

## Surah 5. Al-Maida

5.1 O YOU who have attained to faith! Be true to your covenants!<sup>1</sup> Lawful to you is the [flesh of every] beast that feeds on plants, save what is mentioned to you [hereinafter<sup>2</sup>]: but you are not allowed to hunt while you are in the state of pilgrimage. Behold, God ordains in accordance with His will.<sup>3</sup>

5.2 O you who have attained to faith! Offend not against the symbols set up by God, nor against the sacred month [of pilgrimage], nor against the garlanded offerings,<sup>4</sup> nor against those who flock to the Inviolable Temple, seeking favour with their Sustainer and His goodly acceptance; and [only] after your pilgrimage is over<sup>5</sup> are you free to hunt. And never let your hatred of people who would bar you from the Inviolable House of Worship lead you into the sin of aggression:<sup>6</sup> but rather help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness, and do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity; and remain conscious of God: for, behold, God is severe in retribution!

5.3 FORBIDDEN to you is carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which any name other than God's has been invoked,<sup>7</sup> and the animal that has been strangled, or beaten to death, or killed by a fall, or gored to death, or savaged by a beast of prey, save that which you [yourselves] may have slaughtered while it was still alive; and [forbidden to you is] all that has been slaughtered on idolatrous altars.<sup>8</sup> And [you are forbidden] to seek to learn through divination what the future may hold in store for you:<sup>9</sup> this is sinful conduct. Today, those who are bent on denying the truth have lost all hope of [your ever forsaking] your religion: do not, then, hold them in awe, but stand in awe of Me! Today have I perfected your religious law for you, and have bestowed upon you the full measure of My blessings, and willed that self-surrender unto Me shall be your religion.<sup>10</sup> As for him, however, who is driven [to what is forbidden] by dire necessity<sup>11</sup> and not by an inclination to sinning - behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

5.4 They will ask thee as to what is lawful to them Say: "Lawful to you are all the good things of life."<sup>12</sup> And as for those hunting animals<sup>13</sup> which you train by imparting to them something of the knowledge that God has imparted to yourselves - eat of what they seize for you, but mention God's name over it, and remain conscious of God: verily, God is swift in reckoning.

5.5 Today, all the good things of life have been made lawful to you. And the food of those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime is lawful to you,<sup>14</sup> and your food is lawful to them. And [lawful to you are], in wedlock, women from among those who believe [in this divine writ], and, in wedlock, women from among those who have been vouchsafed revelation before your time - provided that you give them their dowers, taking them in honest wedlock, not in fornication, nor as secret love-companions.<sup>15</sup> But as for him who rejects belief [in God] - in vain will be all his works: for in the life to come he shall be among the lost.<sup>16</sup>

5.6 O YOU who have attained to faith! When you are about to pray, wash your face, and your hands and arms up to the elbows, and pass your [wet] hands lightly over your head, and [wash] your feet up to the ankles. And if you are in a state requiring total ablution, purify yourselves.<sup>17</sup> But if you are ill, or are travelling, or have just satisfied a want of nature, or have cohabited with a woman, and can find no water - then take resort to pure dust, passing therewith lightly over your face and your hands. God does not want to impose any hardship on you, but wants to make you pure, and to bestow upon you the full measure of His blessings, so that you might have cause to be grateful.

5.7 And [always] remember the blessings which God has bestowed upon you, and the solemn pledge by which He bound you to Himself<sup>18</sup> when you said, "We have heard, and we pay heed." Hence, remain conscious of God: verily, God has full knowledge of what is in the hearts [of men].

5.8 O YOU who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of anyone<sup>19</sup> lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God: verily, God is aware of all that you do.

5.9 God has promised unto those who attain to faith and do good works [that] theirs shall be forgiveness of sins, and a mighty reward;

5.10 whereas they who are bent on denying the truth and giving the lie to Our messages - they are destined for the blazing fire.

5.11 O you who have attained to faith! Remember the blessings which God bestowed upon you when [hostile] people were about to lay hands on you<sup>20</sup> and He stayed their hands from you. Remain, then, conscious of God: and in God let the believers place their trust.

5.12 AND, INDEED, God accepted a [similar] solemn pledge<sup>21</sup> from the children of Israel when We caused twelve of their leaders to be sent [to Canaan as spies].<sup>22</sup> And God said: "Behold, I shall be with you! If you are constant in prayer, and spend in charity, and believe in My apostles and aid them, and offer up unto God a goodly loan,<sup>23</sup> I will surely efface your bad deeds and bring you into gardens through which running waters flow. But he from among you who, after this, denies the truth, will indeed have strayed from the right path!"

5.13 Then, for having broken their solemn pledge,<sup>24</sup> We rejected them and caused their hearts to harden - [so that now] they distort the meaning of the [revealed] words, taking them out of their context;<sup>25</sup> and they have forgotten much of what they had been told to bear in mind; and from all but a few of them thou wilt always experience treachery. But pardon them, and forbear: verily, God loves the doers of good.

5.14 And [likewise,] from those who say, "Behold, we are Christians,"<sup>26</sup> We have accepted a solemn pledge: and they, too, have forgotten much of what they had been told to bear in mind - wherefore We have given rise among them to enmity and hatred, [to last] until Resurrection Day:<sup>27</sup> and in time God will cause them to understand what they have contrived.

5.15 O followers of the Bible! Now there has come unto you Our Apostle, to make clear unto you much of what you have been concealing [from yourselves] of the Bible,<sup>28</sup> and to pardon much. Now there has come unto you from God a light, and a clear divine writ,

5.16 through which God shows unto all that seek His goodly acceptance the paths leading to salvation<sup>29</sup> and, by His grace, brings them out of the depths of darkness into the light and guides them onto a straight way.

5.17 Indeed, the truth deny they who say, "Behold, God is the Christ, son of Mary." Say: "And who could have prevailed with God in any way had it been His will to destroy the Christ, son of Mary, and his mother, and everyone who is on earth - all of them? For, God's is the dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that is between them; He creates what He wills: and God has the power to will anything!"

5.18 And [both] the Jews and the Christians say, "We are God's children,"<sup>30</sup> and His beloved ones." Say: "Why, then, does He cause you to suffer for your sins? Nay, you are but human beings of His creating. He forgives whom He wills, and He causeth to suffer whom He wills: for God's is the dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and with Him is all journeys' end."

5.19 O followers of the Bible! Now, after a long time during which no apostles have appeared, there has come unto you [this] Our Apostle to make [the truth] clear to you, lest you say, "No bearer of glad tidings has come unto us, nor any warner": for now there has come unto you a bearer of glad tidings and a warner - since God has the power to will anything.

5.20 AND, LO, Moses said unto his people:<sup>31</sup> "O my people! Remember the blessings which God bestowed upon you when he raised up prophets among you, and made you your own masters,<sup>32</sup> and granted unto you [favours] such as He had not granted to anyone else in the world.

5.21 O my people! Enter the holy land which God has promised you; but do not turn back [on your faith], for then you will be lost!"

5.22 They answered: "O Moses! Behold, ferocious people dwell in that land,<sup>33</sup> and we will surely not enter it unless they depart therefrom; but if they depart therefrom, then, behold, we will enter it."

5.23 [Whereupon] two men from among those who feared [God, and] whom God had blessed, said: "Enter upon them through the gate<sup>34</sup> - for as soon as you enter it, behold, you shall be victorious! And in God you must place your trust if you are [truly] believers!"

5.24 [But] they said: "O Moses! Behold, never shall we enter that [land] so long as those others are in it. Go forth, then, thou and thy Sustainer, and fight, both of you! We, behold, shall remain here!"

5.25 Prayed [Moses]: "O my Sustainer! Of none am I master but of myself and my brother [Aaron]: draw Thou, then, a dividing-line between us and these iniquitous folk!"

5.26 Answered He: "Then, verily, this [land] shall be forbidden to them for forty years, while they wander on earth, bewildered, to and fro; and sorrow thou not over these iniquitous folk."

5.27 AND CONVEY unto them, setting forth the truth, the story of the two sons of Adam<sup>35</sup> - how each offered a sacrifice, and it was accepted from one of them whereas it was not accepted from the other. [And Cain] said: "I will surely slay thee!" [Abel] replied: "Behold, God accepts only from those who are conscious of Him.

5.28 Even if thou lay thy hand on me to slay me, I shall not lay my hand on thee to slay thee: behold, I fear God, the Sustainer of all the worlds.

5.29 I am willing, indeed, for thee to bear [the burden of] all the sins ever done by me as well as of the sin done by thee:<sup>36</sup> [but] then thou wouldst be destined for the fire, since that is the requital of evildoers!"

5.30 But the other's passion<sup>37</sup> drove him to slaying his brother; and he slew him: and thus he became one of the lost.

5.31 Thereupon God sent forth a raven which scratched the earth, to show him how he might conceal the nakedness of his brother's body. [And Cain] cried out: "Oh, woe is me! Am I then too weak to do what this raven did,<sup>38</sup> and to conceal the nakedness of my brother's body?" - and was thereupon smitten with remorse.<sup>39</sup>

5.32 Because of this did We ordain unto the children of Israel that if anyone slays a human being - unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth - it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind.<sup>40</sup> And, indeed, there came unto them<sup>41</sup> Our apostles with all evidence of the truth: yet, behold, notwithstanding all this, many of them go on committing all manner of excesses on earth.<sup>42</sup>

5.33 It is but a just recompense for those who make war on God and His apostle,<sup>43</sup> and endeavour to spread corruption on earth, that they are being slain in great numbers, or crucified in great numbers, or have, in result of their perverseness, their hands and feet cut off in great numbers,<sup>44</sup> or are being [entirely] banished from [the face of] the earth: such is their ignominy in this world.<sup>45</sup> But in the life to come [yet more] awesome suffering awaits them -

5.34 save for such [of them] as repent ere you [O believers] become more powerful than they:<sup>46</sup> for you must know that God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

5.35 O YOU who have attained to faith! Remain conscious of God, and seek to come closer unto Him, and strive hard in His cause, so that you might attain to a happy state.

5.36 Verily, if those who are bent on denying the truth had all that is on earth, and twice as much,<sup>47</sup> to offer as ransom from suffering on the Day of Resurrection, it would not be accepted from them: for grievous suffering awaits them.

5.37 They will wish to come out of the fire, but they shall not come out of it; and long-lasting suffering awaits them.

5.38 NOW AS FOR the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off the hand of either of them in requital for what they have wrought, as a deterrent ordained by God:<sup>48</sup> for God is almighty, wise.

5.39 But as for him who repents after having thus done wrong, and makes amends,<sup>49</sup> behold, God will accept his repentance: verily, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

5.40 Dost thou not know that God's is the dominion over the heavens and the earth? He chastises whom He wills, and He forgives whom He wills: for God has the power to will anything.

5.41 O APOSTLE! be not grieved by those who vie with one another in denying the truth: such as those<sup>50</sup> who say with their mouths, "We believe," the while their hearts do not believe; and such of the Jewish faith as eagerly listen to any falsehood, eagerly listen to other people without having come to thee [for enlightenment].<sup>51</sup> They distort the meaning of the [revealed] words, taking them out of their context, saying [to themselves], "If such-and-such [teaching] is vouchsafed unto you, accept it; but if it is not vouchsafed unto you, be on your guard!"<sup>52</sup> [Be not grieved by them -] for, if God wills anyone to be tempted to evil, thou canst in no wise prevail with God in his behalf.<sup>53</sup> It is they whose hearts God is not willing to cleanse. Theirs shall be ignominy in this world, and awesome suffering in the life to come -

5.42 those who eagerly listen to any falsehood, greedily swallowing all that is evil!<sup>54</sup> Hence, if they come to thee [for judgment],<sup>55</sup> thou mayest either judge between them or leave them alone: for, if thou leave them alone, they cannot harm thee in any way. But if thou cost judge, judge between them with equity:<sup>56</sup> verily, God knows those who act equitably.

5.43 But how is it that they ask thee for judgment - seeing that they have the Torah, containing God's injunctions - and thereafter turn away [from thy judgment]? Such as these, then, are no [true] believers.<sup>57</sup>

5.44 Verily, it is We who bestowed from on high the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light. On its strength did the prophets, who had surrendered themselves unto God, deliver judgment unto those who followed the Jewish faith;<sup>58</sup> and so did the [early] men of God and the rabbis, inasmuch as some of God's writ had been entrusted to their care;<sup>59</sup> and they [all] bore witness to its truth. Therefore, [O children of Israel,] hold not men in awe, but stand in awe of Me; and do not barter away My messages for a trifling gain:<sup>60</sup> for they who do not judge in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high are, indeed, deniers of the truth!

5.45 And We ordained for them in that [Torah]: A life for a life, and an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, and a tooth for a tooth, and a [similar] retribution for wounds;<sup>61</sup> but he who shall forgo it out of charity will atone thereby for some of his past sins.<sup>62</sup> And they who do not judge in accordance with what God has revealed - they, they are the evildoers!

5.46 And We caused Jesus, the son of Mary, to follow in the footsteps of those [earlier prophets], confirming the truth of whatever there still remained<sup>63</sup> of the Torah; and We vouchsafed unto him the Gospel, wherein there was guidance and light, confirming the truth of whatever there still remained of the Torah, and as a guidance and admonition unto the God-conscious.

5.47 Let, then, the followers of the Gospel judge in accordance with what God has revealed therein: for they who do not judge in the light of what God has bestowed from on high - it is they, they who are truly iniquitous!

5.48 And unto thee [O Prophet] have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein.<sup>64</sup> Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high,<sup>65</sup> and do not follow their errant views, forsaking the truth that has come unto thee. Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life.<sup>66</sup> And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you.<sup>67</sup> Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ.<sup>68</sup>

5.49 Hence, judge between the followers of earlier revelation<sup>69</sup> in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views; and beware of them, lest they tempt thee away from aught that God has bestowed from on high upon thee. And if they turn away [from His commandments], then know that it is but God's will [thus] to afflict them for some of their sins:<sup>70</sup> for, behold, a great many people are iniquitous indeed.

5.50 Do they, perchance, desire [to be ruled by] the law of pagan ignorance?<sup>71</sup> But for people who have inner certainty, who could be a better law-giver than God?

5.51 O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your allies: they are but allies of one another<sup>72</sup> - and whoever of you allies himself with them becomes, verily, one of them; behold, God does not guide such evildoers.<sup>73</sup>

5.52 And yet thou canst see how those in whose hearts there is disease vie with one another for their good will,<sup>74</sup> saying [to themselves], "We fear lest fortune turn against us." But God may well bring about good fortune [for the believers] or any [other] event of His own devising,<sup>75</sup> whereupon those [waverers] will be smitten with remorse for the thoughts which they had secretly harboured within themselves -

5.53 while those who have attained to faith will say [to one another], "Are these the self-same people who swore by God with their most solemn oaths that they were indeed with you? In vain are all their works, for now they are lost!"

5.54 O you who have attained to faith! If you ever abandon your faith,<sup>76</sup> God will in time bring forth [in your stead] people whom He loves and who love Him - humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth: [people] who strive hard in God's cause, and do not fear to be censured by anyone who might censure them: such is God's favour, which He grants unto whom He wills. And God is infinite, all-knowing.

5.55 Behold, your only helper shall be God, and His Apostle, and those who have attained to faith - those that are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and bow down [before God]:

5.56 for, all who ally themselves with God and His Apostle and those who have attained to faith - behold, it is they, the partisans of God, who shall be victorious!

5.57 O you who have attained to faith! Do not take for your friends such as mock at your faith and make a jest of it - be they from among those who have been vouchsafed revelation before your time, or [from

among] those who deny the truth [of revelation as such] - but remain conscious of God, if you are [truly] believers:

5.58 for, when you call to prayer, they mock at it and make a jest of it - simply because they are people who do not use their reason.

5.59 Say: "O followers of earlier revelation! Do you find fault with us for no other reason than that we believe in God [alone], and in that which He has bestowed from on high upon us as well as that which He has bestowed aforetime? - or [is it only] because most of you are iniquitous?"

5.60 Say: "Shall I tell you who, in the sight of God, deserves a yet worse retribution than these? They whom God has rejected and whom He has condemned, and whom He has turned into apes and swine because they worshipped the powers of evil:<sup>77</sup> these are yet worse in station, and farther astray from the right path [than the mockers]."<sup>78</sup>

5.61 For, when they come unto you, they say, "We do believe": whereas, in fact, they come with the resolve to deny the truth, and depart in the same state.<sup>79</sup> But God is fully aware of all that they would conceal.

5.62 And thou canst see many of them vie with one another in sinning and tyrannical conduct and in their swallowing of all that is evil.

5.63 Why do not their men of God and their rabbis<sup>80</sup> forbid them to make sinful assertions and to swallow all that is evil? Vile indeed is what they contrive!

5.64 And the Jews say, "God's hand is shackled!" It is their own hands that are shackled; and rejected [by God] are they because of this their assertion.<sup>81</sup> Nay, but wide are His hands stretched out: He dispenses [bounty] as He wills. But all that has been bestowed from on high upon thee [O Prophet] by thy Sustainer is bound to make many of them yet more stubborn in their overweening arrogance and in their denial of the truth. And so We have cast enmity and hatred among the followers of the Bible,<sup>82</sup> [to last] until Resurrection Day; every time they light the fires of war, God extinguishes them;<sup>83</sup> and they labour hard to spread corruption on earth: and God does not love the spreaders of corruption.

5.65 If the followers of the Bible would but attain to [true] faith and God-consciousness, We should indeed efface their [previous] bad deeds, and indeed bring them into gardens of bliss;

5.66 and if they would but truly observe the Torah and the Gospel and all [the revelation] that has been bestowed from on high upon them by their Sustainer, they would indeed partake of all the blessings of heaven and earth. Some of them do pursue a right course; but as for most of them - vile indeed is what they do!<sup>84</sup>

5.67 O APOSTLE! Announce all that has been bestowed from on high upon thee by thy Sustainer: for unless thou doest it fully, thou wilt not have delivered His message [at all]. And God will protect thee from [unbelieving] men: behold, God does not guide people who refuse to acknowledge the truth.

5.68 Say: "O followers of the Bible! You have no valid ground for your beliefs unless you [truly] observe the Torah and the Gospel, and all that has been bestowed from on high upon you by your Sustainer!"<sup>85</sup> Yet all that has been bestowed from on high upon thee [O Prophet] by thy Sustainer is bound to make many of them yet more stubborn in their overweening arrogance and in their denial of the truth. But sorrow not over people who deny the truth:

5.69 for, verily, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Sabians,<sup>86</sup> and the Christians - all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds - no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.

5.70 INDEED, We accepted a solemn pledge from the children of Israel, and We sent apostles unto them [but] every time an apostle came unto them with anything that was not to their liking, [they rebelled:] to some of them they gave the lie, while others they would slay,<sup>87</sup>

5.71 thinking that no harm would befall them; and so they became blind and deaf [of heart]. Thereafter God accepted their repentance: and again many of them became blind and deaf. But God sees all that they do.

5.72 Indeed, the truth deny they who say, "Behold, God is the Christ, son of Mary" - seeing that the Christ [himself] said, "O children of Israel! Worship God [alone], who is my Sustainer as well as your Sustainer."<sup>88</sup> Behold, whoever ascribes divinity to any being beside God, unto him will God deny paradise, and his goal shall be the fire; and such evildoers will have none to succour them!

5.73 Indeed, the truth deny they who say, "Behold, God is the third of a trinity" - seeing that there is no deity whatever save the One God. And unless they desist from this their assertion, grievous suffering is bound to befall such of them as are bent on denying the truth.

5.74 Will they not, then, turn towards God in repentance, and ask His forgiveness? For God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

5.75 The Christ, son of Mary, was but an apostle: all [other] apostles had passed away before him; and his mother was one who never deviated from the truth; and they both ate food [like other mortals].<sup>89</sup> Behold how clear We make these messages unto them: and then behold how perverted are their minds!<sup>90</sup>

5.76 Say: "Would you worship, beside God, aught that has no power either to harm or to benefit you - when God alone is all-hearing, all-knowing?"

5.77 Say: "O followers of the Gospel! Do not overstep the bounds [of truth] in your religious beliefs;<sup>91</sup> and do not follow the errant views of people who have gone astray aforetime, and have led many [others] astray, and are still straying from the right path."<sup>92</sup>

5.78 THOSE of the children of Israel who were bent on denying the truth have [already] been cursed by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary.<sup>93</sup> this, because they rebelled [against God] and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right.

5.79 They would not prevent one another from doing whatever hateful things they did: vile indeed was what they were wont to do!

5.80 [And now] thou canst see many of them allying themselves with those who are bent on denying the truth! [So] vile indeed is what their passions make them do<sup>94</sup> that God has condemned them; and in suffering shall they abide.

5.81 For, if they [truly] believed in God and their Prophet<sup>95</sup> and all that was bestowed upon him from on high, they would not take those [deniers of the truth] for their allies: but most of them are iniquitous.

5.82 Thou wilt surely find that, of all people, the most hostile to those who believe [in this divine writ] are the Jews as well as those who are bent on ascribing divinity to aught beside God; and thou wilt surely find that, of all people,<sup>96</sup> they who say, "Behold, we are Christians," come closest to feeling affection for those who believe [in this divine writ]: this is so because there are priests and monks among them, and because these are not given to arrogance.<sup>97</sup>

5.83 For, when they come to understand what has been bestowed from on high upon this Apostle, thou canst see their eyes overflow with tears, because they recognize something of its truth;<sup>98</sup> [and] they say: "O our Sustainer! We do believe; make us one, then, with all who bear witness to the truth.

5.84 And how could we fail to believe in God and in whatever truth has come unto us, when we so fervently desire that our Sustainer count us among the righteous?"

5.85 And for this their belief<sup>99</sup> God will reward them with gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide: for such is the requital of the doers of good;

5.86 whereas they who are bent on denying the truth and giving the lie to Our messages - they are destined for the blazing fire.

5.87 O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not deprive yourselves of the good things of life which God has made lawful to you,<sup>100</sup> but do not transgress the bounds of what is right: verily, God does not love those who transgress the bounds of what is right.

5.88 Thus, partake of the lawful, good things which God grants you as sustenance, and be conscious of God, in whom you believe.

5.89 GOD will not take you to task for oaths which you may have uttered without thought,<sup>101</sup> but He will take you to task for oaths which you have sworn in earnest. Thus, the breaking of an oath must be atoned for by<sup>102</sup> feeding ten needy persons with more or less the same food as you are wont to give to your own families,<sup>103</sup> or by clothing them, or by freeing a human being from bondage; and he who has not the wherewithal shall fast for three days [instead]. This shall be the atonement for your oaths whenever you have sworn [and broken them]. But be mindful of your oaths!<sup>104</sup> Thus God makes clear unto you His messages, so that you might have cause to be grateful.

5.90 O YOU who have attained to faith! Intoxicants, and games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing:<sup>105</sup> shun them, then, so that you might attain to a happy state!

5.91 By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you not, then, desist?<sup>106</sup>

5.92 Hence, pay heed unto God, and pay heed unto the Apostle, and be ever on your guard [against evil]; and if you turn away, then know that Our Apostle's only duty is a clear delivery of the message [entrusted to him].<sup>107</sup> -

5.93 Those who have attained to faith and do righteous deeds incur no sin by partaking of whatever they may,<sup>108</sup> so long as they are conscious of God and [truly] believe and do righteous deeds, and continue to be conscious of God and to believe, and grow ever more<sup>109</sup> conscious of God, and persevere in doing good: for God loves the doers of good.

5.94 O YOU who have attained to faith! Most certainly God will try you by means of the game which may come within the reach of your hands and your weapons<sup>110</sup> [while you are on pilgrimage], so that God might mark out those who fear Him although He is beyond the reach of human perception.<sup>111</sup> And as for him who, after all this, transgresses the bounds of what is right - grievous suffering awaits him!

5.95 O you who have attained to faith! Kill no game while you are in the state of pilgrimage. And whoever of you kills it intentionally,<sup>112</sup> [shall make] amends in cattle equivalent to what he has killed - with two persons of probity giving their judgment thereon - to be brought as an offering to the Ka'bah,<sup>113</sup> or else he may atone for his sin by feeding the needy, or by the equivalent thereof in fasting:<sup>114</sup> [this,] in order that he taste the full gravity of his deed, [while] God shall have effaced the past. But whoever does it again, God will inflict His retribution on him: for God is almighty, an avenger of evil.

5.96 Lawful to you is all water-game, and what the sea brings forth,<sup>115</sup> as a provision for you [who are settled] as well as for travellers, although you are forbidden to hunt on land while you are in the state of pilgrimage.<sup>116</sup> And be conscious of God, unto whom you shall be gathered.

5.97 God has laid down that the Ka'bah, the Inviolable Temple, shall be a symbol for all mankind,<sup>117</sup> and [so, too,] the sacred month [of pilgrimage] and the garlanded offerings [are symbols] meant to make you aware<sup>118</sup> that God is aware of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and that God has full knowledge of everything.

5.98 Know that God is severe in retribution - and that God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

5.99 No more is the Apostle bound to do than deliver the message [entrusted to him]: and God knows all that you do openly, and all that you would conceal.

5.100 Say: "There is no comparison between the bad things and the good things,<sup>119</sup> even though very many of the bad things may please thee greatly. Be, then, conscious of God, O you who are endowed with insight, so that you might attain to a happy state!"

5.101 O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not ask about matters which, if they were to be made manifest to you [in terms of law], might cause you hardship;<sup>120</sup> for, if you should ask about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they might [indeed] be made manifest to you [as laws].<sup>121</sup> God has absolved [you from any obligation] in this respect: for God is much-forgiving forbearing.<sup>122</sup>

5.102 People before your time have indeed asked such questions - and in result thereof have come to deny the truth.<sup>123</sup>

5.103 IT IS NOT of God's ordaining that certain kinds of cattle should be marked out by superstition and set aside from the use of man;<sup>124</sup> yet those who are bent on denying the truth attribute their own lying inventions to God. And most of them never use their reason:

5.104 for when they are told, "Come unto that which God has bestowed from on high, and unto the Apostle" - they answer, "Enough for us is that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing." Why, even though their forefathers knew nothing, and were devoid of all guidance?

5.105 O you who have attained to faith! It is [but] for your own selves that you are responsible: those who go astray can do you no harm if you [yourselves] are on the right path. Unto God you all must return: and then He will make you [truly] understand all that you were doing [in life].

5.106 O YOU who have attained to faith! Let there be witnesses to what you do when death approaches you and you are about to make bequests:<sup>125</sup> two persons of probity from among your own people, or - if the pangs of death come upon you while you are travelling far from home<sup>126</sup> - two other persons from [among people] other than your own. Take hold of the two after having prayed; and if you have any doubt in your mind, let each of them swear by God, "We shall not sell this [our word] for any price, even though it were [for the sake of] a near kinsman; and neither shall we conceal aught of what we have witnessed before God<sup>127</sup> - or else, may we indeed be counted among the sinful."

5.107 But if afterwards it should come to light that the two [witnesses] have become guilty of [this very] sin, then two others - from among those whom the two former have deprived of their right<sup>128</sup> - shall take their place and shall swear by God, "Our testimony is indeed truer than the testimony of these two, and we have not transgressed the bounds of what is right - or else, may we indeed be counted among the



evildoers!"

5.108 Thus it will be more likely that people will offer testimony in accordance with the truth - or else they will [have cause to] fear that their oaths will be refuted by the oaths of others.<sup>129</sup> Be, then, conscious of God, and hearken [unto Him]: for God does not bestow His guidance upon iniquitous folk.

5.109 ON THE DAY when God shall assemble all the apostles and shall ask, "What response did you receive?" - they will answer, "We have no knowledge; verily, it is Thou alone who fully knowest all the things that are beyond the reach of a created being's perception."<sup>130</sup>

5.110 Lo!<sup>131</sup> God will say: "O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember the blessings which I bestowed upon thee and thy mother - how I strengthened thee with holy inspiration,<sup>132</sup> so that thou couldst speak unto men in thy cradle, and as a grown man; and how I imparted unto thee revelation and wisdom, including the Torah and the Gospel;<sup>133</sup> and how by My leave thou didst create out of clay, as it were, the shape of [thy followers'] destiny, and then didst breathe into it, so that it might become, by My leave, [their] destiny;<sup>134</sup> and how thou didst heal the blind and the leper by My leave, and how thou didst raise the dead by My leave;<sup>135</sup> and how I prevented the children of Israel from harming thee when thou camest unto them with all evidence of the truth, and [when] those of them who were bent on denying the truth were saying 'This is clearly nothing but deception!'"

5.111 AND [remember the time] when I inspired the white-garbed ones.<sup>136</sup> "Believe in Me and in My Apostle!" They answered: "We believe; and bear Thou witness that we have surrendered ourselves [unto Thee]."

5.112 [And,] lo, the white-garbed ones said: "O Jesus, son of Mary! Could thy Sustainer send down unto us a repast from heaven?"<sup>137</sup> [Jesus] answered: "Be conscious of God, if you are [truly] believers!"

5.113 Said they: "We desire to partake thereof, so that our hearts might be set fully at rest, and that we might know that thou hast spoken the truth to us, and that we might be of those who bear witness thereto!"

5.114 Said Jesus, the son of Mary: "O God, our Sustainer! Send down upon us a repast from heaven: it shall be an ever-recurring feast for us - for the first and the last of us - and a sign from Thee. And provide us our sustenance, for Thou art the best of providers!"

5.115 God answered: "Verily, I [always] do send it down unto you:<sup>138</sup> and so, if any of you should henceforth deny [this] truth, on him, behold, will I inflict suffering the like of which I have never [yet] inflicted upon anyone in the world!"

5.116 AND LO! God said:<sup>139</sup> "O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, 'Worship me and my mother as deities beside God'?" [Jesus] answered: "Limitless art Thou in Thy glory! It would not have been possible for me to say what I had no right to [say]! Had I said this, Thou wouldst indeed have known it! Thou knowest all that is within myself, whereas I know not what is in Thy Self. Verily, it is Thou alone who fully knowest all the things that are beyond the reach of a created being's perception.

5.117 Nothing did I tell them beyond what Thou didst bid me [to say]: 'Worship God, [who is] my Sustainer as well as your Sustainer.' And I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelt in their midst; but since Thou hast caused me to die, Thou alone hast been their keeper:<sup>140</sup> for Thou art witness unto everything.

5.118 If thou cause them to suffer - verily, they are Thy servants; and if Thou forgive them - verily, Thou alone art almighty, truly wise!"

5.119 [AND on Judgment Day] God will say:<sup>141</sup> "Today, their truthfulness shall benefit all who have been true to their word: theirs shall be gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide beyond the count of time; well-pleased is God with them, and well-pleased are they with Him: this is the triumph supreme.

5.120 God's is the dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that they contain; and He has the power to will anything.

## Author Comments

party. According to Raghīb, the covenants referred to in this verse "are of three kinds: the covenants between God and man [i.e., man's obligations towards God], between man and his own soul, and between the individual and his fellow-men" - thus embracing the entire area of man's moral and social responsibilities.

2 - I.e., in verse {3}. Literally, the expression *bahimat al-an'am* could be translated as "a beast of the cattle"; but since this would obviously be a needless tautology, many commentators incline to the view that what is meant here is "any beast which resembles [domesticated] cattle insofar as it feeds on plants and is not a beast of prey" (Rāzī; also *Lisan al-'Arab*, art. *na'ma*). I have adopted this convincing interpretation in my rendering of the above phrase.

3 - Lit., "whatever He wills" or "deems fit": i.e., in accordance with a plan of which He alone has full knowledge. Regarding the prohibition of hunting while on pilgrimage, see verses {94-96} of this surah.

4 - Lit., "nor against the offerings, nor the garlands" - a reference to the animals which are brought to Mecca at the time of pilgrimage, to be sacrificed there in the name of God and most of their flesh distributed among the poor. In order to mark out such animals, and to prevent their being inadvertently used for profane (e.g., commercial) ends, garlands are customarily hung around their necks. See also [2:196](#). - The term *sha'a'ir Allah* (lit., "God's symbols"), occurring earlier in this sentence, denotes the places reserved for particular religious rites (e.g., the Ka'bah) as well as the religious rites themselves. (Cf. [2:158](#), where *As-Safa* and *Al-Marwah* are described as "symbols set up by God"). In the above context, the rites of pilgrimage, in particular, are alluded to.

5 - Lit., "when you have become free of the obligations attaching to the state of pilgrimage" (*idha halaltum*).

6 - Inasmuch as this surah was undoubtedly revealed in the year 10 H. (Tabarī, Ibn Kathīr), it is difficult to accept the view of some of the commentators that the above verse alludes to the events culminating in the truce of Hudaibiyyah, in 6 H., when the pagan Quraysh succeeded in preventing the Prophet and his followers from entering Mecca on pilgrimage. At the time of the revelation of this surah Mecca was already in the possession of the Muslims, and there was no longer any question of their being barred from it by the Quraysh, almost all of whom had by then embraced Islam. We must, therefore, conclude that the above injunction cannot be circumscribed by a historical reference but has a timeless, general import: in other words, that it refers to anybody who might endeavour to bar the believers - physically or metaphorically - from the exercise of their religious duties (symbolized by the "Inviolable House of Worship") and thus to

lead them away from their faith. In view of the next sentence, moreover, this interpretation would seem to be the only plausible one.

7 - See [2:173](#).

8 - The nusub (sing. nasibah) were the altar-stones set up in pre-Islamic times around the Ka'bah on which the pagan Quraysh used to sacrifice animals to their idols. However, from the story of Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl (Bukhari) it appears that not only sacrificial animals but also such as were destined for common consumption were often slaughtered there for the sake of a supposed "blessing" (see Fath al-Bari VII, 113). Some philologists consider the form nusub a singular, with ansab as its plural (cf. verse {90} of this surah). In either case the term denotes an association with all manner of practices which could be described as "idolatrous", and should not be taken merely in its literal sense. Cf. in this respect also verse {90} of this surah, and the corresponding note [105].

9 - Lit., "to aim at divining [the future] by means of arrows". This is a reference to the divining-arrows without a point and without feathers used by the pre-Islamic Arabs to find out what the future might hold in store for them. (A comprehensive description of this practice may be found in Lane III, 1247.) As is usual with such historical allusions in the Qur'an, this one, too, is used metonymically: it implies a prohibition of all manner of attempts at divining or foretelling the future.

10 - According to all available Traditions based on the testimony of the Prophet's contemporaries, the above passage - which sets, as it were, a seal on the message of the Qur'an - was revealed at 'Arafat in the afternoon of Friday, the 9th of Dhu 'l-Hijjah, 10 H., eighty-one or eighty-two days before the death of the Prophet. No legal injunction whatsoever was revealed after this verse: and this explains the reference to God's having perfected the Faith and bestowed the full measure of His blessings upon the believers. Man's self-surrender (islam) to God is postulated as the basis, or the basic law, of all true religion (din). This self-surrender expressed itself not only in belief in Him but also in obedience to His commands: and this is the reason why the announcement of the completion of the Qur'anic message is placed within the context of a verse containing the last legal ordinances ever revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

11 - Lit., "in [a condition of] emptiness' (fi makhmasah). This is generally taken to mean in extreme hunger"; but while this expression does, in the first instance, signify "emptiness caused by hunger", the reference to divination in the above verse points to a metonymical use of the term makhmasah as well: that is to say, it covers here not merely cases of actual, extreme hunger (which makes the eating of otherwise prohibited categories of meat permissible, as is explicitly stated in [2:173](#)) but also other

situations in which overwhelming, extraneous forces beyond a person's control may compel him, against his will, to do something that is normally prohibited by Islamic Law - as, for instance, to use intoxicating drugs whenever illness makes their use imperative and unavoidable.

12 - The implication is, firstly, that what has been forbidden does not belong to the category of "the good things of life" (at-tayyibat), and, secondly, that all that has not been expressly forbidden is allowed. It is to be noted that the Qur'an forbids only those things or actions which are injurious to man physically, morally or socially.

13 - Lit., "such of the trained beasts of chase" (min al-jawarih mukallibin). The term mukallib signifies "trained like a [hunting] dog", and is applied to every animal used for hunting - a hound, a falcon, a cheetah, etc.

14 - This permission to partake of the food of the followers of other revealed religions excludes, of course, the forbidden categories of meat enumerated in verse {3} above. As a matter of fact, the Law of Moses, too, forbids them explicitly; and there is no statement whatsoever in the Gospels to the effect that these prohibitions were cancelled by Jesus: on the contrary, he is reported to have said, "Think not that I have come to destroy the Law [of Moses]...: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew v, 17). Thus, the latitude enjoyed by post-Pauline followers of Jesus in respect of food does not correspond to what he himself practiced and enjoined.

15 - Whereas Muslim men are allowed to marry women from among the followers of another revealed religion, Muslim women may not marry non-Muslims: the reason being that Islam enjoins reverence of all the prophets, while the followers of other religions reject some of them - e.g., the Prophet Muhammad or, as is the case with the Jews, both Muhammad and Jesus. Thus, while a non-Muslim woman who marries a Muslim can be sure that - despite all doctrinal differences - the prophets of her faith will be mentioned with utmost respect in her Muslim environment, a Muslim woman who would marry a non-Muslim would always be exposed to an abuse of him whom she regards as God's Apostle.

16 - The above passage rounds off, as it were, the opening sentences of this surah, "O you who have attained to faith, be true to your covenants" - of which belief in God and the acceptance of His commandments are the foremost. It is immediately followed by a reference to prayer: for it is in prayer that man's dependence on God finds its most conscious and deliberate expression.

17 - For an explanation of this and the following passage, see [4:43](#) and the corresponding notes. Here, the reference to prayer connects with the last sentence of the preceding verse, which speaks of belief in God.

18 - Lit., "His solemn pledge by which He bound you". Since this pledge is given by the believers to God and not by Him to them, the personal pronoun in "His pledge" can have only one meaning: namely, God's binding thereby the believers to Himself.

19 - Lit., "of people".

20 - Lit., "to stretch their hands towards you": an allusion to the weakness of the believers at the beginning of the Qur'anic revelation, and - by implication - to the initial weakness of every religious movement.

21 - The interpolation of "similar" is justified by the obvious reference to verse {7} above. The pledge was similar in that it related to obedience to God's commandments.

22 - Lit., "when We sent out twelve leaders from among them". This is a reference to the Biblical story (in Numbers xiii), according to which God commanded Moses to send out one leading personality from each of the twelve tribes "to spy out the land of Canaan" before the children of Israel invaded it. (The noun naqib, here rendered as "leader", has also the meaning of "investigator" or "spy" inasmuch as it is derived from the verb naqaba, which signifies - among other things - "he scrutinized" or "investigated"). The subsequent near-revolt of the children of Israel - caused by their fear of the powerful tribes which inhabited Canaan (cf. Numbers xiv) - is briefly referred to in the first sentence of verse {13} and more fully described in verses {20-26} of this surah.

23 - I.e., by doing righteous deeds.

24 - An allusion to their lack of trust in God and their persistent sinning.

25 - See [4:46](#), where the same accusation is levelled against the children of Israel.

26 - Thus the Qur'an elliptically rejects their claim of being true followers of Jesus: for, by wrongfully elevating him to the status of divinity they have denied the very essence of his message.

27 - I.e., their going astray from the genuine teachings of Jesus - and thus from true faith in God - is the innermost cause of the enmity and hatred which has so often set the so-called Christian nations against one another and led to unceasing wars and mutual persecution.

28 - Inasmuch as verses {15-19} are addressed to the Jews and the Christians, the term al-kitab may suitably be rendered here as "the Bible". It is to be borne in mind that the primary meaning of the verb khafiya is "it became imperceptible" or "not apparent" or "obscure", and that the same significance attaches to the transitive form akhfa. There is, of course, no doubt that in its transitive form the verb also denotes "he concealed [something]", i.e., from others: but in view of the preceding phrase, "there has come unto you Our Apostle to make clear unto you", it is obvious that what is alluded to in this context is the concealing of something from oneself: in other words, it is a reference to the gradual obscuring, by the followers of the Bible, of its original verities which they are now unwilling to admit even to themselves.

29 - The word salam, here rendered as "salvation", has no proper equivalent in the English language. It denotes inner peace, soundness and security from evil of any kind, both physical and spiritual, and the achievement of what, in Christian terminology, is described as "salvation": with the difference, however, that the Christian concept of salvation presupposes the existence of an a-priori state of sinfulness, which is justified in Christianity by the doctrine of "original sin", but is not justified in Islam, which does not subscribe to this doctrine. Consequently, the term "salvation" - which I am using here for want of a better word - does not adequately convey the full meaning of salam. Its nearest equivalents in Western languages would be the German Heil or the French salut, both of which express the idea of spiritual peace and fulfilment without being necessarily (i.e., linguistically) connected with the Christian doctrine of salvation.

30 - Cf. Exodus iv, 22-23 ("Israel is My son"), Jeremiah xxxi, 9 ("I am a father to Israel"), and the many parallel expressions in the Gospels.

31 - With these words the Qur'an returns to the story of the children of Israel alluded to in verses {12} and {13} - namely, to an illustration of their having "broken their solemn pledge" and gone back on their faith in God. The following story is, moreover, directly connected with the preceding verse inasmuch as Moses appeals here to the children of Israel as "a bearer of glad tidings and a warner".

32 - Lit., "made you kings". According to most of the commentators (e.g., Tabari, Zamakhshari, Razi), the "kingship" of the Israelites is a metaphorical allusion to their freedom and independence after their Egyptian bondage, the term "king" being equivalent here to "a free man who is master of his own affairs" (Manar VI, 323 f.) and can, therefore, adopt any way of life he chooses.

33 - Lit., "are in it". See Numbers xiii, 32-33, and also the whole of ch. xiv, which speaks of the terror that overwhelmed the Israelites on hearing the report of the twelve scouts mentioned in verse {12} of this surah, and of the punishment of their cowardice and lack of faith.

34 - I.e., by frontal attack. According to the Bible (Numbers xiv, 6-9, 24, 30, 38), the two God-fearing men were Joshua and Caleb, who had been among the twelve spies sent out to explore Canaan, and who now tried to persuade the terror-stricken children of Israel to place their trust in God. As so often in the Qur'an, this story of the Israelites serves to illustrate the difference between real, selfless faith and worldly self-love.

35 - I.e., the story of Cain and Abel, mentioned in Genesis iv, 1-16. The pronoun in "tell them" refers to the followers of the Bible, and obviously connects with verse {15} of this surah, "Now there has come unto you Our Apostle, to make clear unto you much of what you have been concealing [from yourselves] of the Bible", the meaning of which has been explained in note [28] above. The moral of this particular Biblical story - a moral which the followers of the Bible have been "concealing from themselves" - is summarized in verse {32}.

36 - Lit., "my sin as well as thy sin". It is evident from several well-authenticated ahadith that if a person dies a violent death not caused, directly or indirectly, by his own sinful actions, his previous sins will be forgiven (the reason being, evidently, that he had no time to repent, as he might have done had he been allowed to live). In cases of unprovoked murder, the murderer is burdened - in addition to the sin of murder - with the sins which his innocent victim might have committed in the past and of which he (the victim) is now absolved: this convincing interpretation of the above verse has been advanced by Mujahid (as quoted by Tabari).

37 - Among the many meanings attributable to the noun nafs (primarily, "soul", or "mind", or "self"), there is also that of "desire" or "passionate determination" (Qamus, see also Zamakhshari's Asas); in this context, the best rendering seems to be "passion".

38 - Lit., "to be like this raven".

39 - Lit., "became of those who feel remorse". The thought of burying his dead brother's body, suggested to Cain by the raven's scratching the earth, brought home to him the enormity of his crime.

40 - This moral truth is among those to which the first sentence of verse {15} of this surah alludes, and its succinct formulation fully explains the reason why the story of Cain and Abel is mentioned in this context. The expression "We have ordained unto the children of Israel" does not, of course, detract from the universal validity of this moral: it refers merely to its earliest enunciation.

41 - I.e., to the followers of the Bible, both the Jews and the Christians.

42 - The present participle la-musrifun indicates their "continuously committing excesses" (i.e., crimes), and is best rendered as "they go on committing" them. In view of the preceding passages, these "excesses" obviously refer to crimes of violence and, in particular, to the ruthless killing of human beings.



43 - The term "apostle" is evidently generic in this context. By "making war on God and His apostle" is meant a hostile opposition to, and wilful disregard of, the ethical precepts ordained by God and explained by all His apostles, combined with the conscious endeavour to destroy or undermine other people's belief in God as well.

44 - In classical Arabic idiom, the "cutting off of one's hands and feet" is often synonymous with "destroying one's power", and it is possibly in this sense that the expression has been used here. Alternatively, it might denote "being mutilated", both physically and metaphorically - similar to the (metonymical) use of the expression "being crucified" in the sense of "being tortured". The phrase *min khilaf* - usually rendered as "from opposite sides" - is derived from the verb *khalafahu*, "he disagreed with him", or "opposed him", or "acted contrarily to him": consequently, the primary meaning of *min khilaf* is "in result of contrariness" or "of perverseness".

45 -

Most of the classical commentators regard this passage as a legal injunction, and interpret it, therefore, as follows: "The recompense of those who make war on God and His apostle and spread corruption on earth shall but be that they shall be slain, or crucified, or that their hands and feet be cut off on opposite sides, or that they shall be banished from the earth: such shall be their ignominy in this world." This interpretation is, however, in no way warranted by the text, and this for the following reasons:

(a) The four passive verbs occurring in this sentence - "slain", "crucified", "cut off" and "banished" - are in the present tense and do not, by themselves, indicate the future or, alternatively, the imperative mood.

(b) The form *yuqattalu* does not signify simply "they are being slain" or (as the commentators would have it) "they shall be slain", but denotes - in accordance with a fundamental rule of Arabic grammar - "they are being slain in great numbers"; and the same holds true of the verbal forms *yusallabu* ("they are being crucified in great numbers") and *yuqatta'a* ("cut off in great numbers"). Now if we are to believe that these are "ordained punishments", it would imply that great numbers - but not necessarily all - of "those who make war on God and His apostle" should be punished in this way: obviously an inadmissible assumption of arbitrariness on the part of the Divine Law-Giver. Moreover, if the party "waging war on God and His apostle" should happen to consist of one person only, or of a few, how could a command referring to "great numbers" be applied to them or to him?

(c) Furthermore, what would be the meaning of the phrase, "they shall be banished from the earth", if the above verse is to be taken as a legal injunction? This point has, indeed, perplexed the commentators considerably. Some of them assume that the transgressors should be "banished from the land [of Islam]": but there is no instance in the Qur'an of such a restricted use of the term "earth" (*ard*). Others, again, are of the opinion that the guilty ones should be imprisoned in a subterranean dungeon, which would constitute their "banishment from [the face of] the earth"!

(d) Finally - and this is the weightiest objection to an interpretation of the above verse as a "legal injunction" - the Qur'an places exactly the same expressions referring to mass-crucifixion and mass-mutilation (but this time with a definite intent relating to the future) in the mouth of Pharaoh, as a threat to believers (see 7:124, 20:71 and 26:49). Since Pharaoh is invariably described in the Qur'an as the epitome of evil and godlessness, it is inconceivable that the same Qur'an would promulgate a divine law in

precisely the terms which it attributes elsewhere to a figure characterized as an "enemy of God".

In short, the attempt of the commentators to interpret the above verse as a "legal injunction" must be categorically rejected, however great the names of the persons responsible for it. On the other hand, a really convincing interpretation suggests itself to us at once as soon as we read the verse - as it ought to be read - in the present tense: for, read in this way, the verse reveals itself immediately as a statement of fact - a declaration of the inescapability of the retribution which "those who make war on God" bring upon themselves. Their hostility to ethical imperatives causes them to lose sight of all moral values; and their consequent mutual discord and "perverseness" gives rise to unending strife among themselves for the sake of worldly gain and power: they kill one another in great numbers, and torture and mutilate one another in great numbers, with the result that whole communities are wiped out or, as the Qur'an puts it, "banished from [the face of] the earth". It is this interpretation alone that takes full account of all the expressions occurring in this verse - the reference to "great numbers" in connection with deeds of extreme violence, the "banishment from the earth", and, lastly, the fact that these horrors are expressed in the terms used by Pharaoh, the "enemy of God".

46 - I.e. before belief in God and in the ethical principles decreed by Him becomes prevalent: for, in that event, repentance on the part of "those who make war on God and His apostle" would be no more than an act of conforming to the dominant trend and, therefore, of no moral value whatever. It is to be noted that the exemption from suffering relates to the hereafter.

47 - Lit., "and the like with it".

48 -

The extreme severity of this Qur'anic punishment can be understood only if one bears in mind the fundamental principle of Islamic Law that no duty (taklif) is ever imposed on man without his being granted a corresponding right (haqq); and the term "duty" also comprises, in this context, liability to punishment. Now, among the inalienable rights of every member of the Islamic society - Muslim and non-Muslim alike - is the right to protection (in every sense of the word) by the community as a whole. As is evident from innumerable Qur'anic ordinances as well as the Prophet's injunctions forthcoming from authentic Traditions, every citizen is entitled to a share in the community's economic resources and, thus, to the enjoyment of social security: in other words, he or she must be assured of an equitable standard of living commensurate with the resources at the disposal of the community. For, although the Qur'an makes it clear that human life cannot be expressed in terms of physical existence alone - the ultimate values of life being spiritual in nature - the believers are not entitled to look upon spiritual truths and values as something that could be divorced from the physical and social factors of human existence. In short, Islam envisages and demands a society that provides not only for the spiritual needs of man, but for his bodily and intellectual needs as well. It follows, therefore, that - in order to be truly Islamic - a society (or state) must be so constituted that every individual, man and woman, may enjoy that minimum of material well-being and security without which there can be no human dignity, no real freedom and, in the last resort, no

spiritual progress: for, there can be no real happiness and strength in a society that permits some of its members to suffer undeserved want while others have more than they need. If the whole society suffers privations owing to circumstances beyond its control (as happened, for instance, to the Muslim community in the early days of Islam), such shared privations may become a source of spiritual strength and, through it, of future greatness. But if the available resources of a community are so unevenly distributed that certain groups within it live in affluence while the majority of the people are forced to use up all their energies in search of their daily bread, poverty becomes the most dangerous enemy of spiritual progress, and occasionally drives whole communities away from God-consciousness and into the arms of soul-destroying materialism. It was undoubtedly this that the Prophet had in mind when he uttered the warning words (quoted by As-Suyuti in *Al-Jami' as-Saghir*), "Poverty may well turn into a denial of the truth (kufr)." Consequently, the social legislation of Islam aims at a state of affairs in which every man, woman and child has (a) enough to eat and wear, (b) an adequate home, (c) equal opportunities and facilities for education, and (d) free medical care in health and in sickness. A corollary of these rights is the right to productive and remunerative work while of working age and in good health, and a provision (by the community or the state) of adequate nourishment, shelter, etc. in cases of disability resulting from illness, widowhood, enforced unemployment, old age, or under-age. As already mentioned, the communal obligation to create such a comprehensive social security scheme has been laid down in many Qur'anic verses, and has been amplified and explained by a great number of the Prophet's commandments. It was the second Caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, who began to translate these ordinances into a concrete administrative scheme (see Ibn Sad, *Tabaqat III/1*, 213-217); but after his premature death, his successors had neither the vision nor the statesmanship to continue his unfinished work.

It is against the background of this social security scheme envisaged by Islam that the Qur'an imposes the severe sentence of hand-cutting as a deterrent punishment for robbery. Since, under the circumstances outlined above, "temptation" cannot be admitted as a justifiable excuse, and since, in the last resort, the entire socio-economic system of Islam is based on the faith of its adherents, its balance is extremely delicate and in need of constant, strictly-enforced protection. In a community in which everyone is assured of full security and social justice, any attempt on the part of an individual to achieve an easy, unjustified gain at the expense of other members of the community must be considered an attack against the system as a whole, and must be punished as such: and, therefore, the above ordinance which lays down that the hand of the thief shall be cut off. One must, however, always bear in mind the principle mentioned at the beginning of this note: namely, the absolute interdependence between man's rights and corresponding duties (including liability to punishment). In a community or state which neglects or is unable to provide complete social security for all its members, the temptation to enrich oneself by illegal means often becomes irresistible - and, consequently, theft cannot and should not be punished as severely as it should be punished in a state in which social security is a reality in the full sense of the word. If the society is unable to fulfil its duties with regard to every one of its members, it has no right to invoke the full sanction of criminal law (hadd) against the individual transgressor, but must confine itself to milder forms of administrative punishment. (It was in correct appreciation of this principle that the great Caliph 'Umar waived the hadd of hand-cutting in a period of famine which afflicted Arabia during his reign.) To sum up, one may safely conclude that the cutting-off of a hand in punishment for theft is applicable only within the context of an already-existing, fully functioning social security scheme, and in no other circumstances.

50 - Lit., "from among those".

51 - Although this verse is, in the first instance, addressed to the Prophet, it concerns all followers of the Qur'an and is, therefore, valid for all times. The same observation applies to the people of whom this verse speaks: although it mentions only the hypocrites and the Jews, it refers, by implication, to all people who are prejudiced against Islam and willingly lend ear to any false statement about its teachings, preferring to listen to unfriendly non-Muslim "experts" rather than to turn to the Qur'an itself for enlightenment - which is the meaning of the phrase, "without having come to thee [O Muhammad]"

52 - I.e., they are prepared to accept such of the Qur'anic teachings as might suit their preconceived notions, but are not prepared to accept anything that goes against their own inclinations.

53 - This connects with the beginning of this verse; hence my interpolation. For the meaning of fitnah, see surah {8}, note [25].

54 - The noun suht is derived from the verb sahata, "he utterly destroyed [a thing]", and signifies, primarily, the "doing of anything that leads to destruction" because it is abominable and, therefore, forbidden (Lisan al-'Arab). Hence, it denotes anything that is evil itself. In the above context, the intensive expression akkalun li's-suht may denote "those who greedily devour all that is forbidden" (i.e., illicit gain), or, more probably, "those who greedily swallow all that is evil" - i.e., every false statement made about the Qur'an by its enemies with a view to destroying its impact.

55 - I.e., as to what is right and what is wrong in the sight of God. Most of the commentators assume that this passage refers to a specific judicial case, or cases, which the Jews of Medina brought before the Prophet for decision; but in view of the inherent Qur'anic principle that every historical reference contained in it has also a general import. I rather believe that the "Judgment" alluded to in this verse relates to deciding as to whether any of their beliefs - other than those which the Qur'an explicitly confirms or rejects - is right or wrong.

56 - I.e., on the basis of the ethical laws revealed by God, and not in accordance with their personal, arbitrary likes or dislikes.

57 - This verse illustrates the strange mentality of the Jews, who - despite the fact that they believe the Torah to contain all of the Divine Law - surreptitiously turn to a religious dispensation in which they do not believe, in the hope that its verdict on certain ethical questions might confirm some of their own wishful beliefs which happen to run counter to the Torah. In other words, they are not really prepared to submit to the judgment of the Torah - although they assert their belief in it - nor the judgment of the Qur'an, which confirms some of the laws of the Torah and abrogates others: for, as soon as they come to realize that the Qur'an does not agree with their preconceived ideas, they turn away from it.

58 - Implying that the Law of Moses (the Torah) was intended only for the children of Israel, and was never meant to have universal validity.

59 - The expression "some of God's writ (kitab)" implies that the Torah did not exhaust the whole of God's revelation, and that more was yet to be revealed. For an explanation of the term rabbaniyun, see surah {3}, note [62].

60 - I.e., for the illusory feeling of superiority based on the spurious belief that the children of Israel are "God's chosen people" and, therefore, the sole recipients of God's grace and revelation. The "messages" referred to in this sentence relate to the Qur'an as well as to the Biblical prophecies concerning the advent of Muhammad.

61 - See Exodus xxi, 23 ff., where details of the extremely harsh penalties provided under Mosaic Law are given.

62 - Lit., "it shall be an atonement for him". The Pentateuch does not contain this call to forgiveness which is brought out with great clarity not only in the Qur'an but also in the teachings of Jesus, especially in the Sermon on the Mount: and this, read in conjunction with the following verses, would seem to be an allusion to the time-bound quality of Mosaic Law. Alternatively, the above admonition may have been part of the original teachings of the Torah which have been subsequently corrupted or deliberately abandoned by its followers, whom the Qur'an accuses of "distorting the meaning of the revealed words" (see verse {41} above).

63 - Regarding the meaning of ma bayna yadayhi (lit., "that which was between his [or "its"] hands") occurring twice in this verse, as well as in verse {48}, see surah {3}, note [3].

64 - The participle muhaymin is derived from the quadrilateral verb haymana, "he watched [over a thing]" or "controlled [it]", and is used here to describe the Qur'an as the determinant factor in deciding what is genuine and what is false in the earlier scriptures (see Manar VI, 410 ff.).

65 - Lit., "judge, then, between them...", etc. This apparently applies not merely to judicial cases but also to opinions as to what is right or wrong in the ethical sense (see note [55] above). As is evident from the mention of the "followers of the Gospel" in the preceding verse, and of the Torah in the earlier passages, the people spoken of here are both the Jews and the Christians.

66 - The expression "every one of you" denotes the various communities of which mankind is composed. The term shir'ah (or shar'ah) signifies, literally, "the way to a watering-place" (from which men and animals derive the element indispensable to their life), and is used in the Qur'an to denote a system of law necessary for a community's social and spiritual welfare. The term minhaj, on the other hand, denotes an "open road", usually in an abstract sense: that is, "a way of life". The terms shir'ah and minhaj are more restricted in their meaning than the term din, which comprises not merely the laws relating to a particular religion but also the basic, unchanging spiritual truths which, according to the Qur'an, have been preached by every one of God's apostles, while the particular body of laws (shir'ah or shari'ah) promulgated through them, and the way of life (minhaj) recommended by them, varied in accordance with the exigencies of the time and of each community's cultural development. This "unity in diversity" is frequently stressed in the Qur'an (e.g., in the first sentence of [2:148](#), in {21:92-93}, or in [23:52](#) ff.). Because of the universal applicability and textual incorruptibility of its teachings - as well as of the fact that the Prophet Muhammad is "the seal of all prophets", i.e., the last of them (see [33:40](#)) - the Qur'an represents the culminating point of all revelation and offers the final, perfect way to spiritual fulfilment. This uniqueness of the Qur'anic message does not, however, preclude all adherents of earlier faiths from attaining to God's grace: for - as the Qur'an so often points out - those among them who believe uncompromisingly in the One God and the Day of Judgment (i.e., in individual moral responsibility) and live righteously "need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve".

67 - I.e., "in order to test, by means of the various religious laws imposed on you, your willingness to surrender yourselves to God and to obey Him" (Zamakhshari, Razi), "and thus to enable you to grow, spiritually and socially, in accordance with the God-willed law of evolution" (Manar VI, 418 f.).

68 - Lit., "inform you of that wherein you used to differ" (cf. surah {2}, note [94]). Thus, the Qur'an impresses upon all who believe in God - Muslims and non-Muslims alike - that the differences in their religious practices should make them "vie with one another in doing good works" rather than lose themselves in mutual hostility.

69 - Lit., "between them": see notes [55] and [65] above.

70 - The implication is that a conscious disregard of God's commandments brings with it its own punishment: namely, a gradual corruption of the community's moral values and, thus, growing social disruption and internecine conflict.

71 - By "pagan ignorance" (jahiliyyah) is meant here not merely the time before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad but, in general, a state of affairs characterized by a lack of moral perception and a submission of all personal and communal concerns to the criterion of "expediency" alone: that is, exclusively to the consideration as to whether a particular aim or action is useful or damaging (in the short-term, practical sense of these words) to the interests of the person concerned or of the community to which he belongs. Inasmuch as this "law of expediency" is fundamentally opposed to the concepts of morality preached by every higher religion, it is described in the Qur'an as "the law (hukm) of pagan ignorance".

72 - According to most of the commentators (e.g., Tabari), this means that each of these two communities extends genuine friendship only to its own adherents - i.e., the Jews to the Jews, and the Christians to the Christians - and cannot, therefore, be expected to be really friendly towards the followers of the Qur'an. See also [8:73](#), and the corresponding note.

73 - Lit., "the evildoing folk": i.e., those who deliberately sin in this respect. As regards the meaning of the "alliance" referred to here, see [3:28](#), and more particularly [4:139](#) and the corresponding note, which explains the reference to a believer's loss of his moral identity if he imitates the way of life of, or - in Qur'anic terminology - "allies himself" with, non-Muslims. However, as has been made abundantly clear in {60:7-9} (and implied in verse {57} of this surah), this prohibition of a "moral alliance" with non-Muslims does not constitute an injunction against normal, friendly relations with such of them as are well-disposed towards Muslims. It should be borne in mind that the term wali has several shades of meaning: "ally",

"friend", "helper", "protector", etc. The choice of the particular term - and sometimes a combination of two terms - is always dependent on the context.

74 - Lit., "vie with one another concerning them" - the pronoun referring to the hostile Jews and Christians, for whose good-will the hypocrites within the Muslim community vie with one another by trying to imitate their way of life.

75 - Lit., "from Himself". Some of the commentators assume that the word fath (lit., "victory" or "triumph") occurring in this sentence is a prophetic reference to the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims. This assumption, however, cannot be correct since Mecca was already in the hands of the Muslims at the time of the revelation of this surah. Hence, the term fath has obviously been used here in its primary significance of "opening" - namely, the opening of good fortune. (Cf. the idiomatic expression futiha 'ala fulan, "so-and-so became fortunate" or "possessed of good fortune", mentioned in Zamakhshari's Asas and in the Taj al-'Arus.) The "other event of God's own devising" may conceivably refer to a divine punishment of the hypocrites apart from the good fortune that might be in store for the true believers.

76 - Lit., "whosoever from among you abandons his faith" - i.e., in result of having placed his reliance on non-Muslims who are hostile to Islam, and having taken them for his "allies" and spiritual mentors.

77 - Contrary to many of the commentators who take this reference to "apes and swine" in a literal sense, the famous tabi'i Mujahid explains it as a metaphorical description (mathal) of the moral degradation which such sinners undergo: they become wildly unpredictable like apes, and as abandoned to the pursuit of lusts as swine (Manar VI, 448). This interpretation has also been quoted by Tabari in his commentary on [2:65](#). - As regards the expression "powers of evil" (at-taghut), see surah {2}, note [250].

78 - As is evident from the following verses, the sinners who are even worse than the mockers are the hypocrites, and particularly those among them who claim to be followers of the Bible: for the obvious reason that, having been enlightened through revelation, they have no excuse for their behaviour. Although in verse {64} the Jews are specifically mentioned, the reference to the Gospel in verse {66} makes it clear that the Christians, too, cannot be exempted from this blame.



79 - Lit., "they come in with a denial of the truth and depart with it".

80 - According to Baghawi, the rabbaniyun ("men of God" - see surah {3}, note [62]) stand, in this context, for the spiritual leaders of the Christians, and the ahbar for the Jewish scholars ("rabbis"). Regarding the "swallowing of evil", see note [54] above.

81 - The phrase "one's hand is shackled" is a metaphorical expression denoting niggardliness just as its opposite - "his hand is stretched out wide" - signifies generosity (Zamakhshari). However, these two phrases have a wider meaning as well, namely, "lack of power" and "unlimited power", respectively (Razi). It would appear that the Jews of Medina, seeing the poverty of the Muslims, derided the latter's conviction that they were struggling in God's cause and that the Qur'an was divinely revealed. Thus, the "saying" of the Jews mentioned in this verse "God's hand is shackled", as well as the parallel one in [3:181](#), "God is poor while we are rich", is an elliptical description of their attitude towards Islam and the Muslims - an attitude of disbelief and sarcasm which could be thus paraphrased: "If it were true that you Muslims are doing God's will, He would have bestowed upon you power and riches; but your poverty and your weakness contradict your claim - or else this claim of yours amounts, in effect, to saying that God cannot help you." This outstanding example of the elliptic mode of expression (ijaz) so often employed in the Qur'an has, however, a meaning that goes far beyond the historical circumstances to which it refers: it illustrates an attitude of mind which mistakenly identifies worldly riches or power with one's being, spiritually, "on the right way". In the next sentence the Qur'an takes issue with this attitude and declares, in an equally elliptical manner, that all who see in material success an alleged evidence of God's approval are blind to spiritual truths and, therefore, morally powerless and utterly self-condemned in the sight of God.

82 - Lit., "among them". The personal pronoun refers to the hypocritical followers of the Bible - both the Jews and the Christians - spoken of in verses {57-63} (Tabari); cf. verse {14} of this surah, which makes a similar statement with regard to such of the Christians as "have forgotten much of what they had been told to bear in mind".

83 - I.e., He does not allow any of the warring parties to resolve their conflicts through a final victory. with the result that they continue to live in a state of "enmity and hatred".

84 - The expression "partake of all the blessings of heaven and earth" (lit., "eat from above them and from beneath their feet") is an allusion to the blessing which accompanies the realization of a spiritual truth, as well as to the social happiness which is bound to follow an observance of the moral principles laid down in

the genuine teachings of the Bible. It should be borne in mind that the phrase "if they would but truly observe (lawannahum aqamu) the Torah and the Gospel", etc. implies an observance of those scriptures in their genuine spirit, free of the arbitrary distortions due to that "wishful thinking" of which the Qur'an so often accuses the Jews and the Christians - such as the Jewish concept of "the chosen people", or the Christian doctrines relating to the alleged divinity of Jesus and the "vicarious redemption" of his followers.

85 - I.e., all the other God-inspired books of the Old Testament which stress the oneness of God and are full of prophecies relating to the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (Razi). This must be understood in conjunction with the oft-repeated Qur'anic statement that the Bible, as it exists now, has undergone many textual changes and corruptions.

86 - See surah {2}, note [49].

87 - Lit., "and some they are slaying". Regarding the significance of the change from the past to the present tense (yaqtulun), see surah {2}, note [72].

88 - Cf. Matthew iv, 10; Luke iv, 8; John xx, 17.

89 - The purport of this passage is that Jesus was but a mortal like all the other apostles who lived before him, and that Mary never claimed to be "the mother of God".

90 - Lit., "how turned away they are [from the truth]". Primarily, the verb afaka signifies "he turned [someone or something] away"; in an abstract sense it often denotes "he uttered a lie" (because it implies a turning away from the truth). The passive form ufika has frequently the meaning of "he was turned away from his opinion" (or "from his judgment") and, thus, "his mind became perverted" or "deluded". (Cf. Qamus and Taj al-'Arus; also Lane I, 69.)

91 - Cf. [4:171](#). This passage, like the preceding ones, is obviously addressed to the Christians whose love for Jesus has caused them to "overstep the bounds of truth" by elevating him to the rank of divinity; therefore my rendering, in this context, of ahl al-kitab as "followers of the Gospel".

92 - Lit., "have gone astray from the right path": i.e., are persisting in this condition until now (Razi): an allusion to the many communities who, in the course of time, have come to attribute divinity to their spiritual leaders - a phenomenon frequently encountered in the history of religions.

93 - Cf. Psalms 1xxviii, 21-22, 31-33, and passim; also Matthew xii, 34, and xxiii, 33-35.

94 - Lit., "what their passions (anfusahum) have proffered to them". (Regarding the rendering of nafs as "passion", see note [37] on verse {30} of this surah.) What is alluded to here is their stubborn belief that they are "God's chosen people" and, consequently, their rejection of any revelation that may have been vouchsafed to others.

95 - Lit., "the Prophet". According to Zamakhshari and Razi, the prophet referred to is Moses, whom the Jews claim to follow - a claim which the Qur'an denies by implication.

96 - Lit., "of them".

97 - I.e., they do not believe, as do the Jews, that revelation is God's exclusive gift to the children of Israel, and their "priests and monks" teach them that humility is the essence of all true faith. - It is noteworthy that the Qur'an does not in this context include the Christians among "those who are bent on ascribing divinity to aught beside God" (alladhina ashraku - the element of intent being expressed in the use of the past tense, similar to alladhina kafaru, alladhina zalamu, etc.): for although, by their deification of Jesus, they are guilty of the sin of shirk ("the ascribing of divinity to anyone or anything beside God"), the Christians do not consciously worship a plurality of deities inasmuch as, theoretically, their theology postulates belief in the One God, who is conceived as manifesting Himself in a trinity of aspects, or "persons", of whom Jesus is supposed to be one. However repugnant this doctrine may be to the teachings of the Qur'an their shirk is not based on conscious intent, but rather flows from their "overstepping the bounds of truth" in their veneration of Jesus (see [4:171](#), [5:77](#)). Cf. in this context Razi's remarks mentioned in note [16] on [6:23](#).

98 - Regarding this rendering of the phrase mimma 'arafu min al-haqq, see Zamakhshari and Razi; also Manar VII, 12. As for my translation of the expression idha sami'u as "when they come to understand", it is to be noted that beyond its primary significance of "he heard", the verb sami'a has often the meaning of "he understood" or "came to understand" (cf. Lane IV, 1427).

99 - Lit., "for what they have said" - i.e., expressed as their belief (Zamakhshari).

100 - Most of the commentators - including Tabari, Zamakhshari and Razi - explain the expression la tuharrimu (lit., "do not forbid" or "do not declare as forbidden") in the sense given by me above, and take it to refer to the self-mortification practiced, in particular, by Christian priests and monks. The term at-tayyibat comprises all that is good and wholesome in life - "the delightful things which human beings desire and towards which their hearts incline" (Tabari): hence my rendering, "the good things of life".

101 - Lit., "for a thoughtless word (laghw) in your oaths". This refers primarily to oaths aiming at denying to oneself something which the Law of Islam does not prohibit (i.e., "the good things of life"); and, generally, to all oaths uttered without premeditation, e.g., under the influence of anger (cf. {2:224-225}; also [38:44](#) and the corresponding note [41]).

102 - Lit., "its atonement shall be" - the pronoun referring to the (implied) sin of breaking an oath. It is obvious from the context that this possibility of atonement relates only to "oaths uttered without thought", and not to deliberate undertakings affecting other persons, which - as has been explicitly stated in the opening sentence of this surah - a believer is bound to observe faithfully to the best of his ability. Regarding exceptions from this general rule, see surah {2}, note [212].

103 - Lit., "the average of what you feed your families with".

104 - I.e., "do not make them lightly or often" (Razi).

105 - According to all the lexicographers, the word khamr (derived from the verb khamara, "he concealed" or "obscured") denotes every substance the use of which obscures the intellect, i.e. intoxicates. Hence, the prohibition of intoxicants laid down in this verse comprises not merely alcoholic drinks, but also drugs which have a similar effect. The only exception from this total prohibition arises in cases of "dire necessity" (in the strictest sense of these words), as stipulated in the last sentence of verse {3} of this surah: that is to say, in cases where illness or a bodily accident makes the administration of intoxicating drugs or of alcohol imperative and unavoidable. - As regards the expression "idolatrous practices" (ansab, lit., "idolatrous altars"), see note [8] of this surah. This term has, I believe, been used here metaphorically, and is meant to circumscribe all practices of an idolatrous nature - like saint-worship, the attribution of "magic" properties to certain inanimate objects, the observance of all manner of superstitious taboos, and so forth. - For an explanation of the expression rendered by me as "divining of the future" (al-azlam, lit., "divining-arrows"), see note [9] on the second paragraph of verse {3} of this surah.

106 - Lit., "Will you, then, desist?" - a rhetorical question implying the necessity of desisting, which can be expressed in English only by the use of the negative form.

107 - This implies that he cannot force people to believe, and cannot, therefore, be held responsible for their failure to do so.

108 - Lit., "in whatever they eat" or "taste" (fi-ma ta'imu). The verb ta'ima, which primarily signifies "he ate", applies to eating and drinking as well as - metaphorically - to "partaking of" anything that may be desirable. Most of the commentators assume that this verse relates to the believers who had died before the promulgation of the prohibitions mentioned in verse {90} above. It seems to me, however, that it has a much wider meaning, and relates to the partaking of "the good things of life" - i.e., to those which have not been prohibited by God and which, therefore, the believers need not deny themselves (cf. verse {87} above).

109 - Lit., "and then (thumma) are...": a sequence expressing growth and intensification (Razi). Hence, the particle thumma - occurring twice in this sentence - has been rendered by me, in the first instance, as "[they] continue to be" and, in the second instance, as "[they] grow ever more [conscious of God]".

110 - Lit., "with something of the game which your hands and your lances [may] reach".

111 - With this verse, the Qur'an returns to the prohibition of hunting during pilgrimage enunciated in verse {1} of this surah. The "trial" arises from the fact that hunting, although lawful in itself (and therefore included among the things which the believer, according to the preceding verse, may normally partake of), is prohibited in the state of pilgrimage - As regards the expression bi'l-ghayb, rendered by me as "although He is beyond the reach of human perception", see surah {2}, note [3].

112 - From the last sentence of this verse it appears that by the "intentional" killing referred to here only an isolated incident (or a first offence) can be meant, and not a wilful, persistent "transgressing of the bounds of what is right", which the preceding verse condemns so severely. It is to be borne in mind that the term "game" (sayd) relates in this context only to edible animals: for, according to several authentic Traditions, the killing of a dangerous or highly obnoxious animal - for instance, a snake, a scorpion, a rabid dog, etc. - is permitted even in the state of pilgrimage.

113 - I.e., for distribution among the poor. In this context, the Ka'bah signifies, metonymically the sacred precincts of Mecca, and not only the sanctuary itself (Razi). The "two persons of probity" are supposed to determine the approximate flesh-value of the wild animal which has been killed, and to decide on this basis as to what domestic animal should be offered in compensation.

114 - Lit., "or [there shall be] an atonement by way of feeding the needy, or an equivalent by way of fasting". These two alternatives are open to a pilgrim who is too poor to provide a head or heads of cattle corresponding in value to the game which he has killed, or - in the last-named alternative - too poor even to feed other poor people. Since neither the Qur'an nor any authentic Tradition specifies the number of poor to be fed or the number of days of fasting, these details are obviously left to the conscience of the person concerned.

115 - Lit., "the game of the sea and its food". Since the term bahr denotes any large accumulation of water, the classical commentators and jurists agree in that the above ordinance comprises all water-game, whether derived from seas, rivers, lakes or ponds (Tabari). The pronoun in ta'amuhu (lit., "its food") relates to the word bahr, and thus indicates the fish and other marine animals which may have been cast forth by the waves onto the shore (Tabari, Razi). Zamakhshari, however, regards the pronoun as relating to the object of the game (sayd) as such, and, consequently, understands the phrase as meaning "the eating thereof". Either of these two readings is agreeable with the text inasmuch as the above verse lays down that all kinds of water-game are lawful to a believer - even if he is in the state of pilgrimage - whereas

hunting on land (sayd al-barr) is forbidden to the pilgrim.

116 - According to Al-Hasan al-Basri (as quoted by Tabari), the "travellers" are, in this context, synonymous with "pilgrims": in other words, water-game of all descriptions is lawful to the believers irrespective of whether they are on pilgrimage or not.

117 - All hunting, whether by pilgrims or non-pilgrims, is prohibited in the vicinity of the Ka'bah - i.e., within the precincts of Mecca and its environs - because it is a sanctuary (amn, see [2:125](#)) for all living beings. For its association with Abraham, see [2:125](#) ff., and the corresponding notes. The noun ka'bah, by which, owing to its shape, the sanctuary has always been known, denotes any "cubical building". It would seem that he who first built the Ka'bah (for, since the time of Abraham, it has been rebuilt several times, always in the same shape) consciously chose the simplest three-dimensional form imaginable - a cube - as a parable of man's humility and awe before the idea of God, whose glory is beyond anything that man could conceive by way of architectural beauty. This symbolism is clearly expressed in the term qiyam (lit., "support" or "mainstay"), which - in its abstract sense - signifies "a standard by which [men's] affairs are made sound or improved" (Razi): hence my rendering of qiyam li'n-nas as "a symbol for all mankind".

118 - Lit., "this, so that you may know". The "garlanded offerings" (lit., "offerings and garlands") are a reference to the sacrificial animals (see note [4] of this surah). Thus, the pilgrimage and the rites connected with it are stated to be symbols of man's self-surrender to God.

119 - Lit., "the bad things and the good things are not equal".

120 - This verse connects directly with verse {99}: "No more is the Apostle bound to do than deliver the message." Read in conjunction with the sentence, "Today have I perfected your religious law for you" (occurring in verse {3} of this surah), the above statement implies that the believers should not try to deduce "additional" laws from the injunctions clearly laid down as such by the Qur'an or by the Prophet, since this "might cause you hardship" - that is, might (as has indeed happened in the course of the centuries) impose additional burdens on the believers above and beyond anything that has been stipulated in terms of law in the Qur'an or in the authentic commandments of the Prophet. On the basis of this verse, some of the greatest Muslim scholars have concluded that Islamic Law, in its entirety, consists of no more than the clear-cut injunctions forthcoming from the self-evident (zahir) wording of the Qur'an and the Prophet's commandments, and that, consequently, it is not permissible to extend the scope of such self-evident ordinances by means of subjective methods of deduction. (A most enlightening discussion of this problem is to be found in the Introduction to Ibn Hazm's Muhalla, vol. I, 56 ff.) This, of course, does not

prevent the Muslim community from evolving, whenever necessary, any amount of additional, temporal legislation in accordance with the spirit of the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet: but it must be clearly understood that such additional legislation cannot be regarded as forming part of Islamic Law (the shari'ah) as such.

121 - I.e., with possibly unfortunate consequences. An illustration of this problem has been provided in the following authentic Tradition, quoted by Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayrah. In one of his sermons, the Prophet said: "O my people! God has ordained the pilgrimage (al-hajj) for you; therefore perform it." Thereupon somebody asked, "Every year, O Apostle of God?" The Prophet remained silent; and the man repeated his question twice. Then the Prophet said: "Had I answered 'yes', it would have become incumbent on you [to perform the pilgrimage every year]: and, indeed, it would have been beyond your ability to do so. Do not ask me about matters which I leave unspoken: for, behold, there were people before you who went to their doom because they had put too many questions to their prophets and thereupon disagreed [about their teachings]. Therefore, if I command you anything, do of it as much as you are able to do; and if I forbid you anything, abstain from it." Discussing this Tradition, Ibn Hazm observes: "It circumscribes all the principles of religious law (ahkam ad-din) from the first to the last - namely: what the Prophet has left unspoken - neither ordering nor forbidding it - is allowed (mubah), that is, neither forbidden nor obligatory; whatever he ordered is obligatory (fard), and whatever he forbade is unlawful (haram); and whatever he ordered us to do is binding on us to the extent of our ability alone" (Muhalla I, 64). It should be borne in mind that the term "the Prophet" comprises, in this context, the Qur'an as well, since it was through the Prophet that the Qur'anic message was communicated to mankind.

122 - I.e., by leaving certain matters unspoken, God has left them to man's discretion, thus enabling him to act in accordance with his conscience and the best interests of the community.

123 - Following Ibn Hazm's principles of jurisprudence, Rashid Rida' thus explains the above verse: "Many of our jurists (fuqaha') have, by their subjective deductions, unduly widened the range of man's religious obligations (takalif), thus giving rise to the very difficulties and complications which the clear wording [of the Qur'an] had put an end to; and this has led to the abandonment, by many individual Muslims as well as by their governments, of Islamic Law in its entirety" (Manar VII, 138).

124 - Lit., "God has not ordained anything [in the nature] of a bahirah, nor a sa'ibah, nor a wasilah, nor a ham." These expressions denote certain categories of domestic animals which the pre-Islamic Arabs used to dedicate to their various deities by setting them free to pasture and prohibiting their use or slaughter. They were selected mainly on the basis of the number, sex and sequence of their offspring; but the lexicographers and commentators are by no means unanimous in their attempts at definition. For this reason - as well as because of their inherent complexity - the above four terms cannot be translated into any other language; consequently, I am rendering them in the text as "certain kinds of cattle marked out by



superstition and set aside from the use of man": this being, in the consensus of all authorities, the common denominator of the four categories. It is obvious that their mention at this place (as well as, by implication, in {6:138-139} and {143-144}) serves as an illustration of the arbitrary invention of certain supposedly "religious" obligations and prohibitions alluded to in the preceding two verses and explained in the corresponding notes.

125 - Lit., "[let there be] testimony between you" - i.e., between you and your heirs - "when death approaches any of you, at the time of [making a] bequest".

126 - Lit., "travelling on earth". According to most of the commentators (cf. Razi), the expression minkum (lit., "from among you") signifies here "from among your own people", i.e., from among the Muslim community.

127 - Lit., "we shall not conceal God's testimony".

128 - I.e., from among the rightful heirs of the deceased.

129 - Lit., "lest [contradictory] oaths be proffered after their oaths".

130 - Cf. verse {99} above: "No more is the Apostle bound to do than deliver the message" - for, neither can he force people to follow the right path, nor can he know what is in their hearts. (See also {4:41-42}.)

131 - Regarding my occasional rendering of idh (at the beginning of a sentence) as "lo", see surah {2}, note [21]. In the above context, this interjection connects with the preceding passage, which states, by implication, that the apostles are not responsible for the reactions of those to whom they communicate the divine message: a connection that is brought out fully in verses {116-117} below.

132 - See surah {2}, note [71].

133 - Lit., "and the Torah and the Gospel". The conjunction "and" at the beginning of this clause is meant to stress the fact that both the Torah and the Gospel were included in the revelation (al-kitab) vouchsafed to Jesus. Although the Torah was an earlier revelation, it is described as "imparted to Jesus" because his own prophetic mission was based on the Law of Moses, which was only confirmed, and not abrogated, by the Gospel (cf. Matthew v, 17-19). As regards the expression "in thy cradle", see surah {3}, note [33] (first sentence).

134 - See [3:49](#), as well as the corresponding note [37].

135 - See surah {3}, note [38].

136 - I.e., the disciples of Jesus (see surah {3}, note [42]).

137 - The relevant words, in the generally accepted reading of the Qur'an, are *hal yastati' rabbuka*, meaning "can thy Sustainer", or "could thy Sustainer", or "is thy Sustainer able". Inasmuch as, on the face of it, this reading would imply a fundamental doubt in God's power to do anything that He wills (an imputation which does not agree with the characterization, in the Qur'an, of Jesus' disciples as firm believers), most of the commentators see in the query of the disciples something similar to one person's asking another, "Could you go with me?" - that is to say, not implying a doubt as to the other's ability to go but, rather, an uncertainty as to his willingness to do it (cf. in this respect, Tabari, Baghawi, Razi, Raghīb; also Manar VII, 250ff.). We have, however, positive evidence of the fact that several of the most outstanding Companions of the Prophet - 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, 'A'ishah and Mu'adh ibn Jabal - read the words in question in the spelling *hal tastati' rabbuka*, which might be rendered as "Couldst thou prevail upon thy Sustainer?" (Tabari, Zamakhshari, Baghawi, Razi, Ibn Kathir): a reading which implies the disciples' uncertainty as to Jesus' ability (in the spiritual sense of this word) to make the above request of God. Thus, 'A'ishah, refusing to accept the more common reading *hal yastati' rabbuka* ("can" or "could thy Sustainer"), is reported to have said: "The disciples of Jesus knew better than to ask whether God is able to do anything: they merely asked [of Jesus], 'Art thou able to request thy Sustainer?'" (Razi). Moreover, according to an authentic Tradition quoted in the Mustadrak, Mu'adh ibn Jabal stated unequivocally that

the Prophet himself had imparted to him the reading *hal tastati' rabbaka* ("Couldst thou prevail upon thy Sustainer?"). To my mind, the weight of evidence points to this second alternative: but in view of the more general reading, I have rendered the phrase as above. As regards the disciples' request - and Jesus' subsequent prayer - for a heavenly "repast" (*ma'idah*, the word which gave the title to this *surah*), it might possibly be an echo of the request for daily bread contained in the Lord's Prayer (cf. Matthew vi, 11), since, in religious terminology, every benefit that accrues to man is "sent down from heaven" - that is, by God - even if it comes into being through man's own efforts. But, on the other hand, the manner in which the disciples are said to have asked for the "repast" - and particularly their explanation given in the next verse - rather seems to point to a request for a miracle which would assure them of God's "acceptance" of their faith. (See also next note.)

138 - The grammatical form *munazzil* in the phrase *inni munazziluha* (lit., "I am sending it down") implies a continued recurrence of bestowal - a continuity which I have expressed by interpolating the word "always" between brackets. This stress on God's ever-recurrent provision of sustenance, both physical and spiritual, explains the extreme severity of His condemnation of all who - in their arrogant presumption that man is self-sufficient and independent - deny this obvious truth; and, in addition, it implies a condemnation of any demand for a miracle as a "proof" of God's existence.

139 - Sc., "after Jesus' death": this is fully evident from Jesus' subsequent reference, in the past tense, to his own death ("since Thou hast caused me to die") in verse {117}. On the other hand, the verb *qala* (lit., "He said") can also have the meaning of "He will say" (see note [141] below).

140 - The definite article in *anta'r-raqib* expresses God's exclusiveness in His function as *raqib* ("keeper"), and can only be rendered by an interpolation of the (elliptically implied) word "alone". Similar expressions relating to God are very often met with in the Qur'an - e.g., at the end of the next verse.

141 - Lit., "said" - but many of the classical commentators understand the verb *qala* as denoting here the future tense ("He will say"), sc., "on the Day of Judgment".

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