

Surah 16. An-Nahl

Asad: BEHOLD, God enjoins justice, and the doing of good, and generosity towards [one's] fellow-men;¹⁰⁸ and He forbids all that is shameful and all that runs counter to reason,¹⁰⁹ as well as envy; [and] He exhorts you [repeatedly] so that you might bear [all this] in mind.

Malik: Allah commands doing justice, doing good to others, and giving to near relatives, and He forbids indecency, wickedness, and rebellion: He admonishes you so that you may take heed.

Pickthall: Lo! Allah enjoineth justice and kindness, and giving to kinsfolk, and forbiddeth lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He exhorteth you in order that ye may take heed.

Yusuf Ali: Allah commands justice the doing of good and liberality to kith and kin and He forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you that ye may receive admonition.²¹²⁷

Transliteration: Inna Allāha yamuru bialAAadli waalih̄sani waeetai thee alqurba wayanha AAani alfahshai waalmunkari waalbaghyi yaAAi

Khattab:

Indeed, Allah commands justice, grace, as well as courtesy to close relatives. He forbids indecency, wickedness, and aggression. He instructs you so perhaps you will be mindful.

Author Comments

108 - Lit., "the giving to [one's] kinsfolk (dhu'l-qurba)". The latter term usually denotes "relatives", either by blood or by marriage; but since it occurs here in the context of a comprehensive ethical exhortation, it obviously alludes to man's "kinsfolk" in the widest sense of the term, namely, to his "fellow-men".

109 - The term al-munkar (rendered by me in other places as "that which is wrong") has here its original meaning of "that which the mind [or the moral sense] rejects", respectively "ought to reject". Zamakshari is more specific, and explains this term as signifying in the above context "that which [men's] intellects disown" or "declare to be untrue" (ma tunkiruhu al-'uql): in other words, all that runs counter to reason and good sense (which, obviously, must not be confused with that which is beyond man's comprehension). This eminently convincing explanation relates not merely to intellectually unacceptable propositions (in the abstract sense of the term) but also to grossly unreasonable and, therefore, reprehensible actions or attitudes and is, thus, fully in tune with the rational approach of the Qur'an to questions of ethics as well as with its insistence on reasonableness and moderation in man's behaviour. Hence my rendering of al-munkar, in this and in similar instances, as "all that runs counter to reason".

2127 - Justice is a comprehensive term, and may include all the virtues of cold philosophy. But religion asks for something warmer and more human, the doing of good deeds even where perhaps they are not strictly demanded by justice, such as returning good for ill, or obliging those who in worldly language "have no claim" on you; and of course a fortiori the fulfilling of the claims of those whose claims are recognised in social life. Similarly the opposites are to be avoided; everything that is recognised as shameful, and everything that is really unjust, and any inward rebellion against Allah's Law or our own conscience in its most sensitive form.

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