

Surah 2. Al-Baqara

2.1 Alif. Lam. Mim.¹

2.2 THIS DIVINE WRIT - let there be no doubt about it - is [meant to be] a guidance for all the God-conscious²

2.3 who believe in [the existence of] that which is beyond the reach of human perception,³ and are constant in prayer, and spend on others out of what We provide for them as sustenance;⁴

2.4 and who believe in that which has been bestowed from on high upon thee, [O Prophet,] as well as in that which was bestowed before thy time:⁵ for it is they who in their innermost are certain of the life to come!

2.5 It is they who follow the guidance [which comes] from their Sustainer; and it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state!

2.6 BEHOLD, as for those who are bent on denying the truth⁶ - it is all one to them whether thou warnest them or dost not warn them: they will not believe.

2.7 God has sealed their hearts and their hearing, and over their eyes is a veil;⁷ and awesome suffering awaits them.

2.8 And there are people who say, "We do believe in God and the Last Day," the while they do not [really] believe.

2.9 They would deceive God and those who have attained to faith - the while they deceive none but themselves, and perceive it not.

2.10 In their hearts is disease, and so God lets their disease increase; and grievous suffering awaits them because of their persistent lying.⁸

2.11 And when they are told, "Do not spread corruption on earth," they answer, "We are but improving things!"

2.12 Oh, verily, it is they, they who are spreading corruption - but they perceive it not!⁹

2.13 And when they are told, "Believe as other people believe," they answer, "Shall we believe as the weak-minded believe?" Oh, verily, it is they, they who are weak-minded - but they know it not!

2.14 And when they meet those who have attained to faith, they assert, "We believe [as you believe]"; but when they find themselves alone with their evil impulses,¹⁰ they say, "Verily, we are with you; we were only mocking!"

2.15 God will requite them for their mockery,¹¹ and will leave them for a while in their overweening arrogance, blindly stumbling to and fro:

2.16 [for] it is they who have taken error in exchange for guidance; and neither has their bargain brought them gain, nor have they found guidance [elsewhere].

2.17 Their parable is that of people who kindle a fire: but as soon as it has illumined all around them, God takes away their light and leaves them in utter darkness, wherein they cannot see:

2.18 deaf, dumb, blind - and they cannot turn back.

2.19 Or [the parable] of a violent cloudburst in the sky, with utter darkness, thunder and lightning: they put their fingers into their ears to keep out the peals of thunder, in terror of death; but God encompasses [with His might] all who deny the truth.

2.20 The lightning well-nigh takes away their sight; whenever it gives them light, they advance therein, and whenever darkness falls around them, they stand still. And if God so willed, He could indeed take away their hearing and their sight:¹² for, verily, God has the power to will anything.

2.21 O MANKIND! Worship your Sustainer, who has created you and those who lived before you, so that you might remain conscious of Him

2.22 who has made the earth a resting-place for you and the sky a canopy, and has sent down water from the sky and thereby brought forth fruits for your sustenance: do not, then, claim that there is any power that could rival God,¹³ when you know [that He is One].

2.23 And if you doubt any part of what We have bestowed from on high, step by step, upon Our servant [Muhammad],¹⁴ then produce a surah of similar merit, and call upon any other than God to bear witness for you¹⁵ - if what you say is true!

2.24 And if you cannot do it - and most certainly you cannot do it - then be conscious of the fire whose fuel is human beings and stones¹⁶ which awaits all who deny the truth!

2.25 But unto those who have attained to faith and do good works give the glad tiding that theirs shall be gardens through which running waters flow. Whenever they are granted fruits therefrom as their appointed sustenance, they will say, "It is this that in days of yore was granted to us as our sustenance!" - for they shall be given something that will recall that [past].¹⁷ And there shall they have spouses pure, and there shall they abide.

2.26 Behold, God does not disdain to propound a parable of a gnat, or of something [even] less than that.¹⁸ Now, as for those who have attained to faith, they know that it is the truth from their Sustainer - whereas those who are bent on denying the truth say, "What could God mean by this parable?" In this way does He cause many a one to go astray, just as He guides many a one aright: but none does He cause thereby to go astray save the iniquitous,

2.27 who break their bond with God after it has been established [in their nature],¹⁹ and cut asunder what God has bidden to be joined, and spread corruption on earth: these it is that shall be the losers.

2.28 How can you refuse to acknowledge God, seeing that you were lifeless and He gave you life, and that He will cause you to die and then will bring you again to life, whereupon unto Him you will be brought back?

2.29 He it is who has created for you all that is on earth, and has applied His design to the heavens and fashioned them into seven heavens;²⁰ and He alone has full knowledge of everything.

2.30 AND LO!²¹ Thy Sustainer said unto the angels: "Behold, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it."²² They said: "Wilt Thou place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood - whereas it is we who extol Thy limitless glory, and praise Thee, and hallow Thy name?" [God] answered: "Verily, I know that which you do not know."

2.31 And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things;²³ then He brought them within the ken of the angels and said: "Declare unto Me the names of these [things], if what you say is true."²⁴

2.32 They replied: "Limitless art Thou in Thy glory! No knowledge have we save that which Thou hast imparted unto us. Verily, Thou alone art all-knowing, truly wise."

2.33 Said He: "O Adam, convey unto them the names of these [things]." And as soon as [Adam] had conveyed unto them their names, [God] said: "Did I not say unto you, 'Verily, I alone know the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth, and know all that you bring into the open and all that you would conceal'?"

2.34 And when We told the angels, "Prostrate yourselves before Adam!"²⁵ - they all prostrated themselves, save Iblis, who refused and gloried in his arrogance: and thus he became one of those who deny the truth²⁶.

2.35 And We said: "O Adam, dwell thou and thy wife in this garden,²⁷ and eat freely thereof, both of you, whatever you may wish; but do not approach this one tree, lest you become wrongdoers."²⁸

2.36 But Satan caused them both to stumble therein, and thus brought about the loss of their erstwhile state.²⁹ And so We said: "Down with you, [and be henceforth] enemies unto one another; and on earth you shall have your abode and your livelihood for a while!"³⁰

2.37 Thereupon Adam received words [of guidance] from his Sustainer, and He accepted his repentance: for, verily, He alone is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace.

2.38 [For although] We did say, "Down with you all from this [state]," there shall, nonetheless, most certainly come unto you guidance from Me: and those who follow My guidance need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve;

2.39 but those who are bent on denying the truth and giving the lie to Our messages - they are destined for the fire, and therein shall they abide.

2.40 O CHILDREN of Israel!³¹ Remember those blessings of Mine with which I graced you, and fulfil your promise unto Me, [whereupon] I shall fulfil My promise unto you; and of Me, of Me stand in awe!

2.41 Believe in that which I have [now] bestowed from on high, confirming the truth already in your possession, and be not foremost among those who deny its truth; and do not barter away My messages for a trifling gain;³² and of Me, of Me be conscious!

2.42 And do not overlay the truth with falsehood, and do not knowingly suppress the truth;³³

2.43 and be constant in prayer, and spend in charity,³⁴ and bow down in prayer with all who thus bow down.

2.44 Do you bid other people to be pious, the while you forget your own selves - and yet you recite the divine writ? Will you not, then, use your reason?

2.45 And seek aid in steadfast patience and prayer: and this, indeed, is a hard thing for all but the humble in spirit,

2.46 who know with certainty that they shall meet their Sustainer and that unto Him they shall return.

2.47 O children of Israel! Remember those blessings of Mine with which I graced you, and how I favoured you above all other people;

2.48 and remain conscious of [the coming of] a Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted from any of them, nor ransom taken from them,³⁵ and none shall be succoured.

2.49 And [remember the time] when We saved you from Pharaoh's people, who afflicted you with cruel suffering, slaughtering your sons and sparing [only] your women³⁶ - which was an awesome trial from your Sustainer;

2.50 and when We cleft the sea before you, and thus saved you and caused Pharaoh's people to drown before your very eyes;

2.51 and when We appointed for Moses forty nights [on Mount Sinai], and in his absence you took to worshipping the [golden] calf, and thus became evildoers:

2.52 yet, even after that, We blotted out this your sin, so that you might have cause to be grateful.³⁷

2.53 And [remember the time] when We vouchsafed unto Moses the divine writ - and [thus] a standard by which to discern the true from the false³⁸ - so that you might be guided aright;

2.54 and when Moses said unto his people: "O my people! Verily, you have sinned against yourselves by worshipping the calf; turn, then, in repentance to your Maker and mortify yourselves;³⁹ this will be the best for you in your Maker's sight." And thereupon He accepted your repentance: for, behold, He alone is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace.

2.55 And [remember] when you said, "O Moses, indeed we shall not believe thee unto we see God face to face!" - whereupon the thunderbolt of punishment⁴⁰ overtook you before your very eyes.

2.56 But We raised you again after you had been as dead,⁴¹ so that you might have cause to be grateful.

2.57 And We caused the clouds to comfort you with their shade, and sent down unto you manna and quails, [saying,] "Partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance." And [by all their sinning] they did no harm unto Us - but [only] against their own selves did they sin.

2.58 And [remember the time] when We said: "Enter this land,⁴² and eat of its food as you may desire, abundantly; but enter the gate humbly and say, 'Remove Thou from us the burden of our sins',⁴³ [whereupon] We shall forgive you your sins, and shall amply reward the doers of good."

2.59 But those who were bent on evildoing substituted another saying for that which had been given them:⁴⁴ and so We sent down upon those evildoers a plague from heaven in requital for all their iniquity.

2.60 And [remember] when Moses prayed for water for his people and We replied, "Strike the rock with thy staff!" - whereupon twelve springs gushed forth from it, so that all the people knew whence to drink.⁴⁵ [And Moses said:] "Eat and drink the sustenance provided by God, and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption."

2.61 And [remember] when you said: "O Moses, indeed we cannot endure but one kind of food; pray, then, to thy Sustainer that He bring forth for us aught of what grows from the earth - of its herbs, its cucumbers, its garlic, its lentils, its onions." Said [Moses]: "Would you take a lesser thing in exchange for what is [so

much] better?"⁴⁶ Go back in shame to Egypt, and then you can have what you are asking for!"⁴⁷ And so, ignominy and humiliation overshadowed them, and they earned the burden of God's condemnation: all this, because they persisted in denying the truth of God's messages and in slaying the prophets against all right: all this, because they rebelled [against God], and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right.⁴⁸

2.62 VERILY, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians⁴⁹ - all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds - shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.⁵⁰

2.63 AND LO! We accepted your solemn pledge, raising Mount Sinai high above you,⁵¹ [and saying,] "Hold fast with [all your] strength unto what We have vouchsafed you, and bear in mind all that is therein, so that you might remain conscious of God!"

2.64 And you turned away after that! And had it not been for God's favour upon you and His grace, you would surely have found yourselves among the lost;

2.65 for you are well aware of those from among you who profaned the Sabbath, whereupon We said unto them, "Be as apes despicable!" -

2.66 and set them up as a warning example for their time and for all times to come, as well as an admonition to all who are conscious of God.⁵²

2.67 AND LO! Moses said unto his people: "Behold, God bids you to sacrifice a cow."⁵³ They said: "Dost thou mock at us?" He answered: "I seek refuge with God against being so ignorant!"⁵⁴

2.68 Said they: "Pray on our behalf unto thy Sustainer that He make clear to us what she is to be like."

[Moses] replied: "Behold, He says it is to be a cow neither old nor immature, but of an age in-between. Do, then, what you have been bidden!"

2.69 Said they: "Pray on our behalf unto thy Sustainer that He make clear to us what her colour should be." [Moses] answered: "Behold, He says it is to be a yellow cow, bright of hue, pleasing to the beholder."

2.70 Said they: "Pray on our behalf unto thy Sustainer that He make clear to us what she is to be like, for to us all cows resemble one another; and then, if God so wills, we shall truly be guided aright!"

2.71 [Moses] answered: "Behold, He says it is to be a cow not broken-in to plough the earth or to water the crops, free of fault, without markings of any other colour." Said they: "At last thou hast brought out the truth!" - and thereupon they sacrificed her, although they had almost left it undone.⁵⁵

2.72 For, O children of Israel, because you had slain a human being and then cast the blame for this [crime] upon one another - although God will bring to light what you would conceal⁵⁶ -

2.73 We said: "Apply this [principle] to some of those [cases of unresolved murder]:"⁵⁷ in this way God saves lives from death and shows you His will, so that you might [learn to] use your reason."⁵⁸

2.74 And yet, after all this, your hearts hardened and became like rocks, or even harder: for, behold, there are rocks from which streams gush forth; and, behold, there are some from which, when they are cleft, water issues; and, behold, there are some that fall down for awe of God⁵⁹ And God is not unmindful of what you do!

2.75 CAN YOU, then, hope that they will believe in what you are preaching⁶⁰ - seeing that a good many of them were wont to listen to the word of God and then, after having understood it, to pervert it knowingly?⁶¹

2.76 For, when they meet those who have attained to faith, they say, "We believe [as you believe]" - but when they find themselves alone with one another, they say, "Do you inform them of what God has disclosed to you, so that they might use it in argument against you, quoting the words of your Sustainer?"⁶² Will you not, then, use your reason?"

2.77 Do they not know, then, that God is aware of all that they would conceal as well as of all that they bring into the open?

2.78 And there are among them unlettered people who have no real knowledge of the divine writ,⁶³ [following] only wishful beliefs and depending on nothing but conjecture.

2.79 Woe, then, unto those who write down, with their own hands, [something which they claim to be] divine writ, and then say, "This is from God," in order to acquire a trifling gain thereby;⁶⁴ woe, then, unto them for what their hands have written, and woe unto them for all that they may have gained!

2.80 And they say, "The fire will most certainly not touch us for more than a limited number of days."⁶⁵ Say [unto them]: "Have you received a promise from God - for God never breaks His promise - or do you attribute to God something which you cannot know?"

2.81 Yea! Those who earn evil and by their sinfulness are engulfed - they are destined for the fire, therein to abide;

2.82 whereas those who attain to faith and do righteous deeds - they are destined for paradise, therein to abide.

2.83 AND LO! We accepted this solemn pledge from [you,] the children of Israel:⁶⁶ "You shall worship none but God; and you shall do good unto your parents and kinsfolk, and the orphans, and the poor; and you shall speak unto all people in a kindly way; and you shall be constant in prayer; and you shall spend in charity."⁶⁷ And yet, save for a few of you, you turned away: for you are obstinate folk!⁶⁸

2.84 And lo! We accepted your solemn pledge that you would not shed one another's blood, and would not drive one another from your homelands - whereupon you acknowledged it; and thereto you bear witness [even now].

2.85 And yet, it is you who slay one another and drive some of your own people from their homelands, aiding one another against them in sin and hatred; but if they come to you as captives, you ransom them - although the very [act of] driving them away has been made unlawful to you!⁶⁹ Do you, then, believe in some parts of the divine writ and deny the truth of other parts? What, then, could be the reward of those among you who do such things but ignominy in the life of this world and, on the Day of Resurrection, commitment to most grievous suffering? For God is not unmindful of what you do.

2.86 All who buy the life of this world at the price of the life to come - their suffering shall not be lightened, nor shall they be succoured!

2.87 For, indeed, We vouchsafed unto Moses the divine writ and caused apostle after apostle to follow him;⁷⁰ and We vouchsafed unto Jesus, the son of Mary, all evidence of the truth, and strengthened him with holy inspiration.⁷¹ [Yet] is it not so that every time an apostle came unto you with something that was not to your liking, you gloried in your arrogance, and to some of them you gave the lie, while others you would slay?⁷²

2.88 But they say, "Our hearts are already full of knowledge."⁷³ Nay, but God has rejected them because of their refusal to acknowledge the truth: for, few are the things in which they believe.⁷⁴

2.89 And whenever there came unto them a [new] revelation from God, confirming the truth already in their possession - and [bear in mind that] aforetime they used to pray for victory over those who were bent on denying the truth:- whenever there came unto them something which they recognized [as the truth], they would deny it. And God's rejection is the due of all who deny the truth.

2.90 Vile is that [false pride] for which they have sold their own selves by denying the truth of what God has bestowed from on high, out of envy that God should bestow aught of His favour upon whomsoever He wills of His servants:⁷⁵ and thus have they earned the burden of God's condemnation, over and over. And for those who deny the truth there is shameful suffering in store.

2.91 For when they are told, "Believe in what God has bestowed from on high," they reply, "We believe [only] in what has been bestowed on us" - and they deny the truth of everything else, although it be a truth confirming the one already in their possession. Say: "Why, then, did you slay God's prophets aforetime, if you were [truly] believers?"⁷⁶

2.92 And indeed, there came unto you Moses with all evidence of the truth - and thereupon, in his absence, you took to worshipping the [golden] calf, and acted wickedly.

2.93 And, lo, We accepted your solemn pledge, raising Mount Sinai high above you, [saying,] "Hold fast with [all your] strength unto what We have vouchsafed you, and hearken unto it!" [But] they say, "We have heard, but we disobey"⁷⁷ - for their hearts are filled to overflowing with love of the [golden] calf because of their refusal to acknowledge the truth.⁷⁸ Say: "Vile is what this [false] belief of yours enjoins upon you - if indeed you are believers!"

2.94 Say: "If an afterlife with God is to be for you alone, to the exclusion of all other people,⁷⁹ then you should long for death - if what you say is true!"

2.95 But never will they long for it, because [they are aware] of what their hands have sent ahead in this world: and God has full knowledge of evildoers.

2.96 And thou wilt most certainly find that they cling to life more eagerly than any other people, even more than those who are bent on ascribing divinity to other beings beside God: every one of them would love to live a thousand years, although the grant of long life could not save him from suffering [in the hereafter]: for God sees all that they do.

2.97 SAY [O Prophet]: "Whosoever is an enemy of Gabriel" - who,- verily, by God's leave, has brought down upon thy heart this [divine writ] which confirms the truth of whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations], and is a guidance and a glad tidings for the believers -:

2.98 "whosoever is an enemy of God and His angels and His message-bearers, including Gabriel and Michael, [should know that,] verily, God is the enemy of all who deny the truth."⁸⁰

2.99 For, clear messages indeed have We bestowed upon thee from on high; and none denies their truth save the iniquitous.

2.100 Is it not so that every time they made a promise [unto God], some of them cast it aside? Nay, indeed: most of them do not believe.

2.101 And [even now,] when there has come unto them an apostle from God, confirming the truth already in their possession, some of those who were granted revelation aforetime cast the divine writ behind their backs as though unaware [of what it says],⁸¹

2.102 and follow [instead] that which the evil ones used to practice during Solomon's reign - for it was not Solomon who denied the truth, but those evil ones denied it by teaching people sorcery⁸² -; and [they follow] that which has come down through the two angels in Babylon, Harut and Marut - although these two never taught it to anyone without first declaring, "We are but a temptation to evil: do not, then, deny [God's] truth!"⁸³ And they learn from these two how to create discord between a man and his wife; but whereas they can harm none thereby save by God's leave, they acquire a knowledge that only harms themselves and does not benefit them - although they know, indeed, that he who acquires this [knowledge] shall have no share in the good of the life to come.⁸⁴ For, vile indeed is that [art] for which they have sold their own selves - had they but known it!

2.103 And had they but believed and been conscious of Him, reward from God would indeed have brought them good - had they but known it!

2.104 O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not say [to the Prophet], "Listen to us," but rather say, "Have patience with us," and hearken [unto him], since grievous suffering awaits those who deny the truth.⁸⁵

2.105 Neither those from among the followers of earlier revelation who are bent on denying the truth, nor those who ascribe divinity to other beings beside God, would like to see any good⁸⁶ ever bestowed upon you from on high by your Sustainer; but God singles out for His grace whom He wills - for God is limitless in His great bounty.

2.106 Any message which We annul or consign to oblivion We replace with a better or a similar one.⁸⁷ Dost thou not know that God has the power to will anything?

2.107 Dost thou not know that God's is the dominion over the heavens and the earth, and that besides God you have none to protect you or bring you succour?

2.108 Would you, perchance, ask of the Apostle who has been sent unto you what was asked aforetime of Moses? But whoever chooses to deny the [evidence of the] truth, instead of believing in it,⁸⁸ has already strayed from the right path.

2.109 Out of their selfish envy, many among the followers of earlier revelation would like to bring you back to denying the truth after you have attained to faith - [even] after the truth has become clear unto them. Nonetheless, forgive and forbear, until God shall make manifest His will: behold, God has the power to will anything.

2.110 And be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues; for, whatever good deed you send ahead for your own selves, you shall find it with God: behold, God sees all that you do.

2.111 AND THEY claim,⁸⁹ "None shall ever enter paradise unless he be a Jew" - or, "a Christian". Such are their wishful beliefs! Say: "Produce an evidence for what you are claiming,⁹⁰ if what you say is true!"

2.112 Yea, indeed: everyone who surrenders his whole being unto God,⁹¹ and is a doer of good withal, shall have his reward with his Sustainer; and all such need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve.⁹²

2.113 Furthermore, the Jews assert, "The Christians have no valid ground for their beliefs," while the Christians assert, "The Jews have no valid ground for their beliefs" - and both quote the divine writ! Even thus, like unto what they say, have [always] spoken those who were devoid of knowledge;⁹³ but it is God who will judge between them on Resurrection Day with regard to all on which they were wont to differ.⁹⁴

2.114 Hence, who could be more wicked than those who bar the mention of God's name from [any of] His houses of worship and strive for their ruin, [although] they have no right to enter them save in fear [of God]?⁹⁵ For them, in this world, there is ignominy in store; and for them, in the life to come, awesome suffering.

2.115 And God's is the east and the west: and wherever you turn, there is God's countenance. Behold, God is infinite, all-knowing.

2.116 And yet some people assert, "God has taken unto Himself a son!" Limitless is He in His glory!⁹⁶ Nay, but His is all that is in the heavens and on earth; all things devoutly obey His will.

2.117 The Originator is He of the heavens and the earth: and when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, "Be" - and it is.

2.118 AND [only] those who are devoid of knowledge say, "Why does God not speak unto us, nor is a [miraculous] sign shown to us?" Even thus, like unto what they say, spoke those who lived before their time:⁹⁷ their hearts are all alike. Indeed, We have made all the signs manifest unto people who are endowed with inner certainty.

2.119 Verily, We have sent thee [O Prophet] with the truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner: and thou shalt not be held accountable for those who are destined for the blazing fire.

2.120 For, never will the Jews be pleased with thee, nor yet the Christians, unless thou follow their own creeds. Say: "Behold, God's guidance is the only true guidance." And, indeed, if thou shouldst follow their errant views after all the knowledge that has come unto thee, thou wouldst have none to protect thee from God, and none to bring thee succour.

2.121 Those unto whom We have vouchsafed the divine writ [and who] follow it as it ought to be followed⁹⁸ - it is they who [truly] believe in it; whereas all who choose to deny its truth - it is they, they who are the losers!

2.122 O CHILDREN of Israel! Remember those blessings of Mine with which I graced you, and how I favoured you above all other people;

2.123 and remain conscious of [the coming of] a Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall ransom be accepted from any of them, nor shall intercession be of any use to them, and none shall be succoured.⁹⁹

2.124 And [remember this:] when his Sustainer tried Abraham by [His] commandments and the latter fulfilled them,¹⁰⁰ He said: "Behold, I shall make thee a leader of men." Abraham asked: "And [wilt Thou make leaders] of my offspring as well?" [God] answered: "My covenant does not embrace the evildoers."¹⁰¹

2.125 AND LO! We made the Temple a goal to which people might repair again and again, and a sanctuary:¹⁰² take, then, the place whereon Abraham once stood as your place of prayer.¹⁰³ And thus did We command Abraham and Ishmael: "Purify My Temple for those who will walk around it,¹⁰⁴ and those who will abide near it in meditation, and those who will bow down and prostrate themselves [in prayer]."

2.126 And, lo, Abraham prayed: "O my Sustainer! Make this a land secure, and grant its people fruitful sustenance - such of them as believe in God and the Last Day." [God] answered: "And whoever shall deny the truth, him will I let enjoy himself for a short while - but in the end I shall drive him to suffering through fire: and how vile a journey's end!"

2.127 And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the Temple, [they prayed:] "O our Sustainer! Accept Thou this from us: for, verily, Thou alone art all-hearing, all-knowing!

2.128 "O our Sustainer! Make us surrender ourselves unto Thee, and make out of our offspring¹⁰⁵ a community that shall surrender itself unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship, and accept our repentance: for, verily, Thou alone art the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace!

2.129 "O our Sustainer! Raise up from the midst of our offspring¹⁰⁶ an apostle from among themselves, who shall convey unto them Thy messages, and impart unto them revelation as well as wisdom, and cause them to grow in purity: for, verily, Thou alone art almighty, truly wise!"

2.130 And who, unless he be weak of mind, would want to abandon Abraham's creed, seeing that We have indeed raised him high in this world, and that, verily, in the life to come he shall be among the righteous?

2.131 When his Sustainer said to him, "Surrender thyself unto Me!" - he answered, "I have surrendered myself unto [Thee,] the Sustainer of all the worlds."

2.132 And this very thing did Abraham bequeath unto his children, and [so did] Jacob: "O my children! Behold, God has granted you the purest faith; so do not allow death to overtake you ere you have surrendered yourselves unto Him."

2.133 Nay, but you [yourselves, O children of Israel,] bear witness¹⁰⁷ that when death was approaching Jacob, he said unto his sons: "Whom will you worship after I am gone?" They answered: "We will worship thy God, the God of thy forefathers Abraham and Ishmael¹⁰⁸ and Isaac, the One God; and unto Him will we surrender ourselves."

2.134 Now those people have passed away; unto them shall be accounted what they have earned, and unto you, what you have earned; and you will not be judged on the strength of what they did.¹⁰⁹

2.135 AND THEY say, "Be Jews" - or, "Christians" - "and you shall be on the right path." Say: "Nay, but [ours is] the creed of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false,¹¹⁰ and was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God."

2.136 Say: "We believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants,¹¹¹ and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the [other] prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them.¹¹² And it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves."

2.137 And if [others] come to believe in the way you believe, they will indeed find themselves on the right path; and if they turn away, it is but they who will be deeply in the wrong, and God will protect thee from them: for He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing.

2.138 [Say: "Our life takes its] hue from God! And who could give a better hue [to life] than God, if we but truly worship Him?"

2.139 Say [to the Jews and the Christians]: "Do you argue with us about God?"¹¹³ But He is our Sustainer as well as your Sustainer - and unto us shall be accounted our deeds, and unto you, your deeds; and it is unto Him alone that we devote ourselves.

2.140 "Do you claim that Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants were 'Jews' or 'Christians'?"¹¹⁴ Say: "Do you know more than God does? And who could be more wicked than he who suppresses a testimony given to him by God?"¹¹⁵ Yet God is not unmindful of what you do.

2.141 "Now those people have passed away; unto them shall be accounted what they have earned, and unto you, what you have earned; and you will not be judged on the strength of what they did."

2.142 THE WEAK-MINDED among people will say, "What has turned them away from the direction of prayer which they have hitherto observed?"¹¹⁶ Say: "God's is the east and the west; He guides whom He wills onto a straight way."¹¹⁷

2.143 And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way,¹¹⁸ so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you.¹¹⁹ And it is only to the end that We might make a clear distinction between those who follow the Apostle and those who turn about on their heels that We have appointed [for this community] the direction of prayer which thou [O Prophet] hast formerly observed: for this was indeed a hard test for all but those whom God has guided aright.¹²⁰ But God will surely not lose sight of your faith - for, behold, God is most compassionate towards man, a dispenser of grace.

2.144 We have seen thee [O Prophet] often turn thy face towards heaven [for guidance]: and now We shall indeed make thee turn in prayer in a direction which will fulfil thy desire. Turn, then, thy face towards the Inviolable House of Worship; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces towards it [in prayer]. And, verily, those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime know well that this [commandment] comes in truth from their Sustainer; and God is not unaware of what they do.

2.145 And yet, even if thou wert to place all evidence¹²¹ before those who have been vouchsafed earlier revelation, they would not follow thy direction of prayer; and neither mayest thou follow their direction of prayer, nor even do they follow one another's direction. And if thou shouldst follow their errant views after all the knowledge that has come unto thee, thou wouldst surely be among the evildoers.

2.146 They unto whom We have vouchsafed revelation aforetime know it as they know their own children: but, behold, some of them knowingly suppress the truth -

2.147 the truth from thy Sustainer!¹²² Be not, then, among the doubters:

2.148 for, every community faces a direction of its own, of which He is the focal point.¹²³ Vie, therefore, with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, God will gather you all unto Himself: for, verily, God has the power to will anything.

2.149 Thus, from wherever thou mayest come forth, turn thy face [in prayer] towards the Inviolable House of Worship - for, behold, this [commandment] comes in truth from thy Sustainer; and God is not unaware of what you do.

2.150 Hence, from wherever thou mayest come forth, turn thy face [in prayer] towards the Inviolable House of Worship; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces towards it, so that people should have no argument against you unless they are bent upon wrongdoing.¹²⁴ And hold not them in awe, but stand in awe of Me, and [obey Me,] so that I might bestow upon you the full measure of My blessings, and that you

might follow the right path.

2.151 Even as We have sent unto you an apostle from among yourselves to convey unto you Our messages, and to cause you to grow in purity, and to impart unto you revelation and wisdom, and to teach you that which you knew not:

2.152 so remember Me, and I shall remember you; and be grateful unto Me, and deny Me not.

2.153 O YOU who have attained to faith! Seek aid in steadfast patience and prayer: for, behold, God is with those who are patient in adversity.

2.154 And say not of those who are slain in God's cause, "They are dead": nay, they are alive, but you perceive it not.

2.155 And most certainly shall We try you by means¹²⁵ of danger, and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of lives and of [labour's] fruits. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity -

2.156 who, when calamity befalls them, say, "Verily, unto God do we belong and, verily, unto Him we shall return."

2.157 It is they upon whom their Sustainer's blessings and grace are bestowed, and it is they, they who are on the right path!

2.158 [Hence,] behold, As-Safa and Al-Marwah are among the symbols set up by God;¹²⁶ and thus, no wrong does he who, having come to the Temple on pilgrimage or on a pious visit, strides to and fro between these two:¹²⁷ for, if one does more good than he is bound to do - behold, God is responsive to gratitude, all-knowing.¹²⁸

2.159 BEHOLD, as for those who suppress aught of the evidence of the truth and of the guidance which We have bestowed from on high, after We have made it clear unto mankind through the divine writ - these it is whom God will reject, and whom all who can judge will reject.¹²⁹

2.160 Excepted, however, shall be they that repent, and put themselves to rights, and make known the truth: and it is they whose repentance I shall accept - for I alone am the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace.

2.161 Behold, as for those who are bent on denying the truth and die as deniers of the truth - their due is rejection by God, and by the angels, and by all [righteous] men.

2.162 In this state shall they abide; [and] neither will their suffering be lightened, nor will they be granted respite.

2.163 AND YOUR GOD is the One God: there is no deity save Him, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace.

2.164 Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and the succession of night and day: and in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man: and in the waters which God sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon: and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth: [in all this] there are messages indeed for people who use their reason.¹³⁰

2.165 And yet there are people who choose to believe in beings that allegedly rival God,¹³¹ loving them as [only] God should be loved: whereas those who have attained to faith love God more than all else. If they who are bent on evildoing could but see - as see they will when they are made to suffer¹³² [on Resurrection Day] - that all might belongs to God alone, and that God is severe in [meting out] punishment!

2.166 [On that Day] it will come to pass that those who had been [falsely] adored¹³³ shall disown their followers, and the latter shall see the suffering [that awaits them], with all their hopes¹³⁴ cut to pieces!

2.167 And then those followers shall say: "Would that we had a second chance [in life],¹³⁵ so that we could disown them as they have disowned us!" Thus will God show them their works [in a manner that will cause them] bitter regrets; but they will not come out of the fire.¹³⁶

2.168 O MANKIND! Partake of what is lawful and good on earth, and follow not Satan's footsteps: for, verily, he is your open foe,

2.169 and bids you only to do evil, and to commit deeds of abomination, and to attribute unto God something of which you have no knowledge.¹³⁷

2.170 But when they are told, "Follow what God has bestowed from on high," some answer, "Nay, we shall follow [only] that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing." Why, even if their forefathers did not use their reason at all, and were devoid of all guidance?

2.171 And so, the parable of those who are bent on denying the truth is that of the beast which hears the shepherd's cry, and hears in it nothing but the sound of a voice and a call.¹³⁸ Deaf are they, and dumb, and blind: for they do not use their reason.

2.172 O you who have attained to faith! Partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance, and render thanks unto God, if it is [truly] Him that you worship.

2.173 He has forbidden to you only carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which any name other than God's has been invoked;¹³⁹ but if one is driven by necessity - neither coveting it nor exceeding his immediate need - no sin shall be upon him: for, behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

2.174 VERILY, as for those who suppress aught of the revelation¹⁴⁰ which God has bestowed from on high, and barter it away for a trifling gain - they but fill their bellies with fire. And God will not speak unto them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He cleanse them [of their sins]; and grievous suffering awaits them.

2.175 It is they who take error in exchange for guidance, and suffering in exchange for forgiveness: yet how little do they seem to fear the fire!

2.176 Thus it is: since it is God who bestows¹⁴¹ the divine writ from on high, setting forth the truth, all those who set their own views against the divine writ¹⁴² are, verily, most deeply in the wrong.

2.177 True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west¹⁴³ - but truly pious is he who believes in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and revelation,¹⁴⁴ and the prophets; and spends his substance - however much he himself may cherish it - upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer,¹⁴⁵ and the beggars, -and for the freeing of human beings from bondage;¹⁴⁶ and is constant in prayer, and renders the purifying dues; and [truly pious are] they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril: it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they, they who are conscious of God.

2.178 O YOU who have attained to faith! Just retribution is ordained for you in cases of killing: the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the woman for the woman.¹⁴⁷ And if something [of his guilt] is remitted to a guilty person by his brother,¹⁴⁸ this [remission] shall be adhered to with fairness, and restitution to his fellow-man shall be made in a goodly manner.¹⁴⁹ This is an alleviation from your Sustainer, and an act of His grace. And for him who, nonetheless,¹⁵⁰ wilfully transgresses the bounds of what is right, there is grievous suffering in store:

2.179 for, in [the law of] just retribution, O you who are endowed with insight, there is life for you, so that you might remain conscious of God!¹⁵¹

2.180 IT IS ordained for you, when death approaches any of you and he is leaving behind much wealth, to make bequests in favour of his parents and [other] near of kin in accordance with what is fair:¹⁵² this is binding on all who are conscious of God.

2.181 And if anyone alters such a provision after having come to know it, the sin of acting thus shall fall only upon those who have altered it.¹⁵³ Verily, God is all-hearing, all-knowing.

2.182 If, however, one has reason to fear that the testator has committed a mistake or a [deliberate] wrong, and thereupon brings about a settlement between the heirs,¹⁵⁴ he will incur no sin [thereby]. Verily, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

2.183 O YOU who have attained to faith! Fasting is ordained for you as it was ordained for those before you, so that you might remain conscious of God:

2.184 [fasting] during a certain number of days.¹⁵⁵ But whoever of you is ill, or on a journey, [shall fast instead for the same] number of other days; and [in such cases] it is incumbent upon those who can afford it to make sacrifice by feeding a needy person.¹⁵⁶ And whoever does more good than he is bound to do¹⁵⁷ does good unto himself thereby; for to fast is to do good unto yourselves - if you but knew it.

2.185 It was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was [first] bestowed from on high as a guidance unto man and a self-evident proof of that guidance, and as the standard by which to discern the true from the false. Hence, whoever of you lives to see¹⁵⁸ this month shall fast throughout it; but he that is ill, or on a journey, [shall fast instead for the same] number of other days. God wills that you shall have ease, and does not will you to suffer hardship; but [He desires] that you complete the number [of days required], and that you extol God for His having guided you aright, and that you render your thanks [unto Him].

2.186 AND IF My servants ask thee about Me - behold, I am near; I respond to the call of him who calls, whenever he calls unto Me: let them, then, respond unto Me, and believe in Me, so that they might follow

the right way.

2.187 IT IS lawful for you to go in unto your wives during the night preceding the [day's] fast: they are as a garment for you, and you are as a garment for them. God is aware that you would have deprived yourselves of this right,¹⁵⁹ and so He has turned unto you in His mercy and removed this hardship from you. Now, then, you may lie with them skin to skin, and avail yourselves of that which God has ordained for you,¹⁶⁰ and eat and drink until you can discern the white streak of dawn against the blackness of night,¹⁶¹ and then resume fasting until nightfall; but do not lie with them skin to skin when you are about to abide in meditation in houses of worship.¹⁶² These are the bounds set by God: do not, then, offend against them - [for] it is thus that God makes clear His messages unto mankind, so that they might remain conscious of Him.

2.188 AND DEVOUR NOT one another's possessions wrongfully, and neither employ legal artifices¹⁶³ with a view to devouring sinfully, and knowingly, anything that by right belongs to others.¹⁶⁴

2.189 THEY WILL ASK thee about the new moons. Say: "They indicate the periods for [various doings of] mankind, including the pilgrimage."¹⁶⁵ However, piety does not consist in your entering houses from the rear, [as it were,] but truly pious is he who is conscious of God.¹⁶⁶ Hence, enter houses through their doors, and remain conscious of God, so that you might attain to a happy state.

2.190 AND FIGHT in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression - for, verily, God does not love aggressors.¹⁶⁷

2.191 And slay them wherever you may come upon them, and drive them away from wherever they drove you away - for oppression is even worse than killing.¹⁶⁸ And fight not against them near the Inviolable House of Worship unless they fight against you there first;¹⁶⁹ but if they fight against you, slay them: such shall be the recompense of those who deny the truth.

2.192 But if they desist - behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

2.193 Hence, fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to God alone;¹⁷⁰ but if they desist, then all hostility shall cease, save against those who [wilfully] do wrong.

2.194 Fight during the sacred months if you are attacked:¹⁷¹ for a violation of sanctity is [subject to the law of] just retribution. Thus, if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him just as he has attacked you - but remain conscious of God, and know that God is with those who are conscious of Him.¹⁷²

2.195 And spend [freely] in God's cause, and let not your own hands throw you into destruction;¹⁷³ and persevere in doing good: behold, God loves the doers of good.

2.196 AND PERFORM the pilgrimage and the pious visit [to Mecca]¹⁷⁴ in honour of God; and if you are held back, give instead whatever offering you can easily afford. And do not shave your heads until the offering has been sacrificed;¹⁷⁵ but he from among you who is ill or suffers from an ailment of the head shall redeem himself by fasting, or alms, or [any other] act of worship. And if you are hale and secure,¹⁷⁶ then he who takes advantage of a pious visit before the [time of] pilgrimage shall give whatever offering he can easily afford;¹⁷⁷ whereas he who cannot afford it shall fast for three days during the pilgrimage and for seven days after your return: that is, ten full [days]. All this relates to him who does not live near the Inviolable House of Worship.¹⁷⁸ And remain conscious of God, and know that God is severe in retribution.¹⁷⁹

2.197 The pilgrimage shall take place in the months appointed for it.¹⁸⁰ And whoever undertakes the pilgrimage in those [months] shall, while on pilgrimage, abstain from lewd speech, from all wicked conduct, and from quarrelling; and whatever good you may do, God is aware of it. And make provision for yourselves - but, verily, the best of all provisions is God-consciousness: remain, then, conscious of Me, O you who are endowed with insight!

2.198 [However,] you will be committing no sin if [during the pilgrimage] you seek to obtain any bounty from your Sustainer.¹⁸¹ And when you surge downward in multitudes from 'Arafat,¹⁸² remember God at the holy place, and remember Him as the One who guided you after you had indeed been lost on your way;¹⁸³

2.199 and surge onward together with the multitude of all the other people who surge onward,¹⁸⁴ and ask God to forgive you your sins: for, verily, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

2.200 And when you have performed your acts of worship, [continue to] bear God in mind as you would bear your own fathers in mind - nay, with a yet keener remembrance!¹⁸⁵ For there are people who [merely] pray, "O our Sustainer! Give us in this world" - and such shall not partake in the blessings of the life to come.

2.201 But there are among them such as pray, "O our Sustainer! Grant us good in this world and good in the life to come, and keep us safe from suffering through the fire":

2.202 it is these that shall have their portion [of happiness] in return for what they have earned. And God is swift in reckoning.

2.203 And bear God in mind during the appointed days;¹⁸⁶ but he who hurries away within two days shall incur no sin, and he who tarries longer shall incur no sin, provided that he is conscious of God. Hence, remain conscious of God, and know that unto Him you shall be gathered.

2.204 NOW THERE IS a kind of man¹⁸⁷ whose views on the life of this world may please thee greatly, and [the more so as] he cites God as witness to what is in his heart and is, moreover, exceedingly skillful in argument.¹⁸⁸

2.205 But whenever he prevails, he goes about the earth spreading corruption and destroying [man's] tilth and progeny:¹⁸⁹ and God does not love corruption.

2.206 And whenever he is told, "Be conscious of God," his false pride drives him into sin: wherefore hell will be his allotted portion - and how vile a resting-place!

2.207 But there is [also] a kind of man who would willingly sell his own self in order to please God:¹⁹⁰ and God is most compassionate towards His servants.

2.208 O you who have attained to faith! Surrender yourselves wholly unto God,¹⁹¹ and follow not Satan's footsteps, for, verily, he is your open foe.

2.209 And if you should stumble after all evidence of the truth has come unto you, then know that, verily, God is almighty, wise.

2.210 Are these people¹⁹² waiting, perchance, for God to reveal Himself unto them in the shadows of the clouds, together with the angels - although [by then] all will have been decided, and unto God all things will have been brought back?¹⁹³

2.211 Ask the children of Israel how many a clear message We have given them! And if one alters God's blessed message¹⁹⁴ after it has reached him - verily, God is severe in retribution!

2.212 Unto those who are bent on denying the truth the life of this world [alone] seems goodly;¹⁹⁵ hence, they scoff at those who have attained to faith: but they who are conscious of God shall be above them on Resurrection Day. And God grants sustenance unto whom He wills, beyond all reckoning.¹⁹⁶

2.213 ALL MANKIND were once one single community; [then they began to differ -] whereupon God raised up the prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, and through them bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, so that it might decide between people with regard to all on which they had come to hold divergent views.¹⁹⁷ Yet none other than the selfsame people who had been granted this [revelation] began, out of mutual jealousy, to disagree about its meaning after all evidence of the truth had come unto them. But God guided the believers unto the truth about which, by His leave, they had disagreed: for God guides onto a straight way him that wills [to be guided].¹⁹⁸

2.214 [But] do you think that you could enter paradise without having suffered like those [believers] who passed away before you?¹⁹⁹ Misfortune and hardship befell them, and so shaken were they that the apostle, and the believers with him, would exclaim, "When will God's succour come?"²⁰⁰ Oh, verily, God's succour is [always] near!

2.215 THEY WILL ASK thee as to what they should spend on others. Say: "Whatever of your wealth you spend shall [first] be for your parents, and for the near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer; and whatever good you do, verily, God has full knowledge thereof."

2.216 FIGHTING is ordained for you, even though it be hateful to you; but it may well be that you hate a thing the while it is good for you, and it may well be that you love a thing the while it is bad for you: and God knows, whereas you do not know.²⁰¹

2.217 They will ask thee about fighting in the sacred month.²⁰² Say: "Fighting in it is an awesome thing; but turning men away from the path of God and denying Him, and [turning them away from] the Inviolable House of Worship and expelling its people therefrom - [all this] is yet more awesome in the sight of God, since oppression is more awesome than killing." [Your enemies] will not cease to fight against you till they have turned you away from your faith, if they can. But if any of you should turn away from his faith and die as a denier of the truth - these it is whose works will go for nought in this world and in the life to come; and these it is who are destined for the fire, therein to abide.

2.218 Verily, they who have attained to faith, and they who have forsaken the domain of evil²⁰³ and are striving hard in God's cause - these it is who may look forward to God's grace: for God is much-forgiving, a

dispenser of grace.

2.219 THEY WILL ASK thee about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both there is great evil²⁰⁴ as well as some benefit for man; but the evil which they cause is greater than the benefit which they bring."²⁰⁵ And they will ask thee as to what they should spend [in God's cause]. Say: "Whatever you can spare." In this way God makes clear unto you His messages, so that you might reflect

2.220 on this world and on the life to come. And they will ask thee about [how to deal with] orphans. Say: "To improve their condition is best." And if you share their life, [remember that] they are your brethren.²⁰⁶ for God distinguishes between him who spoils things and him who improves. And had God so willed, He would indeed have imposed on you hardships which you would not have been able to bear.²⁰⁷ [but,] behold, God is almighty, wise!

2.221 AND DO NOT marry women who ascribe divinity to aught beside God ere they attain to [true] belief: for any believing bondwoman [of God]²⁰⁸ is certainly better than a woman who ascribes divinity to aught beside God, even though she please you greatly. And do not give your women in marriage to men who ascribe divinity to aught beside God ere they attain to [true] belief: for any believing bondman [of God] is certainly better than a man who ascribes divinity to aught beside God, even though he please you greatly. [Such as] these invite unto the fire, whereas God invites unto paradise, and unto [the achievement of] forgiveness by His leave; and He makes clear His messages unto mankind, so that they might bear them in mind.

2.222 AND THEY will ask thee about [woman's] monthly courses. Say: "It is a vulnerable condition. Keep, therefore, aloof from women during their monthly courses, and do not draw near unto them until they are cleansed; and when they are cleansed, go in unto them as God has bidden you to do."²⁰⁹ Verily, God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance,²¹⁰ and He loves those who keep themselves pure.

2.223 Your wives are your tilth; go, then, unto your tilth as you may desire, but first provide something for your souls,²¹¹ and remain conscious of God, and know that you are destined to meet Him. And give glad tidings unto those who believe.

2.224 AND DO NOT allow your oaths in the name of God to become an obstacle to virtue and God-consciousness and the promotion of peace between men:²¹² for God is all-hearing, all-knowing.

2.225 God will not take you to task for oaths which you may have uttered without thought, but will take you to task [only] for what your hearts have conceived [in earnest]: for God is much-forgiving, forbearing.

2.226 Those who take an oath that they will not approach their wives shall have four months of grace; and if they go back [on their oath]²¹³ - behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

2.227 But if they are resolved on divorce - behold, God is all-hearing, all-knowing.

2.228 And the divorced women shall undergo, without remarrying,²¹⁴ a waiting-period of three monthly courses: for it is not lawful for them to conceal what God may have created in their wombs,²¹⁵ if they believe in God and the Last Day. And during this period their husbands are fully entitled to take them back, if they desire reconciliation; but, in accordance with justice, the rights of the wives [with regard to their husbands] are equal to the [husbands'] rights with regard to them, although men have precedence over them [in this respect].²¹⁶ And God is almighty, wise.

2.229 A divorce may be [revoked] twice, whereupon the marriage must either be resumed in fairness or dissolved in a goodly manner.²¹⁷ And it is not lawful for you to take back anything of what you have ever given to your wives unless both [partners] have cause to fear that they may not be able to keep within the bounds set by God: hence, if you have cause to fear that the two may not be able to keep within the bounds set by God, there shall be no sin upon either of them for what the wife may give up [to her husband] in order to free herself.²¹⁸ These are the bounds set by God; do not, then, transgress them: for they who transgress the bounds set by God - it is they, they who are evildoers!

2.230 And if he divorces her [finally], she shall thereafter not be lawful unto him unless she first takes another man for husband; then, if the latter divorces her, there shall be no sin upon either of the two if they return to one another - provided that both of them think that they will be able to keep within the bounds set by God: for these are the bounds of God which He makes clear unto people of [innate] knowledge.

2.231 And so, when you divorce women and they are about to reach the end of their waiting-term, then either retain them in a fair manner or let them go in a fair manner. But do not retain them against their will in order to hurt [them]: for he who does so sins indeed against himself. And do not take [these] messages of God in a frivolous spirit; and remember the blessings with which God has graced you, and all the revelation and the wisdom which He has bestowed on you from on high in order to admonish you thereby;

and remain conscious of God, and know that God has full knowledge of everything.

2.232 And when you divorce women, and they have come to the end of their waiting-term, hinder them not from marrying other men if they have agreed with each other in a fair manner. This is an admonition unto every one of you who believes in God and the Last Day; it is the most virtuous [way] for you, and the cleanest. And God knows, whereas you do not know.

2.233 And the [divorced] mothers may nurse their children for two whole years, if they wish to complete the period of nursing; and it is incumbent upon him who has begotten the child to provide in a fair manner for their sustenance and clothing. No human being shall be burdened with more than he is well able to bear: neither shall a mother be made to suffer because of her child, nor, because of his child, he who has begotten it. And the same duty rests upon the [father's] heir. And if both [parents] decide, by mutual consent and counsel, upon separation [of mother and child],²¹⁹ they will incur no sin [thereby]; and if you decide to entrust your children to foster-mothers, you will incur no sin provided you ensure, in a fair manner, the safety of the child which you are handing over.²²⁰ But remain conscious of God, and know that God sees all that you do.

2.234 And if any of you die and leave wives behind, they shall undergo, without remarriage,²²¹ a waiting-period of four months and ten days; whereupon, when they have reached the end of their waiting-term, there shall be no sin²²² in whatever they may do with their persons in a lawful manner. And God is aware of all that you do.

2.235 But you will incur no sin if you give a hint of [an intended] marriage-offer to [any of] these women, or if you conceive such an intention without making it obvious: [for] God knows that you intend to ask them in marriage.²²³ Do not, however, plight your troth with them in secret, but speak only in a decent manner; and do not proceed with tying the marriage-knot ere the ordained [term of waiting] has come to its end. And know that God knows what is in your minds, and therefore remain conscious of Him; and know, too, that God is much-forgiving, forbearing.

2.236 You will incur no sin if you divorce women while you have not yet touched them nor settled a dower upon them;²²⁴ but [even in such a case] make provision for them - the affluent according to his means, and the straitened according to his means - a provision in an equitable manner: this is a duty upon all who would do good.²²⁵

2.237 And if you divorce them before having touched them, but after having settled a dower upon them, then [give them] half of what you have settled - unless it be that they forgo their claim or he in whose hand is the marriage-tie²²⁶ forgoes his claim [to half of the dower]: and to forgo what is due to you is more in accord with God-consciousness. And forget not [that you are to act with] grace towards one another: verily, God sees all that you do.

2.238 BE EVER mindful of prayers, and of praying in the most excellent way;²²⁷ and stand before God in devout obedience.

2.239 But if you are in danger, [pray] walking or riding;²²⁸ and when you are again secure, bear God in mind - since it is He who taught you what you did not previously know.

2.240 AND IF any of you die and leave wives behind, they bequeath thereby to their widows [the right to] one year's maintenance without their being obliged to leave [the dead husband's home].²²⁹ If, however, they leave [of their own accord], there shall be no sin in whatever they may do with themselves in a lawful manner.²³⁰ And God is almighty, wise.

2.241 And the divorced women, too, shall have [a right to] maintenance in a goodly manner:²³¹ this is a duty for all who are conscious of God.

2.242 In this way God makes clear unto you His messages, so that you might [learn to] use your reason.

2.243 ART THOU NOT aware of those who forsook their homelands in their thousands for fear of death - whereupon God said unto them, "Die," and later brought them back to life?²³² Behold, God is indeed limitless in His bounty unto man - but most people are ungrateful.

2.244 Fight, then, in God's cause,²³³ and know that God is all-hearing, all-knowing.

2.245 Who is it that will offer up unto God a goodly loan,²³⁴ which He will amply repay, with manifold increase? For, God takes away, and He gives abundantly; and it is unto Him that you shall be brought back.

2.246 Art thou not aware of those elders of the children of Israel, after the time of Moses, how they said unto a prophet of theirs,²³⁵ "Raise up a king for us, [and] we shall fight in God's cause"? Said he: "Would you, perchance, refrain from fighting if fighting is ordained for you?" They answered: "And why should we not fight in God's cause when we and our children have been driven from our homelands?"²³⁶ Yet, when fighting was ordained for them, they did turn back, save for a few of them; but God had full knowledge of the evildoers.

2.247 And their prophet said unto those elders:²³⁷ "Behold, now God has raised up Saul to be your king." They said: "How can he have dominion over us when we have a better claim to dominion than he, and he has not [even] been endowed with abundant wealth?" [The prophet] replied: "Behold, God has exalted him above you, and endowed him abundantly with knowledge and bodily perfection. And God bestows His dominion²³⁸ upon whom He wills: for God is infinite, all-knowing."

2.248 And their prophet said unto them: "Behold, it shall be a sign of his [rightful] dominion that you will be granted a heart²³⁹ endowed by your Sustainer with inner peace and with all that is enduring in the angel-borne heritage left behind by the House of Moses and the House of Aaron.²⁴⁰ Herein, behold, there shall indeed be a sign for you if you are [truly] believers."

2.249 And when Saul set out with his forces, he said: "Behold, God will now try you by a river: he who shall drink of it will not belong to me, whereas he who shall refrain from tasting it - he, indeed, will belong to me; but forgiven shall be he²⁴¹ who shall scoop up but single handful." However, save for a few of them, they all drank [their fill] of it. And as soon as he and those who had kept faith with him had crossed the river, the others said: "No strength have we today [to stand up] against Goliath and his forces!" [Yet] those who knew with certainty that they were destined to meet God, replied: "How often has a small host overcome a great host by God's leave! For God is with those who are patient in adversity."

2.250 And when they came face to face with Goliath and his forces, they prayed: "O our Sustainer! Shower us with patience in adversity, and make firm our steps, and succour us against the people who deny the truth!"

2.251 And thereupon, by God's leave, they routed them. And David slew Goliath; and God bestowed upon him dominion, and wisdom, and imparted to him the knowledge of whatever He willed. And if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another,²⁴² corruption would surely overwhelm the earth: but God is limitless in His bounty unto all the worlds.

2.252 THESE are God's messages: We convey them unto thee, [O Prophet,] setting forth the truth - for, verily, thou art among those who have been entrusted with a message.

2.253 Some of these apostles have We endowed more highly than others: among them were such as were spoken to by God [Himself], and some He has raised yet higher.²⁴³ And We vouchsafed unto Jesus, the son of Mary, all evidence of the truth, and strengthened him with holy inspiration.²⁴⁴ And if God had so willed, they who succeeded those [apostles] would not have contended with one another after all evidence of the truth had come to them; but [as it was,] they did take to divergent views, and some of them attained to faith, while some of them came to deny the truth. Yet if God had so willed, they would not have contended with one another: but God does whatever He wills.²⁴⁵

2.254 O YOU who have attained to faith! Spend [in Our way] out of what We have granted you as sustenance ere there come a Day²⁴⁶ when there will be no bargaining, and no friendship, and no intercession. And they who deny the truth - it is they who are evildoers!

2.255 GOD - there is no deity save Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being. Neither slumber overtakes Him, nor sleep. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there that could intercede with Him, unless it be by His leave? He knows all that lies open before men and all that is hidden from them,²⁴⁷ whereas they cannot attain to aught of His knowledge save that which He wills [them to attain]. His eternal power²⁴⁸ overspreads the heavens and the earth, and their upholding wearies Him not. And He alone is truly exalted, tremendous.

2.256 THERE SHALL BE no coercion in matters of faith.²⁴⁹ Distinct has now become the right way from [the way of] error: hence, he who rejects the powers of evil²⁵⁰ and believes in God has indeed taken hold of a support most unfailing, which shall never give way: for God is all-hearing, all-knowing.

2.257 God is near unto those who have faith, taking them out of deep darkness into the light - whereas near unto those who are bent on denying the truth are the powers of evil that take them out of the light into darkness deep: it is they who are destined for the fire, therein to abide.

2.258 ART THOU NOT aware of that [king] who argued with Abraham about his Sustainer, [simply] because God had granted him kingship? Lo! Abraham said: "My Sustainer is He who grants life and deals death." [The king] replied: "I [too] grant life and deal death!" Said Abraham: "Verily, God causes the sun to rise in the east; cause it, then, to rise in the west!" Thereupon he who was bent on denying the truth remained dumbfounded: for God does not guide people who [deliberately] do wrong.²⁵¹

2.259 Or [art thou, O man, of the same mind] as he²⁵² who passed by a town deserted by its people, with its roofs caved in, [and] said, "How could God bring all this back to life after its death?"²⁵³ Thereupon God caused him to be dead for a hundred years; whereafter He brought him back to life [and] said: "How long hast thou remained thus?" He answered: "I have remained thus a day, or part of a day." Said [God]: "Nay, but thou hast remained thus for a hundred years! But look at thy food and thy drink - untouched is it by the passing of years - and look at thine ass!"²⁵⁴ And [We did all this so that] We might make thee a symbol unto men. And look at the bones [of animals and men] - how We put them together and then clothe them with flesh!"²⁵⁵ And when [all this] became clear to him, he said: "I know [now] that God has the power to will anything!"

2.260 And, lo, Abraham said: "O my Sustainer! Show me how Thou givest life unto the dead!" Said He: "Hast thou, then, no faith?" [Abraham] answered: "Yea, but [let me see it] so that my heart may be set fully at rest." Said He: "Take, then, four birds and teach them to obey thee;"²⁵⁶ then place them separately on every hill [around thee]; then summon them: they will come flying to thee. And know that God is almighty, wise."²⁵⁷

2.261 THE PARABLE of those who spend their possessions for the sake of God is that of a grain out of which grow seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains: for God grants manifold increase unto whom He wills; and God is infinite, all-knowing.

2.262 They who spend their possessions for the sake of God and do not thereafter mar²⁵⁸ their spending by stressing their own benevolence and hurting [the feelings of the needy] shall have their reward with their Sustainer, and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.

2.263 A kind word and the veiling of another's want²⁵⁹ is better than a charitable deed followed by hurt; and God is self-sufficient, forbearing.

2.264 O you who have attained to faith! Do not deprive your charitable deeds of all worth by stressing your own benevolence and hurting [the feelings of the needy], as does he who spends his wealth only to be seen and praised by men, and believes not in God and the Last Day: for his parable is that of a smooth rock with [a little] earth upon it - and then a rainstorm smites it and leaves it hard and bare. Such as these shall have no gain whatever from all their [good] works: for God does not guide people who refuse to acknowledge the truth.

2.265 And the parable of those who spend their possessions out of a longing to please God, and out of their own inner certainty, is that of a garden on high, fertile ground: a rainstorm smites it, and thereupon it brings forth its fruit twofold; and if no rainstorm smites it, soft rain [falls upon it]. And God sees all that you do.

2.266 Would any of you like to have a garden of date-palms and vines, through which running waters flow, and have all manner of fruit therein - and then be overtaken by old age, with only weak children to [look after] him - and then [see] it smitten by a fiery whirlwind and utterly scorched? In this way God makes clear His messages unto you, so that you might take thought.

2.267 O you who have attained to faith! Spend on others out of the good things which you may have acquired, and out of that which We bring forth for you from the earth; and choose not for your spending the bad things which you yourselves would not accept without averting your eyes in disdain. And know that God is self-sufficient, ever to be praised.

2.268 Satan threatens you with the prospect of poverty and bids you to be niggardly, whereas God promises you His forgiveness and bounty; and God is infinite, all-knowing,

2.269 granting wisdom unto whom He wills: and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted wealth abundant. But none bears this in mind save those who are endowed with insight.

2.270 For, whatever you may spend on others, or whatever you may vow [to spend], verily, God knows it; and those who do wrong [by withholding charity] shall have none to succour them.

2.271 If you do deeds of charity openly, it is well; but if you bestow it upon the needy in secret, it will be even better for you, and it will atone for some of your bad deeds. And God is aware of all that you do.

2.272 It is not for thee [O Prophet] to make people follow the right path,²⁶⁰ since it is God [alone] who guides whom He wills. And whatever good you may spend on others is for your own good, provided that you spend only out of a longing for God's countenance: for, whatever good you may spend will be repaid unto you in full, and you shall not be wronged.

2.273 [And give] unto [such of] the needy who, being wholly wrapped up in God's cause, are unable to go about the earth [in search of livelihood].²⁶¹ He who is unaware [of their condition] might think that they are wealthy, because they abstain [from begging]; [but] thou canst recognize them by their special mark: they do not beg of men with importunity. And whatever good you may spend [on them], verily, God knows it all.

2.274 Those who spend their possessions [for the sake of God] by night and by day, secretly and openly, shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.

2.275 THOSE who gorge themselves on usury²⁶² behave but as he might behave whom Satan has confounded with his touch; for they say, "Buying and selling is but a kind of²⁶³ usury" - the while God has made buying and selling lawful and usury unlawful. Hence, whoever becomes aware of his Sustainer's admonition,²⁶⁴ and thereupon desists [from usury], may keep his past gains, and it will be for God to judge him; but as for those who return to it - they are destined for the fire, therein to abide!

2.276 God deprives usurious gains of all blessing, whereas He blesses charitable deeds with manifold increase.²⁶⁵ And God does not love anyone who is stubbornly ingrate and persists in sinful ways.

2.277 Verily, those who have attained to faith and do good works, and are constant in prayer, and dispense charity - they shall have their reward with their Sustainer, and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.

2.278 O you who have attained to faith! Remain conscious of God, and give up all outstanding gains from usury, if you are [truly] believers;²⁶⁶

2.279 for if you do it not, then know that you are at war with God and His Apostle. But if you repent, then you shall be entitled to [the return of] your principal:²⁶⁷ you will do no wrong, and neither will you be wronged.

2.280 If, however, [the debtor] is in straitened circumstances, [grant him] a delay until a time of ease; and it would be for your own good - if you but knew it - to remit [the debt entirely] by way of charity.

2.281 And be conscious of the Day on which you shall be brought back unto God, whereupon every human being shall be repaid in full for what he has earned, and none shall be wronged.²⁶⁸

2.282 O YOU who have attained to faith! Whenever you give or take credit²⁶⁹ for a stated term, set it down in writing. And let a scribe write it down equitably between you; and no scribe shall refuse to write as God has taught him:²⁷⁰ thus shall he write. And let him who contracts the debt dictate; and let him be conscious of God, his Sustainer, and not weaken anything of his undertaking.²⁷¹ And if he who contracts the debt is weak of mind or body, or is not able to dictate himself,²⁷² then let him who watches over his interests dictate equitably. And call upon two of your men to act as witnesses; and if two men are not available, then a man and two women from among such as are acceptable to you as witnesses, so that if one of them should make a mistake, the other could remind her.²⁷³ And the witnesses must not refuse [to give evidence] whenever they are called upon. And be not loath to write down every contractual provision,²⁷⁴ be it small or great, together with the time at which it falls due; this is more equitable in the sight of God, more reliable as evidence, and more likely to prevent you from having doubts [later]. If, however, [the transaction] concerns ready merchandise which you transfer directly unto one another, you will incur no sin if you do not write it down. And have witnesses whenever you trade with one another, but neither scribe nor witness must suffer harm;²⁷⁵ for if you do [them harm], behold, it will be sinful conduct on your part. And remain conscious of God, since it is God who teaches you [herewith] - and God has full knowledge of everything.

2.283 And if you are on a journey and cannot find a scribe, pledges [may be taken] in hand: but if you trust one another, then let him who is trusted fulfil his trust, and let him be conscious of God, his Sustainer. And do not conceal what you have witnessed²⁷⁶ - for, verily, he who conceals it is sinful at heart: and God has full knowledge of all that you do.

2.284 Unto God belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. And whether you bring into the open what is in your minds or conceal it, God will call you to account for it; and then He will forgive whom He wills, and will chastise whom He wills: for God has the power to will anything.

2.285 THE APOSTLE, and the believers with him, believe in what has been bestowed upon him from on high by his Sustainer: they all believe in God, and His angels, and His revelations, and His apostles,

making no distinction between any of His apostles;²⁷⁷ and they say: "We have heard, and we pay heed.
Grant us Thy forgiveness, O our Sustainer, for with Thee is all journeys' end!

2.286 "God does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear: in his favour shall be whatever good he does, and against him whatever evil he does. "O our Sustainer! Take us not to task if we forget or unwittingly do wrong! "O our Sustainer! Lay not upon us a burden such as Thou didst lay upon those who lived before us!²⁷⁸ O our Sustainer! Make us not bear burdens which we have no strength to bear! "And efface Thou our sins, and grant us forgiveness, and bestow Thy mercy upon us! Thou art our Lord Supreme: succour us, then, against people who deny the truth!"

Author Comments

1 - Regarding the possible significance of the single letters called al-muqatta'at, which occur at the beginning of some surahs of the Qur'an, see Appendix II, where the various theories bearing on this subject are discussed.

2 - The conventional translation of muttaqi as "God-fearing" does not adequately render the positive content of this expression - namely, the awareness of His all-presence and the desire to mould one's existence in the light of this awareness; while the interpretation adopted by some translators, "one who guards himself against evil" or "one who is careful of his duty", does not give more than one particular aspect of the concept of God-consciousness.

3 - Al-ghayb (commonly, and erroneously, translated as "the Unseen") is used in the Qur'an to denote all those sectors or phases of reality which lie beyond the range of human perception and cannot, therefore, be proved or disproved by scientific observation or even adequately comprised within the accepted categories of speculative thought: as, for instance, the existence of God and of a definite purpose underlying the universe, life after death, the real nature of time, the existence of spiritual forces and their inter-action, and so forth. Only a person who is convinced that the ultimate reality comprises far more than our observable environment can attain to belief in God and, thus, to a belief that life has meaning and purpose. By pointing out that it is "a guidance for those who believe in the existence of that which is beyond human perception", the Qur'an says, in effect, that it will - of necessity - remain a closed book to all whose minds cannot accept this fundamental premise.

4 - Ar-rizq ("provision of sustenance") applies to all that may be of benefit to man, whether it be concrete (like food, property, offspring, etc.) or abstract (like knowledge, piety, etc.). The "spending on others" is mentioned here in one breath with God-consciousness and prayer because it is precisely in such selfless acts that true piety comes to its full fruition. It should be borne in mind that the verb anfaqa (lit., "he spent") is always used in the Qur'an to denote spending freely on, or as a gift to, others, whatever the motive may be.

5 - This is a reference to one of the fundamental doctrines of the Qur'an: the doctrine of the historical continuity of divine revelation. Life - so the Qur'an teaches us - is not a series of unconnected jumps but a continuous, organic process: and this law applies also to the life of the mind, of which man's religious experience (in its cumulative sense) is a part. Thus, the religion of the Qur'an can be properly understood only against the background of the great monotheistic faiths which preceded it, and which, according to Muslim belief, culminate and achieve their final formulation in the faith of Islam.

6 - In contrast with the frequently occurring term al-kafirun ("those who deny the truth"), the use of the past tense in *alladhina kafaru* indicates conscious intent, and is, therefore, appropriately rendered as "those who are bent on denying the truth". This interpretation is supported by many commentators, especially Zamakhshari (who, in his commentary on this verse, uses the expression, "those who have deliberately resolved upon their kufr"). Elsewhere in the Qur'an such people are spoken of as having "hearts with which they fail to grasp the truth, and eyes with which they fail to see, and ears with which they fail to hear" ([7:179](#)). - For an explanation of the terms kufr ("denial of the truth"), kafir ("one who denies the truth"), etc., see note [4] on [74:10](#), where this concept appears for the first time in Qur'anic revelation.

7 - A reference to the natural law instituted by God, whereby a person who persistently adheres to false beliefs and refuses to listen to the voice of truth gradually loses the ability to perceive the truth, "so that finally, as it were, a seal is set upon his heart" (Raghib). Since it is God who has instituted all laws of nature - which, in their aggregate, are called *sunnat Allah* ("the way of God") - this "sealing" is attributed to Him: but it is obviously a consequence of man's free choice and not an act of "predestination". Similarly, the suffering which, in the life to come, is in store for those who during their life in this world have wilfully remained deaf and blind to the truth, is a natural consequence of their free choice - just as happiness in the life to come is the natural consequence of man's endeavour to attain to righteousness and inner illumination. It is in this sense that the Qur'anic references to God's "reward" and "punishment" must be understood.

8 - I.e., before God and man - and to themselves. It is generally assumed that the people to whom this passage alludes in the first instance are the hypocrites of Medina who, during the early years after the hijrah, outwardly professed their adherence to Islam while remaining inwardly unconvinced of the truth of Muhammad's message. However, as is always the case with Qur'anic allusions to contemporary or historical events, the above and the following verses have a general, timeless import inasmuch as they refer to all people who are prone to deceive themselves in order to evade a spiritual commitment.

9 - It would seem that this is an allusion to people who oppose any "intrusion" of religious considerations

into the realm of practical affairs, and thus - often unwittingly, thinking that they are "but improving things" - contribute to the moral and social confusion referred to in the subsequent verse.

10 - Lit., "their satans" (shayatin, pl. of shaytan). In accordance with ancient Arabic usage, this term often denotes people "who, through their insolent persistence in evildoing (tamarrud), have become like satans" (Zamakhshari): an interpretation of the above verse accepted by most of the commentators. However, the term shaytan - which is derived from the verb shatana, "he was [or "became"] remote [from all that is good and true]" (Lisan al-'Arab, Taj al-'Arus) - is often used in the Qur'an to describe the "satanic" (i.e., exceedingly evil) propensities in man's own soul, and especially all impulses which run counter to truth and morality (Raghib).

11 - Lit., "God will mock at them". My rendering is in conformity with the generally accepted interpretation of this phrase.

12 - The obvious implication is: "but He does not will this" - that is, He does not preclude the possibility that "those who have taken error in exchange for guidance" may one day perceive the truth and mend their ways. The expression "their hearing and their sight" is obviously a metonym for man's instinctive ability to discern between good and evil and, hence, for his moral responsibility. - In the parable of the "people who kindle a fire" we have, I believe, an allusion to some people's exclusive reliance on what is termed the "scientific approach" as a means to illumine and explain all the imponderables of life and faith, and the resulting arrogant refusal to admit that anything could be beyond the reach of man's intellect. This "overweening arrogance", as the Qur'an terms it, unavoidably exposes its devotees - and the society dominated by them - to the lightning of disillusion which "well-nigh takes away their sight", i.e., still further weakens their moral perception and deepens their "terror of death".

13 - Lit., "do not give God any compeers" (andad, pl. of nidd). There is full agreement among all commentators that this term implies any object of adoration to which some or all of God's qualities are ascribed, whether it be conceived as a deity "in its own right" or a saint supposedly possessing certain divine or semi-divine powers. This meaning can be brought out only by a free rendering of the above phrase.

14 - I.e., the message of which the doctrine of God's oneness and uniqueness is the focal point. By the use of the word "doubt" (rayb), this passage is meant to recall the opening sentence of this surah: "This divine writ - let there be no doubt about it...", etc. The gradualness of revelation is implied in the grammatical form nazzalna - which is important in this context inasmuch as the opponents of the Prophet

argued that the Qur'an could not be of divine origin because it was being revealed gradually, and not in one piece (Zamakhshari).

15 - Lit., "come forward with a surah like it, and call upon your witnesses other than God" - namely, "to attest that your hypothetical literary effort could be deemed equal to any part of the Qur'an." This challenge occurs in two other places as well ([10:38](#) and [11:13](#), in which latter case the unbelievers are called upon to produce ten chapters of comparable merit); see also [17:88](#).

16 - This evidently denotes all objects of worship to which men turn instead of God - their powerlessness and inefficacy being symbolized by the lifelessness of stones - while the expression "human beings" stands here for human actions deviating from the way of truth (cf. Manar I, 197): the remembrance of all of which is bound to increase the sinner's suffering in the hereafter, referred to in the Qur'an as "hell".

17 - Lit., "something resembling it". Various interpretations, some of them of an esoteric and highly speculative nature, have been given to this passage. For the manner in which I have translated it I am indebted to Muhammad 'Abduh (in Manar I, 232 f.), who interprets the phrase, "It is this that in days of yore was granted to us as our sustenance" as meaning: "It is this that we have been promised during our life on earth as a requital for faith and righteous deeds." In other words, man's actions and attitudes in this world will be mirrored in their "fruits", or consequences, in the life to come - as has been expressed elsewhere in the Qur'an in the verses, "And he who shall have done an atom's weight of good, shall behold it; and he who shall have done an atom's weight of evil, shall behold it" ({99:7-8}). As regards the reference to "spouses" in the next sentence, it is to be noted that the term *zawj* (of which *azwaj* is the plural) signifies either of the two components of a couple - that is, the male as well as the female.

18 - Lit., "something above it", i.e., relating to the quality of smallness stressed here - as one would say, "such-and-such a person is the lowest of people, and even more than that" (Zamakhshari). The reference to "God's parables", following as it does immediately upon a mention of the gardens of paradise and the suffering through hell-fire in the life to come, is meant to bring out the allegorical nature of this imagery.

19 - The "bond with God" (conventionally translated as "God's covenant") apparently refers here to man's moral obligation to use his inborn gifts - intellectual as well as physical - in the way intended for them by God. The "establishment" of this bond arises from the faculty of reason which, if properly used, must lead man to a realization of his own weakness and dependence on a causative power and, thus, to a gradual cognition of God's will with reference to his own behaviour. This interpretation of the "bond with God" seems to be indicated by the fact that there is no mention of any specific "covenant" in either the

preceding or the subsequent verses of the passage under consideration. The deliberate omission of any explanatory reference in this connection suggests that the expression "bond with God" stands for something that is rooted in the human situation as such, and can, therefore, be perceived instinctively as well as through conscious experience: namely, that innate relationship with God which makes Him "closer to man than his neck-vein" ([50:16](#)). For an explanation of the subsequent reference to "what God has bidden to be joined", see surah {13}, note [43].

20 - The term sama' ("heaven" or "sky") is applied to anything that is spread like a canopy above any other thing. Thus, the visible skies which stretch like a vault above the earth and form, as it were, its canopy, are called sama': and this is the primary meaning of this term in the Qur'an; in a wider sense, it has the connotation of "cosmic system". As regards the "seven heavens", it is to be borne in mind that in Arabic usage - and apparently in other Semitic languages as well - the number "seven" is often synonymous with "several" (see Lisan al-'Arab), just as "seventy" or "seven hundred" often means many or "very many" (Taj al-'Arus). This, taken together with the accepted linguistic definition that "every sama' is a sama' with regard to what is below it" (Raghib), may explain the "seven heavens" as denoting the multiplicity of cosmic systems. - For my rendering of thumma, at the beginning of this sentence, as "and", see surah {7}, first part of note [43].

21 - The interjection "lo" seems to be the only adequate rendering, in this context, of the particle idh, which is usually - and without sufficient attention to its varying uses in Arabic construction - translated as "when". Although the latter rendering is often justified, idh is also used to indicate "the sudden, or unexpected, occurrence of a thing" (cf. Lane I, 39), or a sudden turn in the discourse. The subsequent allegory, relating as it does to the faculty of reason implanted in man, is logically connected with the preceding passages.

22 - Lit., "establish on earth a successor" or a "vice-gerent". The term khalifah - derived from the verb khalafa, "he succeeded [another]" - is used in this allegory to denote man's rightful supremacy on earth, which is most suitably rendered by the expression "he shall inherit the earth" (in the sense of being given possession of it). See also [6:165](#), [27:62](#) and [35:39](#), where all human beings are spoken of as khala'if al-ard.

23 - Lit., "all the names". The term ism ("name") implies, according to all philologists, an expression "conveying the knowledge [of a thing]...applied to denote a substance or an accident or an attribute, for the purpose of distinction" (Lane IV, 1435): in philosophical terminology, a "concept". From this it may legitimately be inferred that the "knowledge of all the names" denotes here man's faculty of logical definition and, thus, of conceptual thinking. That by "Adam" the whole human race is meant here becomes obvious from the preceding reference, by the angels, to "such as will spread corruption on earth and will shed blood", as well as from [7:11](#).

24 - Namely, that it was they who, by virtue of their purity, were better qualified to "inherit the earth".

25 - To show that, by virtue of his ability to think conceptually, man is superior in this respect even to the angels.

26 - For an explanation of the name of the Fallen Angel, see surah 7, note 10. The fact of this "rebellion", repeatedly stressed in the Qur'an, has led some of the commentators to the conclusion that he could not have been one of the angels, since these are incapable of sinning: "they do not bear themselves with false pride... and they do whatever they are bidden to do" (16:49-50). As against this, other commentators point to the Qur'anic phrasing of God's command to the angels and of Iblis' refusal to obey, which makes it absolutely clear that at the time of that command he was indeed one of the heavenly host. Hence, we must assume that his "rebellion" has a purely symbolic significance and is, in reality, the outcome of a specific function assigned to him by God (see note 31 on 15:41).

27 - Lit., "the garden". There is a considerable difference of opinion among the commentators as to what is meant here by "garden": a garden in the earthly sense, or the paradise that awaits the righteous in the life to come, or some special garden in the heavenly regions? According to some of the earliest commentators (see Manar I, 277), an earthly abode is here alluded to - namely, an environment of perfect ease, happiness and innocence. In any case, this story of Adam is obviously one of the allegories referred to in [3:7](#).

28 - This tree is alluded to elsewhere in the Qur'an ([20:120](#)) as "the tree of life eternal", and in the Bible (Genesis ii, 9) as "the tree of life" and "the tree of knowledge of good and evil". For a tentative explanation of this allegory, see note [106] on [20:120](#).

29 - Lit., "brought them out of what they had been in": i.e., by inducing them to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree.

30 - With this sentence, the address changes from the hitherto-observed dual form to the plural: a further

indication that the moral of the story relates to the human race as a whole. See also surah {7}, note [16].

31 - This passage connects directly with the preceding passages in that it refers to the continuous guidance vouchsafed to man through divine revelation. The reference to the children of Israel at this point, as in so many other places in the Qur'an, arises from the fact that their religious beliefs represented an earlier phase of the monotheistic concept which culminates in the revelation of the Qur'an.

32 - A reference to the persistent Jewish belief that they alone among all nations have been graced by divine revelation. The "trifling gain" is their conviction that they are "God's chosen people" - a claim which the Qur'an consistently refutes.

33 - By "overlaying the truth with falsehood" is meant the corrupting of the Biblical text, of which the Qur'an frequently accuses the Jews (and which has since been established by objective textual criticism), while the "suppression of the truth" refers to their disregard or deliberately false interpretation of the words of Moses in the Biblical passage, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deuteronomy xviii, 15), and the words attributed to God Himself, "I will raise them up a prophet from among thy brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth" (Deuteronomy xviii, 18). The "brethren" of the children of Israel are obviously the Arabs, and particularly the musta'ribah ("Arabianized") group among them, which traces its descent to Ishmael and Abraham: and since it is to this group that the Arabian Prophet's own tribe, the Quraysh, belonged, the above Biblical passages must be taken as referring to his advent.

34 - In Islamic Law, zakah denotes an obligatory tax, incumbent on Muslims, which is meant to purify a person's capital and income from the taint of selfishness (hence the name). The proceeds of this tax are to be spent mainly, but not exclusively, on the poor. Whenever, therefore, this term bears the above legal implication, I translate it as "the purifying dues". Since, however, in this verse it refers to the children of Israel and obviously implies only acts of charity towards the poor, it is more appropriate to translate it as "almsgiving" or "charity". I have also adopted this latter rendering in all instances where the term zakah, though relating to Muslims, does not apply specifically to the obligatory tax as such (e.g., in [73:20](#), where this term appears for the first time in the chronology of revelation).

35 - The "taking of ransom ('adl)" is an obvious allusion to the Christian doctrine of vicarious redemption as well as to the Jewish idea that "the chosen people" - as the Jews considered themselves - would be exempt from punishment on the Day of Judgment. Both these ideas are categorically refuted in the Qur'an.

36 - See Exodus i, 15-16, 22.

37 - The story of the golden calf is dealt with at greater length in [7:148](#) ff. and [20:85](#) ff. Regarding the crossing of the Red Sea, to which verse {50} above alludes, see {20:77-78} and {26:63-66}, as well as the corresponding notes. The forty nights (and days) which Moses spent on Mount Sinai are mentioned again in [7:142](#).

38 - Muhammad 'Abduh amplifies the above interpretation of al-furqan (adopted by Tabari, Zamakhshari and other great commentators) by maintaining that it applies also to "human reason, which enables us to distinguish the true from the false" (Manar III, 160), apparently basing this wider interpretation on 8:41, where the battle of Badr is described as yawm al-furqan ("the day on which the true was distinguished from the false"). While the term furqdn is often used in the Qur'an to describe one or another of the revealed scriptures, and particularly the Qur'an itself, it has undoubtedly also the connotation pointed out by 'Abduh: for instance, in 8:29, where it clearly refers to the faculty of moral valuation which distinguishes every human being who is truly conscious of God.

39 - Lit., "kill yourselves" or, according to some commentators, "kill one another". This literal interpretation (probably based on the Biblical account in Exodus xxxii, 26-28) is not, however, convincing in view of the immediately preceding call to repentance and the subsequent statement that this repentance was accepted by God. I incline, therefore, to the interpretation given by 'Abd al-Jabbar (quoted by Razi in his commentary on this verse) to the effect that the expression "kill yourselves" is used here in a metaphorical sense (majazan), i.e., "mortify yourselves".

40 - The Qur'an does not state what form this "thunderbolt of punishment" (as-sa'iqah) took. The lexicographers give various interpretations to this word, but all agree on the element of vehemence and suddenness inherent in it (see Lane IV, 1690).

41 - Lit., "after your death". The expression mawt does not always denote physical death. Arab philologists - e.g., Raghib - explain the verb mata (lit., "he died") as having, in certain contexts, the meaning of "he became deprived of sensation, dead as to the senses"; and occasionally as "deprived of the intellectual faculty, intellectually dead"; and sometimes even as "he slept" (see Lane VII, 2741).

42 - The word qaryah primarily denotes a "village" or "town", but is also used in the sense of "land". Here it apparently refers to Palestine.

43 - This interpretation of the word hittah is recorded by most of the lexicographers (cf. Lane II, 592) on the basis of what many Companions of the Prophet said about it (for the relevant quotations, see Ibn Kathir in his commentary on this verse). Thus, the children of Israel were admonished to take possession of the promised land ("enter the gate") in a spirit of humility (lit., "prostrating yourselves"), and not to regard it as something that was "due" to them.

44 - According to several Traditions (extensively quoted by Ibn Kathir), they played, with a derisive intent, upon the word hittah, substituting for it something irrelevant or meaningless. Muhammad 'Abduh, however, is of the opinion that the "saying" referred to in verse {58} is merely a metaphor for an attitude of mind demanded of them, and that, correspondingly, the "substitution" signifies here a wilful display of arrogance in disregard of God's command (see Manar I,324 f.).

45 - I.e., according to their tribal divisions.

46 - I.e., "Would you exchange your freedom for the paltry comforts which you enjoyed in your Egyptian captivity?" In the course of their wanderings in the desert of Sinai, many Jews looked back with longing to the comparative security of their life in Egypt, as has been explicitly stated in the Bible (Numbers xi), and is, moreover, evident from Moses' allusion to it in the next sentence of the above Qur'anic passage.

47 - The verb habata means, literally, "he went down a declivity"; it is also used figuratively in the sense of falling from dignity and becoming mean and abject (cf. Lane VIII, 2876). Since the bitter exclamation of Moses cannot be taken literally, both of the above meanings of the verb may be combined in this context and agreeably translated as "go back in shame to Egypt".

48 - This passage obviously refers to a later phase of Jewish history. That the Jews actually did kill some of their prophets is evidenced, for instance, in the story of John the Baptist, as well as in the more general accusation uttered, according to the Gospel, by Jesus: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee" (Matthew xxiii, 37). See also Matthew xxiii, 34-35, Luke xi, 51 - both of which refer to the murder of Zachariah - and I Thessalonians ii, 15. The implication of continuity in, or persistent repetition of, their wrongdoing transpires from the use of the auxiliary verb kana in this context.

49 - The Sabians seem to have been a monotheistic religious group intermediate between Judaism and Christianity. Their name (probably derived from the Aramaic verb tsebha', "he immersed himself [in water]") would indicate that they were followers of John the Baptist - in which case they could be identified with the Mandaeans, a community which to this day is to be found in 'Iraq. They are not to be confused with the so-called "Sabians of Harran", a gnostic sect which still existed in the early centuries of Islam, and which may have deliberately adopted the name of the true Sabians in order to obtain the advantages accorded by the Muslims to the followers of every monotheistic faith.

50 - The above passage - which recurs in the Qur'an several times - lays down a fundamental doctrine of Islam. With a breadth of vision unparalleled in any other religious faith, the idea of "salvation" is here made conditional upon three elements only: belief in God, belief in the Day of Judgment, and righteous action in life. The statement of this doctrine at this juncture - that is, in the midst of an appeal to the children of Israel - is warranted by the false Jewish belief that their descent from Abraham entitles them to be regarded as "God's chosen people".

51 - Lit., "and We raised the mountain (at-tur) above you": i.e., letting the lofty mountain bear witness, as it were, to their solemn pledge, spelled out in verse {83} below. Throughout my translation of the Qur'an, I am rendering the expression at-tur as "Mount Sinai", since it is invariably used in this sense alone.

52 - For the full story of the Sabbath-breakers, and the metaphorical allusion to "apes", see {7:163-166}. The expression ma bayna yadayha, rendered here as "their time", is explained in surah {3}, note [3].

53 - As is evident from verse {72}, the story related in this and the subsequent passages almost certainly refers to the Mosaic law which ordains that in certain cases of unresolved murder a cow should be sacrificed, and the elders of the town or village nearest to the place of the murder should wash their hands over it and declare, "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it" - whereupon the community would be absolved of collective responsibility. For the details of this Old Testament ordinance,

see Deuteronomy xxi, 1-9.

54 - Lit., "lest I be one of the ignorant". The imputation of mockery was obviously due to the fact that Moses promulgated the above ordinance in very general terms, without specifying any details.

55 - I.e., their obstinate desire to obtain closer and closer definitions of the simple commandment revealed to them through Moses had made it almost impossible for them to fulfil it. In his commentary on this passage, Tabari quotes the following remark of Ibn 'Abbas: "If [in the first instance] they had sacrificed any cow chosen by themselves, they would have fulfilled their duty; but they made it complicated for themselves, and so God made it complicated for them." A similar view has been expressed, in the same context, by Zamakhshari. It would appear that the moral of this story points to an important problem of all (and, therefore, also of Islamic) religious jurisprudence: namely, the inadvisability of trying to elicit additional details in respect of any religious law that had originally been given in general terms - for, the more numerous and multiform such details become, the more complicated and rigid becomes the law. This point has been acutely grasped by Rashid Rida', who says in his commentary on the above Qur'anic passage (see Manar I, 345 f.): "Its lesson is that one should not pursue one's [legal] inquiries in such a way as to make laws more complicated.... This was how the early generations [of Muslims] visualized the problem. They did not make things complicated for themselves - and so, for them, the religious law (din) was natural, simple and liberal in its straightforwardness. But those who came later added to it [certain other] injunctions which they had deduced by means of their own reasoning (ijtihad); and they multiplied those [additional] injunctions to such an extent that the religious law became a heavy burden on the community." For the sociological reason why the genuine ordinances of Islamic Law - that is, those which have been prima facie laid down as such in the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet - are almost always devoid of details, I would refer the reader to my book State and Government in Islam (pp. 11 ff. and passim). The importance of this problem, illustrated in the above story of the cow - and correctly grasped by the Prophet's Companions - explains why this surah has been entitled "The Cow". (See also [5:101](#) and the corresponding notes [120-123].)

56 - See note [53] above. The use of the plural "you" implies the principle of collective, communal responsibility stipulated by Mosaic Law in cases of murder by a person or persons unknown. God's bringing the guilt to light obviously refers to the Day of Judgment.

57 - The phrase idribuhu bi-ba'diha can be literally translated as "strike him [or "it"] with something of her [or "it"]" - and this possibility has given rise to the fanciful assertion by many commentators that the children of Israel were commanded to strike the corpse of the murdered man with some of the flesh of the sacrificed cow, whereupon he was miraculously restored to life and pointed out his murderer! Neither the Qur'an, nor any saying of the Prophet, nor even the Bible offers the slightest warrant for this highly imaginative explanation, which must, therefore, be rejected - quite apart from the fact that the pronoun hu in idribuhu has a masculine gender, while the noun nafs (here translated as "human being") is feminine in

gender: from which it follows that the imperative idribuhu cannot possibly refer to nafs. On the other hand, the verb daraba (lit., "he struck") is very often used in a figurative or metonymic sense, as, for instance, in the expression daraba fi 'l-ard ("he journeyed on earth"), or daraba 'sh-shay' bi'sh-shay' ("he mixed one thing with another thing"), or daraba mathal ("he coined a similitude" or "propounded a parable" or "gave an illustration"), or 'ala darb wahid ("similarly applied" or "in the same manner"), or duribat 'alayhim adh-dhillah ("humiliation was imposed on them" or "applied to them"), and so forth. Taking all this into account, I am of the opinion that the imperative idribuhu occurring in the above Qur'anic passage must be translated as "apply it" or "this" (referring, in this context, to the principle of communal responsibility). As for the feminine pronoun ha in ba'diha ("some of it"), it must necessarily relate to the nearest preceding feminine noun - that is, to the nafs that has been murdered, or the act of murder itself about which (fiha) the community disagreed. Thus, the phrase idribuhu bi-ba'diha may be suitably rendered as "apply this [principle] to some of those [cases of unresolved murder]": for it is obvious that the principle of communal responsibility for murder by a person or persons unknown can be applied only to some and not to all such cases.

58 - Lit., "God gives life to the dead and shows you His messages" (i.e., He shows His will by means of such messages or ordinances). The figurative expression "He gives life to the dead" denotes the saving of lives, and is analogous to that in [5:32](#). In this context it refers to the prevention of bloodshed and the killing of innocent persons (Manar I, 351), be it through individual acts of revenge, or in result of an erroneous judicial process based on no more than vague suspicion and possibly misleading circumstantial evidence.

59 - For an explanation of this allusion, see [7:143](#). The simile of "the rocks from which streams gush forth" or "from which water issues" serves to illustrate its opposite, namely, dryness and lack of life, and is thus an allusion to the spiritual barrenness with which the Qur'an charges the children of Israel.

60 - Here the Muslims are addressed. In the early period of Islam - and especially after their exodus to Medina, where many Jews were then living - the Muslims expected that the Jews, with their monotheistic beliefs, would be the first to rally to the message of the Qur'an: a hope that was disappointed because the Jews regarded their own religion as a kind of national heritage reserved to the children of Israel alone, and did not believe in the necessity - or possibility - of a new revelation.

61 - Cf. Jeremiah xxiii, 26- "Ye have perverted the words of the living God".

62 - Lit., "before [or "in the sight of"] your Sustainer". Most of the commentators (e.g., Zamakhshari, Baghawi, Razi) agree in that the expression "your Sustainer" stands here for "that which your Sustainer

has revealed", namely, the Biblical prophecy relating to the coming of a prophet "from among the brethren" of the children of Israel, and that, therefore, the above phrase implies an argument on the basis of the Jews' own scriptures. (See also note [33] above.)

63 - In this case, the Old Testament.

64 - The reference here is to the scholars responsible for corrupting the text of the Bible and thus misleading their ignorant followers. The "trifling gain" is their feeling of pre-eminence as the alleged "chosen people".

65 - According to popular Jewish belief, even the sinners from among the children of Israel will suffer only very limited punishment in the life to come, and will be quickly reprieved by virtue of their belonging to "the chosen people": a belief which the Qur'an rejects.

66 - In the preceding passages, the children of Israel have been reminded of the favours that were bestowed on them. Now, however, the Qur'an reminds them of the fact that the way of righteousness has indeed been shown to them by means of explicit social and moral injunctions: and this reminder flows directly from the statement that the human condition in the life to come depends exclusively on the manner of one's life in this world, and not on one's descent.

67 - See note [34] above.

68 - The Old Testament contains many allusions to the waywardness and stubborn rebelliousness of the children of Israel - e.g., Exodus xxxii, 9, xxxiii, 3, xxxiv, 9; Deuteronomy ix, 6-8,23-24,27.

69 - This is a reference to the conditions prevailing at Medina at the time of the Prophet's hijrah. The two Arab tribes of Medina - Al-Aws and Khazraj - were in pre-Islamic times permanently at war with one

another; and out of the three Jewish tribes living there - the Banu Qaynuqa', Banu 'n-Nadir and Banu Qurayzah - the first-named two were allied with Khazraj, while the third was allied with Al-Aws. Thus, in the course of their warfare, Jew would kill Jew in alliance with pagans ("aiding one another in sin and hatred"): a twofold crime from the viewpoint of Mosaic Law. Nevertheless, they would subsequently ransom their mutual captives in obedience to that very same Law - and it is this glaring inconsistency to which the Qur'an alludes in the next sentence.

70 - Lit., "We caused him to be followed, after his time, by [all] the other apostles": a stress upon the continuous succession of prophets among the Jews (see Tabari, Zamakhshari, Razi, Ibn Kathir), which fact deprives them of any excuse of ignorance.

71 - This rendering of ruh al-qudus (lit., "the spirit of holiness") is based on the recurring use in the Qur'an of the term ruh in the sense of "divine inspiration". It is also recorded that the Prophet invoked the blessing of the ruh al-qudus on his Companion, the poet Hassan ibn Thabit (Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Da'ud and Tirmidhi): just as the Qur'an ([58:22](#)) speaks of all believers as being "strengthened by inspiration (ruh) from Him".

72 - Lit., "and some you are slaying". The change from the past tense observed throughout this sentence to the present tense in the verb taqtulun ("you are slaying") is meant to express a conscious intent in this respect and, thus, a persistent, ever-recurring trait in Jewish history (Manar I, 377), to which also the New Testament refers (Matthew xxiii, 34-35, 37), and I Thessalonians ii, 15).

73 - Lit., "our hearts are repositories [of knowledge]" - an allusion to the boast of the Jews that in view of the religious knowledge which they already possess, they are in no need of any further preaching (Ibn Kathir, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas; identical explanations are mentioned by Tabari and Zamakhshari).

74 - I.e., all their beliefs are centred on themselves and their alleged "exceptional" status in the sight of God.

75 - I.e., out of envy that God should bestow revelation upon anyone but a descendant of Israel - in this particular instance, upon the Arabian Prophet, Muhammad.

76 - A reference to their assertion that they believe in what has been revealed to them - i.e., the Law of Moses, which obviously prohibits the killing not only of prophets but of any innocent human being. See also the concluding sentences of verses {61} and {87}, and the corresponding notes.

77 - It is obvious that they did not actually utter these words; their subsequent behaviour, however, justifies the above metonymical expression.

78 - Lit., "into their hearts has been instilled the calf because of their denial of the truth": i.e., as soon as they turned away from the genuine message propounded by Moses, they fell into worshipping material goods, symbolized by the "golden calf".

79 - An allusion to the Jewish belief that paradise is reserved for the children of Israel alone (cf. verse {111} of this surah).

80 - According to several authentic Traditions, some of the learned men from among the Jews of Medina described Gabriel as "the enemy of the Jews", and this for three reasons: firstly, all the prophecies of the misfortune which was to befall the Jews in the course of their early history were said to have been transmitted to them by Gabriel, who thus became in their eyes a "harbinger of evil" (in contrast to the angel Michael, whom they regarded as a bearer of happy predictions and, therefore, as their "friend"); secondly, because the Qur'an states repeatedly that it was Gabriel who conveyed its message to Muhammad, whereas the Jews were of the opinion that only a descendant of Israel could legitimately claim divine revelation; and, thirdly, because the Qur'an - revealed through Gabriel - abounds in criticism of certain Jewish beliefs and attitudes and describes them as opposed to the genuine message of Moses. (For details of these Traditions, see Tabari, Zamakhshari, Baghawi, Razi, Baydawi, Ibn Kathir.) As regards my rendering of *ma bayna yadayhi* in verse {97} as "whatever there still remains of earlier revelations", see surah {3}, note [3].

81 - The divine writ referred to here is the Torah. By disregarding the prophecies relating to the coming of the Arabian Prophet, contained in Deuteronomy xviii, 15, 18 (see note [33] above), the Jews rejected, as it were, the whole of the revelation granted to Moses (Zamakhshari; also 'Abduh in *Manar* I, 397).

82 - The expression ash-shayatin, here rendered as "the evil ones", apparently refers to human beings, as has been pointed out by Tabari, Razi, etc., but may also allude to the evil, immoral impulses within man's heart (see note [10] on verse {14} of this surah). The above parenthetical sentence constitutes the Qur'anic refutation of the Biblical statement that Solomon had been guilty of idolatrous practices (see I Kings xi, 1-10), as well as of the legend that he was the originator of the magic arts popularly associated with his name.

82 - The expression ash-shayatin, here rendered as "the evil ones", apparently refers to human beings, as has been pointed out by Tabari, Razi, etc., but may also allude to the evil, immoral impulses within man's heart (see note [10] on verse {14} of this surah). The above parenthetical sentence constitutes the Qur'anic refutation of the Biblical statement that Solomon had been guilty of idolatrous practices (see I Kings xi, 1-10), as well as of the legend that he was the originator of the magic arts popularly associated with his name.

83 - This "declaration" circumscribes, metonymically, man's moral duty to reject every attempt at "sorcery" inasmuch as - irrespective of whether it succeeds or fails - it aims at subverting the order of nature as instituted by God. - As regards the designation of Harut and Marut, most of the readings of the Qur'an give the spelling malakayn ("the two angels"); but it is authentically recorded (see Tabari, Zamakhshari, Baghawi, Razi, etc.) that the great Companion of the Prophet, Ibn 'Abbas, as well as several learned men of the next generation - e.g., Al-Hasan al-Basri, Abu 'l-Aswad and Ad-Dahhak - read it as malikayn ("the two kings"). I myself incline to the latter reading; but since the other is more generally accepted, I have adopted it here. Some of the commentators are of the opinion that, whichever of the two readings is followed, it ought to be taken in a metaphorical sense, namely, "the two kingly persons", or "the two angelic persons": in this they rely on a saying of Ibn 'Abbas to the effect that Harut and Marut were "two men who practiced sorcery in Babylon" (Baghawi; see also Manar I, 402). At any rate, it is certain that from very ancient times Babylon was reputed to be the home of magic arts, symbolized in the legendary persons - perhaps kings - Harut and Marut; and it is to this legend that the Qur'an refers with a view to condemning every attempt at magic and sorcery, as well as all preoccupation with occult sciences in general.

84 - The above passage does not raise the question as to whether there is an objective truth in the occult phenomena loosely described as "magic", or whether they are based on self-deception. The intent here is no more and no less than to warn man that any attempt at influencing the course of events by means which - at least in the mind of the person responsible for it - have a "supernatural" connotation is a spiritual offence, and must inevitably result in a most serious damage to their author's spiritual status.

85 - This admonition, addressed in the first instance to the contemporaries of the Prophet, has - as so often in the Qur'an - a connotation that goes far beyond the historical circumstances that gave rise to it. The Companions were called upon to approach the Prophet with respect and to subordinate their personal desires and expectations to the commandments of the Faith revealed through him: and this injunction remains valid for every believer and for all times.

86 - I.e., revelation - which is the highest good. The allusion here is to the unwillingness of the Jews and the Christians to admit that revelation could have been bestowed on any community but their own.

87 - The principle laid down in this passage - relating to the supersession of the Biblical dispensation by that of the Qur'an - has given rise to an erroneous interpretation by many Muslim theologians. The word ayah ("message") occurring in this context is also used to denote a "verse" of the Qur'an (because every one of these verses contains a message). Taking this restricted meaning of the term ayah, some scholars conclude from the above passage that certain verses of the Qur'an have been "abrogated" by God's command before the revelation of the Qur'an was completed. Apart from the fancifulness of this assertion - which calls to mind the image of a human author correcting, on second thought, the proofs of his manuscript, deleting one passage and replacing it with another - there does not exist a single reliable Tradition to the effect that the Prophet ever declared a verse of the Qur'an to have been "abrogated". At the root of the so-called "doctrine of abrogation" may lie the inability of some of the early commentators to reconcile one Qur'anic passage with another: a difficulty which was overcome by declaring that one of the verses in question had been "abrogated". This arbitrary procedure explains also why there is no unanimity whatsoever among the upholders of the "doctrine of abrogation" as to which, and how many, Qur'an-verses have been affected by it; and, furthermore, as to whether this alleged abrogation implies a total elimination of the verse in question from the context of the Qur'an, or only a cancellation of the specific ordinance or statement contained in it. In short, the "doctrine of abrogation" has no basis whatever in historical fact, and must be rejected. On the other hand, the apparent difficulty in interpreting the above Qur'anic passage disappears immediately if the term ayah is understood, correctly, as "message", and if we read this verse in conjunction with the preceding one, which states that the Jews and the Christians refuse to accept any revelation which might supersede that of the Bible: for, if read in this way, the abrogation relates to the earlier divine messages and not to any part of the Qur'an itself.

88 - Lit., "whoever takes a denial of the truth in exchange for belief" - i.e., whoever refuses to accept the internal evidence of the truth of the Qur'anic message and demands, instead, an "objective" proof of its divine origin (Manar I, 416 f.). - That which was "asked of Moses aforetime" was the demand of the children of Israel to "see God face to face" (cf. [2:55](#)). The expression rendered by me as "the Apostle who has been sent unto you" reads, literally, "your Apostle", and obviously refers to the Prophet Muhammad, whose message supersedes the earlier revelations.

89 - This connects with verse {109} above: "Many among the followers of earlier revelation would like to bring you back to denying the truth", etc.

90 - Lit., "produce your evidence" - i.e., "from your own scriptures".

91 - Lit., "who surrenders his face unto God". Since the face of a person is the most expressive part of his body, it is used in classical Arabic to denote one's whole personality, or whole being. This expression, repeated in the Qur'an several times, provides a perfect definition of islam, which - derived from the root-verb aslama, "he surrendered himself" - means "self-surrender [to God]": and it is in this sense that the terms islam and muslim are used throughout the Qur'an. (For a full discussion of this concept, see my note on [68:35](#), where the expression muslim occurs for the first time in the chronological order of revelation.)

92 - Thus, according to the Qur'an, salvation is not reserved for any particular "denomination", but is open to everyone who consciously realizes the oneness of God, surrenders himself to His will and, by living righteously, gives practical effect to this spiritual attitude.

93 - An allusion to all who assert that only the followers of their own denomination shall partake of God's grace in the hereafter.

94 - In other words, "God will confirm the truth of what was true [in their respective beliefs] and show the falseness of what was false [therein]" (Muhammad 'Abduh in Manar I, 428). The Qur'an maintains throughout that there is a substantial element of truth in all faiths based on divine revelation, and that their subsequent divergencies are the result of "wishful beliefs" ([2:111](#)) and of a gradual corruption of the original teachings. (See also {22:67-69}.)

95 - It is one of the fundamental principles of Islam that every religion which has belief in God as its focal point must be accorded full respect, however much one may disagree with its particular tenets. Thus, the Muslims are under an obligation to honour and protect any house of worship dedicated to God, whether it be a mosque or a church or a synagogue (cf. the second paragraph of [22:40](#)); and any attempt to prevent the followers of another faith from worshipping God according to their own rites is condemned by the Qur'an as a sacrilege. A striking illustration of this principle is forthcoming from the Prophet's treatment of

the deputation from Christian Najran in the year 10 H. They were given free access to the Prophet's mosque, and with his full consent celebrated their religious rites there, although their adoration of Jesus as "the son of God" and of Mary as "the mother of God" was fundamentally at variance with Islamic beliefs (see Ibn Sa'd I/1, 84 f.).

96 - I.e., far from any imperfection such as would be implied in the necessity (or logical possibility) of having "progeny" either in a literal or a metaphorical sense. The expression subhana - applied exclusively to God - connotes His utter remoteness from any imperfection and any similarity, however tenuous, with any created being or thing.

97 - I.e., people who were not able to perceive the intrinsic truth of the messages conveyed to them by the prophets, but rather insisted on a miraculous "demonstration" that those messages really came from God, and thus failed to benefit from them. - This verse obviously connects with verse {108} above and, thus, refers to the objections of the Jews and the Christians to the message of the Qur'an. (See also note [29] on [74:52](#).)

98 - Or: "apply themselves to it with true application" - i.e., try to absorb its meaning and to understand its spiritual design.

99 - See [2:48](#). In the above context, this refers, specifically, to the belief of the Jews that their descent from Abraham would "ransom" them on the Day of Judgment - a belief which is refuted in the next verse.

100 - The classical commentators have indulged in much speculation as to what these commandments (kalimat, lit., "words") were. Since, however, the Qur'an does not specify them, it must be presumed that what is meant here is simply Abraham's complete submission to whatever commandments he received from God.

101 - This passage, read in conjunction with the two preceding verses, refutes the contention of the children of Israel that by virtue of their descent from Abraham, whom God made "a leader of men", they are "God's chosen people". The Qur'an makes it clear that the exalted status of Abraham was not something that would automatically confer a comparable status on his physical descendants, and certainly

not on the sinners among them.

102 - The Temple (al-bayt) - lit., "the House [of Worship]" - mentioned here is the Ka'bah in Mecca. In other places the Qur'an speaks of it as "the Ancient Temple" (al-bayt al-'atīq), and frequently also as "the Inviolable House of Worship" (al-masjid al-haram). Its prototype is said to have been built by Abraham as the first temple ever dedicated to the One God (see [3:96](#)), and which for this reason has been instituted as the direction of prayer (qiblah) for all Muslims, and as the goal of the annually recurring pilgrimage (hajj). It is to be noted that even in pre-Islamic times the Ka'bah was associated with the memory of Abraham, whose personality had always been in the foreground of Arabian thought. According to very ancient Arabian traditions, it was at the site of what later became Mecca that Abraham, in order to placate Sarah, abandoned his Egyptian bondswoman Hagar and their child Ishmael after he had brought them there from Canaan. This is by no means improbable if one bears in mind that for a camel-riding bedouin (and Abraham was certainly one) a journey of twenty or even thirty days has never been anything out of the ordinary. At first glance, the Biblical statement (Genesis xii, 14) that it was "in the wilderness of Beersheba" (i.e., in the southernmost tip of Palestine) that Abraham left Hagar and Ishmael would seem to conflict with the Qur'anic account. This seeming contradiction, however, disappears as soon as we remember that to the ancient, town-dwelling Hebrews the term "wilderness of Beersheba" comprised all the desert regions south of Palestine, including the Hijaz. It was at the place where they had been abandoned that Hagar and Ishmael, after having discovered the spring which is now called the Well of Zamzam, eventually settled; and it may have been that very spring which in time induced a wandering group of bedouin families belonging to the South-Arabian (Qahtani) tribe of Jurhum to settle there. Ishmael later married a girl of this tribe, and so became the progenitor of the musta'ribah ("Arabianized") tribes - thus called on account of their descent from a Hebrew father and a Qahtani mother. As for Abraham, he is said to have often visited Hagar and Ishmael; and it was on the occasion of one of these periodic visits that he, aided by Ishmael, erected the original structure of the Ka'bah. (For more detailed accounts of the Abrahamic tradition, see Bukhari's Sahih, Kitab al-'Ilm, Tabari's Ta'rikh al-Umam, Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hisham, Mas'udi's Muruj adh-Dhahab, Yaqut's Mu'jam al-Buldan, and other early Muslim historians.)

103 - This may refer to the immediate vicinity of the Ka'bah or, more probably (Manar I, 461 f.), to the sacred precincts (haram) surrounding it. The word amn (lit., "safety") denotes in this context a sanctuary for all living beings.

104 - The seven-fold circumambulation (tawaf) of the Ka'bah is one of the rites of the pilgrimage, symbolically indicating that all human actions and endeavours ought to have the idea of God and His oneness for their centre.

105 - The expression "our offspring" indicates Abraham's progeny through his first-born son, Ishmael, and is an indirect reference to the Prophet Muhammad, who descended from the latter.

106 - Lit., "within them".

107 - I.e. "In the religious traditions to which you adhere". It is to be noted that the conjunction *am* which stands at the beginning of this sentence is not always used in the interrogative sense ("is it that...?"): sometimes - and especially when it is syntactically unconnected with the preceding sentence, as in this case - it is an equivalent of *bal* ("rather", or "nay, but"), and has no interrogative connotation.

108 - In classical Arabic, as in ancient Hebrew usage, the term *ab* ("father") was applied not only to the direct male parent but also to grandfathers and even more distant ancestors, as well as to paternal uncles: which explains why Ishmael, who was Jacob's uncle, is mentioned in this context. Since he was the first-born of Abraham's sons, his name precedes that of Isaac.

109 - Lit., "you will not be asked about what they did". This verse, as well as verse {141} below, stresses the fundamental Islamic tenet of individual responsibility, and denies the Jewish idea of their being "the chosen people" by virtue of their descent, as well as - by implication - the Christian doctrine of an "original sin" with which all human beings are supposedly burdened because of Adam's fall from grace.

110 - The expression *hanif* is derived from the verb *hanafa*, which literally means "he inclined [towards a right state or tendency]" (cf. Lane II, 658). Already in pre-Islamic times, this term had a definitely monotheistic connotation, and was used to describe a man who turned away from sin and worldliness and from all dubious beliefs, especially idol-worship; and *tahannuf* denoted the ardent devotions, mainly consisting of long vigils and prayers, of the unitarian God-seekers of pre-Islamic times. Many instances of this use of the terms *hanif* and *tahannuf* occur in the verses of pre-Islamic poets, e.g., Umayyah ibn Abi's-Salt and Jiran al-'Awd (cf. *Lisan al-'Arab*, art. *hanafa*).

111 - Lit., "the grandchildren" (*al-asbat*, sing. *sibt*) - a term used in the Qur'an to describe, in the first instance, Abraham's, Isaac's and Jacob's immediate descendants, and, consequently, the twelve tribes which evolved from this ancestry.

112 - I.e., "we regard them all as true prophets of God".

113 - I.e., about God's will regarding the succession of prophethood and man's ultimate salvation. The Jews believe that prophethood was a privilege granted to the children of Israel alone, while the Christians maintain that Jesus - who, too, descended from the children of Israel - was God's final manifestation on earth; and each of these two denominations claims that salvation is reserved to its followers alone (see [2:111](#) and {135}). The Qur'an refutes these ideas by stressing, in the next sentence, that God is the Lord of all mankind, and that every individual will be judged on the basis of his own beliefs and his own behaviour alone.

114 - Regarding the term *asbat* (rendered here as well as in verse {136} as "descendants"), see note [111] above. In the above words the Qur'an alludes to the fact that the concept of "Jewry" came into being many centuries after the time of the Patriarchs, and even long after the time of Moses, while the concepts of "Christianity" and "Christians" were unknown in Jesus' time and represent later developments.

115 - A reference to the Biblical prediction of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (see note [33] on verse {42} of this surah), which effectively contradicts the Judaeo-Christian claim that all true prophets, after the Patriarchs, belonged to the children of Israel.

116 - Before his call to prophethood, and during the early Meccan period of his ministry, the Prophet - and his community with him - used to turn in prayer towards the Ka'bah. This was not prompted by any specific revelation, but was obviously due to the fact that the Ka'bah - although it had in the meantime been filled with various idols to which the pre-Islamic Arabs paid homage - was always regarded as the first temple ever dedicated to the One God (cf. [3:96](#)). Since he was aware of the sanctity of Jerusalem - the other holy centre of the unitarian faith - the Prophet prayed, as a rule, before the southern wall of the Ka'bah, towards the north, so as to face both the Ka'bah and Jerusalem. After the exodus to Medina he continued to pray northwards, with only Jerusalem as his qiblah (direction of prayer). About sixteen months after his arrival at Medina, however, he received a revelation (verses {142-150} of this surah) which definitively established the Ka'bah as the qiblah of the followers of the Qur'an. This "abandonment" of Jerusalem obviously displeased the Jews of Medina, who must have felt gratified when they saw the Muslims praying towards their holy city; and it is to them that the opening sentence of this passage refers. If one considers the matter from the historical point of view, there had never been any change in the divine commandments relating to the qiblah: there had simply been no ordinance whatever in this respect before verses {142-150} were revealed. Their logical connection with the preceding passages, which deal, in the main, with Abraham and his creed, lies in the fact that it was Abraham who erected the earliest structure of the temple which later came to be known as the Ka'bah.

117 - Or: "He guides onto a straight way him that wills [to be guided]".

118 - Lit., "middlemost community" - i.e., a community that keeps an equitable balance between extremes and is realistic in its appreciation of man's nature and possibilities, rejecting both licentiousness and exaggerated asceticism. In tune with its oft-repeated call to moderation in every aspect of life, the Qur'an exhorts the believers not to place too great an emphasis on the physical and material aspects of their lives, but postulates, at the same time, that man's urges and desires relating to this "life of the flesh" are God-willed and, therefore, legitimate. On further analysis, the expression "a community of the middle way" might be said to summarize, as it were, the Islamic attitude towards the problem of man's existence as such: a denial of the view that there is an inherent conflict between the spirit and the flesh, and a bold affirmation of the natural, God-willed unity in this twofold aspect of human life. This balanced attitude, peculiar to Islam, flows directly from the concept of God's oneness and, hence, of the unity of purpose underlying all His creation: and thus, the mention of the "community of the middle way" at this place is a fitting introduction to the theme of the Ka'bah, a symbol of God's oneness.

119 - I.e., "that your way of life be an example to all mankind, just as the Apostle is an example to you".

120 - I.e., "whom He has given understanding" (Razi). The "hard test" (kabirah) consisted in the fact that ever since their exodus to Medina the Muslims had become accustomed to praying towards Jerusalem - associated in their minds with the teachings of most of the earlier prophets mentioned in the Qur'an - and were now called upon to turn in their prayers towards the Ka'bah, which at that time (in the second year after the hijrah) was still used by the pagan Quraysh as a shrine dedicated to the worship of their numerous idols. As against this, the Qur'an states that true believers would not find it difficult to adopt the Ka'bah once again as their qiblah: they would instinctively realize the divine wisdom underlying this commandment which established Abraham's Temple as a symbol of God's oneness and a focal point of the ideological unity of Islam. (See also note [116] above.)

121 - Lit., "every sign (ayah)", i.e., of its being a revealed commandment.

122 - This refers, in the first instance, to the fact that the Ka'bah was Abraham's qiblah, as well as to the Biblical prophecies relating to Ishmael as the progenitor of a "great nation" (Genesis xxi, 13 and 18) from

whom a prophet "like unto Moses" would one day arise: for it was through Ishmael's descendant, the Arabian Prophet, that the commandment relating to the qiblah was revealed. (Regarding the still more explicit predictions of the future advent of the Prophet Muhammad, forthcoming from the canonical Gospels, see [61:6](#) and the corresponding note.)

123 - Lit., "everyone has a direction...", etc. Almost all of the classical commentators, from the Companions of the Prophet downwards, interpret this as a reference to the various religious communities and their different modes of "turning towards God" in worship. Ibn Kathir, in his commentary on this verse, stresses its inner resemblance to the phrase occurring in [5:48](#): "unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life". The statement that "every community faces a direction of its own" in its endeavour to express its submission to God implies, firstly, that at various times and in various circumstances man's desire to approach God in prayer has taken different forms (e.g., Abraham's choice of the Ka'bah as his qiblah, the Jewish concentration on Jerusalem, the eastward orientation of the early Christian churches, and the Qur'anic commandment relating to the Ka'bah); and, secondly, that the direction of prayer - however important its symbolic significance may be - does not represent the essence of faith as such: for, as the Qur'an says, "true piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west" ([2:177](#)), and, "God's is the east and the west" ([2:115](#) and {142}). Consequently, the revelation which established the Ka'bah as the qiblah of the Muslims should not be a matter of contention for people of other faiths, nor a cause of their disbelief in the truth of the Qur'anic revelation as such (Manar II, 21 f.).

124 - Lit., "except such among them as are bent upon wrongdoing" (regarding the intent implied in the use of the past tense in expressions like *alladhina zalamu* or *alladhina kafaru*, see note [6] on verse {6} of this surah). The Qur'an stresses repeatedly that the Muslims are true followers of Abraham. This claim, however, might have been open to objection so long as they prayed in a direction other than Abraham's qiblah, the Ka'bah. The establishment of the latter as the qiblah of the followers of the Qur'an would invalidate any such argument and would leave it only to "those who are bent upon wrongdoing" (in this case, distorting the truth) to challenge the message of the Qur'an on these grounds.

125 - Lit., "with something".

126 - Lit., "God's symbols". The space between the two low outcrops of rock called As-Safa and Al-Marwah, situated in Mecca in the immediate vicinity of the Ka'bah, is said to have been the scene of Hagar's suffering when Abraham, following God's command, abandoned her and their infant son Ishmael in the desert (see note [102] above). Distraught with thirst and fearing for the life of her child, Hagar ran to and fro between the two rocks and fervently prayed to God for succour: and, finally, her reliance on God and her patience were rewarded by the discovery of a spring - existing to this day and known as the Well of Zamzam - which saved the two from death through thirst. It was in remembrance of Hagar's extreme trial, and of her trust in God, that As-Safa and Al-Marwah had come to be regarded, even in pre-Islamic times, as symbols of faith and patience in adversity: and this explains their mention in the context of the

passages which deal with the virtues of patience and trust in God (Razi).

127 - It is in commemoration of Hagar's running in distress between As-Safa and Al-Marwah that the Mecca pilgrims are expected to walk, at a fast pace, seven times between these two hillocks. Because of the fact that in pre-Islamic times certain idols had been standing there, some of the early Muslims were reluctant to perform a rite which seemed to them to be associated with recent idolatry (Razi, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas). The above verse served to reassure them on this score by pointing out that this symbolic act of remembrance was much older than the idolatry practiced by the pagan Quraysh.

128 - From the phrase "if one does more good than he is bound to do", read in conjunction with "no wrong does he who..." (or, more literally, "there shall be no blame upon him who..."), some of the great Islamic scholars - e.g., Imam Abu Hanifah - conclude that the walking to and fro between As-Safa and Al-Marwah is not one of the obligatory rites of pilgrimage but rather a supererogatory act of piety (see Zamakhshari and Razi). Most scholars, however, hold the view that it is an integral part of the pilgrimage.

129 - Lit., "whom all who reject will reject" - i.e., all righteous persons who are able to judge moral issues. God's rejection (la'nah) denotes "exclusion from His grace" (Manar II, 50). In classical Arabic usage, the primary meaning of la'nah is equivalent to ib'ad ("estrangement" or "banishment"); in the terminology of the Qur'an, it signifies "rejection from all that is good" (Lisan al-'Arab). According to Ibn 'Abbas and several outstanding scholars of the next generation, the divine writ mentioned here is the Bible; thus, the above verse refers to the Jews and the Christians.

130 - This passage is one of the many in which the Qur'an appeals to "those who use their reason" to observe the daily wonders of nature, including the evidence of man's own ingenuity ("the ships that speed through the sea"), as so many indications of a conscious, creative Power pervading the universe.

131 - Lit., "there are among the people such as take [to worshipping] compeers beside God". Regarding the term andad, see note [13] on verse {22} of this surah.

132 - Lit., "when they see the suffering" (or "chastisement").

133 - Lit., "followed" - i.e., as saints or alleged "divine personalities".

134 - Asbab (sing. sabab) denotes, in its primary meaning, "ties" or "attachments", and in a tropical sense, "means [towards any end]" (cf. Lisan al-'Arab, and Lane IV, 1285). In the above context, asbab obviously refers to means of salvation, and may thus be rendered as "hopes".

135 - Lit., "Would that there were a return for us".

136 - Sc., back to the life of this world, with a second chance before them (Manar II, 81).

137 - This refers to an arbitrary attribution to God of commandments or prohibitions in excess of what has been clearly ordained by Him (Zamakhshari). Some of the commentators (e.g., Muhammad 'Abduh in Manar II, 89 f.) include within this expression the innumerable supposedly "legal" injunctions which, without being clearly warranted by the wording of the Qur'an or an authentic Tradition, have been obtained by individual Muslim scholars through subjective methods of deduction and then put forward as "God's ordinances". The connection between this passage and the preceding ones is obvious. In verses {165-167} the Qur'an speaks of those "who choose to believe in beings that supposedly rival God": and this implies also a false attribution, to those beings, of a right to issue quasi-religious ordinances of their own, as well as an attribution of religious validity to customs sanctioned by nothing but ancient usage (see next verse).

138 - This is a very free rendering of the elliptic sentence which, literally, reads thus: "The parable of those who are bent on denying the truth is as that of him who cries unto what hears nothing but a cry and a call." The verb na'qa is mostly used to describe the inarticulate cry with which the shepherd drives his flock.

139 - I.e., all that has been dedicated or offered in sacrifice to an idol or a saint or a person considered to be "divine". For a more comprehensive enumeration of the forbidden kinds of flesh, see [5:3](#).

140 - This term is used here in its generic sense, comprising both the Qur'an and the earlier revelations.

141 - Lit., "has been bestowing". Since the form nazzala implies gradualness and continuity in the process of revelation, it can best be rendered by the use of the present tense.

142 - Lit., "who hold discordant views about the divine writ" - i.e., either suppressing or rejecting parts of it, or denying its divine origin altogether (Razi).

143 - Thus, the Qur'an stresses the principle that mere compliance with outward forms does not fulfil the requirements of piety. The reference to the turning of one's face in prayer in this or that direction flows from the passages which dealt, a short while ago, with the question of the qiblah.

144 - In this context, the term "revelation" (al-kitab) carries, according to most of the commentators, a generic significance: it refers to the fact of divine revelation as such. As regards belief in angels, it is postulated here because it is through these spiritual beings or forces (belonging to the realm of al-ghayb, i.e., the reality which is beyond the reach of human perception) that God reveals His will to the prophets and, thus, to mankind at large.

145 - The expression ibn as-sabil (lit., "son of the road") denotes any person who is far from his home, and especially one who, because of this circumstance, does not have sufficient means of livelihood at his disposal (cf. Lane IV, 1302). In its wider sense it describes a person who, for any reason whatsoever, is unable to return home either temporarily or permanently: for instance, a political exile or refugee.

146 - Ar-raqabah (of which ar-riqab is the plural) denotes, literally, "the neck", and signifies also the whole of a human person. Metonymically, the expression fi 'r-riqab denotes "in the cause of freeing human beings from bondage", and applies to both the ransoming of captives and the freeing of slaves. By including this kind of expenditure within the essential acts of piety, the Qur'an implies that the freeing of

people from bondage - and, thus, the abolition of slavery - is one of the social objectives of Islam. At the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, slavery was an established institution throughout the world, and its sudden abolition would have been economically impossible. In order to obviate this difficulty, and at the same time to bring about an eventual abolition of all slavery, the Qur'an ordains in [8:67](#) that henceforth only captives taken in a just war (jihad) may be kept as slaves. But even with regard to persons enslaved in this or - before the revelation of [8:67](#) - in any other way, the Qur'an stresses the great merit inherent in the freeing of slaves, and stipulates it as a means of atonement for various transgressions (see, e.g., [4:92](#), [5:89](#), [58:3](#)). In addition, the Prophet emphatically stated on many occasions that, in the sight of God, the unconditional freeing of a human being from bondage is among the most praiseworthy acts which a Muslim could perform. (For a critical discussion and analysis of all the authentic Traditions bearing on this problem, see Nayl al-Awtar VI, 199 ff.)

147 - After having pointed out that true piety does not consist in mere adherence to outward forms and rites, the Qur'an opens, as it were, a new chapter relating to the problem of man's behaviour. Just as piety cannot become effective without righteous action, individual righteousness cannot become really effective in the social sense unless there is agreement within the community as to the social rights and obligations of its members: in other words, as to the practical laws which should govern the behaviour of the individual within the society and the society's attitude towards the individual and his actions. This is the innermost reason why legislation plays so great a role within the ideology of Islam, and why the Qur'an consistently intertwines its moral and spiritual exhortation with ordinances relating to practical aspects of social life. Now one of the main problems facing any society is the safeguarding of the lives and the individual security of its members: and so it is understandable that laws relating to homicide and its punishment are dealt with prominently at this place. (It should be borne in mind that "The Cow" was the first surah revealed in Medina, that is, at the time when the Muslim community had just become established as an independent social entity.) As for the term qisas occurring at the beginning of the above passage, it must be pointed out that - according to all the classical commentators - it is almost synonymous with musawah, i.e., "making a thing equal [to another thing]": in this instance, making the punishment equal (or appropriate) to the crime - a meaning which is best rendered as "just retribution" and not (as has been often, and erroneously, done) as "retaliation". Seeing that the Qur'an speaks here of "cases of killing" (fi 'l-qatla, lit., "in the matter of the killed") in general, and taking into account that this expression covers all possible cases of homicide - premeditated murder, murder under extreme provocation, culpable homicide, accidental manslaughter, and so forth - it is obvious that the taking of a life for a life (implied in the term "retaliation") would not in every case correspond to the demands of equity. (This has been made clear, for instance, in [4:92](#), where legal restitution for unintentional homicide is dealt with.) Read in conjunction with the term "just retribution" which introduces this passage, it is clear that the stipulation "the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman" cannot - and has not been intended to - be taken in its literal, restrictive sense: for this would preclude its application to many cases of homicide, e.g., the killing of a free man by a slave, or of a woman by a man, or vice-versa. Thus, the above stipulation must be regarded as an example of the elliptical mode of expression (ijaz) so frequently employed in the Qur'an, and can have but one meaning, namely: "if a free man has committed the crime, the free man must be punished; if a slave has committed the crime...", etc. - in other words, whatever the status of the guilty person, he or she (and he or she alone) is to be punished in a manner appropriate to the crime.

148 - Lit., "and he to whom [something] is remitted by his brother". There is no linguistic justification whatever for attributing - as some of the commentators have done - the pronoun "his" to the victim and, thus, for assuming that the expression "brother" stands for the victim's "family" or "blood relations". The pronoun "his" refers, unquestionably, to the guilty person; and since there is no reason for assuming that

by "his brother" a real brother is meant, we cannot escape the conclusion that it denotes here "his brother in faith" or "his fellow-man" - in either of which terms the whole community is included. Thus, the expression "if something is remitted to a guilty person by his brother" (i.e., by the community or its legal organs) may refer either to the establishment of mitigating circumstances in a case of murder, or to the finding that the case under trial falls within the categories of culpable homicide or manslaughter - in which cases no capital punishment is to be exacted and restitution is to be made by the payment of an indemnity called diyyah (see [4:92](#)) to the relatives of the victim. In consonance with the oft-recurring Qur'anic exhortation to forgiveness and forbearance, the "remission" mentioned above may also (and especially in cases of accidental manslaughter) relate to a partial or even total waiving of any claim to indemnification.

149 - Lit., "and restitution to him in a goodly manner", it being understood that the pronoun in ilayhi ("to him") refers to the "brother in faith" or "fellow-man" mentioned earlier in this sentence. The word ada' (here translated as "restitution") denotes an act of acquitting oneself of a duty or a debt (cf. Lane I, 38), and stands here for the act of legal reparation imposed on the guilty person. This reparation or restitution is to be made "in a goodly manner" - by taking into account the situation of the accused and, on the latter's part, by acquitting himself of his obligation willingly and sincerely (cf. Manar II, 129).

150 - Lit., "after this" - i.e., after the meaning of what constitutes "just retribution" (qisas) has been made clear in the above ordinance (Razi).

151 - I.e., "there is a safeguard for you, as a community, so that you might be able to live in security, as God wants you to live". Thus, the objective of qisas is the protection of the society, and not "revenge".

152 - The word khayr occurring in this sentence denotes "much wealth" and not simply "property": and this explains the injunction that one who leaves much wealth behind should make bequests to particularly deserving members of his family in addition to - and preceding the distribution of - the legally-fixed shares mentioned in {4:11-12}. This interpretation of khayr is supported by sayings of 'A'ishah and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, both of them referring to this particular verse (cf. Zamakhshari and Baydawi).

153 - Lit., "and as for him who alters it" - i.e., after the testator's death - "after having heard it, the sin thereof is only upon those who alter it": that is, not on anyone who may have unwittingly benefited by this alteration. It is to be noted that the verb sami'a (lit., "he heard") has also the connotation of "he came to know".

154 - Lit., "between them" - i.e., a settlement overriding the testamentary provisions which, by common consent of the parties concerned, are considered unjust.

155 - I.e., during the twenty-nine or thirty days of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar (see next verse). It consists of a total abstinence from food, drink and sexual intercourse from dawn until sunset. As the Qur'an points out, fasting has been widely practiced at all times of man's religious history. The extreme rigour and the long duration of the Islamic fast - which is incumbent on every healthy adult, man or woman - fulfils, in addition to the general aim of spiritual purification, a threefold purpose: (1) to commemorate the beginning of the Qur'anic revelation, which took place in the month of Ramadan about thirteen years before the Prophet's exodus to Medina; (2) to provide an exacting exercise of self-discipline; and (3) to make everyone realize, through his or her own experience, how it feels to be hungry and thirsty, and thus to gain a true appreciation of the needs of the poor.

156 - This phrase has been subject to a number of conflicting and sometimes highly laboured interpretations. My rendering is based on the primary meaning of *alladhina yutiqunahu* ("those who are capable of it" or "are able to do it" or "can afford it"), with the pronoun *hu* relating to the act of "feeding a needy person".

157 - Some commentators are of the opinion that this refers to a voluntary feeding of more than one needy person, or to feeding the needy for more than the number of days required by the above ordinance. Since, however, the remaining part of the sentence speaks of the benefits of fasting as such, it is more probable that "doing more good than one is bound to do" refers, in this context, to supererogatory fasting (such as the Prophet sometimes undertook) apart from the obligatory one during the month of Ramadan.

158 - Lit., "witnesses" or "is present in".

159 - Lit., "deceived" or "defrauded yourselves [in this respect]": an allusion to the idea prevalent among the early Muslims, before the revelation of this verse, that during the period of fasting all sexual intercourse should be avoided, even at night-time, when eating and drinking are allowed (Razi). The above verse removed this misconception.

160 - Lit., "and seek that which God has ordained for you": an obvious stress on the God-willed nature of sexual life.

161 - Lit., "the white line of dawn from the black line [of night]". According to all Arab philologists, the "black line" (al-khayt al-aswad) signifies "the blackness of night" (Lane II, 831); and the expression al-khaytan ("the two lines" or "streaks") denotes "day and night" (Lisan al-'Arab).

162 - It was the practice of the Prophet to spend several days and nights during Ramadan - and occasionally also at other times - in the mosque, devoting himself to prayer and meditation to the exclusion of all worldly activities; and since he advised his followers as well to do this from time to time, seclusion in a mosque for the sake of meditation, called i'tikaf, has become a recognized - though optional - mode of devotion among Muslims, especially during the last ten days of Ramadan.

163 - Lit., "and do not throw it to the judges" - i.e., with a view to being decided by them contrary to what is right (Zamakhshari, Baydawi).

164 - Lit., "a part of [other] people's possessions".

165 - The reference, at this stage, to lunar months arises from the fact that the observance of several of the religious obligations instituted by Islam - like the fast of Ramadan, or the pilgrimage to Mecca (which is dealt with in verses {196-203}) - is based on the lunar calendar, in which the months rotate through the seasons of the solar year. This fixation on the lunar calendar results in a continuous variation of the seasonal circumstances in which those religious observances are performed (e.g., the length of the fasting-period between dawn and sunset, heat or cold at the time of the fast or the pilgrimage), and thus in a corresponding, periodical increase or decrease of the hardship involved. In addition to this, reckoning by lunar months has a bearing on the tide and ebb of the oceans, as well as on human physiology (e.g., a woman's monthly courses - a subject dealt with later on in this surah).

166 - I.e., true piety does not consist in approaching questions of faith through a "back door", as it were -

that is, through mere observance of the forms and periods set for the performance of various religious duties (cf. [2:177](#)). However important these forms and time-limits may be in themselves, they do not fulfil their real purpose unless every act is approached through its spiritual "front door", that is, through God-consciousness. Since, metonymically, the word bab ("door") signifies "a means of access to, or of attainment of, a thing" (see Lane I, 272), the metaphor of "entering a house through its door" is often used in classical Arabic to denote a proper approach to a problem (Razi).

167 - This and the following verses lay down unequivocally that only self-defence (in the widest sense of the word) makes war permissible for Muslims. Most of the commentators agree in that the expression la ta'tadu signifies, in this context, "do not commit aggression"; while by al-mu'tadin "those who commit aggression" are meant. The defensive character of a fight "in God's cause" - that is, in the cause of the ethical principles ordained by God - is, moreover, self-evident in the reference to "those who wage war against you", and has been still further clarified in [22:39](#) - "permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged" - which, according to all available Traditions, constitutes the earliest (and therefore fundamental) Qur'anic reference to the question of jihad, or holy war (see Tabari and Ibn Kathir in their commentaries on [22:39](#)). That this early, fundamental principle of self-defence as the only possible justification of war has been maintained throughout the Qur'an is evident from [60:8](#), as well as from the concluding sentence of [4:91](#), both of which belong to a later period than the above verse.

168 - In view of the preceding ordinance, the injunction "slay them wherever you may come upon them" is valid only within the context of hostilities already in progress (Razi), on the understanding that "those who wage war against you" are the aggressors or oppressors (a war of liberation being a war "in God's cause"). The translation, in this context, of fitnah as "oppression" is justified by the application of this term to any affliction which may cause man to go astray and to lose his faith in spiritual values (cf. Lisan al-'Arab).

169 - This reference to warfare in the vicinity of Mecca is due to the fact that at the time of the revelation of this verse the Holy City was still in the possession of the pagan Quraysh, who were hostile to the Muslims. However - as is always the case with historical references in the Qur'an - the above injunction has a general import, and is valid for all times and circumstances.

170 - Lit., "and religion belongs to God [alone]" - i.e., until God can be worshipped without fear of persecution, and none is compelled to bow down in awe before another human being. (See also [22:40](#).) The term din is in this context more suitably translated as "worship" inasmuch as it comprises here both the doctrinal and the moral aspects of religion: that is to say, man's faith as well as the obligations arising from that faith.

171 - This is a free rendering of the phrase "the sacred month for the sacred month", which is interpreted by all commentators in the sense given above. The "sacred months" during which, according to ancient Arab custom, all fighting was deemed utterly wrong, were the first, seventh, eleventh and twelfth months of the lunar calendar.

172 - Thus, although the believers are enjoined to fight back whenever they are attacked, the concluding words of the above verse make it clear that they must, when fighting, abstain from all atrocities, including the killing of non-combatants.

173 - I.e., "you might bring about your own destruction by withholding your personal and material contribution to this common effort".

174 - The Mecca pilgrimage (hajj) takes place once a year, in the month of Dhu 'l-Hijjah, whereas a pious visit ('umrah) may be performed at any time. In both hajj and 'umrah, the pilgrims are required to walk seven times around the Ka'bah and seven times between As-Safa and Al-Marwah (see notes [127] and [128] above); in the course of the hajj, they must, in addition, attend the gathering on the plain of 'Arafat on the 9th of Dhu 'l-Hijjah (see note [182] below). Irrespective of whether they are performing a full hajj or only an 'umrah, the pilgrims must refrain from cutting or even trimming the hair on their heads from the time they enter the state of pilgrimage (ihram) until the end of the pilgrimage, respectively the pious visit. As mentioned in the sequence, persons who are ill or suffer from an ailment which necessitates the cutting or shaving of one's hair are exempted from this prohibition.

175 - Lit., "until the offering has reached its destination" - i.e., in time or in place; according to Razi, the time of sacrifice is meant here, namely, the conclusion of the pilgrimage, when those who participate in the hajj are expected - provided they can afford it - to sacrifice a sheep, a goat, or the like, and to distribute most of its flesh in charity.

176 - The expression idha amantum (lit., "when you are safe") refers here to safety both from external dangers (e.g., war) and from illness, and is, therefore, best rendered as "hale and secure" - the implication being that the person concerned is in a position, and intends, to participate in the pilgrimage.

177 - This relates to an interruption, for the sake of personal comfort, of the state of pilgrimage (ihram) during the time intervening between the completion of an 'umrah and the performance of the hajj (cf. Manar II, 222). The pilgrim who takes advantage of this facility is obliged to sacrifice an animal (see note [175] above) at the termination of the pilgrimage or, alternatively, to fast for ten days.

178 - Lit., "whose people are not present at the Inviolable House of Worship" - i.e., do not permanently reside there: for, obviously, the inhabitants of Mecca cannot remain permanently in the state of ihram.

179 - This refers not merely to a possible violation of the sanctity of the pilgrimage but also, in a more general way, to all deliberate violations of God's ordinances.

180 - Lit., "in the well-known months". Since the hajj culminates in one particular month (namely, Dhu 'l-Hijjah), the plural apparently refers to its annual recurrence. It should, however, be noted that some commentators understand it as referring to the last three months of the lunar year.

181 - I.e., by trading while in the state of ihram. Muhammad 'Abduh points out (in Manar II, 231) that the endeavour "to obtain any bounty from your Sustainer" implies God-consciousness and, therefore, constitutes a kind of worship - provided, of course, that this endeavour does not conflict with any other, more prominent religious requirement.

182 - The gathering of all pilgrims on the plain of 'Arafat, east of Mecca, takes place on the 9th of Dhu 'l-Hijjah and constitutes the climax of the pilgrimage. The pilgrims are required to remain until sunset on that plain, below the hillock known as Jabal ar-Rahmah ("the Mount of Grace") - a symbolic act meant to bring to mind that ultimate gathering on Resurrection Day, when every soul will await God's judgment. Immediately after sunset, the multitudes of pilgrims move back in the direction of Mecca, stopping overnight at a place called Muzdalifah, the "holy place" referred to in the next clause of this sentence.

183 - Lit., "and remember Him as He has guided you, although before that you had indeed been among those who go astray".

184 - Lit., "surge onward in multitudes whence the people surge onward in multitudes": thus the pilgrims are called upon to submerge their individualities, at that supreme moment of the pilgrimage, in the consciousness of belonging to a community of people who are all equal before God, with no barrier of race or class or social status separating one person from another.

185 - Most of the commentators see in this passage a reference to the custom of the pre-Islamic Arabs to extol, on the occasion of various gatherings, the greatness and the supposed virtues of their ancestors. Some of the earliest Islamic scholars, however - e.g., Ad-Dahhak, Ar-Rabi' and Abu Muslim - are of the opinion that what is meant here are actual fathers (or, by implication, both parents), whom a child usually considers to be the embodiment of all that is good and powerful (see Razi's commentary on this verse).

186 - These are the days following the "Festival of Sacrifices" ('id al-adha'), which takes place on the 10th of Dhu 'l-Hijjah. The pilgrims are obliged to spend at least two of these days in the valley of Mina, about half-way between 'Arafat and Mecca.

187 - Lit., "among the people there is he" (or "such as"). Since there is no valid reason to suppose, as some commentators do, that this refers to a particular person - a contemporary of the Prophet - the most reliable authorities hold that the above passage has a general meaning (cf. Razi). As the context shows, it is a further elaboration of the allusion, made in {2:200-201}, to two contrasting attitudes: the attitude of people whose only real concern is the life of this world, and that of people who are mindful of the hereafter as well as, or even more than, their present life.

188 - Lit., "the most contentious of adversaries in a dispute". According to Az-Zajaj (quoted by Razi), this signifies a person who is always able to defeat his opponent in a controversy by the use of extremely adroit and often misleading arguments. It is obvious that this passage refers to people who hold plausible and even admirable views regarding a possible improvement of human society and of man's lot on earth, but at the same time refuse to be guided by what they regard as "esoteric" considerations - like belief in a life after death - and justify their exclusive preoccupation with the affairs of this world by seemingly sound arguments and a stress on their own ethical objectives ("they cite God as witness to what is in their hearts"). There is an inescapable affinity between the mental attitude described in the above passage and the one spoken of in {2:8-12}.

189 - Lit., "he hastens about the earth (or "strives on earth") to spread corruption therein and to destroy tilth and progeny". Most of the commentators see in this sentence an indication of a conscious intent on the part of the person thus described; but it is also possible that the particle li in li-yufsid (generally taken to mean "in order that he might spread corruption") plays in this context the role of what the grammarians call a lam al-'aqibah, "the [letter] lam used to denote a consequence" - i.e., regardless of the existence or non-existence of a conscious intent. (By rendering the sentence the way I do it, both possibilities are left open.) As regards the expression harth (rendered by me as "tilth"), its primary significance is "gain" or "acquisition" through labour; and thus it often signifies "worldly goods" (see Lane II, 542), and especially the crops obtained by tilling land, as well as the tilled land itself. If harth is understood in this context as "tilth", it would apply, metaphorically, to human endeavours in general, and to social endeavours in particular. However, some commentators - basing their opinion on the Qur'anic sentence, "your wives are your tilth" ([2:223](#))- maintain that harth stands here for "wives" (cf. Razi, and the philologist Al-Azhari, as quoted in Manar II, 248): in which case the "destruction of tilth and progeny" would be synonymous with an upsetting of family life and, consequently, of the entire social fabric. According to either of these two interpretations, the passage has the following meaning: As soon as the mental attitude described above is generally accepted and made the basis of social behaviour, it unavoidably results in widespread moral decay and, consequently, social disintegration.

190 - Lit., "there is such as would sell his own self out of a desire for God's pleasure": i.e., would give up all his personal interests if compliance with God's will were to demand it.

191 - Lit., "enter wholly into self-surrender". Since self-surrender to God is the basis of all true belief, some of the greatest commentators (e.g., Zamakhshari, Razi) hold that the address, "O you who have attained to faith" cannot refer here to Muslims - a designation which, throughout the Qur'an, literally means "those who have surrendered themselves to God" - but must relate to people who have not yet achieved such complete self-surrender: that is, to the Jews and the Christians, who do believe in most of the earlier revelations but do not regard the message of the Qur'an as true. This interpretation would seem to be borne out by the subsequent passages.

192 - Lit., "they" - obviously referring to the people addressed in the preceding two verses.

193 - I.e., it will be too late for repentance. All commentators agree in that the "decision" relates to the unequivocal manifestation of God's will on the Day of Judgment, which is alluded to in the words, "when unto God all things will have been brought back". Since, in the next verse, the children of Israel are addressed, it is possible that this rhetorical question is connected with their refusal, in the time of Moses, to believe in the divine message unless they "see God face to face" (cf. [2:55](#)).

194 - Lit., "God's blessing".

195 - Lit., "has been made beautiful".

196 - I.e., He cannot be called to account for the way in which He distributes worldly benefits, sometimes granting them to the morally deserving and sometimes to sinners.

197 - By using the expression *ummah wahidah* ("one single community") to describe the original state of mankind, the Qur'an does not propound, as might appear at first glance, the idea of a mythical "golden age" obtaining at the dawn of man's history. What is alluded to in this verse is no more than the relative homogeneity of instinctive perceptions and inclinations characteristic of man's primitive mentality and the primitive social order in which he lived in those early days. Since that homogeneity was based on a lack of intellectual and emotional differentiation rather than on a conscious agreement among the members of human society, it was bound to disintegrate in the measure of man's subsequent development. As his thought-life became more and more complex, his emotional capacity and his individual needs, too, became more differentiated, conflicts of views and interests came to the fore, and mankind ceased to be "one single community" as regards their outlook on life and their moral valuations: and it was at this stage that divine guidance became necessary. (It is to be borne in mind that the term *al-kitab* refers here - as in many other places in the Qur'an - not to any particular scripture but to divine revelation as such.) This interpretation of the above Qur'anic passage is supported by the fact that the famous Companion 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud used to read it thus: "All mankind were once one single community, and then they began to differ (*fakhtalafu*) - whereupon God raised up...", etc. Although the word *fakhtalafu* interpolated here by Ibn Mas'ud does not appear in the generally-accepted text of the Qur'an, almost all of the authorities are of the opinion that it is implied in the context.

198 - Or: "God guides whomever He wills onto a straight way." As is made clear in the second part of verse {253} of this surah, man's proneness to intellectual dissension is not an accident of history but an integral, God-willed aspect of human nature as such: and it is this natural circumstance to which the words "by His leave" allude. For an explanation of the phrase "out of mutual jealousy", see [23:53](#) and the corresponding note [30].

199 - Lit., "while yet there has not come to you the like of [what has come to] those who passed away before you". This passage connects with the words, "God guides onto a straight way him that wills [to be

guided]", which occur at the end of the preceding verse. The meaning is that intellectual cognition of the truth cannot, by itself, be a means of attaining to ultimate bliss: it must be complemented by readiness to sacrifice and spiritual purification through suffering.

200 - The preceding reference to "those who passed away before you" makes it obvious that the term "the apostle" is used here in a generic sense, applying to all the apostles (Manar II, 301).

201 - Insofar as it relates to fighting, this verse must be read in conjunction with {2:190-193} and [22:39](#): but it expresses, in addition, a general truth applicable to many situations.

202 - For an explanation of the "sacred months", see note [171] above.

203 - The expression *alladhina hajarū* (lit., "those who have forsaken their homelands") denotes, primarily, the early Meccan Muslims who migrated at the Prophet's bidding to Medina - which was then called Yathrib - in order to be able to live in freedom and in accordance with the dictates of Islam. After the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims in the year 8 H., this exodus (*hijrah*) from Mecca to Medina ceased to be a religious obligation. Ever since the earliest days of Islam, however, the term *hijrah* has had a spiritual connotation as well - namely, a "forsaking of the domain of evil" and turning towards God: and since this spiritual connotation applies both to the historical *muhajirun* ("emigrants") of early Islam and to all believers of later times who forsake all that is sinful and "migrate unto God", I am using this expression frequently.

204 - Lit., "sin", or anything that is conducive to sinning. As some of the classical commentators (e.g., Razi) point out, the term *ithm* is used in this verse as the antithesis of *manafi'* ("benefits"); it can, therefore, be suitably rendered as "evil".

205 - Lit., "their evil is greater than their benefit". For a clear-cut prohibition of intoxicants and games of chance, see {5:90-91} and the corresponding notes.

206 - The implication is that if one shares the life of an orphan in his charge, one is permitted to benefit by such an association - for instance, through a business partnership - provided this does not damage the orphan's interests in any way.

207 - I.e., "by putting you under an obligation to care for the orphans, and at the same time prohibiting you from sharing their life" (see preceding note).

208 - Although the majority of the commentators attribute to the term amah, occurring in this context, its usual connotation of "slave-girl", some of them are of the opinion that it stands here for "God's bondwoman". Thus, Zamakhshari explains the words amah mu'minah (lit., "a believing bondwoman") as denoting "any believing woman, whether she be free or slave; and this applies to [the expression] 'believing bondman' as well: for all human beings are God's bondmen and bondwomen". My rendering of the above passage is based on this eminently plausible interpretation.

209 - This is one of the many references in the Qur'an to the positive, God-ordained nature of sexuality.

210 - I.e., if they have transgressed against the above restriction.

211 - In other words, a spiritual relationship between man and woman is postulated as the indispensable basis of sexual relations.

212 - Lit., "do not make God, because of your oaths...", etc. As can be seen from verse {226}, this injunction refers primarily to oaths relating to divorce but is, nevertheless, general in its import. Thus, there are several authentic Traditions to the effect that the Prophet Muhammad said: "If anyone takes a solemn oath [that he would do or refrain from doing such-and-such a thing], and thereupon realizes that something else would be a more righteous course, then let him do that which is more righteous, and let him break his oath and then atone for it" (Bukhari and Muslim; and other variants of the same Tradition in other compilations). As regards the method of atonement, see [5:89](#).

213 - I.e., during this period of grace.

214 - Lit., "by themselves".

215 - The primary purpose of this waiting-period is the ascertainment of possible pregnancy, and thus of the parentage of the as yet unborn child. In addition, the couple are to be given an opportunity to reconsider their decision and possibly to resume the marriage. See also [65:1](#) and the corresponding note [2].

216 - A divorced wife has the right to refuse a resumption of marital relations even if the husband expresses, before the expiry of the waiting-period, his willingness to have the provisional divorce rescinded; but since it is the husband who is responsible for the maintenance of the family, the first option to rescind a provisional divorce rests with him.

217 - Lit., "whereupon either retention in fairness or release in a goodly manner". In other words, a third pronouncement of divorce makes it final and irrevocable.

218 - All authorities agree in that this verse relates to the unconditional right on the part of the wife to obtain a divorce from her husband; such a dissolution of marriage at the wife's instance is called khul'. There exist a number of highly-authenticated Traditions to the effect that the wife of Thabit ibn Qays, Jamilah, came to the Prophet and demanded a divorce from her husband on the ground that, in spite of his irreproachable character and behaviour, she "disliked him as she would dislike falling into unbelief after having accepted Islam". Thereupon the Prophet ordained that she should return to Thabit the garden which he has given her as her dower (mahr) at the time of their wedding, and decreed that the marriage should be dissolved. (Several variants of this Tradition have been recorded by Bukhari, Nasa'i, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Bayhaqi, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas.) Similar Traditions, handed down on the authority of 'A'ishah and relating to a woman called Hubaybah bint Sahl, are to be found in the Muwatta' of Imam Malik, in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad, and in the compilations of Nasa'i and Abu Da'ud (in one variant, the latter gives the woman's name as Hafsah bint Sahl). In accordance with these Traditions, Islamic Law stipulates that whenever a marriage is dissolved at the wife's instance without any offence on the part of the husband against his marital obligations, the wife is the contract-breaking party and must, therefore, return the dower which she received from him at the time of concluding the marriage: and in this event "there shall be no sin upon either of them" if the husband takes back the dower which the wife gives up of

her own free will. An exhaustive discussion of all these Traditions and their legal implications is found in *Nayl al-Awtar* VII, pp. 34-41. For a summary of the relevant views of the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence, see *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* II, pp. 54-57.

219 - Most of the commentators understand the word *fisal* as being synonymous with "weaning" (i.e., before the end of the maximum period of two years). Abu Muslim, however, is of the opinion that it stands here for "separation" - i.e., of the child from its mother (Razi). It appears to me that this is the better of the two interpretations inasmuch as it provides a solution for cases in which both parents agree that, for some reason or other, it would not be fair to burden the divorced mother with the upbringing of the child despite the father's obligation to support them materially, while, on the other hand, it would not be feasible for the father to undertake this duty single-handed.

220 - Lit., "provided you make safe [or "provided you surrender"] in a fair manner that which you are handing over". While it cannot be denied that the verb *sallamahu* can mean "he surrendered it" as well as "he made it safe", it seems to me that the latter meaning (which is the primary one) is preferable in this context since it implies the necessity of assuring the child's future safety and well-being. (The commentators who take the verb *sallamtum* in the sense of "you surrender" interpret the phrase *idha sallamtum ma ataytum bi'l-ma'ruf* as meaning "provided you hand over the agreed-upon [wages to the foster-mothers] in a fair manner" - which, to my mind, unduly limits the purport of the above injunction.)

221 - Lit., "by themselves".

222 - Lit., "you will incur no sin". Since, obviously, the whole community is addressed here (Zamakhshari), the rendering "there shall be no sin" would seem appropriate.

223 - Lit., "if you conceal [such an intention] within yourselves: [for] God knows that you will mention [it] to them". In classical Arabic usage, the expression *dhakaraha* ("he mentioned [it] to her") is often idiomatically synonymous with "he demanded her in marriage" (see Lane III, 969). The above passage relates to a marriage-offer - or to an intention of making such an offer - to a newly-widowed or divorced woman before the expiry of the prescribed waiting-term.

224 - The term faridah denotes the dower (often also called mahr) which must be agreed upon by bridegroom and bride before the conclusion of the marriage-tie. While the amount of this dower is left to the discretion of the two contracting parties (and may even consist of no more than a token gift), its stipulation is an essential part of an Islamic marriage contract. For exceptions from this rule, see [33:50](#) and the corresponding note [58].

225 - Lit., "upon the doers of good" - i.e., all who are determined to act in accordance with God's will.

226 - According to some of the most prominent Companions of the Prophet (e.g., 'Ali) and their immediate successors (e.g., Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab and Sa'id ibn Jubayr), this term denotes the husband (cf. Tabari, Zamakhshari, Baghawi, Razi and Ibn Kathir).

227 - Lit., "the midmost [or "the most excellent"] prayer". It is generally assumed that this refers to the mid-afternoon ('asr) prayer, although some authorities believe that it denotes the prayer at dawn (fajr). Muhammad 'Abduh, however, advances the view that it may mean "the noblest kind of prayer - that is, a prayer from the fullness of the heart, with the whole mind turned towards God, inspired by awe of Him, and reflecting upon His word" (Manar II, 438). - In accordance with the system prevailing throughout the Qur'an, any lengthy section dealing with social laws is almost invariably followed by a call to God-consciousness: and since God-consciousness comes most fully to its own in prayer, this and the next verse are interpolated here between injunctions relating to marital life and divorce.

228 - This relates to any dangerous situation - for instance, in war - where remaining for any length of time at one place would only increase the peril: in such an event, the obligatory prayers may be offered in any way that is feasible, even without consideration of the qiblah.

229 - Lit., "[it is] a bequest to their wives [of] one year's maintenance without being dislodged". (As regards the justification of the rendering adopted by me, see Manar II, 446 ff.). The question of a widow's residence in her dead husband's house arises, of course, only in the event that it has not been bequeathed to her outright under the provisions stipulated in [4:12](#).

230 - For instance, by remarrying - in which case they forgo their claim to additional maintenance during

the remainder of the year. Regarding the phrase "there shall be no sin", see note [222] above.

231 - This obviously relates to women who are divorced without any legal fault on their part. The amount of alimony - payable unless and until they remarry - has been left unspecified since it must depend on the husband's financial circumstances and on the social conditions of the time.

232 - After the conclusion of the injunctions relating to marital life, the Qur'an returns here to the problem of warfare in a just cause by alluding to people who - obviously under a hostile attack - "forsook their homelands for fear of death". Now, neither the Qur'an nor any authentic Tradition offers any indication as to who the people referred to in this verse may have been. The "historical" explanations given by some of the commentators are most contradictory; they seem to have been derived from Talmudic stories current at the time, and cannot be used in this context with any justification. We must, therefore, assume (as Muhammad 'Abduh does in *Manar* II. 455 ff.) that the above allusion is parabolically connected with the subsequent call to the faithful to be ready to lay down their lives in God's cause: an illustration of the fact that fear of physical death leads to the moral death of nations and communities, just as their regeneration (or "coming back to life") depends on their regaining their moral status through overcoming the fear of death. This is undoubtedly the purport of the elliptic story of Samuel, Saul and David told in verses {246-251}.

233 - I.e., in a just war in self-defence against oppression or unprovoked aggression (cf. {2:190-194}).

234 - I.e., by sacrificing one's life in, or devoting it to, His cause.

235 - The prophet referred to here is Samuel (cf. Old Testament, I Samuel viii ff.).

236 - Obviously a reference to the many invasions of their homelands by their perennial enemies, the Philistines, Amorites, Amalekites and other Semitic and non-Semitic tribes living in and around Palestine; and, by implication, a reminder to believers of all times that "fighting in God's cause" (as defined in the Qur'an) is an act of faith.

237 - Lit., "to them" - but the next sentence shows that the elders were thus addressed by Samuel.

238 - An allusion to the Qur'anic doctrine that all dominion and all that may be "owned" by man belongs to God alone, and that man holds it only in trust from Him.

239 - Lit., "that there will come to you the heart". The word tabut - here rendered as "heart" - has been conventionally interpreted as denoting the Ark of the Covenant mentioned in the Old Testament, which is said to have been a highly-ornamented chest or box. The explanations offered by most of the commentators who adopt the latter meaning are very contradictory, and seem to be based on Talmudic legends woven around that "ark". However, several authorities of the highest standing attribute to tabut the meaning of "bosom" or "heart" as well: thus, Baydawi in one of the alternatives offered in his commentary on this verse, as well as Zamakhshari in his *Asas* (though not in the *Kashshaf*), Ibn al-Athir in the *Nihayah*, Raghib, and Taj al-'Arus (the latter four in the article *tabata*); see also Lane I, 321, and IV, 1394 (art. *sakinah*). If we take this to be the meaning of tabut in the above context, it would be an allusion to the Israelites' coming change of heart (a change already indicated, in general terms, in verse {243} above). In view of the subsequent mention of the "inner peace" in the tabut, its rendering as "heart" is definitely more appropriate than "ark".

240 - Lit., "and the remainder of that which the House (al) of Moses and the House of Aaron left behind, borne by the angels". The expression "borne by the angels" or "angel-borne" is an allusion to the God-inspired nature of the spiritual heritage left by those two prophets; while the "remainder" (*baqiyyah*) denotes that which is "lasting" or "enduring" in that heritage.

241 - Lit., "excepting him". The symbolic implication is that faith - and, thus, belief in the justice of one's cause - has no value unless it is accompanied by heightened self-discipline and disregard of one's material interests.

242 - Lit., "were it not that God repels some people by means of others": an elliptic reference to God's enabling people to defend themselves against aggression or oppression. {Exactly the same phrase occurs in [22:40](#), which deals with fighting in self-defence}.

243 - This appears to be an allusion to Muhammad inasmuch as he was the Last Prophet and the bearer of a universal message applicable to all people and to all times. By "such as were spoken to by God" Moses is meant (see the last sentence of [4:164](#)).

244 - The mention, in this context, of Jesus by name is intended to stress the fact of his having been a prophet, and to refute the claims of those who deify him. For an explanation of the term ruh al-qudus (rendered by me as "holy inspiration"), see note [71] on verse {87} of this surah.

245 - Once again - as in verse {213} above - the Qur'an alludes to the inevitability of dissension among human beings: in other words, it is the will of God that their way to the truth should be marked by conflicts and trial by error.

246 - I.e., the Day of Judgment. With this exhortation, the Qur'an returns to the subject of verse {245}: "Who is it that will offer up unto God a goodly loan?" We may, therefore, infer that the "spending in God's way" relates here to every kind of sacrifice in God's cause, and not merely to the spending of one's possessions.

247 - Lit., "that which is between their hands and that which is behind them". The commentators give most conflicting interpretations to this phrase. Thus, for instance, Mujahid and 'Ata' assume that "that which is between their hands" means "that which has happened to them in this world", while "that which is behind them" is an allusion to "that which will happen to them in the next world"; Ad-Dahhak and Al-Kalbi, on the other hand, assume the exact opposite and say that "that which is between their hands" refers to the next world, "because they are going towards it", while "that which is behind them" means this world, "because they are leaving it behind" (Razi). Another explanation is "that which took place before them and that which will take place after them" (Zamakhshari). It would seem, however, that in all these interpretations the obvious meaning of the idiomatic expression ma bayna yadayhi ("that which lies open between one's hands") is lost sight of: namely, that which is evident, or known, or perceivable; similarly, ma khalfahu means that which is beyond one's ken or perception. Since the whole tenor of the above Qur'an-verse relates to God's omnipotence and omniscience, the translation given by me seems to be the most appropriate.

248 - Lit., "His seat [of power]". Some of the commentators (e.g., Zamakhshari) interpret this as "His sovereignty" or "His dominion", while others take it to mean "His knowledge" (see Muhammad 'Abduh in

Manar III, 33); Razi inclines to the view that this word denotes God's majesty and indescribable, eternal glory.

249 - The term *din* denotes both the contents of and the compliance with a morally binding law; consequently, it signifies "religion" in the widest sense of this term, extending over all that pertains to its doctrinal contents and their practical implications, as well as to man's attitude towards the object of his worship, thus comprising also the concept of "faith". The rendering of *din* as "religion", "faith", "religious law" or "moral law" (see note [3] on [109:6](#)) depends on the context in which this term is used. On the strength of the above categorical prohibition of coercion (*ikrah*) in anything that pertains to faith or religion, all Islamic jurists (*fuqaha'*), without any exception, hold that forcible conversion is under all circumstances null and void, and that any attempt at coercing a non-believer to accept the faith of Islam is a grievous sin: a verdict which disposes of the widespread fallacy that Islam places before the unbelievers the alternative of "conversion or the sword".

250 - *At-taghut* denotes, primarily, anything that is worshipped instead of God and, thus, all that may turn man away from God and lead him to evil. It has both a singular and a plural significance (Razi) and is, therefore, best rendered as "the powers of evil".

251 - According to Muhammad 'Abduh, the wrong (*zulm*) referred to here consists in "one's deliberately turning away from the light [of guidance] provided by God" (Manar III, 47).

252 - Lit., "Or like him". The words interpolated by me between brackets are based on Zamakhshari's interpretation of this passage, which connects with the opening of the preceding verse.

253 - The story told in this verse is obviously a parable meant to illustrate God's power to bring the dead back to life: and, thus, it is significantly placed between Abraham's words in verse {258}, "My Sustainer is He who grants life and deals death", and his subsequent request, in verse {260}, to be shown how God resurrects the dead. The speculations of some of the earlier commentators as to the "identity" of the man and the town mentioned in this story are without any substance, and may have been influenced by Talmudic legends.

254 - Sc., "and observe that it is alive": thus pointing out that God has the power to grant life indefinitely, as well as to resurrect the dead.

255 - The Qur'an frequently points to the ever-recurring miracle of birth, preceded by the gradual evolution of the embryo in its mother's womb, as a visible sign of God's power to create - and therefore also to re-create - life.

256 - Lit., "make them incline towards thee" (Zamakhshari; see also Lane IV, 1744).

257 - My rendering of the above parable is based on the primary meaning of the imperative *surhunna ilayka* ("make them incline towards thee", i.e., "teach them to obey thee"). The moral of this story has been pointed out convincingly by the famous commentator Abu Muslim (as quoted by Razi): "If man is able - as he undoubtedly is - to train birds in such a way as to make them obey his call, then it is obvious that God, whose will all things obey, can call life into being by simply decreeing, 'Be!'"

258 - Lit., "do not follow up".

259 - For the rendering of *maghfarah* (lit., "forgiveness") in this context as "veiling another's want" I am indebted to Baghawi's explanation of this verse.

260 - Lit., "their guidance is not upon thee" - i.e., "thou art responsible only for conveying God's message to them, and not for their reaction to it": the people referred to being the needy spoken of in the preceding verses. It appears that in the early days after his migration to Medina, the Prophet - faced by the great poverty prevalent among his own community - advised his Companions that "charity should be bestowed only on the followers of Islam" - a view that was immediately corrected by the revelation of the above verse (a number of Traditions to this effect are quoted by Tabari, Razi and Ibn Kathir, as well as in *Manar* III, 82 f.). According to several other Traditions (recorded, among others, by Nasa'i and Abu Da'ud and quoted by all the classical commentators), the Prophet thereupon explicitly enjoined upon his followers to disburse charities upon all who needed them, irrespective of the faith of the person concerned. Consequently, there is full agreement among all the commentators that the above verse of the Qur'an - although expressed in the singular and, on the face of it, addressed to the Prophet - lays down an injunction binding upon all

Muslims. Razi, in particular, draws from it the additional conclusion that charity - or the threat to withhold it - must never become a means of attracting unbelievers to Islam: for, in order to be valid, faith must be an outcome of inner conviction and free choice. This is in consonance with verse {256} of this surah: "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith."

261 - I.e., those who have devoted themselves entirely to working in the cause of the Faith - be it by spreading, elucidating or defending it physically or intellectually - or to any of the selfless pursuits extolled in God's message, such as search for knowledge, work for the betterment of man's lot, and so forth; and, finally, those who, having suffered personal or material hurt in such pursuits, are henceforth unable to fend for themselves.

262 - For a discussion of the concept of *riba* ("usury"), see note [35] on [30:39](#), where this term occurs for the first time in the chronological order of revelation. The passage dealing with the prohibition of *riba*, which follows here, is believed to have been among the last revelations received by the Prophet. The subject of usury connects logically with the preceding long passage on the subject of charity because the former is morally the exact opposite of the latter: true charity consists in giving without an expectation of material gain, whereas usury is based on an expectation of gain without any corresponding effort on the part of the lender.

263 - Lit., "like".

264 - Lit., "he to whom an admonition has come from his Sustainer".

265 - Lit., "whereas He causes [the merit of] charitable deeds to increase with interest (*yurbi*)".

266 - This refers not merely to the believers at the time when the prohibition of usury was proclaimed, but also to people of later times who may come to believe in the Qur'anic message.

267 - I.e., without interest.

268 - According to the uncontested evidence of Ibn 'Abbas, the above verse was the last revelation granted to the Prophet, who died shortly afterwards (Bukhari; see also Fath al-Bari VIII, 164f.).

269 - The above phrase embraces any transaction on the basis of credit, be it an outright loan or a commercial deal. It relates (as the grammatical form *tadayantum* shows) to both the giver and taker of credit, and has been rendered accordingly.

270 - I.e., in accordance with the laws promulgated in the Qur'an.

271 - Lit., "and do not diminish anything thereof". Thus, the formulation of the undertaking is left to the weaker party, i.e., to the one who contracts the debt.

272 - E.g., because he is physically handicapped, or does not fully understand the business terminology used in such contracts, or is not acquainted with the language in which the contract is to be written. The definition "weak of mind or body" (lit., "lacking in understanding or weak") applies to minors as well as to very old persons who are no longer in full possession of their mental faculties.

273 - The stipulation that two women may be substituted for one male witness does not imply any reflection on woman's moral or intellectual capabilities: it is obviously due to the fact that, as a rule, women are less familiar with business procedures than men and, therefore, more liable to commit mistakes in this respect (see 'Abduh in *Manar* III, 124 f.).

274 - Lit., "to write it down" - i.e., all rights and obligations arising from the contract.

275 - E.g., by being held responsible for the eventual consequences of the contract as such, or for the non-fulfilment of any of its provisions by either of the contracting parties.

276 - Lit., "do not conceal testimony". This relates not only to those who have witnessed a business transaction, but also to a debtor who has been given a loan on trust - without a written agreement and without witnesses - and subsequently denies all knowledge of his indebtedness.

277 - Lit., "we make no distinction between any of His apostles": these words are put, as it were, in the mouths of the believers. Inasmuch as all the apostles were true bearers of God's messages, there is no distinction between them, albeit some of them have been "endowed more highly than others" (see verse {253}).

278 - A reference to the heavy burden of rituals imposed by the Law of Moses upon the children of Israel, as well as the world-renunciation recommended by Jesus to his followers.

[View Page](#)

Source : *Alim.org-Asad Translation-Surah 2*