2.
69. And, by thy Lord, We shall assuredly gather them together, and the satans too; then shall We bring them on their knees around Hell.  
70. Then shall We certainly pick out, from every group, those of them who were most stubborn in rebellion against the Gracious God.

2209. Important Words:

**جَهَنَم** (Hell). Commentators of the Qur'an generally agree that in Arabic this word has no root and is used as a proper name for the place of punishment reserved for the evil-doers in the next world. Non-Arabic lexicographers, however, are of the opinion that it is an Aramaic word and is used for the place of punishment after death. In Hebrew it is used as Gehenna which in Aramaic originally was 'Hinnom' but later on came to be changed into "Ge-Hinnom" (Enc. Bib.) which means, "the valley of death or destruction." The word "Ge-Hinnom" also seems to have been a distorted form of the Arabic words ذَوْهَمُ and هَمُّ, the latter word meaning 'a leopard'; and so ذَوْهَمُ means a place where leopards live. Thus "Ge-Hinnom" which in Aramaic means the valley of death and destruction was originally ذَوْهَمُ. The non-Arabs generally change the letter ج into ح; so ذَوْهَمُ became converted into the Aramaic 'Ge-Hinnom' and the Arabs borrowed it from the non-Arabs and turned it into جَهَنَم. The word may also have been a combination of جَهَنَم which means, he went near, and جَهْنَم which means, he became contracted in the face. So جَهَنَم may mean a thing or place which a person at first likes but when he goes near it he comes to dislike it and contracts his face to show his dislike for it. Thus the very construction of the word جَهَنَم explains its nature and character, i.e. at first a person commits hellish deeds, thinking them to be good but when as a result of those deeds he approaches near Hell, he dislikes it and contracts his face to show his dislike. See also 2:207.

The word **الشياطين** (satans) applies to those philosophers and exponents of a materialistic concept of life who engender in the minds of unbelievers doubts regarding life after death.

2210. Important Words:

**ثُمَّ** meaning then, i.e. afterward or afterwards, is a particle or conjunction denoting order and delay. Sometimes it is used to denote the order of enunciation, not the virtual order. It also has the meaning of و (and) and ف (so) (Lane).

In the present verse **ثَمَّ** shows order i.e. this thing will happen after the thing that has been mentioned before. Some Commentators of the Qur'an think that this verse can be explained by reading it as:  

تم لنبزعن من كل شيعة الذين يقال فيهم افهم اشد على الرحمن عتياً i.e. then shall We certainly pick out from every group those about whom it will be said that they were most stubborn in rebellion against the Gracious God. Others are of the view that the expression افهم اشد على الرحمن عتيا is an independent and...
71. And surely, We know best those most deserving to be burned therein.  

72. And "there is not one of you but will come to it. This is a fixed decree of thy Lord."
73. "And We shall save the righteous and We shall leave the wrongdoers therein, on their knees.

74. And when Our manifest Signs are recited unto them, the disbelievers say to the believers, 'Tell us, which of the two parties is better in respect of position and makes a more impressive assembly?'

75. And how many generations have We destroyed before them, who were better off in wealth than these and better in outward show!

sayings of the Holy Prophet in which he has likened fever to the fire of Hell. He is reported to have said: The fever is a believer's share of the Hell-fire (Qurtubl as quoted by Tabari).

The Holy Prophet himself has explained the meaning of this verse. His wife Hafsa is reported to have said: "On one occasion when the Prophet said that none of those of his Companions who had taken part in the battle of Badr or Uhud will go to Hell, I drew his attention to the present verse, upon which he slightly reprimanded me for having misunderstood its meaning and directed me to read the next verse" (Muslim as quoted by Jami' al-Bayan).

The fact that the Holy Prophet referred Hafsa to the next verse (v. 73) shows that he also understood the word occurring in that verse to mean "and", and had taken the next verse as an independent and separate clause, otherwise he could not have reprimanded Hafsa for having misunderstood the meaning of the verse under comment.

2213. Important Words:

(outward show) is derived from. They say the people gathered and came to a meeting. ندأ means, ندأ i.e. an assembly (Aqrab).

Commentary:

آيات (Signs) are those proofs and arguments based on reason, intellect and experience, which point to the existence of a thing, its aim and purpose, and establish it. آيات بيدات (manifest Signs) are those Signs and arguments or reasons which not only point to the existence of a thing and prove it but are quite suited to the occasion and to the problem which they are intended to prove, and they have a very noble and sublime purpose to serve which they eminently do.

This verse shows that Western nations are very proud of their material pomp and wealth and are proud also of their civilization and culture, the order of their society and their way of life and their military organizations and vast numbers.

2214. Important Words:

(outward show) is derived from which means, he saw or he thought.
76. Say, 'The Gracious God does give those who are in error long respite until, when they will see that with which they are threatened—whether it be punishment or the final Hour—they will realize who is worse in respect of position and who is weaker in forces.  

means, a sight; a beautiful sight; anything to which people raise their eyes to see. رَأَا means, aspect, look or outward appearance; beautiful aspect or outward appearance or what the eyes see of goodly condition and clean apparel (Lane & Aqrab). For نَمَّث (wealth) see 16:81.

Commentary:

The verse while, on the one hand, shows how proud the Western Christian nations are of their material might, pomp and wealth and of the high order of their society, on the other, it leaves no doubt that in spite of all these things they will eventually come to grief. It may be said that the statement made in the verse under comment that there lived in the past more powerful and wealthier peoples than the present Christian nations of the West is contrary to the facts of history. Speaking absolutely it is correct that Western Christian nations of today were never equalled in the past by any nation in material power and wealth but speaking comparatively there certainly have been rulers and nations in the past who were more powerful than these nations, inasmuch as the opponents of the former were much weaker to them in material resources and in numbers than the adversaries of Western Christian nations of today are to them. It is in this sense that some of the nations of antiquity have been described as more powerful than the Western Christian nations of today in the present verse.

2215. Commentary:

The verb نَلْصَبَ while being in the imperative mood has been used in the indicative mood in order to impart more emphasis to the meaning. The verse means to say that God will give more and more respite to the wrong-doing people and will grant them increase in power and wealth and resources, so that when Divine punishment descends upon them, their destruction will look all the more impressive and awe-inspiring. النَعَم (the punishment) here may signify the intervening punishment which will overtake Western nations in stages before their final destruction, and الحُسْمَة may mean their complete and final destruction. Thus the verse means to say that Divine punishment will descend upon the nations of the West in different forms and stages. At first their power will gradually weaken and decline by wars that will take place at short intervals and then a global war in which most deadly weapons will be used will destroy them fully and completely.

The words السَّاعَة السَّعَاب and السَّاعَة having been used simultaneously in the verse show that the punishment which will overtake Western nations, if they did not accept truth and mend their ways, will at first be in the form of السَّاعَة (intervening punishment) for some of them and السَّاعَة (final destruction) for others till ultimately it will take the form of السَّاعَة for all of them.
And Allah increases in guidance those who follow guidance.

And the good works that endure are best in the sight of thy Lord as reward, and best as resort.  2216

Hast thou not seen him who disbelieves in Our Signs, and says, "I shall certainly be given wealth and children?" 2217

Has he become acquainted with the unseen or has he taken a promise from the Gracious God? 2218

Nay! We shall note down what he says and We shall greatly prolong for him the punishment. 2219

The verse points to an absolute certainty that the path of sin and iniquity leads to sure destruction. It also shows that when destruction will overtake Western nations, they will realize that the germs of their destruction had lain hidden in their very material power of which they were so proud and that the apparently weak condition of the Eastern nations possessed seeds of their growing strength and power.

The verse means to say that every new change that takes place in the world makes the position of believers stronger and firmer. They grow in influence, prestige and numbers. The Quranic words, And the good works... resort, remind Christian Western peoples of the beautiful and oftquoted words of Jesus, viz., lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Matt. 6:19, 20). These words imply a warning to his so-called followers that it is futile on their part to bank upon their material riches and resources because they are sure to perish while it is only good works that will endure and last.

The verse means to say that the disbeliever sets great store by his wealth and children and takes great pride in them. "The disbeliever" in the verse represents the disbelieving proud nations of the West.

The words "the unseen" may signify the conjectures and guesses of political philosophers and soothsayers and the words, a promise from the Gracious God, may signify the promise given through a Divine Messenger about the eventual triumph of the cause of truth.

Important Words:

كل (nay) is a particle and signifies, rejection; rebuke; and reprimanding a person for what he has said being untrue. It also signifies that what has been said before is wrong and what follows after is right (Lane).
81. And We shall inherit of him all that he talks of and he shall come to Us all alone. 2220

82. And they have taken other gods beside Allah, that they may be a source of power for them. 2221

83. Not at all! They will deny their worship, and will become their opponents. 2222

Commentary:
The verse means to say that disbelievers take pride in their wealth and children but they should know that they will be deprived of all these things and their punishment will be prolonged as was their prosperity prolonged because it was the prolongation of their prosperity that made them proud and arrogant. 2220

Commentary:
The sentence, And We shall inherit of him all that he talks of, may mean: (a) We shall inherit his wealth and children, i.e. he shall be obliged to leave all his wealth and children behind; (b) We shall preserve his insolent talk and will remind him of it when he comes to Us and will punish him for it; and (c) his inheritors will enter the fold of Islam and all his wealth and resources will be used in the cause of Islam.

The words, He shall come to Us all alone, signify that he shall be deprived of all his wealth so that all his sycophants and hangers-on who had gathered round him on account of his great wealth and children will leave him and he will be left all alone.

The expression لَيْتُولِيْنَكَياً refers to the proud talk in which the disbelievers indulge because of their great wealth, power, influence and children.

2221. Commentary:
The verse may signify that disbelievers erect big houses of worship in the name of their idols so that it may redound to their honour and good name, or that they worship false deities seeking thereby nearness to God. To the latter meaning of the verse reference has also been made in 39: 4 where it is stated: And those who take for protectors others beside Him say, we serve them only that they may bring us near to Allah in station.

2222. Commentary:
The words: they will deny their worship may mean (a) the false deities will deny that the idolaters ever worshipped them; (b) the idolaters will deny that they ever worshipped false deities. For (a) see 2: 167; 10: 29; 16: 87; 28: 64; and for (b) see 6: 24; 30: 14.

It is interesting to note that though the idol-worshippers and their false deities will be many, the word ﺖِإْا used for them in the verse is in the singular number. This is to show that the idol-worshippers and their objects of worship, while standing before God's Judgment Seat, will become one in this respect that they will deny each other.

To the objection that when some of the deities are inanimate things, how they will speak, three
84. Seest thou not that We have sent satans against the disbelievers goading them on to acts of disobedience?\footnote{2223}

85. So be not thou in haste with regard to them; We are keeping full account of their doings.\footnote{2224}

Answers may be given: (a) some of the idols are living beings such as Jesus etc; (b) in the spiritual realm, such as in visions and dreams inanimate things are known to speak; and (c) the idols of stone are in reality physical representations of holy men and angels. These holy men and angels whose representations in the physical forms the idolaters worshipped will speak against them.

2223. Important Words:

- ارسلنا (We sent) means, I let the camel go wherever it liked. ارسل فلا تؤثرهم means, he left such a one to do with him whatever he liked; he set such a one on him or gave him mastery or power over him (Aqrab & Lane).

- تؤثرهم (goading them on) is derived from تأثر i.e. the cooking pot boiled or boiled vehemently or made a sound in cooking. أثر means, he stirred him, roused or provoked him; and insisted, urged or instigated him, على كذا to do such a thing. أثر is more intensive than هزه which means, he shook him; induced him to do the thing (Lane).

Commentary:

The words تؤثرهم أرا mean: (a) satans incite disbelievers to acts of disobedience; (b) they continue to incite disbelievers to acts of disobedience till they enter Hell; and (c) they incite disbelievers against Muslims that they should attack the latter and persecute them.

2224. Commentary:

In the words فلا تعجل عليهم Muslims are enjoined not to lose patience if Divine punishment is slow in overtaking Western Christian nations. The words also seem to enjoin Muslims not to be so impatient as to indulge in such foolish dreams as waging Jihad against disbelievers because they (Muslims) do not possess the necessary means to fight them successfully, but should adopt only spiritual means for this purpose such as praying and preaching and disseminating the teachings of Islam. The warning contained in the Holy Prophet’s words لا يدان لاقتالهم (no one will have the power to fight them) may perhaps have been derived from this Divine command.

The words إنما نعد ن لهم عداً mean: (a) We are keeping full account of their wicked deeds; and (b) We are keeping account of the time when their punishment will be due. The verse means to say that their doom is already decreed and it will overtake them when the appointed time arrives.
86. Remember the day when We shall gather the righteous before the Gracious God as honoured guests; 2225

87. And We shall drive the guilty to Hell like a herd of thirsty camels. 2226

2225. Important Words:

وُسُوقُ (honoured guests) is the plural of وَدْن اَيْ وَدْن اَيْ عَلَى الْسَلاطِينَ which is active participle from وَدْن اَيْ عَلَى الْسَلاطِينَ i.e. he came to the king as an ambassador, envoy or messenger; or to convey gifts and ask aid; he went forth to the king (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

This verse has provoked discussion as to whether the righteous will be assembled before God or will merely be admitted to Paradise. There seems to be no real difference between the two alternative senses, because Paradise is the House of God and going to Paradise is as good as going before God. The verse may also apply to two resurrections; the one in this world and the other in the next. Resurrection in the next world will both be individual and collective. Immediately after its departure from the physical body the human soul begins to taste of the fruits of the works, good or bad, a man might have done in this world. This state of the soul is known by its individual resurrection in which its experience of the reward or punishment, as the case may be, of the next life is partial and incomplete. The Resurrection on the Last Day, however, will be collective when the whole of mankind will be brought before God's Judgment Seat. Then the realization by the soul of its state of bliss or punishment will be complete. That will be the final Resurrection. The significance of the verse as is clear from many sayings of the Holy Prophet, is that there will be great confusion and bewilderment on the Day of Resurrection. But immediately after the initial shock the righteous will regain their composure and peace of mind and will be honoured with the gift of God's favours and blessings.

2226. Important Words:

وُسُوقُ (a herd of thirsty camels) means, coming to or arriving at water; water to which one comes to drink; turn of coming to water; a number of camels or a herd of thirsty camels; birds arriving at water. See also 11:99.

Commentary:

Here the word وُسُوقُ (We shall drive) has been used about the sinners and means that they will be driven to Hell against their wish. But this word has also been used in the Qur'an about the righteous believers (39:74). But in that verse the word has been used in the sense of being conducted or carried. If, however, in 39:74 the
88. None will have the power of intercession save he who has received a promise from the Gracious God. 2227

89. And they say, 'the Gracious God has taken unto Himself a son.' 2228

2227. Important Words:

شفع (intercession) is derived from شفع which means, he provided a thing, which was alone with another, or he joined up a single thing with another, so as to make it one of a pair or couple. According to Imam-Raghib شفع signifies the adjoining of a thing to its like; thus the word has the significance of likeness or similarity also. Thus شفع has come to mean interceding or praying for a person on the ground that he is connected with the intercessor or is like or similar to him (Aqrab, Lane & Mufradat).

Commentary:

شفع (intercession) is governed by the following four conditions:

1. He who intercedes has a special connection with the person (or Being) with whom he wishes to intercede and enjoys his special favour, for without such connection he dare not intercede nor can intercession be fruitful.

2. The person for whom intercession is to be made must have a true and real connection with the intercessor, for none would think of interceding for a person unless the latter is specially connected with him.

3. The person in whose favour intercession is sought must generally deserve the description of a good person and must be one who has made an honest effort to win the pleasure of God (21: 29). If he ever happens to fall into sin, it is in a moment of weakness. A wicked man cannot enjoy true and real connection with a holy person.

4. Intercession can only be made with God's express permission (2: 256; 10: 4).

For a detailed note on شفع see 2: 49.

It may be noted that of all Prophets and Messengers of God the Holy Prophet alone will be granted permission to intercede on the Last Day.

2228. Commentary:

The verse means to say that the so-called followers of Jesus think that he will intercede for them. How could this be possible when he was a strict believer in the Oneness of God and they ascribe partners to the Almighty which is a heinous sin. They possess no likeness with him while one of the most important conditions of intercession is that the person for whom intercession is sought must be like him who is to make the intercession.
90. Assuredly, you have done a most hideous thing.\(^{2229}\)

91. The heavens might well-nigh burst thereat, and the earth cleave asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces.\(^{2230}\)

92. Because they ascribe a son to the Gracious God,

93. Whereas it becomes not the Gracious God to take unto Himself a son.\(^{2231}\)

事故非常嚴重。如果有天恢裝破裂，大地裂開，山崩坍，因為他們給那慈悲的神安插一個兒子。

2229. **Important Words:**

- **إِذًا** (most hideous) is derived from **إذا**. They say إذا الويل i.e. a terrible calamity befell him. إذا الأمر means, the event or affair oppressed him, distressed him or afflicted him.
- **ءَدَإ** means, a very evil, abominable, severe, thing or affair; an evil thing against which human nature revolts or which causes an uproar on account of its extreme abomination (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

The verse purports to say that شرك (idolatry) is a most abominable thing. Human nature revolts against it and reason and intellect recoil in disgust from it and no sane person can help protesting against such a blasphemous practice or belief. No doctrine has been condemned so strongly and repeatedly in the Qur'an as the Christian dogma that Jesus, son of Mary, a mortal, subject to all human weaknesses and frailties, was the son of God.

2230. **Commentary:**

The verse means to say that the dogma that Jesus is the son of God is so hideous that the heavens, the earth and the mountains might well break into pieces and fall asunder at the enormity of this idea. The belief is repugnant to heavenly beings because it is against Divine attributes and against all that they stand for. It is revolting for human beings living on the earth because it offends against the dictates of human nature and man's intellect and reason recoil in sheer disgust from it. Men of high and noble ideals such as Divine Prophets and God's Elect also deny and denounce it because the idea that man should stand in need of the vicarious sacrifice of anybody for the attainment of salvation and a high moral status runs counter to their own spiritual experience. The doctrine of Atonement is dependent on and is inseparably connected with belief in the sonship of Jesus and bars the door to all moral and spiritual advancement and attainment of high and noble ideals and condemns man to undeserved moral degradation. In short, the doctrine that Jesus is son of God is against all that is sane, sound and sensible.

2231. **Commentary:**

The سورة contains a most emphatic and clear denunciation of Christian dogmas, particularly the basic doctrine that Jesus is son of God, from which all other dogmas flow. In the present
94. "There is none in the heavens and the earth but he shall come to the Gracious God as a bondman.\textsuperscript{2232}

95. Verily, He comprehends them by His knowledge and has numbered them all fully.

96. And each of them shall come to Him singly on the Day of Resurrection.\textsuperscript{2233}

97. Those who believe and do good deeds—the Gracious God will create love in their hearts.\textsuperscript{2234}

and preceding four verses special stress has been laid on the refutation and condemnation of this dogma. It is worthy of special note that the Divine attribute “Rahmān” has been repeatedly referred to in this Sūra—it has been mentioned as many as sixteen times. As the fundamental dogma of the sonship of Jesus and its corollary, the dogma of Atonement, involve a denial of the Divine attribute “Rahmān” and as the central theme of this Sūra is the refutation of this dogma, this attribute inevitably has been repeatedly referred to. The dogma of Atonement implies that God cannot forgive the sins of men whereas the Divine attribute “Rahmān” implies that He can and actually does forgive them, hence its repetition in this Sūra.

\textsuperscript{2232} Commentary:
The verse purports to say that the Gracious God needs no son to help Him or succeed Him, because He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and His kingdom extends over the whole universe and because all men are His servants and Jesus is one of them.

\textsuperscript{2233} Commentary:
This verse contains a further refutation of Atonement. It purports to say that every believer in Atonement will appear before God alone on the Day of Resurrection when he will have to render an account of his beliefs and deeds, and will have to carry his own cross and no one else will bear his burden and atone for his sins. Jesus himself says: “And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. . . . . . whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me” (Luke 14:27; Mark 8:34).

\textsuperscript{2234} Important Words:

- ودَا (love) is infinitive-noun from ود (wadda).
- They say ودُه, i.e. he loved him or it. ود (wad), ودَ (wid) and ودُ (wud) mean the same thing, viz., (a) deep love and affection; (b) a person loved, an object of love. الودُ means, a person who loves much; very loving and affectionate. الودُ is one of the Divine attributes meaning, Most Loving towards His servants; also One Who is loved in the hearts of His servants (Aqrab & Taj).

Commentary:
The words سيعمل لهم الرحمن ودا may have one of the following meanings: (a) God will put
98. So "We have made it (the Qur'ān) easy in thy tongue that thou mayest give thereby good tidings to the righteous, and warn thereby a contentious people."

99. "And how many a generation have We destroyed before them! Canst thou see a single one of them, or hear even a whisper of them?"

His own love in the hearts of the righteous; or (b) God will have deep love for the righteous; (c) God will put deep love for mankind in the hearts of the righteous, or (d) God will create love for the righteous in the hearts of men.

2235. Important Words:
- "contentious" is derived from َلَدَأ (ladda) which means, he was violent or vehement in contention; in dispute; in litigation. َلَدَأ means, he overcame him or opposed him violently in contention or altercation; in dispute; in litigation. َلَدَأ is the plural of َلَد which means, a man violent or vehement in contention; in dispute; in litigation; or difficult therein, and vehement in war; or a contentious or litigious and tenacious adversary who will not incline to the truth (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradât).

2236. Important Words:
- "thou seest" is derived from َحَس (hiss) of the thing; he ascertained the thing as one ascertains a thing that is perceived by the senses; he knew the thing; or he perceived it by means of any of the senses, by seeing, feeling, touching etc.

Commentary:

The verse embodies for the Western Christian nations a most grim warning about the dreadful fate that is in store for them if they did not accept the truth and give up their evil ways. It purports to say that they are proud of their material power and resources and their worldly prosperity and progress. But they have ignored the patent fact that wrong beliefs and a life of sin leads only to destruction. They are warned that there had lived before them people who were at least as powerful and prosperous as they are and yet on account of their evil deeds and transgressions they were so completely destroyed that no trace was left of them.
CHAPTER 20
TAHĀ
(Revealed before Hijra)

Time of Revelation

This Sūra belongs to the Meccan period. 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd regards it as one of those Sūrās which were revealed very early in the Prophet's ministry and were among the first to be committed to memory by him. These were, besides Tāhā, Sūrās Bānî Isrā'îl, Kahf, Maryam and Anbiyā' (Bukhārî, kitāb al-Tafsîr).

Wherry has assigned the revelation of this Sūra to the third part of the Meccan period, i.e. a little before Hijra. He has done so on the assumption that an account of some Israelite Prophets has been given in this Sūra. But why this fact at all should have been selected by him as a reason for placing the revelation just before Hijra he has not taken the trouble to explain, because such an account is also to be found in Sūra Maryam which by common consent was revealed in the early years of the Call, most probably in its 5th year. So to fix the end of the Meccan period as the period for the revelation of the present Sūra only on this account is indeed a bold assertion which contradicts tradition and history. As stated above 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd included this Sūra among those Chapters of the Qur'ān which were revealed very early in the Holy Prophet's ministry and which he learned first of all, and 'Abdullah's testimony who was one of the Holy Prophet's earliest and most trusted Companions must necessarily carry great weight.

Connection with the Preceding Sūra

The Sūra has a very close connection with its predecessor, Sūra Maryam. Towards the close of the latter Sūra it was stated that the Qur'ān has been revealed in the Arabic tongue in order that the Holy Prophet may have no difficulty in conveying its Message to his people and that they in their turn may easily grasp, comprehend and imbibe its full import. The Qur'ān is also intended to give glad tidings to the righteous who act upon its teaching with a fervour and spontaneity which is born of conviction in its Divine origin. It is revealed also to warn and bring home to those who have forged false beliefs the realization of the falsity and untenability of their position.

The Sūra continues to deal with the subject which has been treated in the preceding Chapter i.e. Sūra Maryam. That Sūra primarily deals with Christian dogmas. One of the basic doctrines of Christianity is that the Law is a curse. The present Sūra opens with an emphatic contradiction of this Christian belief. At the very outset it tells us that the Law is not only not a curse
but is positively a Divine mercy, and that instead of being a burden and an encumbrance it is intended to afford solace and spiritual contentment to man. The Sūra opens with the comforting message that the Qurʾān has been revealed to the Holy Prophet to render his task easy and to confer honour and eminence upon him. It is in fulfilment of this promise that literally and in substance all facilities have been provided to him for the preaching of its Message. The Qurʾān has been revealed in the Prophet’s own tongue, its style is easy and simple, its teachings are in perfect harmony with human nature and reason and are practical and practicable. In short, every care has been taken to save this Book from becoming a burden and an encumbrance to man.

The Sūra possesses another deeper and wider connection with Sūra Maryam. In that Sūra light was shed on the early history of Christianity. It was stated that the sole object of Jesus’s mission was to establish Unity of God but his followers defied and flouted his simple teachings and instead made him an object of worship and discarded the Law and dubbed it as a curse. The present Sūra contradicts and condemns this foolish and insensate view. Its opening verses deal with the origin of the Mosaic Dispensation in some detail. We are told that Moses’s greatest achievement lay in the fact that he gave to the Israelites a comprehensive Law, the basic principle of which was the doctrine that God is One. So, consistently with human reason and common sense Christianity which is only a branch of the Mosaic Dispensation should not and could not have gone against this doctrine of the Oneness of God. The present Christian dogmas and doctrines of the Trinity and sonship of Jesus are, therefore, a later interpolation.

Then in order to explain the nature and reality of the Law (Sharī'at) and sin, this subject has been carried from the time of Moses right up to the beginning of creation. In fact, lack of proper comprehension and realization of the subject lies at the very root of repudiation of the Law or the Sharī'at by Christians and is also the source and fountain of their idolatry. Because if it be admitted that Divine revelation was not vouchsafed to man right from the beginning of creation, the fact will have to be admitted that man can do without the Law or the Sharī'at and also that he can frame it for himself which is God’s own special prerogative. Thus, this idea leads directly to the doctrine that man needs no Law or the Sharī'at.

Summary of the Subject-Matter

The Sūra opens with a message of comfort for the Holy Prophet and the believers and it is stated that God has revealed the Qurʾān to lighten our burdens and not to add to our difficulties. It is further stated that the Qurʾān is easily comprehensible. It deals with all the major needs and requirements of man, having full regard for his feelings and susceptibilities. It is quite competent to do so because God Who has revealed it is fully conversant with the secrets of nature and also with man’s physical and spiritual needs, and because He has complete authority and control over all things. He therefore has made full provision for those needs, and as that provision has been made in the Law or the Sharī'at, therefore the Sharī'at could not be a burden for man but a mercy and a blessing for him.

The Sūra then proceeds to tell Christians that in order to understand and realize the truths embodied in the Qurʾān they should ponder over the circumstances and conditions through which
Moses had to pass; how God helped him in his state of extreme helplessness and how He guided him to the right path and exalted him and revealed Himself to him. Next, we are told that the Divine Word came to Moses and the worship of God was made incumbent upon him and truth was revealed to him that the actions of man would be rewarded according to their deserts, and that man would be judged according to his deeds and not by his belief in Atonement.

Then a brief mention is made of the manifold favours that God bestowed upon Moses from the time of his birth till he came of age. It is stated that after the spiritual upbringing of Moses had become complete and he was found fit to be entrusted with the great and onerous responsibilities of a Prophet he was commanded to go to Pharaoh and to convey to him the Divine Message and that Aaron, his brother, was commissioned to assist him in the discharge of his great and noble mission. The narrative continues to the effect that Moses went to Pharaoh and conveyed to him the Divine Message but Pharaoh refused to accept it, behaved arrogantly and sought to kill him. Thereupon Moses was commanded by God to take the Israelites out of Egypt to Canaan. Pharaoh pursued him with his mighty hosts but Divine punishment overtook him. After the Israelites were delivered from Pharaoh, Moses went up to the Mount where the Law was revealed to him. In his absence the Israelites set up idols and began to worship them and consequently were punished, but in the end they repented and gave up idolatry.

The Sura then administers a subtle rebuke to Christians. They are told that when before the advent of Jesus the Israelites had become a unitarian people and later great stress had also been laid in the Qur'ān upon Divine Unity and upon the importance and significance of the Law or the Shari'at, how was it that a teaching which professed to regard the Law a curse and entertained and preached polytheistic beliefs could wedge in between these two monotheistic creeds?

Next, mention is made of Divine punishment that would overtake Christian nations after they will have enjoyed uniform material prosperity for a thousand years, ranging from the 4th to the 14th century of the Hijra. Of these the last three centuries would be marked by progress and prosperity of a very high order. But when at the height of their glory and greatness the Christian nations would be warned that a dreadful fate was in store for them, people would ask in doubt and amazement how could it be possible, and how the power of these mighty nations could ever break and their glory depart? The Sura emphatically declares that this event will certainly come to pass and Christian nations will be seized with a terrible visitation, “lofty mountains shall crumble and become like scattered dust” (20 : 106).

Then the subject dealt with in the opening verses of the Sura is rehearsed, viz., that the Qur'ān easily yields to comprehension because it has been revealed in the national tongue of the people who are its first addressees. Like the Gospels it does not usually talk in parables and metaphors, thus leaving the subject confused and lacking in clarity, but explains its principles and teachings fully and renders them quite clear and transparent. Then again the importance of the Shari'at is driven home and we are told that the Law is not a curse but a blessing and a mercy
of God, therefore the Faithful should wait patiently for new commandments and ordinances to be revealed. After this reference is made to the expulsion of Adam from "the garden" and Christians are told that this incident on which the whole fabric of Christian doctrine of Atonement stands is either misunderstood or deliberately mis-interpreted. The truth is that the birth of Adam took place in pursuance of a special Divine plan, and Divine plans never miscarry or fail in their object. While on the one hand the Bible says that God created Adam in His own image (Gen. I : 27), on the other hand it declares that beguiled by Eve he fell into sin. In this way the Bible contradicts itself. According to the Qur’an, however, Adam having been created in God’s own image and after His likeness could not possibly have been guilty of any such fall imputed to him by the Bible. The Quranic statement, unlike the statement of the Bible is, therefore, quite consistent with reason. It describes Adam as only having slipped into an inadvertent lapse.

The Sūra further observes that if Adam had really committed a sin, then God’s plan had miscarried and not Adam but God Himself was to blame and that it was God’s own weakness and not that of Adam that had become exposed. Then those people who reject the Law and turn away from it receive a severe scolding and are condemned as deprived of Divine light. Next, the Holy Prophet is told that if disbelievers have not been punished so far it is because everything has an appointed time. He should go on preaching his Message and success ultimately is bound to come to him.

Towards the end of the Sūra the Holy Prophet is commanded to tell disbelievers that the Signs and miracles of their devising and choice will never be shown to them but God Himself will decide when and which Signs to show. In spite of their disbelief and transgression they will get respite as did disbelievers in the past. The latter were seized with Divine punishment when their transgression and iniquity had exceeded all legitimate bounds. So will it happen to the enemies of the Holy Prophet. They will also be punished at the proper time because God is a just God and if the Holy Prophet’s enemies, in spite of their transgressions and tyrannies, are not punished, then He would rightly be regarded as being partial and unjust.
1. "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful."

2. Ta Ha.

**Commentary:**

See 1:1.

2237. **Important Words:**

ط (Tahaa) is a combination of Ta and Ha. In the dialect of ‘Akk, an Arab tribe, it means يا حبيبي i.e. O my beloved or يا رجل which means, "O great man", or "O perfect man". The expression يا (Ya) was so much in vogue among the ‘Akk tribe, that one of them would not answer if he were called by the words يا رجل but would only answer if he were addressed as يا حبيبي (Tahaa). The author of Kashshaf interprets it as يا هذا i.e. "O you". By some the expression is interpreted as, "be thou at rest" (Qadir). This last interpretation seems to be quite in harmony with the significance of the next verse, which contains a message of comfort, solace and good cheer for the Holy Prophet (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary :

The combined letters ط point to the fact that the Holy Prophet was gifted, in full measure, with all those natural faculties, qualities and attributes which contribute to the building up of a man's full moral stature. The Holy Prophet was indeed a complete and perfect man in the fullest sense of the word. He possessed in full measure moral qualities such as boldness and bravery; generosity, beneficence, fidelity, forbearance and fortitude; pity and compassion; self-abnegation, honesty, brotherliness, humility, jealousy, gratitude, hospitality, magnanimity, firmness and steadfastness; dignity and decorum; love and sympathy for relatives and mankind at large; high resolve, patience and power to resist evil; an infinite capacity for hard work; simplicity and truthfulness; love for the poor and the down-trodden, respect for the old and kindness towards the young; an unbounded love for his Creator and complete devotion to Him and trust in Him, etc. A reference to the possession by the Holy Prophet of all the highest moral excellences that a human being is capable of possessing is also to be found in vv. 33:22 & 68:5.

Moreover, it is of interest to note that whereas the angel who brought the tidings of the birth of a son to Mary has been called بشر (man) in the Qur'an (19:18), implying that Jesus was at best possessed of qualities which a بشر (man) could possess, the use in the present verse of the expression يا (O perfect man) for the Holy Prophet indicates that he possessed in the fullest measure all the moral excellences that a human being is capable of possessing.
3. We have not sent down the Qur'an to thee that thou shouldst be distressed.\(^{2239}\)

4. But as an exhortation for him who fears God.\(^{2240}\)

5. And a revelation from Him Who created the earth and the high heavens.\(^{2241}\)

\(^{2239}\) Commentary:

As hinted above, the present verse contains a message of comfort and hope for the Holy Prophet and Muslims. It means to suggest that it is incompatible with the perfect and unerring Quranic revelation that its bearer should fail in his mission. The cause of the Holy Prophet, therefore, will triumph and his followers after passing through severe trials and tribulations will achieve success, prosperity and glory. This Sûra was revealed at Mecca in the very early period of the Call when the Muslims were being mercilessly harassed and harried and the persecution to which they were subjected was very severe and organized and seemed to know no end. Hence the need for these comforting words.

The verse also refutes and rebuts the Christian dogma that the law or the Shari'at is a curse. It purports to say that the Law has been revealed as a source of Divine mercy and blessing. There is nothing in it which is repugnant to human nature and which if acted upon should put man into trouble and distress.

\(^{2240}\) Commentary:

The word تذكّرة (exhortation) being derived from ذكر and meaning eminence and honour (Lane), the verse purports to say that Muslims will achieve honour and eminence by following the teachings of the Qur'an and that their enemies will come to grief by rejecting it. The expression يخشى (who fears) implies that for achievement of the great and noble object of the establishment of Divine Unity on earth, which the Muslims have in view, the perfect teaching of the Qur'an alone is not sufficient unless it is accompanied by the purification of their hearts. The verse further says that the Qur'an not only guides to the right path those who grope in the darkness of doubt and disbelief but also leads the believers to the highest pinnacles of spiritual eminence and glory.

\(^{2241}\) Commentary:

The verse gives the reason why revelation of the Qur'an will bring success to the Holy Prophet and his followers. It is that the Qur'an has been revealed by the Creator of heavens and earth i.e. the Source of all power, and that its teachings possess all those qualities and characteristics that go to make a people strong and powerful.
6. *He is the Gracious God Who has settled Himself firmly on the Throne.*

7. "To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, and whatsoever is between them, and whatsoever is beneath the moist sub-soil."

8. "And if thou speakest aloud, it makes no difference, for He knows the secret thought and what is yet more hidden."

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2242. **Important Words:**

For a detailed explanation of عرش (Throne) see 7: 55 and 10: 4. Briefly, the word represents the transcendent attributes of God, *i.e.* the attributes which are technically known as مصافات تشبيهية. These attributes which are eternal and unchangeable and are God's exclusive possession are manifested through God's other attributes which are known as مصافات تشبيهية *i.e.* such attributes as are found more or less in other beings also. The former attributes *i.e.* transcendent attributes, are said to constitute God's Throne and the latter attributes *i.e.* مصافات تشبيهية are the bearers of His Throne.

**Commentary:**

The verse continues the theme of the previous and the succeeding verses—the theme of the Almightyness and Majesty of God.

As this Chapter, like its predecessor, سورة مريم, primarily contains a repudiation of Christian dogmas and doctrines, the Divine attribute الرحمن (the Gracious) has been repeatedly mentioned in both of them because this attribute demolishes the basic Christian doctrine of Atonement. It further points to the fact that the revelation of the Qur'an, in fact of all Divine Scriptures, is subject to this attribute. This subject has also been dealt with in some detail in vv. 55:2-3.

2243. **Important Words:**

ثرى (moist sub-soil) is derived from تاریث الارض (thariya). They say تاریث الارض *i.e.* the earth or land became moist and soft after drought or dryness. تری means moisture; humidity of the earth; moist earth. The Arabs say بس الثرى إلينهم *i.e.* the fresh, vigorous friendship between them withered — they became enemies after they were friends. The word also means, good or anything good. They say قرب الترى *i.e.* such a one is a person from whom good is easy of attainment. تحت الثرى means, what is beneath the earth (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

The verse means to say that as the Qur'an has been revealed by God Whose dominion and control extend to all that is in the heavens and the earth, so all the celestial and terrestrial forces will be pressed into service to further the cause of Islam.

2244. **Commentary:**

Whereas the word السر (secret thought) signifies the thoughts that lie hidden in a man's
9. He is Allah. There is no God but He. **His** are the most beautiful names.\textsuperscript{2245}

10. And has the story of Moses come to thee?\textsuperscript{2246}

\begin{itemize}
\item[a] \textsuperscript{7} : \textsuperscript{181} ; \textsuperscript{59} : \textsuperscript{25}
\item[b] \textsuperscript{19} : \textsuperscript{52} ; \textsuperscript{79} : \textsuperscript{16}
\end{itemize}

breast which he alone knows, the word 

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] That Moses is an Egyptian name.
\item[2.] That the idea of the Oneness of God is originally Egyptian, having been first conceived and adopted by an ancient Egyptian king, named Ikhnaten (or Akhenaten). Moses himself being an Egyptian borrowed it from the Egyptians and preached it among the Israelites.
\item[3.] That, being an Egyptian, Moses popularized the Egyptian custom of circumcision as a religious rite among the Israelites.
\item[4.] That like the teaching of the Egyptian king, Akhenaten, there is no mention of the life after death in the teachings of Moses which also shows that he was also an Egyptian.
\item[5.] That the Egyptians had a very strong dislike for swine and its flesh and that the Israelites developed this dislike as a result of the teaching of Moses.
\item[6.] That because Moses was an Egyptian he could not properly express himself in Hebrew.
\end{itemize}

Against all accepted canons of history Freud in his "Moses and Monotheism" has adumbrated quite a novel theory that Moses was not an Israelite and did not belong to the Hebrew stock and also that the Israelites never settled in Egypt. He has advanced the following arguments in support of this strange and baseless claim:-

1. All these arguments possess no basis in fact. As stated above and also in \textsuperscript{2} : \textsuperscript{54}, Moses is certainly a Hebrew word, having derivation both in Hebrew and Arabic. But even if we admit that the name Moses was of Egyptian origin, it does not follow that the man Moses also was an Egyptian. As the Israelites were a subject race in Egypt, living under the
rule of the Pharaohs, it seems quite plausible that they should have adopted Egyptian names. The members of a subject race generally feel a particular delight in adopting the names and imitating the customs, modes of living and dress etc., of their rulers. But the actual fact is that موسى (Moses) is a Hebrew name and Pharaoh’s daughter, who very probably gave him that name, must have certainly been influenced to give the child a Hebrew name, as having taken him out of water she thought that he belonged to the Israelite people. It is also possible that the name might have been suggested by Moses’s mother or sister.

2. The second argument that the idea of the Oneness of God was originally Egyptian, having been first conceived and adopted by Akhenaten, an ancient Egyptian king, and preached by him among the Israelites, is equally wrong. In the first place it is manifestly unreasonable to suppose that a certain concept is the monopoly of one people. Different peoples may independently form similar ideas without having borrowed them from one another. Secondly, even supposing that the idea of God’s Unity is of Egyptian origin, the inference cannot be justified that Moses was an Egyptian. If an American or a German can borrow an idea from an Englishman and vice versa why cannot an Israelite borrow an idea from an Egyptian. The truth is that the idea of God’s Oneness was neither conceived by Egyptians nor by Syrians or any other people. It has its origin in Divine revelation.

3. The contention that circumcision was an old Egyptian practice and Moses being an Egyptian borrowed it from his people and popularized it among the Israelites also possesses no substance. Supposing that the practice of circumcision was Egyptian, how does this fact show that Moses was an Egyptian? Do not one people adopt the customs of another people? Could not the Israelites, during their stay in Egypt, have borrowed this practice from the Egyptians, particularly in view of the fact that the Israelites were a subject race and the subject race have a special liking for the ideas and practices of their rulers. In any case it is not a fact that the practice of circumcision was in vogue among the Egyptians alone. According to the Bible, in pursuance of God’s command, Abraham had himself and his two sons Ishmael and Isaac circumcised and had made the observance of the rite of circumcision incumbent upon his posterity long before Moses was born (Gen. 17:11). This practice was also in vogue among the Arabs who never had good social relations with the Israelites and never had gone to Egypt. Even among the wild tribes of Africa and the aborigines of Australia circumcision is not unknown (Jew. Enc. vol. 4, p. 97 and “Tribes of Central Australia” by Spencer and Gillen, p. 323). The earliest traces of this practice among Egyptians are to be found in the 16th century B.C. (Jew. Enc. vol. 4, p. 97), when the Israelites had already been living there. It can, therefore, be safely inferred that, if at all, the practice was borrowed by the Egyptians from the Israelites and not by the Israelites from the Egyptians. The practice seems to have been introduced into Egypt by the Prophet Joseph who commanded great respect and prestige with Egyptian monarchs. Under his influence it must have become popular among the upper strata of Egyptian society as research scholars are of the view that this practice was much more in vogue among the upper sections of the Egyptian people to which Joseph himself belonged than among the poor classes.
4. Another argument that has been advanced in favour of Moses being an Egyptian is that like the teaching of Akhenaten no reference is to be found in the teachings of Moses about life after death. That this argument is quite weak and flimsy is clear from the fact that Akhenaten has left no book, no teaching and no community of followers from whom his views about life after death might be ascertained. Moreover, there are references to life after death in the teaching of Moses. The Bible says: “And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people” (Deut. 32:50) and “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalms 17:15). The misconception may have arisen from the absence of any marked emphasis on life after death in the Old Testament. This lack of stress might have been due to the fact that in the course of time the Old Testament had become subject to much interpolation and had been tampered with and many parts of it had been lost during the miseries and misfortunes that overtook the Israelites in the period of their dispersion and captivity. When, however, the Jewish scholars and savants re-edited the Bible, they left out from it those passages which did not quite suit the Jewish temper and genius. The passages dealing with the subject of life after death seem to have been among the parts left out as the Jews, being a particularly worldly-minded people, did not relish its repeated mention.

5. The fifth argument given in support of this thesis is that the Israelites, like the Egyptians, had an extreme dislike for pork. This argument, too, seems to stand on a flimsy ground. Though Egyptians did not like pork, pigs were kept and reared in Egypt and were even offered as sacrifice at the altars of the Egyptian gods (Enc. Bib. cols. 4825, 4826). Thus the reason for the Egyptians to refrain from slaughtering pigs seems to have been that they considered it a sacred animal unlike the Israelites to whom its eating was forbidden on account of its being filthy and abominable.

6. The sixth argument given in favour of Moses being an Egyptian is that he could not properly speak Hebrew, the language of the Israelites. This argument is based on Exod. 4:10 where it is stated that Moses was not eloquent and was slow of speech and of a slow tongue. It is true that Moses suffered from an impediment in his speech and could not freely express himself. But how could the fact that Moses was not fluent and was slow of speech prove that he was slow of speech in Hebrew and therefore was not an Israelite. On the contrary, as it appears from the Bible and the Qur'an, when commanded by God to go to Pharaoh to preach his mission to him, Moses requested to be excused on the plea of his inability to express himself adequately. This fact, if anything, shows that Moses could not freely talk in the tongue which Pharaoh spoke and understood i.e. the Egyptian tongue, and therefore he was not an Egyptian.

In short, there is no reason or justification for supposing that the name Moses is of Egyptian origin or that the man Moses was not an Israelite. The linguistic evidence of Hebrew and Arabic, combined with reason and the evidence of Jewish history and tradition, added to the account of Moses as given in the Bible and the Qur'an, all go to substantiate and support the fact that Moses was not an Egyptian nor was his name of Egyptian origin.
11. "When he saw a fire, and he said to his family, 'Tarry ye, I perceive a fire; perhaps I may bring you a brand therefrom or find guidance at the fire'." 2246 A

2246 A. Important Words:

- آنس (I perceived) is derived from عِناس (anisa). They say عِناس به i.e. he became familiar with him. آنس (انسا–ح) means, he perceived it; he saw him or it and looked at him or it; he heard it, namely a sound; he felt it; he was sensible of it; he knew it; he had certain knowledge of it; he was acquainted with it. آنس منه refund means, I knew him to be characterised by maturity of intelligence and rectitude of actions and good management of affairs (Lane & Aqrab).

- قيس (brand). They say قيس منه ثارة i.e. he took fire from him. قيس التار means, he lighted or kindled the fire. قيس means fire, or live coal; a brand or a firebrand; a piece of fire which one takes upon the end of a stick (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Visions, however, are of two kinds: (a) those that concern only an individual. In such visions the Divine manifestation which is called جلوك ولايت (manifestation shown to God’s beloved other than the Prophets) in the spiritual terminology remains confined to the concerned individual. (b) Visions in which جلوك نبوت (manifestation shown to the Prophets) is shown, the Divine manifestation extends also to the Prophet’s people.

By the words, "perhaps I may bring you a brand therefrom or find guidance at the fire", Moses meant to say that if it were that he had seen, then he would be given a new Shari’at for his people but if it were only that he would receive some guidance for his own spiritual advancement.

It may be of interest to note that fire is of three kinds; (a) that which has light and also burns; (b) that which has no light but it burns and (c) that which has light but does not burn. The fire which Moses had seen seemed to belong to the last category.

The word "tarry" implies that Moses wanted privacy for communion with God, therefore he asked his family to remain behind.

According to the Qur’an the incident to which reference has been made in this verse took place after Moses had completed his ten years of service with Shu’aib in Midian and was
12. "And when he came to it, he was called by a voice, 'O Moses,

13. 'Verily, I am thy Lord. So take off thy shoes; for thou art in the sacred valley of Tuwa;" 2247

14. "And I have chosen thee; so hearken to what is revealed to thee;

15. "Verily, I am Allah; there is no God beside Me. So serve Me, and observe Prayer for My remembrance," 2248

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2247. Commentary: 

As stated above it was a vision that Moses had seen and "shoes", in the language of visions signifies worldly relations such as wife, children, friends etc. بعلوك (thy two shoes) signifies, thy relations with thy family and those with thy people and community. Thus the verse purports to say that at the time of close communion with God Moses was commanded to banish from his mind all thoughts of wife and children and of other worldly connections. Taken literally the verse would mean that as Moses was in a sacred place he was bidden to take off his shoes.

The word Twā meaning twice blessed (Lane), the significance of the verse may be that Moses in that state of communion with God stood in a valley doubly blessed, one end of which, as it were, reached to God and the other end to mankind.

2248. Commentary:

The verse contains the first commandment that was given to Moses. It appears that the observance of Prayer is the most important commandment in religion.

The words for My remembrance may mean:

(a) for My remembering you i.e. as I have remembered you, therefore, you should
16. "Surely, the Hour is coming and I am going to manifest it, that every soul may be recompensed according to its endeavour;" 2249

17. 'So let not him who believes not therein and follows his own evil inclinations, turn thee away therefrom, lest thou perish;" 2250

18. 'And what is that in thy right hand, O Moses?'

also remember Me by way of thanksgiving;

(b) your Prayer should be for the sake of remembering Me;

(c) you should set up the institution of Prayer so that My remembrance may become established in the world.

2249. Important Words:

(I am going to manifest it) is derived from which has two contrary significations: (khafîya) means, the thing was or became hidden, concealed or covered. (khafa) means, he made the thing apparent, manifest, plain or evident. They say . i.e. the rain made the rats come forth from the holes. means, he removed (covering) of the thing. The Quranic expression means, I am almost making it to appear; I am almost removing that which covers it i.e. I am going to manifest it (Lane & Aqrab). The expression may also mean, I am going to keep it concealed.

The verse may also mean that the time of the destruction of the enemies of Moses will remain hidden so that when the Divine punishment overtook them all of a sudden, they will become completely non-plussed and will not know what to do.

2250. Important Words:

The pronoun in (therefrom) and (therein) may refer to (a) "the hour" and (b) the Prayer and worship of God; or in it may refer to Prayer and worship of God, and in to "the hour".

Resurrection; or the time of triumph of the cause of Moses and that of the discomfiture and destruction of his enemies.

Commentary:

Moses is here told that when he preached his Divine Mission, he will be opposed and persecuted but no opposition or persecution will be allowed to impede or arrest the progress of his cause, and that the signs foretelling the death and destruction of those who stood in his way will become increasingly manifest.

The verse may also mean that the time of the destruction of the enemies of Moses will remain hidden so that when the Divine punishment overtook them all of a sudden, they will become completely non-plussed and will not know what to do.
19. He replied, 'This is my rod, I lean on it, and beat down there-with leaves for my sheep, and I have also other uses for it'.

20. He said, "Cast it down, O Moses'.

21. So he cast it down, and behold! it was a serpent running.

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2251. Important Words:

عصا (rod) means, he beat the man with a rod.
عصا القوم means, he brought together the people, or he made them agree on some matters of common concern.
عصا means, a rod strong enough to support the weight of a man; communal and family life; a community; the shin-bone. شن العصا means, he separated himself from the community.
عاصا المسلمين means, they caused a split in the ranks of the Muslim community (Aqrab & Lane).

أرب (uses) is the plural of أرب which is derived from أرب (ariba). They say أرب بالشئي i.e. he became devoted to the thing. أرب الله 오 베 means, he wanted it and sought it. أرب ابن الناقة means, want; intellect. غير أرب ابن الناقة means, idiots; persons deficient in intellect; persons such as have no need of women. أرب means, wants, uses, needs, requirements, purposes (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

God had only asked Moses what was in his hand. Moses did not confine himself to giving a direct reply, viz., that it was only a rod that he had held in his hand but also went on to enumerate some of its uses. It may be that taking advantage of his communion with the Divine Being Moses desired to prolong the blessed talk.

As stated above it was a vision that Moses had seen and "rod" in the language of visions signifies a Prophet's own community or people and "sheep" signifies those who do not actually belong to his community but only are under his care and protection. Moses's reply meant that he not only invited and welcomed the help of his own people and relied upon their support in the furtherance of his own cause but also looked after the interests of other people who were under his protection but did not actually belong to his community.

2251 A. Commentary:

The verse means to say that if Moses cast his people away i.e. if he gave up looking after their spiritual welfare, the dreadful consequences that are mentioned in the next verse would inevitably follow.

2252. Commentary:

حية (serpent). The Qur'an has used three different words for describing the turning of the rod of Moses into a serpent, viz., حية as in the verse under comment; حية as in 27:11 and 28:32; and حية as in 7:108 and 26:33. The word حية is of general application and is used for all categories of serpents; حية means a small serpent; and حية generally means a bulky and long serpent. These words apparently seem to have been used haphazardly at
22. God said, ‘Catch hold of it, and fear not. We shall restore it to its former condition;\(^{2253}\)

23. “And draw thy hand closer under thy arm-pit, it shall come forth white, without any disease—another Sign;\(^{2254}\)

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For an exhaustive explanation of the miracle of the rod turning into a serpent and its spiritual significance see 7:108. Suffice it to say here that it was a vision which Moses had seen and in which Pharaoh, his courtiers and the magicians were also made to share. The rod did not actually turn into a serpent but was merely made to appear like one. It, therefore, contradicted or contravened no law of nature.

**2253. Commentary:**

Moses is here comforted that his people would not remain permanently wedded to idolatry and other evil practices but the instant they came under his fostering care, they would again become his good and God-fearing companions. See also 7:108.

**2254. Important Words:**

- **يدٰك (yada)**: (thy hand). \(^{1628}\)
- **يدٰى الرجل (yadiya)**: means, he hit or hurt the hand of the man; he did a good to him.
- **يدٰى فلان من فلان (yadiya)**: means, such a one received a favour or bounty from such a one.
- **يدٰ (yad)**: means, hand or arm; and figuratively means, favour, benefit, bounty or beneficence; power, dominion, control, authority or assistance; help, protection; troop, host, army; shame, disgrace; duration, length; community, party; etc.
- **قَطٰ في يديه (ṣaqat fī yadīh)**: means, he felt ashamed; he was smitten with remorse.
- ** أعطى يده (aṭā‘ yadīh)**: means, he obeyed and submitted; this is under my possession or authority.
- **يد الزمان (yad al-zaman)**: means, the wing of the bird.
- **يد الطائر (yad al-tair)**: usually means, the wing;
24. That We may show thee some of Our greater Signs.\(^{2255}\)

25. Go thou to Pharaoh; he has indeed exceeded all bounds.'\(^{2256}\)

26. Moses said, 'My Lord, open out for me my breast,\(^{2257}\)

The verse may signify that after the Signs of the "rod" and the "white hand," God promises to show to Moses yet greater Signs. One of these latter Signs was that Pharaoh and his mighty hosts were drowned in the sea before the very eyes of the Israelites. According to the Qur'an altogether 9 Signs were shown for Moses (7:131-134) whereas the Bible gives their number as 13. For a detailed discussion about the disparity in the account of the Bible and that of the Qur'an see 7:134 & 17:102. Suffice it to say here that the Signs were really 9 in number; the Bible has only unnecessarily enlarged their number.

Commentary:

Moses now receives his commission to go to Pharaoh as a Messenger of God. The words, he has indeed exceeded all bounds, show that by his misdeeds Pharaoh had already incurred God's wrath and had made himself deserving of Divine punishment. But, God, out of His mercy, sent Moses to him in order to warn him of the impending punishment if he did not give up his evil ways and to give him a last opportunity to repent and reform.

Commentary:

One of the meanings of يد (hand) as stated above under "Important Words" is, a community or people. According to this meaning the expression يدصم يددم إلى جناحك contains an injunction for Moses that he should always keep his people close to him and under his fostering care. If he did so they would become highly righteous men, radiating spiritual light and would be free from all evil.

Commentary:

The present and the following few verses show that at first Moses did not feel himself equal to the great task which was entrusted to him. They also shed some light on the necessary qualifications that a preacher should possess in order to succeed in his mission. The following are some of them:
27. 'And make my task easy for me;
28. 'And loose the knot of my tongue';
29. 'That they may understand my speech;
30. 'And grant me a helper from my family—
31. "Aaron, my brother;

(a) He must be inspired with zeal and enthusiasm for his mission and must possess strong arguments to support his cause (v: 26); (b) his teachings must be easy of comprehension (v: 27); (c) he should be a good speaker (v: 28); (d) he should always be on the look out for favourable opportunities for his discourse to be listened to with attention and respect (v: 29); and (e) if possible he may have a good companion to share his responsibility and burden (v: 30).

2258. Commentary:
Moses seems to have suffered from an impediment in his tongue. He does not appear to be an eloquent speaker. But it is not eloquence alone that makes a man a successful preacher. More than that it is conviction in the truth of one’s mission and one’s zeal for that mission and readiness to suffer for it, that greatly make up for the deficiency of fluency. Moses possessed these things in full measure. This is why, in spite of the weakness of which he himself was conscious, he made a very effective and convincing speech before Pharaoh and his court.

2259. Important Words:
وزر (helper) is derived from وزر (wazara). وزر الرجل means, he bore the thing. وزر الرجل means, the man carried a weight which burdened his back. وزر الرجل means, he overcame or overwhelmed the man. وزر also means, he sinned. وزير means, helper; one who helps a person in carrying his burden; a minister who helps the king by his counsel in conducting the affairs of the State (Aqrab).

Commentary:
What a contrast between Moses and the Holy Prophet Muḥammad! Whereas Moses here asks for a helper for the discharge of a lighter responsibility, the Holy Prophet who was entrusted with an infinitely heavier and more onerous task never prayed to be given an assistant. He, alone, unhelped and unassisted, discharged fully and completely the responsibility of raising a people, sunk deep into the depths of moral turpitude, to the highest pinnacles of spiritual glory. Even in moments of mortal danger he was never discouraged or dismayed. The brave words which he uttered on the battle-field of Ḥunain when he was left alone surrounded by blood-thirsty enemies and sure death stared him in the face, viz.,

"I am the Prophet of God, there is no untruth about it, I am the son of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib," (Buḥārt, kitāb al-Jihād wa’l Siyar) have resounded through the centuries.
32. ‘Increase my strength with him;’

33. ‘And make him share my task;

34. ‘That we may glorify Thee much;

35. ‘And remember Thee much;

36. ‘Thou possesst full knowledge of us’.

37. ‘God said, “Granted is thy prayer, O Moses,”

38. ‘And We did indeed confer a favour upon thee at another time also;

39. ‘When We revealed to thy mother what was an important revelation, saying,’

2260. **Important Words:**

أزرى (my strength); أزر (azrun) is derived from أزر (azara). They say أزر i.e., it surrounded or encompassed it. أزر أزر (azzara) means, he strengthened him or it. أزر (azara) means, he aided, assisted or helped him and strengthened him. أزر الزرع بعضه ببعض means, the seed-produce became tangled or luxuriant, one part reaching to another, and one part strengthening another. أزر أزر (azzara) and أزر (azara) are also used synonymously. أزر (azrun) means, strength; weakness; back; aid, assistance or help. They say أزر i.e., he strengthened his back. أزر به أزر أزر (azara) means, (a) strengthen Thou by him my back; (b) strengthen Thou by him my weakness, and (c) through him add Thou to my strength (Lane & Aqrab).

2261. **Important Words:**

سَأَل (prayer) is derived from سَلَل which means, he asked for; he begged, he prayed or petitioned. سَأَل means, a thing asked for; a prayer; a petition (Aqrab & Lane).

2262. **Important Words:**

مَا يَوْحِي (an important revelation), مَا يَوْحَى being مَيَوْحِي turns the verb following it into an infinitive and imparts to it an intensiveness of meaning. Thus the expression مَا يَوْحِي means, an important revelation or what it was necessary to be revealed at that time.
40. "'Put him in the ark, and place it into the river, then the river will cast it on to the bank, and 'one who is an enemy to me and also an enemy to him will take him up.' And I wrapped thee with love from Me; and this I did that thou mightest be reared before My eye."2263

41. "When thy sister walked along and said, 'Shall I guide you to one who will take charge of him?' So We restored thee to thy mother that her eye might be cooled and she might not grieve. And thou didst kill a man, but We delivered thee from sorrow. Then We tried thee with various trials. And thou didst tarry several years among the people of Midian. Then thou camest up to the standard, O Moses."2264

2263. Important Words:

For عيني see 2 : 249.

عيني (My eye) means, (1) the eye; (2) look or view; (3) the people or inmates of a house or dwelling; (4) brothers from the same father and mother; (5) protection or honour (Lane). The expression عيني یی means, before my eyes, or, under my protection. See also 11 : 38.

صنع (be reared) is derived from صنع. They say صنع الشی (i.e. he made the thing). صنع the horse means, he looked after the horse. صنع ابنه means, he properly brought up his daughter. صنع (sun‘un) means, to do a thing properly and well. صنع الشی means, he ordered the thing to be prepared for him. صنع شی means, he taught him and trained and brought him up. صنع عجلت صنعی means, he did him a favour. صنع نفسه means, he chose him for himself. صنع عجلت شی means, to mend or reform a thing thoroughly and well (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

As Moses was to have been entrusted with the great and difficult task of delivering a people held in bondage for long by a cruel and powerful monarch, it was necessary that he should have received the requisite training for the great mission under royal tutors and teachers. So it was in fulfilment of this Divine plan that he found his way into Pharaoh’s own house.

The reference in the verse is to the Biblical narrative. See Exod. 2 : 1-10.

The expression فلیقه is in the imperative mood and signifies command, meaning, We commanded that the river should cast it on to the bank.

2264. Important Words:

قدر (standard) is inf. noun from قدر (qadara). قدر التی means, I measured the thing; computed or determined its quantity,
42. "And "I have chosen thee for Myself."

measure, size, value, worth, bulk, proportion. extent, amount, limit or number. قدر (qadr) or قدر (qadarun) is the quantity, quantum, measure, magnitude, size, bulk, proportion and extent, of a thing. They say جاء على قدر i.e., it came according to measure or as it may be said, he came up to the standard (Aqrab, Mufradät & Lane). See also 15 : 61.

Commentary:

In what a wonderful way God fulfilled the promise He had made to Moses's mother (when He commanded her to cast him into the river) that he would be restored to her (28 : 8)! God so managed the whole affair that the baby was soon again in the loving arms of his mother. It is in this way that God demonstrates not only His existence, but also His knowledge and shows His supreme control over all things and it is events like these that inspire a living faith in the hearts of God's loving and sincere votaries. And it was that living faith which made Moses's mother cast her baby into the river which was amply rewarded by Moses being restored to her very soon.

The words فَنَبِكَ قُتُوْنَا (We tried thee with various trials) mean that Moses was made to pass through the crucible of trials and tribulations so that his mettle might be tested, and after passing out of these ordeals with flying colours he might be declared fit to be endowed with God's great gifts and favours.

Midian or Madyan is the name of a town on the east side of the Gulf of 'Akaba. The name is connected with that of the tribe of Midianites. In the 6th century Ya‘qūb speaks of its position in a district rich in springs, gardens and date-groves. Istakhri describes from his own observation the spring in the town from which Moses watered the flocks of Shu‘aib. It was then covered by a house which had been built over it. The town had then shown signs of gradual decay and decline. In the 12th century Idrisi says, "It is an unimportant little trading centre with scanty resources." In the 14th century Abu‘l-Fidā saw that it was in ruins. In recent times it has been visited by Ruppell, Burton and Musil. The extensive ruins which the Arabs call Maghair Shu‘aib after the cave-tombs lie about 16 miles east of the port of Makna, in the southern part of the valley of Al-Bad‘ which is rich in streams and palms and other trees. According to Burton the whole district between 29° 28’ and 27° 40’ is called Arḍ Madyan (Enc. of Islam under "Madyan").

The town lay on the trade-route from Medina to Syria and caravans going to Syria or Egypt passed through it.

The sojourn of Moses among the people of Midian fulfilled yet another Divine plan. As he was destined to live with the Israelites in the deserts and forests of the valley of Sinai, he was made to become used to a hard life by living for several years in Midian.

2265. Important Words:

اصطعنك (I have chosen thee). For اصطنى see 20 : 40.

The verse signifies that God chose Moses for the great and difficult task of delivering a broken and crushed people from a heartless tyranny.
43. a "Go, thou and thy brother, with My Signs, and slacken not in remembering Me.  

44. b "Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has transgressed all bounds.

45. "But speak to him a gentle speech, haply he might heed or fear." a

46. They replied, c "Our Lord, we fear lest he commit some excess against us, or exceed all bounds in transgression." c

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\text{اَذَّنَّ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْمُكَرِّمُ ۚ بِٱلشَّرْيَٰفِ ۚ وَلَيْنِٰ ٱلْقَٰدِمِينَ ۚ يُلِيَّلِي}
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\text{قَالَ لَهُ رَبِّي ۛ إِنَّا نَطَافُونَ ۚ أَنَّ ٱلشَّرَّ فَرَطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَنَّ ۖ ۛ يُ٪ظِّلَ}
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\text{قَالَ لَهُ رَبِّي ۛ إِنَّا نَطَافُونَ ۚ أَنَّ ٱلشَّرَّ فَرَطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَنَّ ۖ ۛ يُ٪ظِّلَ}
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\text{ءَاذَّنَّ ٱلّٰهُ ٱلْمُكَرِّمُ ۚ بِٱلشَّرْيَٰفِ ۚ وَلَيْنِٰ ٱلْقَٰدِمِينَ ۚ يُلِيَّلِي}
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\text{فَوَتَّوْلاٍ لَّهُ ۛ لَوْ كَيْفُ ۖ لَيْسَ لَهُ بُعُولُ ۚ يَزِّدِكَ أَوْ يَفْنِعُ}
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\text{قَالَ لَهُ رَبِّي ۛ إِنَّا نَطَافُونَ ۚ أَنَّ ٱلشَّرَّ فَرَطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَنَّ ۖ ۛ يُ٪ظِّلَ}
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2266. Important Words:

لا تنيا (slacken not) is derived from ونِي which means, he was or became languid, remiss, weak, feeble or faint. ونِي فيه means, he entered upon a thing languidly or weakly; تواني في الأمر, he flagged or was remiss in the affair; ونِي عنه, he passed from it and left it (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The words, and slacken not in remembering Me, show that prayer and constant remembrance of God are greatly helpful in attaining success. They constitute the spiritual means which one must employ along with physical and material means for the furtherance and success of one's cause. They are as essential as the physical means.

God's command to Moses and Aaron to adopt these means, although He had promised them His help, makes it abundantly clear that the promise of Divine help does not absolve one of the obligation to use those means which God has created for the attainment of a certain object. God wants us to use all legitimate means that lie in our power for the accomplishment of our object and leave the rest to Him.

2266 A. Important Words:

لمع (that haply he might). لعل when expressing hope or fear is not used with regard to God. Hope or fear combined with expectation expressed by لعل pertains sometimes to the speaker and sometimes to the person spoken of and sometimes to the addressee. In the verse under comment it expresses hope on the part of Moses and Aaron meaning that they should preach the Divine Message to Pharaoh hoping that he might accept it. When used about God it signifies certainty. See also 2:22 & 11:13.

Commentary:

The verse teaches a two-fold lesson to religious teachers and preachers. A religious teacher must use gentle language when preaching his Message. He should also show due respect to those whom God has endowed with worldly honour or whom He has placed in the seat of authority.

2267. Important Words:

فرط (commit excess) is derived from فرط which means, he preceded; went before; was or
47. God said, "Fear not; for I am with you both. I hear and I see."

48. "So go ye both to him and say, 'We are the Messengers of thy Lord; so let the children of Israel go with us; and afflict them not. We have, indeed, brought thee a great Sign from thy Lord; and peace shall be on him who follows the guidance;"

49. 'It has, indeed, been revealed to us that punishment shall come on him who rejects the Message of God and turns away'."

50. Pharaoh said, "Who then is the Lord of you two, O Moses?"

became first or foremost; had priority or precedence. قرب علیه means, he hastened to do him an evil action; he acted hastily and unjustly towards him; he did to him what was hateful or evil; he annoyed him. FRONT عليه في التول means, he exceeded the due bounds or just limits towards him in speech. The expression عنا نخاف ان يفرق علینا means, we fear that he may act hastily and unjustly towards us, or that he may hastily do to us an evil action or that he may hasten to punish us. أفرق علیه means, he acted insolently towards him. أفرق على الرجل means, he burdened the man with what he could not bear (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Moses and Aaron are represented here as saying that Pharaoh might do them some harm or that he might exceed proper bounds in his talk about God i.e. might use derogatory language about God.

2268. Commentary:

The verse means: When in distress you will call Me, I will hear your prayer and help you and when there will be a possibility of your being overtaken unawares I will look after you and protect you.

2269. Commentary:

"A great Sign" in this verse may be taken as referring to the whole teaching or Message of Moses because he had already shown two Signs to Pharaoh—the Sign of the rod and of the white hand, and not one. The word الهدى i.e. "guidance" also seems to support the above significance of "a Sign." Thus آية signifies the whole teaching of Moses and not a particular part of it or one or two of his miracles. Or the word may refer to the promise of peace and security which God had given to Moses and of Divine punishment with which Pharaoh had been threatened.
51. He said, 'Our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its proper form and then guided it to its proper function.'

52. Pharaoh said, 'What then will be the fate of the former generations?'

53. He said, 'The knowledge thereof is with my Lord preserved in a Book. My Lord neither errs nor forgets.'

54. 'It is He Who has made the earth for you a cradle, and has caused pathways for you to run through it; and Who sends down rain from the sky and thereby We bring forth various kinds of vegetation in pairs.'

*a 87:3-4. b 19:65. c 43:11.

2270. Commentary:

The verse means to say that there exists a perfect order in the world and that God has endowed everything with the qualities and attributes which are best suited to its particular requirements and needs and by making proper use of which it can attain to its fullest development.

Pharaoh seems to be a polytheistic philosopher. Moses has here drawn his attention to the Oneness and Unity of God.

2271. Commentary:

Moses's reply to Pharaoh's query contained in the previous verse seemed to have entirely confounded him (Pharaoh), so he adroitly turned away from the subject which he himself had started and put Moses a new question. He asked Moses whether his God knew anything about the former generations who were dead and gone, meaning how they would fare when they had not had the benefit of receiving guidance from him (Moses). Thus in a subtle manner Pharaoh sought to incite his people against Moses by making an oblique hint that he (Moses) regarded their forefathers as bereft of Heavenly guidance and therefore deserving of Divine punishment.

2272. Commentary:

Moses gives a crushing reply to Pharaoh's evasive tactics. He tells Pharaoh that he should not bother about the former generations. His God knew all about them and every detail concerning them was well preserved in His knowledge and on the Day of Resurrection He would requite them all according to their deeds and actions, taking into consideration their particular conditions and circumstances.

2273. Commentary:

The word ازوجا (in pairs) points to a profound scientific truth which has only recently been
55. “Eat ye and pasture your cattle. Verily, in this are Signs for those endowed with reason.”

56. "From this earth have We created you, and into it shall We cause you to return, and from it shall We bring you forth once more."

discovered, viz., that there are pairs in the vegetable world as there are pairs in the animal world. Long before this scientific truth was discovered the Qur’an had stated it. It has further stated that all objects have been created in pairs (51:50). Science seems to be moving in the direction pointed by the Qur’an. Its discoveries in organic and inorganic matter have been increasingly supporting and substantiating the truth enunciated by the Qur’an centuries ago.

The verse under comment continues the argument begun in the previous verse, viz., that just as physical rain gives life to plants and vegetation, similarly water of Divine revelation is indispensible for the spiritual life of man.

2274. Important Words:

**ناهة (naha).** They say ناهي عن كذا i.e. he forbade him to do such a thing. ناهي (nuhā) is the plural of نهة (nuhyatun) which means, reason. It is so called because reason restrains a man from doing what is bad and from all that which is contrary to reason and common sense (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The truths narrated in the previous verse constitute “Signs” or proofs of the existence of God. They also prove the need of Divine revelation, because they show that if God has made so much provision for the physical needs of man, He must have made similar provision for his spiritual needs also.

2275. Commentary:

The words, into it shall We cause you to return, give rise to a natural question, viz., where does human soul go after man dies and his body decays and is completely dissolved? The answer to this question as given by the Qur’an is that human soul acquires a new body after its departure from its physical habitat and also an abode according to the nature of the deeds which man may have done during his life on earth. Man’s real sepulchre is the place to which God consigns his soul after death according to his works in this life. It is not the pit in which his dead body is placed. It is an abode of happiness or misery according to his spiritual condition.

The sentence, And from this earth shall We bring you forth once more, points to the supreme truth that man’s life does not end with the extinction and dissolution of his physical body, as it is pregnant with too big an import to end with the latter’s decay and death. If life had no great purpose God would not have created it, and after
57. And We did show him (Pharaoh) Our Signs, all of them; but he rejected them and refused to believe. 2276

58. He said, \textit{Hast thou come to us, O Moses, to drive us out of our land by thy magic?} 2277

59. \textit{But we shall assuredly bring thee magic the like thereof; so make an appointment between us and thyself which we shall not fail to keep—neither we nor thou—at a place alike for us both}. 2278

2276. \textbf{Commentary:}

The word \\textit{أي} besides the meaning given in the text also means, he hated or disliked. According to this meaning the verse shows that Pharaoh not only rejected the Divine Signs but also held them up to scorn and looked down upon them with contempt and disdain.

2277. \textbf{Commentary:}

This verse seems to refer to an insidious device of Pharaoh. He told his people that Moses who was a foreigner in Egypt was seeking to turn the ruling dynasty out of Egypt by his clever manoeuvres. He accused Moses of rebellion and revolt against the constituted authority and of aspiring to the leadership of the Egyptians. Thus apprehending in the rise of Moses a threat to his own power and prestige he sought to incite his people against him and thus turn his personal enmity against him into national hatred.

In this verse Pharaoh leaves out Aaron and addresses only Moses. He seems to have regarded Aaron as too insignificant to be considered worthy of notice.

2278. \textbf{Important Words:}

\textit{ساوية} (saviya). They say \\textit{ساوية الرجل}, \textit{i.e.} the affair of the man became established. \\textit{ساوية} means, it was or became equal to it and like it in measure, extent, size, quantity or amount and in-value, etc. \\textit{ساوية} (siwan) or \\textit{ساوية} (suwan) means, equal; or
60. *Moses* said, "Your appointment shall be the day of the festival, and let the people be assembled when the sun is risen high."\(^{2279}\)

61. Then Pharaoh withdrew and concerted his plan and then came to the place of appointment.\(^{2280}\)

62. Moses said to them, 'Woe to you, forge not a lie against Allah, lest He destroy you utterly by some punishment and, surely, he who forges a lie shall perish.'\(^{2281}\)

63. Then they argued their affair among themselves and conferred in secret.\(^{2282}\)

The verse shows that Pharaoh possessed some sense of fairness. He seems to act with justice and impartiality in regard to the controversy that was to take place between Moses and the magicians.

\(^{2279}\) Commentary:

It seems a curious analogy that whereas the contest between Moses and the magicians in which they were fully and finally routed took place at the time of the Holy Prophet also entered Mecca as a conqueror at the time of which marked the final defeat of disbelief and idolatry in Arabia.

The day of festival seemed to be the holy day of the people of Pharaoh when they were expected to assemble in large numbers and to behave with unusual dignity and decorum.

\(^{2280}\) Commentary:

The expression besides the meaning given in the text may also mean: He mustered all his designs; he contrived all sorts of plans; he did all that he could do.

\(^{2281}\) Important Words:

- فُسَجَّتْكُمْ (destroy you utterly) is derived from which means, he earned unlawful money.
- يُعَمِّرُونَ (hält:;: also means, a marked place (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:109 and 19:11.

The verse lays down an infallible criterion to test the truth of a claimant to Divine revelation, viz., that a forger of lies against God, though he may appear to progress and prosper for a while, ultimately perishes and comes to a miserable and ignoble end. This is a truth writ large on the pages of all religious history.

\(^{2282}\) Commentary:

This verse shows that the warning which Moses held out to the magicians in the words, forge not a lie against Allah, had had its effect
64. They said, 'Certainly these two are magicians who desire to drive you out from your land by their magic and to destroy your best traditions.'

65. 'Concert, therefore, your plan; and then come forward arrayed in a body. And, surely, he who gains ascendancy this day shall prosper.'

Commentary:
The reference in the words, "they said," is to the members of Pharaoh's party. It is they who spoke these words to incite the reluctant magicians to take the field against Moses. They brought two charges against Moses and Aaron. First, that Moses and Aaron sought to turn them out of their country by deceitful means; secondly that they intended to destroy their religion and the sacred traditions which they (people of Pharaoh) had inherited from their forefathers.

Important Words:
- كيد (plan) means, a plan, a wile, an artifice, artful contrivance; device; a plot; a stratagem, art; cunning, ingenuity or skill (Lane).
- المثل (best) is the feminine of أجل which is derived from أجل. They say أجل فلانًا, i.e. he became like such a one. أجل (amithal) or أجل means, coming nearest to the model, i.e. the best. أجل the people in the community. They say المثل اليوم أجل i.e. the patient today is in the best of health (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradāt). See also 13:7.

Commentary:
The magicians were told that they could use any device, artifice or wile to defeat Moses. This implied a confession that with Pharaoh and his people the end justified the means.

In the verse an appeal has also been made to the magicians' self-interest. They are told that if they were successful against Moses, it would be all to their good.
66. aThey said, 'O Moses, either do thou cast first, or we shall be the first to cast.'
67. bHe said, 'Nay, cast ye.' Then lo! their cords and their staves appeared to him, by their magic as though they ran about.
68. And Moses conceived a fear in his mind.

2285. Commentary:
The words of the verse show that the magicians had behaved respectfully towards Moses and it is this respectful attitude of theirs which, perhaps, was mainly instrumental in enabling them to see the truth and accept it.

2286. Important Words:
عصیم (their staves). عصی is the plural of عصا which means: (1) a piece of wood on which one reclines, a stick, a stave; a party; the tongue (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The words "Nay, cast ye", show that the Prophets of God never take the offensive. They wait till they are attacked and then they defend themselves.

The expression يخيل إليه (appeared to him) clearly indicates that the cords and staves of the magicians only appeared to Moses as though they ran about. Actually they did nothing of the kind. The forces of evil at first appear to carry the day for a short while but they soon come to grief and suffer defeat and destruction.

2287. Important Words:
وَجَس (conceived) is derived from وجس which means, he was frightened at some sound or other thing that fell into his mind or ear. وَجَسُ الشَّيء means, the thing was unperceived or hardly perceived by the eye or ear; was hidden or concealed. وَجَس means, he conceived a thing in his mind. The Quranic expression وَجَسَ في نفوسه خيفة means, and he conceived in his mind a fear or he perceived or felt and conceived in his mind a fear (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
When Moses saw the trick of the magicians he feared lest the people might be deceived thereby and be led astray. He was not afraid of the cords and staves of the magicians. The Prophets of God stand on a rock of certainty. Their belief and their trust in God is invincible. Nothing can shake their belief nor are they afraid of anything. Moses only feared that the people might not be led astray by the antics of the magicians.
69. We said, 'Fear not, for thou wilt have the upper hand.'

70. 'And cast that which is in thy right hand; it will swallow that which they have wrought, for that which they have wrought is only a magician's trick. And a magician shall not thrive, come where he may.'

71. Then the magicians were made to fall down prostrate. They said, 'We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses.'

72. Pharaoh said, 'Do you believe in him before I give you leave. He must be your chief who has taught you magic. I will therefore surely cut off your hands and your feet on account of your disobedience, and I will surely crucify you on the trunks of palm trees; and you shall know which of us can impose severer and more abiding punishment.'

2288. Commentary:

In this verse God comforts Moses that the magicians would not succeed in leading people astray and that he will have the upper hand.

2289. Important Words:

**تلَفْ (swallow)** is derived from *لَا قِفْلا* (laqifa). They say لغف الشيء: he hastily took the thing. لغف الطعام (laqqafa) means, he swallowed up the food (Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse makes it clear that it was the rod of Moses and not anything else which "swallowed" that which the magicians had wrought, and which undid their magic. The rod of Moses wielded with the spiritual force of a great Prophet and thrown at the command of Almighty God exposed the deception that the magicians had wrought on the spectators by their magic. Elsewhere in the Qur'an the staves and cords of the magicians have been described as their lies (7:118).

2290. Commentary:

The magicians admitted their defeat and became fully convinced of the rightness and righteousness of Moses's cause.

2291. Important Words:

**مَن (on account of)** among other things means, because of, on account of, by reason of; as in ما خطبناهم أغرقوا i.e. because of their sins they were drowned (71:26). It also means on, by, etc. (Aqrab).
73. They said, 'We shall not prefer thee to the manifest Signs that have come to us, nor shall we prefer thee to Him Who has created us. So decree what thou wilt decree; thou canst only decree concerning this present life.'

74. 'Surely, we have believed in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins and forgive us the magic which thou didst force us to use. And Allah is the Best and the Most Abiding.'

75. Verily, he who comes to his Lord a sinner—for him is Hell; he shall neither die therein nor live.

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Commentary:

The crucifixion was in itself a terrible form of death yet the punishment of cutting off the hands and the feet was added to make it all the more dreadful. Elsewhere in the Qur'an the expression has been used in this connection. The difference between the two expressions is that whereas simply means, you have believed in him, the expression means, you have believed in him and have accepted his lead and have followed him.

Commentary:

Mark the wonderful change that true faith works in man. The greedy and materialistic magicians who only a short while ago were asking for reward from Pharaoh, in the form of money, position or honour (7:114), became quite indifferent even to the most horrible form of death with which he threatened them when they found and accepted the truth.

Commentary:

Death delivers man from pain. So the sinners will not die in Hell and will continue to suffer its torment. Neither will they live therein, because real life consists in the enjoyment of Divine love and they will be deprived of it. Or the verse may mean that the sinners will be completely deprived of all comfort and happiness and this condition is described here as worse than death.
76. But he who comes to Him as a believer having done good deeds, for such are the highest ranks.

77. Gardens of Eternity, beneath which rivers flow; they will abide therein for ever. And that is the recompense of those who keep themselves pure.

78. And We sent revelation to Moses, saying, 'Take away My servants by night, and strike for them a dry path through the sea. Thou wilt not be afraid of being overtaken, nor wilt thou have any other fear.'

2293A. Important Words:

لا تخشى (nor wilt thou have fear) is formed from خشى which means, he feared or dreaded or feared with reverence, veneration, respect, or awe. We have in the Qur'an وهم من خشينه مشغفون i.e. they fear their Lord, holding Him in reverence (21 : 29). خشى منه means, he feared or dreaded what might happen to him from him or it. خشى is the dread, fear or awe resulting from the knowledge which one possesses about a thing or person. The Quranic expression أنما يخشى الله من عباده العلماء (35 : 29) means, only those of His servants who possess knowledge fear Allah (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradat). The reference to the fear mentioned in the words لا تخشى is to the dangers of the sea and other hardships that lay ahead of the Israelites.

Commentary:

The incident mentioned in this verse relates to the time when, under God's command, Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt into Canaan. The Israelites left secretly by night, and when Pharaoh learnt of their flight, he pursued them with his hosts and was drowned in the Red Sea.

In order to appreciate fully the nature and significance of this incident which indeed constituted a great Divine Sign, it is necessary to read the verse under comment along with other relevant verses such as vv. 2 : 51, 26 : 62-64 & 44 : 25. The Qur'an says:

And remember the time when We divided the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people while you looked on (2 : 51).

And when the two hosts came in sight of each other the companions of Moses said, 'We are surely overtaken.'...Then We revealed to Moses, saying, 'Strike the sea with thy rod.' Whereupon it parted and every part was like a huge sand-hill (26 : 62-64). When the Israelites were passing they had the sea on one side and the small lakes
on the other, which conformably to the natural laws of perspective appeared raised above the level of the land.

And leave the sea at a time when it is motionless. Surely, they are a host which is doomed to be drowned (44:25), i.e. pass through the sea quickly at a time when the tide has receded.

The Bible also refers to this incident in the following verses:

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued and went in after them to the midst of the sea... And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Stretch out thine hand over the sea'. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea and the sea returned to its strength. And the waters returned and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them (Exod. 14:21-28).

The following facts emerge from the above account of this incident as given in the Qur'an and the Bible;

(a) that Moses was commanded by God to take away the Israelites out of Egypt by night;

(b) that Pharaoh pursued the Israelites with his mighty hosts;

(c) that when the Israelites reached the arm of the Red Sea which lay across their route, they were greatly dismayed because Pharaoh was close behind with his hosts;

(d) that when on seeing Pharaoh's hosts the Israelites exclaimed in fright that they were overtaken, God commanded Moses to strike the water of the sea with his rod;

(e) that when Moses struck the sea with his rod as the Qur'an says or stretched out his hand over the sea as the Bible says, it was the time of the ebb-tide and the sea was receding, leaving a dry bed;

(f) that Moses was commanded by God to cross quickly the dry bed to the opposite bank, which he did;

(g) that when the hosts of Pharaoh reached the sea, it was the time of high tide and that in their zeal to overtake the Israelites they took no notice of it and at once jumped into the sea behind them; and

(h) that, as it appears, being heavily equipped with big chariots and other heavy armaments the progress of the army of Pharaoh was greatly retarded so that while they were yet in the midst of the sea, the high tide returned and they were all drowned.

Historians differ as to the exact place from where Moses crossed the Red Sea from Egypt into Canaan. Some are of the view that on his way from the territory of Goshen, which is also called the valley of Al-Tamthilat or Wadi Tumilat and where the capital of the Pharaohs was situated (Enc. Bib. vol. 4, col. 4012, under "Rameses"), Moses passed by the Gulf of Timsah (Enc. Bib., cols. 1438 & 1439). Others think that he went much further to the north and going round Zoan crossed over to Canaan near the Mediterranean Sea (Enc. Bib., col. 1438). But what is
most probable is the fact that from Tal Abl Sulaimān which was the capital of the Pharaohs in Moses’s time, the Israelites at first went to north-east to the Gulf of Timsāḥ but finding that a net of gulfs barred their way, they turned south and crossed the Red Sea near the town of Suez where it is hardly more than 2/3 mile wide, and started for Qadas (Enc. Bib., col. 1437).

The following passage from Peake’s “Commentary on the Bible” (p. 64) may also be read with interest:

The Israelites fled with him (Moses) across the Goshen marshes into the Sinai-tic peninsula. The crossing of the “Red Sea” (yam sūph, “sea” or “lake of reeds”) was probably the crossing of the southern end of a lake a few miles N.W. of what is now called the Red Sea. A wind laid bare a wide stretch of shore, and when an Egyptian force pursued the fugitives, their chariot wheels stuck fast in the wet soil, and the water returned upon them when the wind shifted. Writers differ as to the route taken by the Israelites. Some think that they moved southward to the mountainous range of (the modern) Sinai, and then along the eastern arm of the Red Sea, now known as the Gulf of ‘Akaba, to its northernmost point at Ezion-Geber. Others think that the evidence points to the route still taken by Mecca pilgrims, nearly due E. to Ezion Geber, and that thence they moved N.W. to the region of Kadesh (Barnea), to Mt. Sinai or southward along the E. side of the Gulf of ‘Akaba to Mt. Horeb. The traditions differ and certainty is impossible.

There are people who against all canons of history take particular delight in propounding most extraordinary theories that the Israelites never lived in Egypt. Some such theories are:

(a) No reference to the Israelites is to be found in the old Egyptian historical records.

(b) In the fifth year of the reign of Pharaoh Meneptah (or Merenptah) when Moses is said to have taken the Israelites out of Egypt, some Israelite tribes were actually living in Canaan, therefore the theory of Moses having taken the Israelites out of Egypt to Canaan during his reign and their having settled in that country some fifty years later is all wrong.

(c) Though some trace is found of some tribes having crossed over from Asia into Egypt but there is no proof that these were the Israelite tribes.

The propounders of these strange theories seem to ignore the patent fact that the Israelites were foreigners in Egypt and were a subject race and lived the miserable life of slaves under their cruel rulers. How could such people be considered worthy of any notice being taken of them by historians? Apart from this the fact may also be taken into consideration that when it is not quite possible for historians even in this 20th century to prepare a well-connected and harmonious narrative about a people from the remnants of its ruined civilization, it was much more difficult for historians in the past to reconstruct a consistent record from the fragmentary accounts of a people who lived in the hoary past and who were treated like beasts of burden by their rulers. This is why no reference to the Israelites is to be found in the old historical records of Egypt.

Secondly, the doubtful theory that certain Israelite tribes were found to be living in Canaan in the 5th year of the reign of Pharaoh Menep-tah cannot disprove the fact that other Israelite tribes had remained behind in Egypt. Is it not possible that some of these tribes might have left Egypt for Canaan sometime before all of them were taken out of it by Moses. It is very strange that on the one hand these very writers say that Moses is an Egyptian name and that some of the companions of Moses also had Egyptian names, and on the other that the
Israelites never went to Egypt. Moreover, the Bible gives a detailed and well-connected story of the Israelites having lived in Egypt. There was no compelling reason for the writers of the Bible to have done so, especially when the Israelites had lived there only as slaves and worse than beasts of burden. No people would feel any urge or pride in forging and falsely inventing such a miserable record of shame and sorrow of themselves. Last but not least, the Biblical details with regard to the customs, culture and mode of life of the Pharaohs of that time is another proof of the fact that the Israelites had lived under them. The Bible had no interest in the Pharaoh dynasty of Egypt apart from their being rulers of the Israelites. Besides, as stated by old Greek historians, the Egyptians themselves admitted that the Israelites had lived in Egypt for a long time and later on had left this country. The present Egypt, however, should not be confused with a territory which in ancient times was also known as Egypt but which formed a part of northern Syria or northern Arabia.

The date of the Exodus has also been much contested and there seems to be considerable difficulty in determining its exact date from the Biblical records alone. Neither the name of the reigning Pharaoh nor the place where he held his court is mentioned; the account given is not contemporary, but has been condensed and annotated by later editors, and fused by them into a general narrative; and the Biblical chronology of the period, though containing trustworthy material, is known to be largely artificial. Apart from the Biblical records any historical information on the subject is meagre. Various theories, however, are held about the Exodus. Some of these are as follows:

1. The view that the Israelites left Egypt with the Hyksos (1580 B.C.) at the beginning of the XVIIIth Dynasty, or shortly afterwards, and lived a nomadic life of about 200 years in the desert previous to entering Canaan. But evidently this view seems to do violence to genuine Hebrew tradition.

2. The theory which dates the Exodus in the XVIIIth Dynasty, but about 1445 B.C. just after the long despotic reign of Thutmose III and during that of his son Amenhotep II (1447-1420 B.C.). This theory too lacks the support of trustworthy historical material and Hebrew tradition.

3. The hypothesis which connects the Exodus with the religious revolution attempted by Amenhotep IV, otherwise known as Akhenaten (1383-1366 B.C.) This view would place the Exodus about 1350 or 1345 B.C. This seems to be more plausible than the first two views.

4. But the theory, largely prevalent which receives much support from historical data, archaeological research and Hebrew tradition is that the Exodus occurred in the Nineteenth Dynasty (1328-1202 B.C.), in the reign of Merenptah II or Menepth II (1234-1214) and still seems the most probable. It appears to have taken place about 1230 B.C. According to this view the Pharaoh of the Oppression would be Rameses II and his successor Merenptah II, the Pharaoh of the Exodus (Peake's Commentary on the Bible, pp. 119, 955 & 956).

Incidentally, it may be stated here that the striking of the water of the sea with his rod by Moses had no cause and effect connection with the actual parting of the sea. It was merely a sign or a Divine intimation that it was the time of the ebb tide and that the Israelites should hasten to cross. God had so arranged that when Moses reached the sea the tide was about to go back, so that as soon as he struck the sea with his rod in obedience to Divine command, it began to recede and a dry path was made for the Israelites. The striking of the
79. Then Pharaoh pursued them with his hosts, and the waters of the sea completely overwhelmed them. 2294

80. And Pharaoh led his people astray and did not guide them aright.

81. O Children of Israel, We delivered you from your enemy, and We made a covenant with you on the right side of the Mount, and We sent down on you manna and “salwâ.” 2295

water with his rod by Moses and the recession of the sea coincided. This constituted a miracle because God alone knew when the sea would recede and He had commanded Moses to strike its waters at the time of its recession.

2294. **Important Words:**
- **أتبعهم** (pursued them) is derived from **تتبع.** They say **اتبعه** i.e. he followed him. **تتبع** means, he followed him and overtook him. **اتبعه بهم** means, he made him to be followed by them i.e. he made them to follow him. **أتبعهم نزوع بجوده** means, Pharaoh made his troops to follow them (Lane & Aqrab). See also 10 : 91.
- **يام** (sea) is substantive-noun from **يَامن** (yamma). The Arabs say **يام الرجل** i.e. the man was thrown into the sea. **يام الساحل** means, the water of the river overflowed its banks. **يام** means, the sea; or the sea of unknown or unreached depth; a great body of water. See also 7 : 137.

2295. **Important Words:**
- **من عليه** i.e. he bestowed a favour on him. **من** which is infinitive noun signifies bestowing favour upon a man or doing good to him. **من** means, (1) anything which comes to a man without much effort on his part; (2) a favour; (3) honey-dew (Aqrab). Dr. Jesenius in his dictionary has also referred to **من** as having been from **من** (manna) and means, a favour or bounty. See also 2 : 58.
- **سلوى** is derived from **سل.** They say **سل عن الشيء** i.e. he was satiated with the thing. **سلوى** is (1) a whitish bird resembling a quail; (2) anything which gives a man satisfaction or contentment, (3) honey (Aqrab). See also 2 : 58.

**Commentary:**

The Israelites had lived long in bondage under the heartless tyranny of the Pharaohs and consequently had come to lose all those manly qualities that go to make a people hardy, brave and courageous. According to the Divine scheme of things they were destined to conquer and rule over Canaan. Therefore after Moses had taken them out of Egypt they were made to live in the arid and barren region of Sinai in order that they might become used to a free and hard life and thus acquire and develop those qualities which were so essential for a great future that lay in store for them. But having lived in bond-
82. "Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and transgress not therein, lest My wrath descend upon you; and he on whom My wrath descends, shall perish.\(^{2296}\)

...age for a long time they had lost all initiative and had become used to a life of lethargy and lassitude. So when they saw that they would have to live in the wilderness where no amenities of life were to be found and even food was lacking, they were utterly dismayed and fretted and fumed and quarelled with Moses saying: "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exod. 16: 3). God heard the murmurings of the Israelites and commanded Moses to tell those ungrateful people: "At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God" (Exod. 16: 12). And how this Divine promise was fulfilled has been described in the Bible as follows:

And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, it is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. (Exod. 16: 13-15).

This was the food which in answer to the murmurings of the Israelites God, out of His infinite grace and mercy, bestowed upon them in the wilderness of Sinai and which they were given without much effort or labour on their part, and which was found when stark hunger seemed to stare them in the face, and the fact of its having been found in that place and condition did, indeed, constitute a great miracle. It is to this incident that reference has been made in the verse under comment.

The manna has also been referred to in a saying of the Holy Prophet, viz. the truffle is one of the things included in the manna (Bukhari). In Lane’s Lexicon we have the following explanation for manna under the word ترانجان (turanjabin): A kind of manna; the manna of the thorny plants called by the Arabs the haj, and hence by European botanists Alhagi; according to Dr. Royle it is a sweetish juice which exudes from the Alhagi maurorum, crystallizes into small granular masses, and is usually distinguished by the name of Persian manna; a kind of dew that falls mostly in Khurasan and Ma-wara al-nahr and in our country, mostly upon the haj; the best thereof is that which is fresh or moist and white (Ibn Sinā), the ماننا or manna mentioned in the Qurʾān (p. 306).

\(^{2296}\) Important Words:

حل (lest it descend) is formed from حل. They say حل بالتنوم i.e. he alighted or descended and stopped at or in the abode of the people. حل الدين means, the time of the payment of the
83. 'But surely I am forgiving to those who repent and believe and do good deeds, and then stick to guidance.'

84. 'And what has made thee hasten away from thy people, O Moses?'

85. He said, 'They are closely following in my footsteps and I have hastened to Thee, my Lord, that thou mightest be pleased.'

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Commentary:

At three places in the Qur'an the sending down of manna and salwā has been mentioned; viz. in the present verse and in vv. 2:58 and 7:161 and at all these three places the fact has been followed by the injunction, 'Eat of the good things that We have provided for you.' This shows that whereas the food which was provided to the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai was wholesome, palatable and good in taste; it consisted not of one but of several things, ụtụ (truffle) and ụlọ (quails) forming the major part of them.

The injunction in the words "And transgress not therein" contained a warning to the Israelites that as they had been provided with food in abundance in the wilderness without much labour on their part and purely as an act of God's grace, they should not misuse this Divine gift, the powerful and the influential among them hoarding it for themselves and depriving the poor and the weak of their due share.

2297. Important Words:

- ٍِهَٰنَّدَى (stick to guidance) is derived from ٍِهِدَى (which is the infinitive form, is generally used in three different senses: to show the right path; to lead to the right path; and to make one follow the right path. (Aqrab, Baqà & Mufradat).

2298. Important Words:

- أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) means, I recited or narrated the story or tradition. أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) means, he honoured him. أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) means, a remain or relic of a thing; a trace; sign or mark; a footprint, vestige or track; a footprint, impression or mark made by the foot of a man upon the ground. They say عليه أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) أَثَرُ (footsteps) i.e. he or it bears the mark, stamp, character or trace of such a thing (Lane & Aqrab).
86. God said, "We have tried thy people in thy absence, and the Sāmirī has led them astray."  

87. So Moses returned to his people indignant and sorrowful. He said, "O my people, did not your Lord promise you a gracious promise? Did then, the appointed time appear too long to you, or did you desire that wrath should descend upon you from your Lord, that you broke your promise to me?"

88. They said, 'We have not broken our promise to thee of our own accord; but we were laden with loads of people’s ornaments and we threw them away, and likewise did the Sāmirī cast.'

2299. Important Words:
- سامری (Sāmirī) is derived from سمره. They say سمره i.e. he nailed it, i.e. he made it fast, firm or strong with a nail or nails, a nail being called سمر. Hence سامری is one who makes things fast with nails, i.e. one belonging to the profession of blacksmiths, carpenters, etc. Thus سامری means, a people who carry on the profession of blacksmiths, carpenters etc. i.e. artisans. Sāmirī, the mischief-maker, seems to belong to this class. So سامری may be a descriptive or attributive name. Or it may be a relative noun from سامری (the Samaritans), a people said to be one of the tribes of the Children of Israel; or a sect of the Jews, differing from them in many of their institutions. Properly speaking they were inhabitants of Samaria. The name is now restricted to a small tribe of people living in Nablus and calling themselves ‘Bene Yisrael’. Their history as a distinct community began with the taking of Samaria by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. (Lane & Jew. Enc.).

2300. Commentary:
- موعدی (my promise) means, the promise which you made to me, or the promise which God made to you through me.

2301. Important Words:
- موعد ک (thy promise) means, the promise which we made to thee.

Commentary:
Whereas the Qur’ān in this verse says that the Egyptians gave the Israelites jewels of gold and silver of their own accord, the Bible accuses them of having despoiled the Egyptians of their
89. Then he produced for them a calf—a mere body producing a lowing sound. And they said, ‘This is your god, and the god of Moses.’ So he gave up the religion of Moses.\textsuperscript{2302}

90. Could they not see that it returned to them no answer, and had no power to do them either harm or good?\textsuperscript{2303}

Commentary:

The Israelites had lived in Egypt under bondage for a long time and during their bondage they had acquired many of the customs, ways of life and religious rites of their rulers, the Egyptians, who worshipped the cow (Enc. Rel. & Ethics, vol. 1, p. 507). In this way they had also developed a great liking for the cow, and taking advantage of Moses's absence Sāmīrī led them into cow-worship.

2302. Important Words:

- \textit{khawira} (lowing sound) is infinitive-noun from خوار. They say خوار البقر \textit{i.e.} the cow made a lowing sound, it bellowed. خوار (\textit{khawira}) means, it became weak and enfeebled: it broke. خوار signifies the loud crying \textit{i.e.} the lowing or bellowing of a cow and of a calf; and the crying \textit{i.e.} bleating of sheep, or that of goats and gazelles, and of any beast and the whizzing of arrow. They say له صوت خوار الثور \textit{i.e.} he has a voice like the bellowing of the bull (Aqrab, Lane & Mufradāt).

- فنسى (so he gave up) means, he forgot or he abandoned or gave up or ceased acting (Aqrab & Mufradāt). See also 5: 14 & 9: 67.
91. And Aaron had said to them before this, 'O my people, you have only been tried by means of it (the calf). And surely, the Gracious God is your Lord, so follow me and obey my command.'

92. They replied, 'We shall not cease to worship it until Moses return to us.'

93. Moses said, 'O Aaron, what hindered thee, when thou didst see them gone astray,

94. 'From following me? Hast thou then disobeyed my command?'

2304. Commentary:

The Qur'an here contradicts the Bible and clears Aaron of the charge of having made a molten calf for the Israelites to worship (Exod. 32:4). It says that not only did Aaron not fashion the calf for them but on the other hand prohibited them from worshipping the one which the Sāmirī had made for them. It offends against reason and common sense even to think that a Prophet of God who had heard His voice and had had communion with Him should have stooped so low as to worship a calf. The charge is patently so foolish that it has been dismissed as unfounded by Christian writers themselves (Enc. Brit. under "the Golden Calf" and under "Moses.")

As usual, in this case also the Bible has contradicted itself. Far from deserving condemnation on account of being involved in cow-worship, Aaron at God's command was to be dressed with holy garments, be anointed and sanctified by Moses (Exod 40:13).

The words "you have been tried by means of it" show that in the offer of calf-worship by the Sāmirī lay the greatest trial of the Israelites because this worship was calculated to destroy their national unity. The trials and tribulations which the Israelites had suffered at the hands of Pharaoh were nothing compared with the spiritual trial to which they had become exposed through the wicked designs of the Sāmirī. While the former had helped to cement their national unity, the latter had almost destroyed it. It had caused dissensions among the Israelites; and internecine discord and dissensions are more destructive of national unity than external dangers.

2305. Commentary:

The verse shows that while Moses was held in awe by the Israelites they had no great respect for Aaron.

2306 Commentary:

Moses here severely calls Aaron to account for not having properly looked after the spiritual welfare of the Israelites in his absence. The verse thus clearly shows Aaron to be a subordinate Prophet to Moses.
95. He answered, "O Son of my mother, seize me not by my beard, nor by the hair of my head. I feared lest thou shouldst say, 'Thou hast caused a division among the Children of Israel, and didst not wait for my word.'"\textsuperscript{2307}

96. Moses said, 'And what hast thou to say, O Sāmirī?\textsuperscript{2308}

97. He said, 'I perceived what they perceived not. I only partly received the impress of the Messenger (Moses), but that too I cast away. Thus it is that my mind commended to me'.\textsuperscript{2309}

\textsuperscript{2307} Important Words:

- لم ترقب (didst not wait for) is formed from رقب (I perceived) and ل (didst not).
- They say ل (I perceived) is from L (i.e. he perceived it; he knew it; he saw it).
- أبصَرْ (I saw) also means, he relinquished infidelity and adopted the true belief. أبصَرْ (I saw) means, the way became manifest.

Commentary:

Taking the word رقب (I perceived) in its different senses the expression لم ترقب قول (I didst not wait for) would mean, thou didst not wait for my word; thou didst not preserve and guard my word (the instructions which I left for your guidance); thou wast not regardful of my word i.e. thou didst not pay any regard to my directions which I left for your guidance.

\textsuperscript{2308} Important Words:

- خطبة (what hast thou to say) among other things may also mean, object, purpose, plea, defence etc. See also 12 : 52.

\textsuperscript{2309} Important Words:

- لم ترقب قول (I perceived that which they did not perceive) mean, "My mental perception was clearer than that of the Israelites". The Sāmirī means to say that he had followed Moses and had accepted his teachings intelligently and not blindly like them and that his object in doing so was that he should become the leader of his people. So when the proper occasion arrived and Moses went to the Mount, he threw away the cloak of expediency and discarded what little of his teachings he had accepted and that was what his mind suggested to him.
98. Moses said, “Go away. It shall be thine to say throughout thy life, ‘Touch me not’; and there is a promise of punishment for thee which shall not fail to be fulfilled about thee. Now look at thy god of which thou hast become a devoted worshipper. We will certainly burn it and then We will scatter it away into the sea.”

99. Your God is only Allah, beside Whom there is no god. He embraces all things in His knowledge.

100. Thus do We relate to thee the tidings of what has happened before. And We have given thee from Us a Reminder.

2310. **Important Words:**

نَسَفَ (We will scatter it) is derived from نَسَفْتُ. They say نَفَّذَ الْبَيْتَ, i.e. he destroyed or uprooted the building from its foundation. نَفَّذَ الْجَبَال means, He broke the mountains into pieces. نَسَفَ الرَّجْلِ الْمُبِين means, the wind uprooted or eradicated the thing and scattered it away (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

The words “touch me not” may signify one of the following: (a) that Sāmirī was punished with a rigorous social boycott for having misled the Israelites into calf-worship; (b) that he was afflicted with some contagious skin disease so that people avoided contact with him; or (c) that he suffered from hypochondriasis and consequently shunned the company of men.

The mentioning together of the cow and the river is significant because generally the nations that worship the cow are found to worship rivers also.

2311. **Commentary:**

The verse embodies a prophecy that the Holy Prophet will have to face conditions and circumstances similar to those which Moses had confronted. No other Israelite Prophet had so many points of resemblance with the Holy Prophet as Moses had. Moses had Aaron, his brother, as his assistant in the discharge of his duties. The Holy Prophet had his cousin ‘Alī whom he likened to Aaron when he left him behind on the occasion of the expedition to Tabūk. Aaron was accused of having made for the Israelites a calf for worship and ‘Alī was accused of being an accomplice in the murder of ‘Uthmān. The Holy Prophet also had a Sāmirī in the person of the Jew, ‘Abdullah bin Sābā, who outwardly became a Muslim and stirred up revolt against the third Caliph, ‘Uthmān, which culminated in the latter’s assassination and in an internecine split in Islam which unfortunately has since then shown no sign of abating or healing.
101. Whosoever turns away from it will surely bear a heavy burden on the Day of Resurrection.\textsuperscript{2311A}

102. Abiding thereunder, and evil will the burden be to them on the Day of Resurrection.\textsuperscript{2311B}

103. The day when the trumpet will be blown. And on that day We shall gather the sinful together, blue-eyed.\textsuperscript{2312}

104. They will talk to one another in a low tone saying, ‘You tarried only ten days’.\textsuperscript{2313}

\textsuperscript{2311A} Commentary:

The words \textit{يوم القيامة} (Day of Resurrection) have been used in the Qur'an and the Hadith in three senses: (a) the day of the death of a person as in the saying of the Holy Prophet \textit{وَقَدْ قَامَتْ يَتَابِعَة}, i.e. he who dies, the day of his resurrection indeed has come (Bih\textit{\textae}r, vol. 3, p. 183); (b) the time of the decline, downfall and death of a nation; (c) the day when all mankind will be raised from their graves and made to stand before God’s great Judgment Seat to render an account of their deeds. In the present verse the words “the Day of Resurrection” seem to have been used in the first sense.

\textsuperscript{2311B} Commentary:

In this verse the words \textit{يوم القيامة} have been metaphorically used in the second sense \textit{i.e.} in this very life a day of resurrection comes to a people or group of peoples.

\textsuperscript{2312} Important Words:

\textit{زرقة} (blue-eyed) is the plural of \textit{زرق} and is derived from \textit{زرق} which means, (1) he was blue-eyed or grey-eyed or of a greenish hue in the eye; (2) he was or became blind. 

\textit{أزرقت أو أزرقت} (ten days) here signifies ten centuries. The reference is to the ten centuries after the Hijra during which the European nations remained in a state of inactivity and dormancy. It was in the beginning of the 17th century, exactly one thousand years after the Holy Prophet began to preach his mission in the beginning of the 7th century A.D., that the nations of Europe came out of their hibernation and began to spread over the world and conquer it.

See also 18:20.
105. We know best what they will say—when the one possessing the best way of life among them will say, 'You have tarried only a day.'

6 106. And they ask thee concerning the mountains. Say, 'My Lord will break them into pieces and scatter them as dust. And He will leave them as a barren level plain,'

107. 'And He will leave them as a barren level plain,'

*Commentary*:

(a day) here signifies one thousand years referred to in 22:48 where it is said: *verily, a day with thy Lord is as a thousand years of what you reckon.* This (a day) corresponds to (ten days) of the preceding verse, i.e. ten centuries or a thousand years.

(also means time absolutely. In this sense of the word the disbelievers, when they are seized with Divine punishment, are depicted as saying that the time of their prosperity and progress was but a day i.e. very short. In fact the period of ease and comfort, however long, looks very short when misfortunes and miseries overtake a person. So this word may have been used here in the sense of “a short time.”

*Important Words*:

(1) chief of a tribe or community; (2) a learned man who towers above those around him; (3) a niggard; (4) a great hardship or calamity. See also 13:32.

The reference in the word (mountains) here is to the powerful Christian nations of the West. The prophecy contained in this verse is that these great powerful nations will be scattered as dust. The decline of the West has already begun. The last two World Wars have considerably weakened the hold of the West over the East and Eastern nations are gradually coming into their own. This decline of the West is too patent to be overlooked and Western political thinkers themselves realize and admit it. The reader is referred to Spengler’s “Decline of the West”, and Toynbee’s “A Study of History”. See also 18:8, 9.

(2) (level plain) is derived from which means, he desisted, recoiled or drew back; he inclined to one side while walking. (level plain) means, an even place; plain or level land that produces nothing; plain or soft land, low and free from mountain and herbage (Aqrab & Lane).

(level plain) is derived from which means, he placed or stationed in a row. (level plain) means, a level or an even tract of land or ground. (level plain) signifies, a smooth and level or even land or a waterless desert (Lane).

*Commentary*:

The reference in the verse seems to be to the complete destruction of the material power and resources of the Western nations. See also 18:8, 9.
108. 'Wherein thou wilt see no depression, or elevation.'

109. On that day they will follow the Caller whose teaching is without crookedness; and all voices shall be hushed before the Gracious God and thou shalt not hear but a subdued sound of footsteps.

110. On that day an intercession shall not avail any person save him in whose case the Gracious God grants permission and with whose word of faith He is pleased.

2317. **Important Words:**

- **أَمْتَ (elevation):** is infinitive noun from **أَمْتَا (amata).** أَمِنَّهُ means, he measured it; he betook himself to it. أَمْتَ (amtun) means, a measure of distance; doubt; curvity or crookedness or unevenness; ruggedness in one place and smoothness in another; one part being high or more prominent than another; an elevated place; a hillock, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

- **Commentary:**
  The allusion seems to be to the rise of Socialism and Democracy in our own time when great and powerful empires were to be swept away and there was to be a general levelling up of the social and economic conditions of different sections of human society. This process has already begun.

2318. **Important Words:**

- **هَمْسٌ (subdued sound):** is derived from **هَمْسُ الصوت (hamasa).** They say حَمْسُ الصوت i.e. he whispered in a subdued tone. حَمْسُ الطَّمَاهُ means, he chewed the food while his mouth was shut. حَمْسُ إلى مَذْهِبٍ means, he narrated to me his story in a low voice. حَمْسُ بالقَدْمٍ means, he walked stealthily. حَمْسٌ means, low or subdued voice; or subdued sound of footsteps. حَمْسَتِهِ أُخْذَاهَا عُمْساً means, I seized him with a terrible seizure (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

- الداعِ (the Caller) may refer to the Holy Prophet or his representative or Khalifa. The verse also alludes to the decline and ultimate destruction of the material power of the West and to the rise and ascendancy of Islam through a great Muslim Caller i.e. the Promised Messiah.

2319. **Commentary:**

The words “in whose case the Gracious God grants permission” may apply to both the intercessor and the person for whom intercession is made.

The expression “and with whose word of faith He is pleased” refers to Muslims. Elsewhere the Qur'an says about the true followers of Islam: “Allah is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him” (58 : 23). The verse under comment means to say that at that time Islam will be in the ascendancy and all progress and prosperity will fall to the lot of its followers. Allah will be well pleased with them and they will be well pleased with Him.
111. "He knows all that is before them and all that is behind them, but they cannot compass it with their knowledge."

112. And all faces shall humble themselves before the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining God. And he shall indeed perish who bears the burden of iniquity.

113. But he who does good works, being a believer, will fear neither injustice nor loss.

114. And thus have We sent it down—the Qur'an in Arabic—and We have explained therein every kind of warning, that they may fear God or that it may arouse Divine remembrance in them.


2320. Commentary:
The allusion in the verse seems to be to the great material achievements of the Western people. The words “all that is behind them” refer to the great accomplishments that they will already have made in the past and the words “that is before them” refer to the great achievements they will aspire to make in the future.

2321. Commentary:
The theme of the preceding verses regarding destruction of the power of the great and powerful Western nations and their abasement continues in this verse. The verse may also signify that these great nations will humble themselves before God—they will humbly accept God’s true religion—Islam.

2322. Important Words:

- حضورٌ (loss) is infinitive noun from حضر (haḍāma). حضر الشيء means, he broke the thing.
- حضورٌ فاقدًا means, he wronged him and was unjust to him.
- حضر means, wrong; loss of one’s right (Aqrab).

2322A. Commentary:
The verse purports to say that if the Western nations wish to escape the Divine punishment which they have incurred by their evil deeds, and which is in store for them; they can do so by accepting the Message of Islam and by following the Holy Prophet.
115. *Exalted then is Allah, the True King! And be not impatient for the Qur'an ere its revelation is completed unto thee, but only say, 'O my Lord, increase me in knowledge.'*

116. And verily, We had made a covenant with Adam beforehand, but he forgot, and We found in him no determination to disobey.

117. And when We said to the angels, ‘Submit to Adam’, and they all submitted. But Iblis did not. He refused to submit.

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2323. **Commentary:**

The words *O my Lord, increase me in knowledge* show the great importance that the Qur'an attaches to the acquirement of knowledge. Even the Holy Prophet to whom was vouchsafed knowledge about the generations that have passed away and about those that are yet to be born (أو تبث عام الأولين وألآخرين), is taught to pray that his knowledge may be increased. He is further reported to have said, “Seek knowledge though it may be found in a country as far away as China” (Ṣaghir vol. 1). Elsewhere in the Qur'an knowledge has been styled as “God’s great grace” (2 : 270 & 4 : 114).

The verse also implies that all knowledge is of two kinds: (a) that which is vouchsafed to man through revelation and which has found its perfect manifestation in the Qur'an which is the last and most perfect Divine teaching; (b) that which man acquires by his own effort and labour. It is this second kind of knowledge for the acquisition of which man is enjoined in the present verse to make ceaseless effort.

The verse also implies that the Qur'an will come to be increasingly read and followed.

2324. **Important Words:**

عهدنا (We had made a covenant), عهد means, he promised. عهد الأمر means, he knew the affair. عهد نافذ وعهد means, he guarded and fulfilled his promise. عهد النفلان means, he enjoined upon him or commanded him and made it a condition for him (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

The verse shows that Adam’s lapse was only an error of judgment on his part. It was quite inadvertent and involuntary and not at all intentional or deliberate. To err is human and man, however spiritually exalted he might be, is prone to forgetfulness and consequently is sometimes liable to falter.

2325. **Commentary:**

Who was this Adam who is mentioned in this verse and when and where he lived, is a
pertinent question. Adam, who lived about 6000 years ago is popularly believed to be the first man created by God upon this earth. This view is neither substantiated and proved by facts of history nor supported by the Qur'an. The truth is that the world has passed through different cycles of creation and civilization, and Adam, the progenitor of the present human race, was only the first link in the present cycle and not the very first man in God's creation. There must have lived many Adams before him. Modern science has computed one million years as the age of human race. (Enc. Brit. 14th Edit., p. 767). It is not claimed that the race which lived before Adam was entirely swept away before he was born. Most probably there had remained a small remnant of the old race and Adam was one of them. But he himself became the progenitor of a new race and the precursor of a new civilization. It is difficult to say whether the original inhabitants of America, Australia, etc. are the progeny of this last Adam, or some other Adam who had gone before him. Iraq is considered by archaeologists to be the place where Adam lived. See also 2 : 31 and 7 : 12.

The expression اسجدوا لآدم (submit to Adam) does not mean, "prostrate before Adam", because prostration before anything or being except God is, according to the Qur'an, a heinous sin and therefore completely forbidden (41 : 38). So prostration before Adam by way of worship being opposed to the express teaching of the Qur'an, a command to that effect could never have proceeded from God. The expression therefore has evidently been used here in the sense of "obey Adam" or "submit to Adam" i. e. "assist him in the discharge of his great duties." This is a Divine command which is given to the angels and through them to all men whenever a Messenger of God appears in the world. A reference to this fact is to be found in a famous saying of the Holy Prophet. He is reported to have said: "When God loves a person He communicates this fact to the Arch-angel Gabriel who also begins to love him and proclaims in the Heavens that God loves a certain person. Upon this all the angels in Heaven also begin to love him. The process continues till the person comes to be loved by all good and righteous men on earth" (Bukhari, kitab bad'al-Khalq). Thus the command to the angels to submit to Adam applied to Iblis also. Elsewhere it is expressly stated in the Qur'an (7 : 13) that Iblis was also commanded to submit to Adam. So there is no point in the objection that as only the angels were commanded to submit, Iblis could not have been justifiably called to account for not carrying out this command.

أبي (he refused). Iblis refused to obey Adam because (1) he considered the teaching of Adam to be against his interests; (2) he looked upon Adam as of lower status to himself; (3) he regarded the ideals of Adam as incapable of being achieved and because also (4) he led a life of deceit and falsehood. See also 2 : 35, 36, 37.
118. Then We said, 'O Adam, this is an enemy to thee, and to thy wife; so let him not drive you both out of the garden, lest thou come to grief.'

119. 'It is provided for thee that thou wilt not hunger therein, nor wilt thou be naked.

120. 'And that thou wilt not thirst therein, nor wilt thou be exposed to the sun.'

**2326. Commentary:**

الجنة (the garden) does not refer to Heaven or Paradise but only to the garden-like place where Adam was first made to live. The word cannot refer to Heaven; first, because it was on the earth that Adam was made to live, as the words: “I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth” (2 : 31) indicate; and secondly, because Heaven is a place from where no one having once entered it can ever be expelled (15 : 49), whereas Adam was compelled to leave the الجنة, referred to in this verse. Recent archaeological researches show that the place where Adam was made to dwell was the garden of Eden which lay near Babylon in Iraq, and which was given this name on account of the great fertility of its soil (Enc. Brit. under “Ur”). See also 2 : 35, 36.

The Bible also lends support to this view. It says: “And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom He had formed” (Gen. 2 : 8).

The verse means to warn Adam that if he succumbed to the blandishments held out to him by Iblīs and accepted his advice, he would become deprived of the life of bliss, comfort and spiritual contentment which he had formerly enjoyed.

**2327. Commentary:**

See next verse.

**2328. Commentary:**

The reference in this and the preceding verse seems to be to the amenities and comforts which are the concomitants of civilized life. These two verses point to the fact that to provide food, clothing and housing to its people which are their primary necessities of life is the first duty of a civilized government and that a society can only be called civilized when all its members are provided with these necessities. Mankind will continue to suffer from social upheavals and the moral tone of human society will never really improve unless economic inequalities of such a serious nature that some sections of society roll in wealth and others die of starvation, are done away with. Adam is told in these verses that he will live in a place where amenities and necessities of life will be adequately available to all its inhabitants. This state of affairs has been described elsewhere in the Qur’an in the words, And eat therefrom plentifully wherever you will (2 : 36). The verse under comment also shows that with Adam began a new social order and that he laid the foundations of a kingdom which ushered in the era of social progress of man.
121. But "Satan whispered evil suggestions to him. He said, 'O Adam, shall I lead thee to the tree of eternity, and to a kingdom that never decays?'”

2329. **Important Words:**

شیطان (Satan) is either derived from شعل (Shaitan) or شیطان (Shaitaan) and means, (1) the being who is not only himself far from truth but also turns others away from it; and (2) the being who burns with hate and anger and is lost (Aqrab & Mufradat). See also 2:15.

**Commentary:**

In common usage شیطان (Satan) signifies (1) the evil spirit i.e. Satan; (2) anybody who greatly transgresses proper limits and is excessively proud and rebellious; (3) any evil propensity or inclination. شیطان (Satan) is a very general term and is of much wider significance than ابليس (Iblis), for whereas Iblis is the name given to the Evil Spirit who belonged to the Jinn and refused to serve Adam, thereafter becoming the leader of the forces of evil, شیطان is any evil or harmful being or thing, whether a spirit or a human being or an animal or a disease, etc. The Qur'an mentions شیطان and ابليس side by side wherever the story of Adam is given, but everywhere a distinction is observed between the two. Wherever the Qur'an speaks of the being who, unlike the angels, refused to serve Adam, it invariably mentions the name Iblis and wherever it speaks of the being who beguiled Adam and became the means of his being turned out of جنة (garden) it mentions the name "Satan.”

This distinction, which is most significant and which has been maintained throughout the Qur'an, shows that Iblis and Satan are two aspects of the same being or person. When he refuses to believe in Adam and to submit to him, he is called Iblis but when he translates his refusal into action and opposes him and puts all sorts of obstacles in his way and creates difficulties for him, he is called Satan. It may further be added that شیطان mentioned in connection with Adam was one of his own people.

As for شجرة الخلد (the tree of eternity), the Qur'an elsewhere makes mention of two شجرة طيبة (good tree) and شجرة شرارة (evil tree). See 14:25 & 27. In the Qur'an pure things are likened to the former and impure things to the latter. In view of this explanation it appears that Adam was enjoined to avoid quarrels and useless wranglings which are calculated to create discord and disharmony in a family, otherwise there exists in the world no such tree as "tree of eternity" the eating of whose fruit makes a man naked or provides him with the knowledge of good and evil. The "tree" as mentioned in the present verse and elsewhere in the Qur'an was a certain family or tribe from which Adam was bidden to keep aloof because its members were his enemies.
122. Then they both ate thereof, so that their shame became manifest to them, and they began to cover themselves with the leaves of the garden. And Adam observed not the commandment of his Lord, so his life became miserable. 2330

2330. Important Words:

سوأة (shame) is the plural of سوء which is derived from ساء which means, it was or became evil, foul or abominable. سوء means, any evil, foul or abominable saying or action or habit or practice; any saying or action of which one is ashamed when it appears and which one would like to hide; any disgracing action or thing; the external portion of organs of generation of a man or of a woman; corpse or dead body; nakedness (Lane & Aqrab). See also 7: 21.

ورق (leaves) is both singular and plural and is substantive noun from the verb وَرَقَ (waraqa). They say وَرَقَ the tree put forth leaves. وَرَقَ الشجر means, the man became rich. طَبَّ الورق means, thou hast a good and righteous progeny. ورق means, leaves, foliage; sheet of paper; the prime and freshness of a thing; the young lads of a community. It also signifies the beauty of the things of this world and their resplendence (Lane & Aqrab). See also 7: 23.

غوى (his life became miserable) means, he erred; he deviated from the right way; he acted ignorantly; he failed in his object and was disappointed; he was lost; his life became unpleasant (Aqrab, Lane & Mufradat).

Commentary:

As a result of acceptance by Adam of Satan's suggestion a split occurred among his people which caused him much distress and mental anguish.
123. Then his Lord chose him for His grace, and "turned to him with mercy and guided him." 2331

124. He said, "Go forth, both of you, from here, some of you being enemies of others. And if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoso will follow My guidance, will not go astray, nor will he come to grief." 2332

125. 'But whosoever will turn away from My Reminder, his will be a strait life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him up blind'. 2333

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The words, "Then his Lord chose him," also indicate that Adam's act of disobedience was inadvertent and unconscious, for an act of deliberate disobedience could not have been followed by the great honour of his being selected by God for His favour. The verse means to say that when Adam realized his mistake and repented of it and sought God's forgiveness, God took pity on him, chose him for His grace, and revealed to him the right plan by employing which he could successfully foil and defeat Satan's machinations.

2331. **Commentary:**

The words, "Then his Lord chose him," also indicate that Adam's act of disobedience was inadvertent and unconscious, for an act of deliberate disobedience could not have been followed by the great honour of his being selected by God for His favour. The verse means to say that when Adam realized his mistake and repented of it and sought God's forgiveness, God took pity on him, chose him for His grace, and revealed to him the right plan by employing which he could successfully foil and defeat Satan's machinations.

2332. **Commentary:**

The words "both of you", signify two groups of people i.e. the followers of Adam and the followers of Satan. The words, "the leaves of the garden", which means the young lads or pious and righteous members of the community, according to the Bible he used the fig leaves which in the language of visions also signify righteous and pious people. So there is no contradiction or incongruity between the Quranic and the Biblical statements in this respect.

That Adam’s disobedience was not deliberate but casual and accidental is evident from v. 116 above.

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2333. **Commentary:**

The verse means to say that a person who consigns God to oblivion in this life and leads
126. He will say, ‘My Lord, why hast Thou raised me up blind, while I possessed sight before?’

127. God will say, ‘Thus it was to be; Our Signs came to thee and thou didst disregard them and in like manner wilt thou be disregarded this day’.  

128. And thus do We recompense him who is extravagant and believes not in the Signs of his Lord; and the punishment of the Hereafter is surely severer and more lasting.

2334. Commentary:

In answer to the disbeliever’s protestation as to why he was raised up blind while he was possessed of sight in the former life, God would say that he had become spiritually blind in that world on account of his having led a life of disbelief and sin, and as his soul was to serve as a body for another much more spiritually developed soul in the after life, therefore he was born blind in the Hereafter.

The verse possesses another interpretation. As a disbeliever does not develop in him Divine attributes and remains a stranger to them, so when on the Day of Resurrection those attributes will be manifested in all their splendour and glory, he being stranger to them will not be able to recognize them and thus will stand like a blind man, having had no recollection or remembrance of them.

2334A. Commentary:

The verse presents some difficulty. In the preceding three verses we are told that a disbeliever will be raised up blind in the Hereafter as a punishment for having turned a blind eye to God’s attributes and in this verse it is stated that the punishment of the Hereafter is surely severer and more lasting, which means that there will be
129. Does it not afford guidance to them "how many generations We destroyed before them, in whose dwellings they now walk. Therein verily are Signs for those who are endowed with reason."\textsuperscript{2335}

8 130. And \textsuperscript{b}had it not been for a word already gone forth from thy Lord, and a term \textit{already} fixed, \textit{immediate} punishment would have been inevitable.\textsuperscript{2336}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{a} 17 : 18; 36 : 32.
\item \textsuperscript{b} 8 : 69; 10 : 20.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}

another punishment severer and more lasting than the former punishment. What are these two punishments of the Hereafter? This difficulty is solved by vv. 2 : 167 and 6 : 95 wherein it is stated that when disbelievers will be disowned by their false gods and will be left alone, the falsity of their beliefs will dawn on them and consequently their remorse and frustration will be bitter in the extreme. That bitter realization will constitute the first punishment and the torment of Hell will form the second and severer punishment.

2335. Commentary:

The verse embodies a perpetual warning for the deniers of Divine Messengers that they will ultimately come to grief. It is an invariable and immutable Divine law that rejection of Divine teaching lands the rejectors in utter ruin and destruction.

2336. Important Words:

- لزامة (inevitable) is derived from لزوم. They say لزوم \textit{i.e.} it necessarily or inseparably belonged to it, clove or adhered to him or it.
- لزوم الامر means, the affair became incumbent upon him. لزومه شبا means, he obliged him to do or endure a thing or He (God) decreed or ordained to him a thing; he made a thing cleave to him or he made him to cleave to a thing.
- لزامة means, death; reckoning; such as cleaves fast; a thing inseparable; decision in a case (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The reference in the words, a word already gone forth, is to the Divine declaration contained in the verse "My mercy encompasses all things" (7 : 157) \textit{i.e.} God in His infallible wisdom has decreed that His attribute of mercy will continue to transcend all His other attributes. Or the reference may be to the verse “And Allah would not punish them while thou wast amongst them” (8 : 34). In this case the words “a term already fixed” refer to the battle of Badr.
131. Bear patiently then what they say, and glorify thy Lord with His praise before the rising of the sun and before its setting; and glorify Him in the hours of the night and at the sides of the day, that thou mayest find true happiness.\(^{2337}\)

132. And strain not thine eyes after what We have bestowed on some classes of them to enjoy for a short time—the splendour of the present world—that We may try them thereby. And the provision of thy Lord is better and more lasting.\(^{2338}\)

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2337. Important Words:

\(\text{i} \text{nyun}\) (hours) is the plural of \(\text{i} \text{nyun}\) (inyun) and \(\text{in} \) (inan) and \(\text{a} \) (anyun). All these are derived from \(\text{a} \) (ana) which means, its time came; it was or became or drew near; it attained to its full state. \(\text{i} \text{nyun}\) means, an hour or a short portion of time, or an indefinite time; a time of the night; any hour of the night. \(\text{i} \text{nyun}\) means, a time of the night passed (Lane & Aqrab).

2338. Important Words:

\(\text{zehra}\) (splendour) is noun-infinitive from \(\text{zehra}\) which means, it shone or glistened; it gave light or shone brightly; it was clear in colour; he was or became beautiful. \(\text{zehra}\) means, the beauty and splendour of the present world or life; the abundance of its goods or comforts; its goods, finery or beauty and splendour (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Some Commentators of the Qur'an are of the view that by the glorification of God at the hours mentioned in the verse are meant the hours of the five daily Prayers; the words “before the rising of the sun” signifying the morning Prayer; and the words “before its setting” the late afternoon (\('\text{Asr}\) ) Prayer; and the expression “and glorify Him in the hours of the night” signifying the evening (\(\text{Maghrib}\)) and night Prayer (\(\text{Ishā}\)), while the words “at the sides of the day” signifying afternoon (\(\text{Zuhr}\) ) Prayer. But whatever the words of the verse may mean it is quite clear that in order to obtain success in life and satisfaction of the mind it is very essential to remember God and glorify Him. God’s constant remembrance is specifically suited to illumine the soul and to bring about peace of mind.

All international jealousies and rivalries which result in wars and consequently in much human misery and bloodshed are the result, direct or indirect, of a mad hunger for material wealth and physical comforts. Muslims are warned not to cast covetous looks on the wealth and riches of other people and not to think that the acceptance of Islam by the wealthy people only
133. And enjoin Prayer on thy people, and be constant therein. We ask thee not for provision; it is We that provide for thee. And the end is for righteousness.\(^{2339}\)

134. And they say, 'Why does he not bring us a Sign from his Lord?' Has there not come to them the clear evidence of what is contained in the former Books?\(^{2340}\)

135. And if We had destroyed them with a punishment before the coming of this Messenger, they would have surely said, 'Our Lord, wherefore didst Thou not send to us a Messenger that we might have followed Thy commandments before we were humbled and disgraced?'

\(^a\) 19:56; 33:34. \(^b\) 28:48.

will add to its glory and power and will accelerate its progress. On the contrary, material wealth will prove a source of great affliction and distress for nations hankering after it. In fact mad competition for the acquisition of wealth has brought all the misery to the world. Rivalries among Western nations know no end and they have already caused two highly destructive wars and there is no knowing when humanity is to be thrown into the vortex of a third war, far more destructive than its two predecessors.

2339. Commentary:

The verse draws attention to the fact that observance of Prayers is the key to all success in life and to moral and spiritual food. Prayer, in fact, is the true and real spiritual favour that God has bestowed upon man, if only he knew it.

2340. Important Words:

\(\text{آیة}\) here means a great Sign or the Sign of punishment. See also 2:130 & 19:11.

Commentary:

The words, Has there not come to them clear evidence of what is contained in the former Books, may mean: (1) is not the argument sufficient to convince them that in the times of former Prophets also disbelievers continued to demand Signs in spite of many Signs having been shown to them and that this fact is recorded in the former Scriptures; (2) does not the fact constitute a sufficient guide to them that the prophecies made in the former Scriptures about the advent of a great Prophet are being fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet; and (3) is not the fact sufficient to convince them that similar Signs have been shown to them as were shown in the times of the former Prophets?
136. Say, 'Each one is waiting; wait ye, therefore, and you will know who are the people of the right path and who follow true guidance.'

2341. Commentary:

The verse means to say that believers are waiting, and disbelievers should also wait, and time itself will show as to who achieves success and who meets with failure and comes to grief.
CHAPTER 21

AL-ANBIYĀ’

(Revealed before Hijra)

**Time of Revelation**

It can be stated without fear of contradiction that this is a Meccan Sūra, having been revealed very early in the Holy Prophet’s ministry. According to Imam Sayuti only the 7th verse belongs to the Medinita period (Itqān). Wherry, however, says that the Sūra was revealed in the 9th year of the Call. He bases his assumption on the fact that the Sūra dwells at some length upon the opposition and hostility of disbelievers to the cause of truth which according to him developed and stiffened towards the later years of the Meccan life. Wherry’s inference is not based on facts. This is like saying that because there is a mention in Sūra Al-Rahmān of the joining together of the Mediterranean and the Red Seas and of the plying of big steamships in these two seas and because these events took place towards the later half of the 19th century, therefore, Sūra Al-Rahmān was revealed in that century.

The testimony of the Companions of the Holy Prophet before whose very eyes this Sūra was revealed affords most dependable evidence about the time of its revelation. Several of them, ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd being most prominent among them, have testified to its having been revealed before the 5th year of the Call. ‘Abdullah has stated that Sūrās Kahf, Maryam, Tāhā and Anbiyā’ were revealed very early in the Prophet’s ministry and that he had learned them by heart (Bukhārī). As ‘Abdullah was a very distinguished and prominent Muslim and an early convert to the new Faith, his testimony must necessarily carry great weight and these Sūrās must be taken to have been revealed very early.

Moreover, some parts of Sūra Maryam were recited before the Negus in the first few days of the emigration to Abyssinia and as that emigration admittedly took place in the beginning of the 5th year of the Call, therefore the above-mentioned Sūrās i.e. Kahf, Maryam and Tāhā along with the present Sūra, must have been revealed before that time. So the fact is established beyond any reasonable doubt that this Sūra was revealed before the 5th year of the Call and that Wherry’s assertion possesses no foundation in fact. But why in the face of historical evidence of such unimpeachable integrity he should have persuaded himself to hold such an untenable view, passes our comprehension. It evidently seems to be the result of blind prejudice or at best of crass ignorance.

**Arrangement of the Sūra**

In the existing arrangement of the Qur’ān this Sūra finds a place after Tāhā. Its immediate connection with Tāhā consists in the fact that towards the end of that Sūra it was stated that Divine punishment would overtake disbelievers at its appointed time, i.e. when the truth of Islam would
have been brought home to them and they would have persisted in rejecting it and persecuting the Holy Prophet and his followers. The Prophet was enjoined to bear the opposition and persecution of disbelievers patiently and with fortitude. In continuation of this subject the present Sūra opens with a warning to disbelievers that the time of their punishment has already arrived and that they will now have to render an account of their actions, but they still continue to wander in the wilderness of heedlessness and disbelief. Thus the subject that disbelievers will suffer punishment for rejection of truth, to which reference was made towards the end of the preceding Sūra, has been carried forward in the present Sūra.

This is the immediate connection of this Sūra with Ṭāhā. But it is the subject-matter as a whole which, in fact, constitutes the real connecting link between the present Sūra and some of its predecessors. In Sūra Maryam some false Christian doctrines were repudiated and rebutted, viz., that Jesus possessed Divine attributes, that he had abrogated the Law and had declared it to be a curse and that salvation depended not on good works but upon Atonement. These false beliefs had led Christians astray. In Sūra Ṭāhā a detailed account of Moses was given in order to refute these false doctrines. The Christians were told that Christianity was but a link in the Mosaic Dispensation, and Moses's circumstances constituted a flat repudiation of their doctrines. His whole pride lay in the fact that he was a Law-giving Prophet. If the Law was a curse, then, according to Christian belief, Moses, instead of having been made an object of respect and pride, should have been condemned and denounced. After this, Sūra Ṭāhā gave a brief account of the lapse suffered by Adam and thus traced the Christian theory of the original sin to its very root and then repudiated and rebutted it. It was made clear in that Sūra that sin formed no part of the heritage of man and that he is punished only for his own trespasses and offences which he should try to get rid of. Next, it was stated that if it was not possible for man to get rid of sin, then the very purpose of Divine punishment is defeated and God's Prophets and His Messengers, instead of holding out warnings, should have given him the comforting message that being a mere creature of circumstances and possessing no volition or discretion he will not be called to account for his actions.

The same subject has been enlarged and expanded in the present Sūra and the lesson is driven home that the enemies not of one Prophet but those of all Messengers of God, from Adam to Jesus and from Jesus up to the Holy Prophet Muhammed, were punished for their wicked deeds and the righteous rewarded for their good actions. If man had inherited sin and if he could not shed it, then there was no sense or justification in punishing the sinners and rewarding the righteous. So the dogma of inherited sin is a baseless invention.

Summary of Subject-Matter

The Sūra opens with a warning to disbelievers that Divine punishment is fast approaching but they are deluding themselves into a false sense of security. There never came into the world a Divine Messenger who was not jeered and scoffed at. But out of sympathy with and solicitude for the spiritual well-being of their peoples the Prophets of God invited them to accept truth and be saved. If sin formed a part of man's heritage, then of what avail was this invitation? The Sūra
then proceeds to cite some objections of disbelievers, one hackneyed and common-place among them being that the Holy Prophet is an ordinary human being. Another is that his talk is alluring and enticing. A third one is that he sees confused dreams and calls them Divine revelations even goes so far as to forge lies, and dresses glib lies into elegant poetry and thus seeks to deceive people, while the fourth objection is that if he is a Messenger of God, he should, like the Prophets of yore, bring down Divine punishment upon them. To all these objections the Qur’ān return the one very effective answer that the Holy Prophet is no novelty among Divine Messengers. Like them he is but a man and like them he will succeed and like their enemies his enemies will come to grief.

After this disbelievers are asked to consider, what new burden the Qur’ān imposes upon them that they are bent upon rejecting its Message. Its primary object is to exalt and raise them to moral eminence. As it is God’s own revealed Word, its rejectors will not escape punishment. The Surā then goes on to ask unbelievers whether they have ever given the idea their serious consideration that an All-Knowing and Wise God could not have created the universe without a great and grim purpose, and that its creation was intended to serve a noble and sublime object and that those who stand in the way of its fulfilment are bound to fail.

Next, the Surā deals with the all-important subject of the Unity and Oneness of God which forms the basic and most fundamental belief of all religions. When one uniform law, the Qur’ān says again and again, pervades and governs the whole universe, how can the polytheists justify Shirk (belief in the plurality of gods)? Belief in the plurality of gods implies disagreement on their part in regard to the management and control of the universe and as evidently there exists no such disagreement, and on the contrary there is perfect order in it, there should be only one Creator and Controller of the whole universe. And why should God have a son?—the Qur’ān further asks, and proceeds to reply that a son is needed only when the father is likely to fall victim to decay or death or when he cannot perform his work single-handed and unassisted. But all such notions about God are blasphemous and unfounded and those whom the polytheists associate with God as partners are themselves subject to Divine laws.

After this the Surā points to another Divine law which is to the effect that when darkness enshrouds the entire face of the earth and the world suffers from a dearth of righteous men, God opens the gates of His mercy upon mankind and Heavenly Water, in the form of Divine revelation, descends upon earth and gives new life to a world steeped in sin and iniquity. The phenomenon of the alternation of light and darkness in the spiritual realm corresponds to a similar phenomenon in the physical world where day and night follow each other. Sometimes it is the sun that brightens and gives warmth to the world, at another time it is the moon that shines at night. Similarly, at one time corruption and moral turpitude reign supreme in the world, at another it is righteousness that predominates. Let not this alternating predominance of spiritual darkness and light in the world delude one into the belief that the creation of the universe has failed in its object. On the contrary, this fact rather points to a striking resemblance that exists between the physical and the spiritual worlds. Thus the presence of sin in the world does not justify the invention of the dogma of Atonement. This dogma, in fact, is the product of another equally false idea that the system
of prophethood has failed. The fact, however, is that the spiritual world has undergone no change after Jesus; neither has goodness increased nor has corruption declined. The Prophets of God come and go. All of them tasted death and so did Jesus and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and so the world goes on. As the setting of the sun causes no dislocation or derangement in the physical world, so does the death of a Prophet of God cause no disorder in the spiritual world. Every person, and for that matter every Prophet and Messenger of God, has a certain mission in life which he fulfils and then he goes the way of all flesh. The real chain that binds and sustains the entire universe is Almighty God Who is completely immune from death or decay.

Next, the Sūra drives home the argument that it is foolish on the part of disbelievers to reject the Holy Prophet on the plea that he is but an ordinary man. They do not try to understand this simple fact that it is not so much the status and position of the bearer of the Qur‘ān that matters. What really matters is that it is God Himself Who has sent him with His Message and Who can and will punish disbelievers in this life and even after death. But as He is slow to punish, the ignorant people fall a victim to false pride and heedlessness on that account. They are warned to read the writing on the wall and fear Divine punishment, as their repenting and making amends will prove of no avail when it actually overtook them.

In order to show that the cause of the Holy Prophet will prevail the Sūra cites the examples of some former Prophets. Moses, who was stated to be like him (Deut. 18:18) was one of them. The Jews accepted his Message and found salvation and became a great nation. If they needed no belief in Atonement for salvation, why should those to whom the Holy Prophet has addressed his Message need it when this Message is in every respect more comprehensive than were Moses’s teachings and has a much wider appeal and comprises all that was best and enduring in the teachings of all former Prophets? Another Prophet was the Patriarch Abraham. He was Jesus’s ancestor. He came before Moses. He also warned his people against setting up equals to God. God gave him spiritual light and bestowed upon him the inheritance of a country and he was blessed with a noble son like Isaac and a great grandson like Jacob and all of them were pious and righteous men. And before Abraham had come Noah who also had succeeded in his mission and his enemies also were destroyed. Then there was David, Jesus’s great progenitor. He, too, enjoyed a very high spiritual status. So did his son, the Prophet Solomon. All these great Prophets of God attained their high spiritual status and the pleasure of God without believing in Atonement. Similarly, Job suffered much in the cause of God and so did Ishmael and Idris and Dhu‘l-Kifl and the Prophet Dhu‘l-Nun who bore a close resemblance with Jesus. Then there was Zachariah and his son, the Prophet Yahyā. All these chosen servants of God like Jesus were models of noble and righteous conduct and like him they suffered great hardships and privations in the way of God. Then why of all these Prophets Jesus alone should be regarded as son of God and not they?

After the account of these Prophets mention is made of Jesus and his mother, Mary, who became widely known and highly respected. Their circumstances were in no way different from those of the noble Prophets of God mentioned above. Even the unusual birth of Jesus entitled
him to no special spiritual status. The birth of Yahyā had also taken place in very exceptional circumstances. If Jesus was born without the agency of a human father, Yahyā’s birth took place when his father had reached an extreme old age and his mother had become barren and was quite unfit to give birth to a child. Similarly, Jesus’s suffering in the cause of truth was no novel thing. Whereas he was only hung on the Cross but taken down alive, Yahyā suffered actual death for the sake of God. Then why should only Jesus’s death atone for the sins of mankind and not that of Yahyā?

Towards the end the Sūra points to the phenomenal rise and great material might and dazzling prosperity, progress and power of Gog and Magog—Christian nations of the West. When these nations, it proceeds to say, will have spread all over the world and have occupied every position of power and eminence, and when other nations of the world will have bowed down to them in submission and have paid homage to them, then will the promise about their ultimate destruction be fulfilled. Divine punishment will come down upon them so sudden and swift that they will be taken completely by surprise. All their handiworks, the source and cause of their pride, and all their pomp, glory and grandeur will be destroyed and reduced to ashes and dust.

The Sūra ends on the note that the Holy Prophet has been sent as a mercy of God that he may save mankind from the curse of Atonement and may open for the sinners the gates of redemption and Divine Mercy through repentance and Divine Grace and that he may proclaim Unity of God to the whole world and may warn disbelievers of the great punishment that is in store for them.