

## Surah 9. At-Tauba

9.1 DISAVOWAL by God and His Apostle [is herewith announced] unto those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God, [and] with whom you [O believers] have made a covenant.<sup>1</sup>

9.2 [Announce unto them:] "Go, then, [freely] about the earth for four months<sup>2</sup> - but know that you can never elude God, and that, verily, God shall bring disgrace upon all who refuse to acknowledge the truth!"

9.3 And a proclamation from God and His Apostle [is herewith made] unto all mankind on this day of the Greatest Pilgrimage:<sup>3</sup> "God disavows all who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and [so does] His Apostle. Hence, if you repent, it shall be for your own good; and if you turn away, then know that you can never elude God!" And unto those who are bent on denying the truth give thou [O Prophet] the tidings of grievous chastisement.

9.4 But excepted shall be<sup>4</sup> - from among those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God - [people] with whom you [O believers] have made a covenant and who thereafter have in no wise failed to fulfil their obligations towards you, and neither have aided anyone against you: observe, then, your covenant with them until the end of the term agreed with them.<sup>5</sup> Verily, God loves those who are conscious of Him.

9.5 And so, when the sacred months are over,<sup>6</sup> slay those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God wherever you may come upon them,<sup>7</sup> and take them captive, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place.<sup>8</sup> Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, let them go their way: for, behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.<sup>9</sup>

9.6 And if any of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God seeks thy protection,<sup>10</sup> grant him protection, so that he might [be able to] hear the word of God [from thee]; and thereupon convey him to a place where he can feel secure:<sup>11</sup> this, because they [may be] people who [sin only because they] do not know [the truth].

9.7 HOW COULD they who ascribe divinity to aught beside God be granted a covenant by God and His Apostle,<sup>12</sup> unless it be those [of them] with whom you [O believers] have made a covenant in the vicinity of the Inviolable House of Worship?<sup>13</sup> [As for the latter,] so long as they remain true to you, be true to them: for, verily, God loves those who are conscious of Him

9.8 How [else could it be]?<sup>14</sup> - since, if they [who are hostile to you] were to overcome you, they would not respect any tie [with you,] nor any obligation to protect [you].<sup>15</sup> They seek to please you with their mouths the while their hearts remain averse [to you]; and most of them are iniquitous.

9.9 God's messages have they bartered away for a trifling gain, and have thus turned away from His path: evil, behold, is all that they are wont to do,

9.10 respecting no tie and no protective obligation with regard to a believer; and it is they, they who transgress the bounds of what is right!<sup>16</sup>

9.11 Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, they become your brethren in faith:<sup>17</sup> and clearly do We spell out these messages unto people of [innate] knowledge!

9.12 But if they break their solemn pledges after having concluded a covenant,<sup>18</sup> and revile your religion, then fight against these archetypes of faithlessness<sup>19</sup> who, behold, have no [regard for their own] pledges, so that they might desist [from aggression].

9.13 Would you, perchance, fail to fight against people who have broken their solemn pledges, and have done all that they could to drive the Apostle away,<sup>20</sup> and have been first to attack you? Do you hold them in awe? Nay, it is God alone of whom you ought to stand in awe,<sup>21</sup> if you are [truly] believers!

9.14 Fight against them! God will chastise them by your hands, and will bring disgrace upon them, and will succour you against them; and He will soothe the bosoms of those who believe,

9.15 and will remove the wrath that is in their hearts. And God will turn in His mercy unto whom He wills:<sup>22</sup> for, God is all-knowing, wise.

9.16 Do you [O believers] think that you will be spared<sup>23</sup> unless God takes cognizance of your having striven hard [in His cause]<sup>24</sup> without seeking help from any but God and His Apostle and those who believe

in Him?<sup>25</sup> For, God is aware of all that you do.

9.17 IT IS NOT for those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God to visit or tend<sup>26</sup> God's houses of worship, the while [by their beliefs] they bear witness against themselves that they are denying the truth. It is they whose works shall come to nought, and they who in the fire shall abide!<sup>27</sup>

9.18 Only he should visit or tend God's houses of worship who believes in God and the Last Day, and is constant in prayer, and spends in charity, and stands in awe of none but God: for [only such as] these may hope to be among the right-guided!<sup>28</sup>

9.19 Do you, perchance, regard the [mere] giving of water to pilgrims and the tending of the Inviolable House of Worship as being equal to [the works of] one who believes in God and the Last Day and strives hard in God's cause? These [things] are not equal in the sight of God.<sup>29</sup> And God does not grace with His guidance people who [deliberately] do wrong.

9.20 Those who believe, and who have forsaken the domain of evil<sup>30</sup> and have striven hard in God's cause with their possessions and their lives have the highest rank in the sight of God; and it is they, they who shall triumph [in the end]!

9.21 Their Sustainer gives them the glad tiding of the grace [that flows] from Him, and of [His] goodly acceptance, and of the gardens which await them, full of lasting bliss,

9.22 therein to abide beyond the count of time. Verily, with God is a mighty reward!

9.23 O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not take your fathers and your brothers for allies if a denial of the truth is dearer to them than faith: for those of you who ally themselves with them - it is they, they who are evildoers!<sup>31</sup>

9.24 Say: "If your fathers and your sons and your brothers and your spouses and your clan, and the worldly goods which you have acquired, and the commerce whereof you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you take pleasure - [if all these] are dearer to you than God and His Apostle and the struggle in His cause, then wait until God makes manifest His will;<sup>32</sup> and [know that] God does not grace iniquitous folk with His guidance."

9.25 Indeed, God has succoured you on many battlefields, [when you were few;] and [He did so, too,] on the Day of Hunayn, when you took pride in your great numbers and they proved of no avail whatever to you - for the earth, despite all its vastness, became [too] narrow for you and you turned back, retreating:<sup>33</sup>

9.26 whereupon God bestowed from on high His [gift of] inner peace upon His Apostle and upon the believers, and bestowed [upon you] from on high forces which you could not see,<sup>34</sup> and chastised those who were bent on denying the truth: for such is the recompense of all who deny the truth!

9.27 But with all this,<sup>35</sup> God will turn in His mercy unto whom He wills: for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.<sup>36</sup>

9.28 O YOU who have attained to faith! Those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God are nothing but impure:<sup>37</sup> and so they shall not approach the Inviolable House of Worship from this year onwards.<sup>38</sup> And should you fear poverty, then [know that] in time God will enrich you out of His bounty, if He so wills:<sup>39</sup> for, verily, God is all-knowing, wise!

9.29 [And] fight against those who - despite having been vouchsafed revelation [aforetime]<sup>40</sup> - do not [truly] believe either in God or the Last Day, and do not consider forbidden that which God and His Apostle have forbidden,<sup>41</sup> and do not follow the religion of truth [which God has enjoined upon them],<sup>42</sup> till they [agree to] pay the exemption tax with a willing hand, after having been humbled [in war].<sup>43</sup>

9.30 AND THE JEWS say, "Ezra is God's son," while the Christians say, "The Christ is God's son." Such are the sayings which they utter with their mouths, following in spirit assertions made in earlier times by people who denied the truth!<sup>44</sup> [They deserve the imprecation:] "May God destroy them!"<sup>45</sup> How perverted are their minds!<sup>46</sup>

9.31 They have taken their rabbis and their monks - as well as the Christ, son of Mary - for their lords beside God,<sup>47</sup> although they had been bidden to worship none but the One God, save whom there is no deity: the One who is utterly remote, in His limitless glory, from anything to which they may ascribe a share in His divinity!

9.32 They want to extinguish God's [guiding] light with their utterances:<sup>48</sup> but God will not allow [this to pass], for He has willed to spread His light in all its fullness,<sup>49</sup> however hateful this may be to all who deny the truth.

9.33 He it is who has sent forth His Apostle with the [task of spreading] guidance and the religion of truth, to the end that He may cause it to prevail over all [false] religion<sup>50</sup> - however hateful this may be to those

who ascribe divinity to aught beside God.

9.34 O you who have attained to faith! Behold, many of the rabbis and monks do indeed wrongfully devour men's possessions and turn [others] away from the path of God. But as for all who lay up treasures of gold and silver and do not spend them for the sake of God<sup>51</sup> - give them the tiding of grievous suffering [in the life to come]:

9.35 on the Day when that [hoarded wealth] shall be heated in the fire of hell and their foreheads and their sides and their backs branded therewith,<sup>52</sup> [those sinners shall be told:] "These are the treasures which you have laid up for yourselves! Taste, then, [the evil of] your hoarded treasures!"

9.36 BEHOLD, the number of months, in the sight of God, is twelve months, [laid down] in God's decree on the day when He created the heavens and the earth; [and] out of these, four are sacred:<sup>53</sup> this is the ever-true law [of God]. Do not, then, sin against yourselves with regard to these [months].<sup>54</sup> And fight against those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God, all together - just as they fight against you, [O believers,] all together<sup>55</sup> - and know that God is with those who are conscious of Him.

9.37 The intercalation [of months] is but one more instance of [their] refusal to acknowledge the truth<sup>56</sup> - [a means] by which those who are bent on denying the truth are led astray. They declare this [intercalation] to be permissible in one year and forbidden in [another] year,<sup>57</sup> in order to conform [outwardly] to the number of months which God has hallowed: and thus they make allowable what God has forbidden.<sup>58</sup> Goodly seems unto them the evil of their own doings, since God does not grace with His guidance people who refuse to acknowledge the truth.

9.38 O YOU who have attained to faith! What is amiss with you that, when you are called upon, "Go forth to war in God's cause," you cling heavily to the earth?<sup>59</sup> Would you content yourselves with [the comforts of] this worldly life in preference to [the good of] the life to come? But the enjoyment of life in this world is but a paltry thing when compared with the life to come!

9.39 If you do not go forth to war [in God's cause], He will chastise you with grievous chastisement, and will place another people in your stead - whereas you shall in no wise harm Him: for, God has the power to will anything.

9.40 If you do not succour the Apostle,<sup>60</sup> then [know that God will do so - just as] God succoured him at the time when those who were bent on denying the truth drove him away, [and he was but] one of two:<sup>61</sup> when these two were [hiding] in the cave, [and] the Apostle said to his companion, "Grieve not: verily, God is with us."<sup>62</sup> And thereupon God bestowed upon him from on high His [gift of] inner peace,<sup>63</sup> and brought utterly low the cause of those who were bent on denying the truth, whereas the cause of God remained supreme:<sup>64</sup> for God is almighty, wise.

9.41 Go forth to war, whether it be easy or difficult [for you],<sup>65</sup> and strive hard in God's cause with your possessions and your lives: this is for your own good - if you but knew it!

9.42 Had there been [a prospect of] immediate gain, and an easy journey, they would certainly have followed thee, [O Prophet:] but the distance was too great for them.<sup>66</sup> And yet, [after your return, O believers,] they will swear by God, "Had we been able to do so, we would certainly have set out with you!" - [and by thus falsely swearing] they will be destroying their own selves: for God knows indeed that they are lying!

9.43 May God pardon thee [O Prophet]!<sup>67</sup> Why didst thou grant them permission [to stay at home] ere it had become obvious to thee as to who was speaking the truth, and [ere] thou camest to know [who were] the liars?

9.44 Those who [truly] believe in God and the Last Day do not ask thee for exemption from struggling with their possessions and their lives [in God's cause] - and God has full knowledge as to who is conscious of Him -:<sup>68</sup>

9.45 only those ask thee for exemption who do not [truly] believe in God and the Last Day and whose hearts have become a prey to doubt, so that in their doubting they waver between one thing and another.

9.46 For, had they been [truly] desirous of setting out [with thee], they would surely have made some preparation therefor: but God was averse to their taking the field, and so He caused them to hold back when it was said, "[You may] stay at home with all [the others] who stay at home."<sup>69</sup>

9.47 Had these [hypocrites] set out with you, [O believers,] they would have added nothing to you save the evil of corruption, and would surely have scurried to and fro in your midst, seeking to stir up discord among you, seeing that there are in your midst such as would have lent them ear: but God has full knowledge of the evildoers.

9.48 Indeed, even before this time<sup>70</sup> have they tried to stir up discord and devised all manner of plots against thee, [O Prophet,] until the truth was revealed and God's will became manifest, however hateful this may have been to them.

9.49 And among them there was [many a one] who said,<sup>71</sup> "Grant me permission [to remain at home], and do not put me to too hard a test!" Oh, verily, [by making such a request] they had [already failed in their test and] succumbed to a temptation to evil:<sup>72</sup> and, behold, hell will indeed encompass all who refuse to acknowledge the truth!

9.50 Should good fortune alight on thee,<sup>73</sup> [O Prophet,] it will grieve them; and should misfortune befall thee, they will say [to themselves], "We have already taken our precautions beforehand!" - and will turn away, and will rejoice.

9.51 Say: "Never can anything befall us save what God has decreed! He is our Lord Supreme; and in God let the believers place their trust!"

9.52 Say: "Are you, perchance, hopefully waiting for something [bad] to happen to us - [the while nothing can happen to us] save one of the two best things?<sup>74</sup> But as far as you are concerned, we are hopefully waiting for God to inflict chastisement upon you, [either] from Himself<sup>75</sup> or by our hands! Wait, then, hopefully; behold, we shall hopefully wait with you!"

9.53 Say: "You may spend [anything], willingly or unwillingly, [pretending that you do it for the sake of God:] it shall never be accepted from you<sup>76</sup> - for, verily, you are people bent on iniquity!"

9.54 For, only this prevents their spending from being accepted from them:<sup>77</sup> they are bent on refusing to acknowledge God and His Apostle, and never pray without reluctance,<sup>78</sup> and never spend [on righteous causes] without resentment.

9.55 Let not, then, their worldly goods or [the happiness which they may derive from] their children excite thy admiration: God but wants to chastise them by these means in this worldly life, and [to cause] their souls to depart while they are [still] denying the truth.<sup>79</sup>

9.56 And they swear by God that they do indeed belong to you - the while they do not belong to you but are [only] people ridden by fear:

9.57 if they could but find a place of refuge, or any cavern, or a crevice [in the earth], they would turn towards it in headlong haste.<sup>80</sup>

9.58 And among them are such as find fault with thee [O Prophet] concerning [the distribution of] the offerings given for the sake of God:<sup>81</sup> if they are given something thereof, they are well-pleased; but if they are not given anything thereof, lo! they are consumed with anger.

9.59 And yet, [it would be but for their own good] if they were to content themselves with what God has given them and [caused] His Apostle [to give them],<sup>82</sup> and would say, "God is enough for us! God will give us [whatever He wills] out of His bounty, and [will cause] His Apostle [to give us, too]: verily, unto God alone do we turn with hope!"

9.60 The offerings given for the sake of God<sup>83</sup> are [meant] only for the poor and the needy, and those who are in charge thereof,<sup>84</sup> and those whose hearts are to be won over, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage, and [for] those who are overburdened with debts, and [for every struggle] in God's cause, and [for] the wayfarer: [this is] an ordinance from God - and God is all-knowing, wise.<sup>85</sup>

9.61 AND AMONG those [enemies of the truth] there are such as malign the Prophet by saying, "He is all ear."<sup>86</sup> Say: "[Yes,] he is all ear, [listening] to what is good for you!<sup>87</sup> He believes in God, and trusts the believers, and is [a manifestation of God's] grace towards such of you as have [truly] attained to faith. And as for those who malign God's Apostle - grievous suffering awaits them [in the life to come]!"

9.62 [The hypocrites] swear to you by God [that they are acting in good faith], with a view to pleasing you [O believers] - the while it is God and His Apostle whose pleasure they should seek above all else, if indeed they are believers!<sup>88</sup>

9.63 Do they not know that for him who sets himself against God and His Apostle there is in store the fire of hell, therein to abide - that most awesome disgrace?

9.64 [Some of] the hypocrites dread lest a [new] surah be revealed [in evidence] against them, making them understand what is [really] in their hearts.<sup>89</sup> Say: "Go on mocking! Behold, God will bring to light the very thing that you are dreading!"<sup>90</sup>

9.65 Yet, indeed, if thou wert to question them, they would surely answer, "We were only indulging in idle talk, and were playing [with words]."<sup>91</sup> Say: "Were you, then, mocking at God and His messages and His Apostle?"

9.66 Do not offer [empty] excuses! You have indeed denied the truth after [having professed] your belief [in it]!"<sup>92</sup> Though We may efface the sin of some of you, We shall chastise others - seeing that they were lost in sin.<sup>93</sup>

9.67 The hypocrites, both men and women, are all of a kind: they enjoin the doing of what is wrong and forbid the doing of what is right,<sup>94</sup> and withhold their hands [from doing good]. They are oblivious of God, and so He is oblivious of them. Verily, the hypocrites - it is they, they who are truly iniquitous!<sup>95</sup>

9.68 God has promised the hypocrites, both men and women - as well as the [outright] deniers of the truth - the fire of hell, therein to abide: this shall be their allotted portion. For, God has rejected them, and long-lasting suffering awaits them.

9.69 [Say unto them: "You are] like those [hypocrites] who lived before your time.<sup>96</sup> Greater than you were they in power, and richer in wealth and in children; and they enjoyed their share [of happiness]. And you have been enjoying your share - just as those who preceded you enjoyed their share; and you have been indulging in scurrilous talk - just as they indulged in it. It is they whose works have come to nought in this world and in the life to come - and it is they, they who are the lost!"<sup>97</sup>

9.70 Have, then, the stories of those who preceded them never come within the ken of these [hypocrites and deniers of the truth]? - [the stories] of Noah's people, and of [the tribes of] 'Ad and Thamud, and of Abraham's people, and of the folk of Madyan, and of the cities that were overthrown?<sup>98</sup> To [all of] them their apostles had come with all evidence of the truth, [but they rejected them:] and so it was not God who wronged them [by His punishment], but it was they who wronged themselves.

9.71 AND [as for] the believers, both men and women - they are close unto one another.<sup>99</sup> they [all] enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Apostle. It is they upon whom God will bestow His grace: verily, God is almighty, wise!

9.72 God has promised the believers, both men and women, gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual bliss:<sup>100</sup> but God's goodly acceptance is the greatest [bliss of all] - for this, this is the triumph supreme!

9.73 O PROPHET! Strive hard against the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites, and be adamant with them.<sup>101</sup> And [if they do not repent,] their goal shall be hell - and how vile a journey's end!

9.74 [The hypocrites] swear by God that they have said nothing [wrong]; yet most certainly have they uttered a saying which amounts to a denial of the truth,<sup>102</sup> and have [thus] denied the truth after [having professed] their self-surrender to God: for they were aiming at something which was beyond their reach.<sup>103</sup> And they could find no fault [with the Faith] save that God had enriched them and [caused] His Apostle [to enrich them] out of His bounty!<sup>104</sup> Hence, if they repent, it will be for their own good; but if they turn away, God will cause them to suffer grievous suffering in this world and in the life to come, and they will find no helper on earth, and none to give [them] succour.

9.75 And among them are such as vow unto God, "If indeed He grant us [something] out of His bounty, we shall most certainly spend in charity, and shall most certainly be among the righteous!"

9.76 But as soon as He has given them [aught] out of His bounty, they cling to it niggardly, and turn away in their obstinacy [from all that they have vowed]:

9.77 whereupon He causes hypocrisy to take root in their hearts, [therein to remain] until the Day on which they shall meet Him<sup>105</sup> - because they have failed to fulfil the vow which they had made unto God, and because they were wont to lie.<sup>106</sup>

9.78 Do they not know that God knows [all] their hidden thoughts and their secret confabulations, and that God knows fully all the things that are beyond the reach of human perception?

9.79 [It is these hypocrites] who find fault with such of the believers as give for the sake of God<sup>107</sup> more than they are duty-bound to give, as well as with such as find nothing [to give] beyond [the meagre fruits of] their toil, and who scoff at them [all].<sup>108</sup> God will cause their scoffing to rebound on themselves,<sup>109</sup> and grievous suffering awaits them.

9.80 [And] whether thou dost pray [unto God] that they be forgiven or dost not pray for them - [it will all be the same: for even] if thou wert to pray seventy times<sup>110</sup> that they be forgiven, God will not forgive them, seeing that they are bent on denying God and His Apostle. And God does not bestow His guidance upon such iniquitous folk.<sup>111</sup>

9.81 THOSE [hypocrites] who were left behind rejoiced in their staying away [from war]<sup>112</sup> after [the departure of] God's Apostle, for they hated the thought of striving with their possessions and their lives in

God's cause; and they had [even] said [to the others], "Do not go forth to war in this heat!" Say: "The fire of hell is hotter by far!" Had they but grasped this truth!



9.82 Let them, then, laugh a little - for they will weep a lot<sup>113</sup> in return for what they have earned.

9.83 Hence, [O Prophet,] if God brings thee again face to face with some of them,<sup>114</sup> and then they ask thy leave to go forth [to war with thee], say: "Never shall you go forth with me, nor shall you fight an enemy together with me! Behold, you were well-pleased to stay at home on that first occasion: stay at home, then, with those who [are obliged to] remain behind!"<sup>115</sup>

9.84 And never shalt thou pray over any of them that has died, and never shalt thou stand by his grave:<sup>116</sup> for, behold, they were bent on denying God and His Apostle, and they died in this their iniquity.<sup>117</sup>

9.85 And let not their worldly goods and [the happiness which they may derive from] their children excite thy admiration: God but wants to chastise them by these means in [the life of] this world, and [to cause] their souls to depart while they are [still] denying the truth.<sup>118</sup>

9.86 [They are indeed denying it:] for, when they were called upon through revelation,<sup>119</sup> "Believe in God, and strive hard [in His cause] together with His Apostle," [even] such of them as were well able [to go to war] asked thee for exemption, saying, "Allow us to stay behind with those who remain at home!"<sup>120</sup>

9.87 They were well-pleased to remain with those who were left behind - wherefor their hearts have been sealed,<sup>121</sup> so that they cannot grasp the truth.

9.88 The Apostle, however, and all who share his faith strive hard [in God's cause] with their possessions and their lives: and it is they whom the most excellent things await [in the life to come], and it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state!

9.89 God has readied for them gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide: and this is the triumph supreme!

9.90 AND THERE came [unto the Apostle] such of the bedouin as had some excuse to offer, [with the request] that they be granted exemption,<sup>122</sup> whereas those who were bent on giving the lie to God and His Apostle [simply] remained at home.<sup>123</sup> [And] grievous suffering is bound to befall such of them as are bent on denying the truth!

9.91 [But] no blame shall attach to the weak,<sup>124</sup> nor to the sick, nor to those who have no means [to equip themselves],<sup>125</sup> provided that they are sincere towards God and His Apostle: there is no cause to reproach the doers of good, for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

9.92 Nor [shall blame attach] to those who, when they came unto thee [O Prophet, with the request] that thou provide them with mounts, were told by thee, "I cannot find anything whereon to mount you" - [whereupon] they turned away, their eyes overflowing with tears out of sorrow that they had no means to spend [on their equipment].

9.93 Only they may rightly be reproached who asked thee for exemption even though they were fully able [to go to war].<sup>126</sup> They were well-pleased to remain with those who were left behind - wherefore God has sealed their hearts, so that they do not know [what they are doing].

9.94 [And] they will [still] be offering excuses to you when you return to them [from the campaign]! Say: "Do not offer [empty] excuses, [for] we shall not believe you: God has already enlightened us about you. And God will behold your [future] deeds, and [so will] His Apostle; and in the end you will be brought before Him<sup>127</sup> who knows all that is beyond the reach of a created being's perception as well as all that can be witnessed by a creature's senses or mind,<sup>128</sup> and then He will make you truly understand what you were doing [in life]."

9.95 When you will have returned to them, [O believers,] they will swear to you by God, [repeating their excuses,] with a view to your letting them be.<sup>129</sup> Let them be, then: behold, they are loathsome, and hell is their goal in recompense for what they were wont to do.

9.96 They will swear to you with a view to making you pleased with them: but [even] should you be pleased with them, verily, God shall never be pleased with iniquitous folk.

9.97 [The hypocrites among] the bedouin<sup>130</sup> are more tenacious in [their] refusal to acknowledge the truth and in [their] hypocrisy [than are settled people], and more liable to ignore the ordinances which God has bestowed from on high upon His Apostle - but God is all-knowing, wise.<sup>131</sup>

9.98 And among the bedouin there are such as regard all that they might spend [in God's cause] as a loss, and wait for misfortune to encompass you, [O believers: but] it is they whom evil fortune shall encompass - for God is all-hearing, all-knowing.

9.99 However, among the bedouin there are [also] such as believe in God and the Last Day, and regard all that they spend [in God's cause] as a means of drawing them nearer to God and of [their being

remembered in] the Apostle's prayers. Oh, verily, it shall [indeed] be a means of [God's] nearness to them, [for] God will admit them unto His grace: verily, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace!

9.100 And as for the first and foremost of those who have forsaken the domain of evil and of those who have sheltered and succoured the Faith<sup>132</sup> as well as those who follow them in [the way of] righteousness - God is well-pleased with them, and well-pleased are they with Him. And for them has He readied gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide beyond the count of time: this is the triumph supreme!

9.101 But among the bedouin who dwell around you there are hypocrites; and among the people of the [Prophet's] City<sup>133</sup> [too] there are such as have grown insolent in [their] hypocrisy. Thou dost not [always] know them, [O Muhammad - but] We know them. We shall cause them to suffer doubly [in this world];<sup>134</sup> and then they will be given over to awesome suffering [in the life to come].

9.102 And [there are] others<sup>135</sup> - [people who] have become conscious of their sinning after having done righteous deeds side by side with evil ones;<sup>136</sup> [and] it may well be that God will accept their repentance: for, verily, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

9.103 [Hence, O Prophet,] accept that [part] of their possessions which is offered for the sake of God<sup>137</sup> so that thou mayest cleanse them thereby and cause them to grow in purity, and pray for them: behold, thy prayer will be [a source of] comfort to them - for God is all-hearing, all-knowing.

9.104 Do they not know that it is God alone who can accept the repentance of His servants<sup>138</sup> and is the [true] recipient of whatever is offered for His sake - and that God alone is an acceptor of repentance, a dispenser of grace?

9.105 And say [unto them, O Prophet]: "Act!<sup>139</sup> And God will behold your deeds, and [so will] His Apostle, and the believers: and [in the end] you will be brought before Him who knows all that is beyond the reach of a created being's perception as well as all that can be witnessed by a creature's senses or mind<sup>140</sup> - and then He will make you understand what you have been doing."

9.106 And [there are yet] others - [people whose cases are] deferred until God wills to judge them:<sup>141</sup> He will either chastise them or turn again unto them in His mercy - for God is all-knowing, wise.

9.107 AND [there are hypocrites] who have established a [separate] house of worship in order to create mischief, and to promote apostasy and disunity among the believers, and to provide an outpost for all who from the outset have been warring against God and His Apostle.<sup>142</sup> And they will surely swear [to you, O believers], "We had but the best of intentions!" - the while God [Himself] bears witness that they are lying.<sup>143</sup>

9.108 Never set foot in such a place!<sup>144</sup> Only a house of worship founded, from the very first day, upon God-consciousness is worthy of thy setting foot therein<sup>145</sup> - [a house of worship] wherein there are men desirous of growing in purity: for God loves all who purify themselves.

9.109 Which, then, is the better: he who has founded his building on God-consciousness and [a desire for] His goodly acceptance - or he who has founded his building on the edge of a water-worn, crumbling river-bank, so that it [is bound to] tumble down with him into the fire of hell? For, God does not grace with His guidance people, who [deliberately] do wrong:

9.110 the building which they have built will never cease to be a source of deep disquiet in their hearts until their hearts crumble to pieces.<sup>146</sup> And God is all-knowing, wise.

9.111 BEHOLD, God has bought of the believers their lives and their possessions, promising them paradise in return, [and so] they fight in God's cause, and slay, and are slain: a promise which in truth He has willed upon Himself in [the words of] the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Qur'an. And who could be more faithful to his covenant than God? Rejoice, then, in the bargain which you have made with Him: for this, this is the triumph supreme!

9.112 [It is a triumph of] those who turn [unto God] in repentance [whenever they have sinned], and who worship and praise [Him], and go on and on [seeking His goodly acceptance],<sup>147</sup> and bow down [before Him] and prostrate themselves in adoration, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and keep to the bounds set by God. And give thou [O Prophet] the glad tiding [of God's promise] to all believers.

9.113 IT DOES NOT behove the Prophet and those who have attained to faith to pray that they who ascribed divinity to aught beside God be forgiven [by Him] - even though they happened to be [their] near of kin<sup>148</sup> - after it has been made clear unto them that those [dead sinners] are destined for the blazing fire.

9.114 And Abraham's prayer that his father be forgiven was but due to a promise which he had given the latter [in his lifetime];<sup>149</sup> but when it was made clear unto him that he had been God's enemy, [Abraham] disavowed him - [although,] behold, Abraham was most tender-hearted, most clement.

9.115 And God would never - after having invited them to His guidance - condemn people for going astray<sup>150</sup> ere He has made [entirely] clear unto them of what they should beware. Verily, God has full knowledge of everything.<sup>151</sup>

9.116 Verily, God's alone is the dominion over the heavens and the earth; He [alone] grants life and deals death; and there is none besides God who could protect you or bring you succour.

9.117 INDEED, God has turned in His mercy unto the Prophet, as well as unto those who have forsaken the domain of evil and those who have sheltered and succoured the Faith<sup>152</sup> - [all] those who followed him in the hour of distress, when the hearts of some of the other believers had well-nigh swerved from faith.<sup>153</sup> And once again:<sup>154</sup> He has turned unto them in His mercy - for, behold, He is compassionate towards them, a dispenser of grace.

9.118 And [He turned in His mercy, too,] towards the three [groups of believers] who had fallen prey to corruption,<sup>155</sup> until in the end - after the earth, despite all its vastness, had become [too] narrow for them and their souls had become [utterly] constricted - they came to know with certainty that there is no refuge from God other than [a return] unto Him; and thereupon He turned again unto them in His mercy, so that they might repent: for, verily, God alone is an acceptor of repentance, a dispenser of grace.<sup>156</sup>

9.119 O YOU who have attained to faith! Remain conscious of God, and be among those who are true to their word!

9.120 It does not behove the people of the [Prophet's] City and the bedouin [who live] around them to hold back from following God's Apostle, or to care for their own selves more than for him<sup>157</sup> - for, whenever they suffer from thirst or weariness or, hunger in God's cause, and whenever they take any step which confounds<sup>158</sup> those who deny the truth, and whenever there comes to them from the enemy whatever may be destined for them<sup>159</sup> - [whenever anything thereof comes to pass,] a good deed is recorded in their favour.<sup>160</sup> Verily, God does not fail to requite the doers of good!

9.121 And whenever they spend anything [for the sake of God], be it little or much, and whenever they move on earth<sup>161</sup> [in God's cause] - it is recorded in their favour, and God will grant them the best reward for all that they have been doing.

9.122 With all this, it is not desirable that all of the believers take the field [in time of war]. From within every group in their midst, some shall refrain from going forth to war, and shall devote themselves [instead] to acquiring a deeper knowledge of the Faith, and [thus be able to] teach their homecoming brethren, so that these [too] might guard themselves against evil.<sup>162</sup>

9.123 O you who have attained to faith! Fight against those deniers of the truth who are near you, and let them find you adamant;<sup>163</sup> and know that God is with those who are conscious of Him.

9.124 YET WHENEVER a surah [of this divine writ] is bestowed from on high, some of the deniers of the truth are prone to ask,<sup>164</sup> "Which of you has this [message] strengthened in his faith?" Now as for those who have attained to faith, it does strengthen them in their faith, and they rejoice in the glad tiding [which God has given them].<sup>165</sup>

9.125 But as for those in whose hearts is disease, each new message but adds another [element of] disbelief to the disbelief which they already harbour,<sup>166</sup> and they die while [still] refusing to acknowledge the truth.

9.126 Are they, then, not aware that they are being tested year-in, year-out?<sup>167</sup> And yet, they do not repent and do not bethink themselves [of God];

9.127 and whenever a surah is bestowed from on high, they look at one another [and say, as it were], "Is there anyone who can see what is in your hearts?"<sup>168</sup> - and then they turn away. God has turned their hearts away [from the truth] - for they are people who will not grasp it.<sup>169</sup>

9.128 INDEED, there has come unto you [O mankind] an Apostle from among yourselves:<sup>170</sup> heavily weighs upon him [the thought] that you might suffer [in the life to come]; full of concern for you [is he, and] full of compassion and mercy towards the believers.

9.129 But if those [who are bent on denying the truth] turn away, say: "God is enough for me! There is no deity save Him. In Him have I placed my trust, for He is the Sustainer, in awesome almightiness enthroned."<sup>171</sup>

## Author Comments

1 - Sc., "which they (the unbelievers) have deliberately broken" (Tabari, Baghawi, Zamakhshari, Razi); see also verse {4}, which relates to such of the unbelievers as remain faithful to their treaty obligations towards the believers. The above passage connects with verses {56-58} of the preceding surah (Al-Anfal). The noun bara'ah (derived from the verb bari'a, "he became free [of something]" or "quit of having any part [in something]") signifies a declaration of being free or quit of any bond, moral or contractual, with the person or persons concerned (see Lane I, 178); with reference to God - or the Apostle speaking in God's name - it is best rendered as "disavowal".

2 - These words, addressed to the mushrikin ("those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God") who have deliberately broken the treaties in force between them and the believers, indicate a cancellation of all treaty obligations on the latter's part. The period of four months which is to elapse between this announcement and the beginning (or resumption) of hostilities is a further elaboration of the injunction "cast it [i.e., the treaty] back at them in an equitable manner", given in [8:58](#) with reference to a breach of covenant by hostile unbelievers (see also note [62] on verse {58} of surah {8}).

3 - There is no unanimity among the commentators as to what is meant by "the day of the Greatest Pilgrimage". Most of them assume that it refers to the pilgrimage in the year 9 H., in which the Prophet himself did not participate, having entrusted Abu Bakr with the office of amir al-hajj. This very fact, however, makes it improbable that the designation "the Greatest Pilgrimage" should have been given in the Qur'an to this particular pilgrimage. On the other hand, there exists a Tradition on the authority of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar to the effect that the Prophet described in these very words the last pilgrimage led by himself in 10 H. and known to history as the Farewell Pilgrimage (Zamakhshari, Razi); one may, therefore, assume that it is this which is alluded to here. If this assumption is correct, it would justify the conclusion that verses {3} and {4} of this surah were revealed during the Farewell Pilgrimage, i.e., shortly before the Prophet's death. This might explain the - otherwise perplexing - statement, reliably attributed to the Prophet's Companion Al-Bara' (Bukhari, Kitab at-Tafsir), that At-Tawbah was the last surah revealed to the Prophet: for, although it is established beyond any doubt that the surah as a whole was revealed in 9 H. and was followed by several other parts of the Qur'an, e.g., Al-Ma'idah, it is possible that what Al-Bara' had in mind were only these two key-verses ({3} and {4}) of At-Tawbah, which conceivably were revealed during the Farewell Pilgrimage.

4 - I.e., from the cancellation, explained in note [2] above, of the treaties which they have concluded with the believers.

5 - Lit., "until their term".

6 - According to a pre-Islamic custom prevalent in Arabia, the months of Muharram, Rajab, Dhu 'l-Qa'dah and Dhu 'l-Hijjah were considered "sacred" in the sense that all tribal warfare had to cease during those months. It was with a view to preserving these periods of truce and thus to promoting peace among the frequently warring tribes that the Qur'an did not revoke, but rather confirmed, this ancient custom. See also [2:194](#) and {217}.

7 - Read in conjunction with the two preceding verses, as well as with {2:190-194}, the above verse relates to warfare already in progress with people who have become guilty of a breach of treaty obligations and of aggression.

8 - I.e., "do everything that may be necessary and advisable in warfare". The term marsad denotes "any place from which it is possible to perceive the enemy and to observe his movements" (Manar X, 199).

9 - As I have pointed out on more than one occasion, every verse of the Qur'an must be read and interpreted against the background of the Qur'an as a whole. The above verse, which speaks of a possible conversion to Islam on the part of "those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God" with whom the believers are at war, must, therefore, be considered in conjunction with several fundamental Qur'anic ordinances. One of them, "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith" ([2:256](#)), lays down categorically that any attempt at a forcible conversion of unbelievers is prohibited - which precludes the possibility of the Muslims' demanding or expecting that a defeated enemy should embrace Islam as the price of immunity. Secondly, the Qur'an ordains, "Fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you; but do not commit aggression, for verily, God does not love aggressors" ([2:190](#)); and, "if they do not let you be, and do not offer you peace, and do not stay their hands, seize them and slay them whenever you come upon them: and it is against these that We have clearly empowered you [to make war]" ([4:91](#)). Thus, war is permissible only in self-defence (see surah {2}, notes [167] and [168]), with the further proviso that "if they desist - behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace" ([2:192](#)), and "if they desist, then all hostility shall cease" ([2:193](#)). Now the enemy's conversion to Islam - expressed in the words, "if they repent, and take to prayer [lit., "establish prayer"] and render the purifying dues (zakah)" - is no more than one, and by no means the only, way of their "desisting from hostility"; and the reference to it in verses {5} and {11} of this surah certainly does not imply an alternative of "conversion or death", as some unfriendly critics of Islam choose to assume. Verses {4} and {6} give a further elucidation of the attitude which the believers are enjoined to adopt towards such of the unbelievers as are not hostile to them. (In this connection, see also {60:8-9}).

10 - Lit., "seeks to become thy neighbour": a metaphorical expression denoting a demand for protection,

based on the ancient Arabian custom (strongly affirmed by Islam) of honouring and protecting a neighbour to the best of one's ability.

11 - Lit., "his place of security" (ma'manahu) - i.e., "let him rejoin his homeland" (Razi), which implies that he is free to accept or not to accept the message of the Qur'an: a further re-affirmation of the Qur'anic injunction that "there shall be no coercion in matters of faith" ([2:256](#)).

12 - Lit., "have a covenant before [or "in the sight of"] God and His Apostle": i.e., be protected by those who believe in God and His Apostle. The specific reference to the latter is meant to stress the fact that he speaks and acts in the name of God.

13 - Cf. verse {4} above. The "covenant" alluded to is the truce-agreement concluded in 6 H. at Hudaibiyyah, in the vicinity of Mecca, between the Prophet and the pagan Quraysh, which was (and was obviously intended to remain) a model of the self-restraint and the tolerance expected of true believers with regard to such of the unbelievers as are not openly hostile to them.

14 - This connects with the opening clause of the preceding verse, and relates to the hostile among "those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God".

15 - The term ill signifies any tie that arises from a compact or from blood-relationship, and which imposes on both parties the obligation to protect each other (cf. Lane I, 75); the latter implication is expressed in the word dhimmah, which literally denotes a "covenant of protection".

16 - Or: "who are the aggressors" - the two expressions being, in this context, synonymous.

17 - See note [9] above.

18 - Lit., "if they break their oaths after their covenant". This obviously refers to unbelievers who, without having renounced their own beliefs, have concluded treaties of friendship with the Muslims. Their subsequent "breaking of the solemn pledges" is an allusion to the breach of the truce of Hudaibiyah by the pagan Quraysh, which, in turn, led to the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims in the year 8 H.

19 - The word imam (of which a'immah is the plural) denotes not merely a "leader" but also - and primarily - "a person who is an object of imitation by his followers" (Taj al-'Arus): hence, a "model", or "exemplar", or "archetype". The term kufr, which usually signifies a "denial of [or "refusal to acknowledge"] the truth", is rendered here as "faithlessness" because it refers, specifically, to a deliberate breaking of solemn engagements.

20 - I.e., from Mecca, thus bringing about his and his followers' exodus (hijrah) to Medina.

21 - Lit., "God is more worthy (ahaqq) that you should stand in awe of Him".

22 - This relates to the unbelievers with whom the Muslims are at war: for God may, if He so wills, bring about a change of heart in them and guide them to a realization of the truth (Baghawi and Zamakhshari; see also Manar X, 236).

23 - Lit., "left [alone]", i.e., without being tried by means of suffering and hardship.

24 - Lit., "while God has not yet taken cognizance of those of you who have striven hard". For an explanation of God's "taking cognizance", see [3:142](#) and the corresponding note.



25 - Lit., "without having taken any intimate helper (walijah) other than God and His Apostle and the believers".

26 - In its transitive form, the verb 'amara comprises the meanings of both visiting and maintaining a place; hence my rendering of an ya'muru as "that they should visit or tend".

27 - Some of the commentators conclude from this verse that "those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God" are not allowed to enter mosques ("God's houses of worship"). This conclusion however, is entirely untenable in view of the fact that in 9 H. - that is, after the revelation of this surah - the Prophet himself lodged a deputation of the pagan Banu Thaqif in the mosque at Medina (Razi). Thus, the above verse expresses no more than the moral incongruity of the unbelievers' "visiting or tending God's houses of worship". As regards their exclusion from the central mosque of Islam at Mecca ("the Inviolable House of Worship"), see verse {28} of this surah.

28 - Lit., "it may well be that these will be among the right-guided". However, according to Abu Muslim (as quoted by Razi), as well as the great grammarian Sibawayh (see Manar X, 253), the word 'asa, usually signifying "it may well be", is here indicative of the hope which the above-mentioned believers may entertain.

29 - Many commentators see in this verse an allusion to the boast of the pagan Quraysh, before the Muslim conquest of Mecca, that they were superior to all other people on account of their guardianship of the Ka'bah and their providing water (siqayah) to pilgrims; and on being taken prisoner by the Muslims in the battle of Badr, Al-'Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, excused on these very grounds his failure to accompany the Muslims on their exodus from Mecca to Medina (Tabari). It is probable, however, that this verse has yet another, deeper import. According to an authentic Tradition quoted by Muslim, Abu Da'ud and Ibn Hibban (as well as by Tabari), one of the Prophet's Companions stated in the mosque of Medina, "I would not care, after having accepted Islam, to do any good deed beyond providing water to the pilgrims!" - whereupon another of the Companions declared, "Nay, [I would rather take charge of] the maintenance of the Inviolable House of Worship." But yet another Companion declared, "Nay, struggle (jihad) in God's cause is far better than what you have mentioned!" A short time afterwards the above Qur'an-verse was revealed to the Prophet. It would, therefore, appear that what is meant here is the superior value of faith in God and struggle in His cause as compared with acts which, however meritorious, are concerned only with outward forms: in brief, the immense superiority of real self-surrender to God over mere ritual.

30 - See surah {2}, note [203], and surah {4}, note [124].

31 - The term *walayah* ("alliance" or "friendship") is used in this context in the sense of an alliance against other believers, as in [3:28](#). (Regarding the wider, spiritual implications of this expression, see surah {4}, note [154].) That it does not refer to "friendship" in the sense of normal human affection is obvious from the many exhortations in the Qur'an to be good to one's parents and kinsfolk; and, more explicitly, from {60:8-9}, where the believers are reminded that friendly relations with unbelievers who are not hostile to the Muslim community are permissible, and even desirable. (See also Manar X, 269 ff., where a similar interpretation is advanced.)

32 - Or: "brings about [the fulfilment of] His command". This may be an allusion to the Day of Judgment or - more probably - to the inevitable degeneration and decline of communities which place narrow self-interest above ethical values. In particular, this passage rejects the tendency to regard ties of kinship and national affiliation (expressed in the term "your clan") as the decisive factors of social behaviour, and postulates ideology ("God and His Apostle and the struggle in His cause") as the only valid basis on which a believer's life - individually and socially - should rest.

33 - The battle of Hunayn, a valley situated on one of the roads leading from Mecca to Ta'if, took place in the year 8 H., shortly after the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims. The latter's opponents were the pagan tribes of Hawazin (in whose territory the valley lay) and their allies, the Banu Thaqif. The Muslim army - reinforced by many newly-converted Meccans - comprised about twelve thousand men, whereas the Hawazin and Thaqif had only one-third of that number at their disposal. Relying on their great numerical superiority, the Muslims were over-confident and, apparently, careless. In the narrow defiles beyond the oasis of Hunayn they fell into an ambush prepared by the tribesmen and began to retreat in disorder after heavy losses had been inflicted on them by the bedouin archers. It was only the example of the Prophet and his early adherents (the Meccan *muhajirun* and the *ansar* from Medina) that saved the day and turned the initial rout of the Muslims into a decisive victory. It is to this battle that verses {25} and {26} refer, pointing out that true succour can come only from God, and that great numbers, ties of kinship and worldly wealth are of no avail if they are "dearer to you than God and His Apostle and the struggle in His cause" (see preceding verse).

34 - I.e., spiritual forces. Cf. {3:124-125} (relating to the battle of Uhud) and the corresponding note, as well as [8:9](#) (which refers to the battle of Badr). The spiritual nature of this aid is clearly implied in the phrase, "forces which you could not" [or "did not"] see".

35 - Lit., "then, after this".

36 - Most of the commentators (e.g., Tabari, Baghawi, Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir) understand this verse as relating to the unbelievers and having a general import; Razi, however, thinks that it refers to the believers who behaved badly at the opening stage of the battle of Hunayn. In my opinion, the former interpretation is preferable. (See also last sentence of verse {15} and note [22] above.)

37 - The term najas ("impure") occurs in the Qur'an only in this one instance, and carries an exclusively spiritual meaning (see Manar X, 322ff.). To this day, the bedouin of Central and Eastern Arabia - who, contrary to the modern town-dwellers, have preserved the purity of the Arabic idiom to a high degree - describe a person who is immoral, faithless or wicked as najas. "The Inviolable House of Worship" (al-masjid al-haram) is, of course, the Ka'bah and, by implication, the whole of the territory of Mecca: which explains the next sentence.

38 - Lit., "after this their year" - i.e., after the year 9 H., in which this surah was revealed.

39 - This is an allusion to the apprehension on the part of some Muslims (and not only at the time of the revelation of this verse) that an exclusion of unbelievers from living in or visiting Mecca might lead to a loss of its position as a centre of trade and commerce, and thus to an impoverishment of its inhabitants.

40 - Lit., "such of those who were vouchsafed revelation [aforetime] as do not believe...", etc. In accordance with the fundamental principle - observed throughout my interpretation of the Qur'an - that all of its statements and ordinances are mutually complementary and cannot, therefore, be correctly understood unless they are considered as parts of one integral whole, this verse, too must be read in the context of the clear-cut Qur'anic rule that war is permitted only in self-defence (see {2:190-194}, and the corresponding notes). In other words, the above injunction to fight is relevant only in the event of aggression committed against the Muslim community or state, or in the presence of an unmistakable threat to its security: a view which has been shared by that great Islamic thinker, Muhammad 'Abduh. Commenting on this verse, he declared: "Fighting has been made obligatory in Islam only for the sake of defending the truth and its followers.... All the campaigns of the Prophet were defensive in character; and so were the wars undertaken by the Companions in the earliest period [of Islam]" (Manar X, 332).

41 - This, to my mind, is the key-phrase of the above ordinance. The term "apostle" is obviously used here in its generic sense and applies to all the prophets on whose teachings the beliefs of the Jews and the Christians are supposed to be based - in particular, to Moses and (in the case of the Christians) to Jesus as well (Manar X, 333 and 337). Since, earlier in this sentence, the people alluded to are accused of so grave a sin as wilfully refusing to believe in God and the Last Day (i.e., in life after death and man's individual responsibility for his doings on earth), it is inconceivable that they should subsequently be blamed for comparatively minor offences against their religious law: consequently, the stress on their "not forbidding that which God and His apostle have forbidden" must refer to something which is as grave, or almost as grave, as disbelief in God. In the context of an ordinance enjoining war against them, this "something" can mean only one thing - namely, unprovoked aggression: for it is this that has been forbidden by God through all the apostles who were entrusted with conveying His message to man. Thus, the above verse must be understood as a call to the believers to fight against such - and only such - of the nominal followers of earlier revelation as deny their own professed beliefs by committing aggression against the followers of the Qur'an (cf. Manar X, 338).

42 - See in this connection the statement (in {5:13-14}) that the Jews and the Christians "have forgotten much of what they had been told to bear in mind".

43 - Sc., "and having become incorporated in the Islamic state". The term *jizyah*, rendered by me as "exemption tax", occurs in the Qur'an only once, but its meaning and purpose have been fully explained in many authentic Traditions. It is intimately bound up with the concept of the Islamic state as an ideological organization: and this is a point which must always be borne in mind if the real purport of this tax is to be understood. In the Islamic state, every able-bodied Muslim is obliged to take up arms in *jihad* (i.e., in a just war in God's cause) whenever the freedom of his faith or the political safety of his community is imperilled: in other words, every able-bodied Muslim is liable to compulsory military service. Since this is, primarily, a religious obligation non-Muslim citizens, who do not subscribe to the ideology of Islam, cannot in fairness be expected to assume a similar burden. On the other hand, they must be accorded full protection of all their civic rights and of their religious freedom: and it is in order to compensate the Muslim community for this unequal distribution of civic burdens that a special tax is levied on non-Muslim citizens (*ahl adh-dhimmah*, lit., "covenanted" [or "protected"] people", i.e., non-Muslims whose safety is statutorily assured by the Muslim community). Thus, *jizyah* is no more and no less than an exemption tax in lieu of military service and in compensation for the "covenant of protection" (*dhimmah*) accorded to such citizens by the Islamic state. (The term itself is derived from the verb *jaza* "he rendered [something] as a satisfaction", or "as a compensation [in lieu of something else;]" - cf. Lane II, 422.) No fixed rate has been set either by the Qur'an or by the Prophet for this tax; but from all available Traditions it is evident that it is to be considerably lower than the tax called *zakah* ("the purifying dues") to which Muslims are liable and which - because it is a specifically Islamic religious duty - is naturally not to be levied on non-Muslims. Only such of the non-Muslim citizens who, if they were Muslims, would be expected to serve in the armed forces of the state are liable to the payment of *jizyah*, provided that they can easily afford it. Accordingly, all non-Muslim citizens whose personal status or condition would automatically free them from the obligation to render military service are statutorily - that is, on the basis of clear-cut ordinances promulgated by the Prophet - exempted from the payment of *jizyah*: (a) all women, (b) males who have not yet reached full maturity, (c) old men, (d) all sick or crippled men, (e) priests and monks. All non-Muslim citizens who volunteer for military service are obviously exempted from the payment of *jizyah*. My rendering of the expression '*an yad* (lit., "out of hand") as "with a willing hand", that is, without reluctance, is based on one of several explanations offered by Zamakhshari in his commentary on the above verse. Rashid Rida',

taking the word yad in its metaphorical significance of "power" or "ability", relates the phrase 'an yad to the financial ability of the person liable to the payment of jizyah (see Manar X, 342): an interpretation which is undoubtedly justified in view of the accepted definition of this tax.

44 - This statement is connected with the preceding verse, which speaks of the erring followers of earlier revelation. The charge of shirk ("the ascribing of divinity [or "divine qualities"] to aught beside God") is levelled against both the Jews and the Christians in amplification, as it were, of the statement that they "do not follow the religion of truth [which God has enjoined upon them]". As regards the belief attributed to the Jews that Ezra (or, in the Arabicized form of this name 'Uzayr) was "God's son", it is to be noted that almost all classical commentators of the Qur'an agree in that only the Jews of Arabia, and not all Jews, have been thus accused. (According to a Tradition on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas - quoted by Tabari in his commentary on this verse - some of the Jews of Medina once said to Muhammad, "How could we follow thee when thou hast forsaken our qiblah and dost not consider Ezra a son of God?") On the other hand, Ezra occupies a unique position in the esteem of all Jews, and has always been praised by them in the most extravagant terms. It was he who restored and codified the Torah after it had been lost during the Babylonian Exile, and "edited" it in more or less the form which it has today, and thus "he promoted the establishment of an exclusive, legalistic type of religion that became dominant in later Judaism" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1963, vol. IX, p. 15). Ever since then he has been venerated to such a degree that his verdicts on the Law of Moses have come to be regarded by the Talmudists as being practically equivalent to the Law itself: which, in Qur'anic ideology, amounts to the unforgivable sin of shirk, inasmuch as it implies the elevation of a human being to the status of a quasi-divine law-giver and the blasphemous attribution to him - albeit metaphorically - of the quality of "sonship" in relation to God. Cf. in this connection Exodus iv, 22-23 ("Israel is My son") or Jeremiah xxxi, 9 ("I am a father to Israel"): expressions to which, because of their idolatrous implications, the Qur'an takes strong exception.

45 - My interpolation, between brackets, of the words "they deserve the imprecation" is based on Zamakhshari's and Razi's convincing interpretation of this phrase. Originally, the Arabs used the expression "may God destroy him" in the sense of a direct imprecation; but already in pre-Qur'anic Arabic it had assumed the character of an idiomatic device meant to circumscribe anything that is extremely strange or horrifying: and, according to many philologists, "this, rather than its literal meaning, is the purport [of this phrase] here" (Manar X, 399).

46 - See surah {5}, note [90].

47 - Cf. [3:64](#).

48 - Lit., "with their mouths" - an allusion to the "sayings" (i.e., beliefs) mentioned in verse {30}.

49 - Lit., "except (illa) that He bring His light to completion", or "to perfection". The expression "for He has willed" (i.e., contrary to what the erring ones want), is here elliptically implied by means of the particle illa.

50 - Cf. [3:19](#) - "the only [true] religion in the sight of God is [man's] self-surrender unto Him". See also {61: 8-9}.

51 - Most probably this is, in the first instance, an allusion to the wealth of the Jewish and Christian communities, and their misuse of this wealth. Some of the commentators, however, are of the opinion that the reference is wider, comprising all people, including Muslims, who hoard their wealth without spending anything thereof on righteous causes.

52 - Cf. the parallel allegory, in [3:180](#), of the suffering which will befall the avaricious and the niggardly in the life to come. Regarding the eschatological implications of this and similar allegories, see Appendix I.

53 - This connects with the subsequent reference to fighting against "those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God" (see next note). The months spoken of here are lunar months, progressively rotating through the seasons of the solar year (see surah {2}, note [165]). Since reckoning by the easily observable lunar months is more natural than by the arbitrarily fixed months of the solar year, it is described in this passage as "the ever-true law (din) [of God]". The four "sacred months" during which warfare was considered blasphemous in pre-Islamic Arabia - a view which has been confirmed by Islam (see note [6] above) - are Muharram, Rajab, Dhu 'l-Qa'dah and Dhu 'l-Hijjah.

54 - In their endeavour to obviate certain disadvantages for their trade caused by the seasonal rotation of the lunar months, the pagan Arabs used to intercalate a thirteenth month in the third, sixth and eighth year of every eight-year period, with a view to making the lunar calendar more or less stationary, and thus roughly corresponding to the solar year. An acceptance of this unwarranted intercalation by the Muslims would have tied the Mecca pilgrimage as well as the fast of Ramadan to fixed seasons, and would thus have made, permanently, the performance of these religious duties either too exacting or too easy, and in

either case the believers would have been offending against the spiritual purpose underlying these duties - which is the meaning of the words "do not sin against yourselves with regard to these [months]": i.e., by following, without any warrant from God, a custom devised by "those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him", to whom the sequence refers.

55 - I.e., "just as all of them are, as it were, united against you in their rejection of the truth, be united against them in your readiness for self-sacrifice". As regards the circumstances in which the Muslims are authorized to make war against unbelievers, see the earlier parts of this surah, and especially verses {12-13}, as well as {2:190-194}, where the general principles relating to war are laid down.

56 - Lit., "is but an increase in denying the truth (kufr)". The term nasi', rendered by me as "intercalation", may also be translated as "postponement" - i.e., the postponement of lunar months by means of the periodical intercalation of a thirteenth month, as practiced by the pre-Islamic Arabs with a view to bringing the traditional lunar calendar, for purely worldly reasons, into accord with the solar year (see note [54] above). The Qur'an describes this practice as an additional instance of kufr because it contravenes God's declared will as regards the observance of the lunar calendar in respect of various religious duties (cf. the preceding verse, as well as [2:189](#) and the corresponding note [165]).

57 - An allusion to the arbitrary manner in which the pre-Islamic Arabs intercalated a thirteenth month in the third, sixth and eighth year of every eight-year period.

58 - By means of the intercalation spoken of above, the pagan Arabs did in most years keep the number of months to twelve; but by divorcing the four "sacred months" (Muharram, Rajab, Dhu 'l-Qa'dah and Dhu 'l-Hijjah), from their proper lunar context they obviously profaned and perverted the natural law.

59 - I.e., "you are sluggish in your response, clinging to the life of this world". This verse - as well as most of this surah from here onward - alludes to the campaign of Tabuk, in the year 9 H. The immediate reason for this expedition was the information which the Prophet received to the effect that the Byzantines, made apprehensive by the rapid growth of Islam in Arabia and incited by the Prophet's enemy Abu 'Amir (see note [142] on verse {107} of this surah), were assembling large forces on the confines of the Peninsula with a view to marching against Medina and overthrowing the Muslims. To guard against such an assault, the prophet assembled the strongest force the Muslims were capable of, and set out in the month of Rajab, 9 H., towards the frontier. On reaching Tabuk, about half-way between Medina and Damascus, the Prophet ascertained that the Byzantines were either not yet ready to invade Arabia or had entirely given up the idea for the time being; and so - in accordance with the Islamic principle that war may be waged

only in self-defence - he returned with his followers to Medina without engaging in hostilities. At the time of the preparation for this expedition, the hypocrites and a minority among the believers displayed an extreme reluctance (referred to in this and the following verses) to embark on a war with Byzantium: and it is this minority that the above verse reproaches for "clinging heavily to the earth" (Manar X 493).

60 - Lit., "him". i.e., Muhammad.

61 - Lit., "the second of two": an allusion to the Prophet's flight, in the company of Abu Bakr, from Mecca to Medina in the year 622 of the Christian era. The expression "the second of two" does not imply any order of precedence but is synonymous with "one of two": cf. the Prophet's saying to Abu Bakr, on that very occasion, "What [could], in thy opinion, [happen] to two [men] who have God as the third with them?" (Bukhari, in the chapter Fada'il Ashab an-Nabi.)

62 - When the Prophet and Abu Bakr left on their hijrah to Medina, they first hid for three nights in a cave on Mount Thawr, in the vicinity of Mecca, where they were almost discovered and apprehended by the pagan Quraysh who were pursuing them (Bukhari, loc. cit.).

63 - Cf. verse {26} above.

64 - Lit., "is the highest". The expression rendered by me as "cause", which occurs twice in this sentence, reads, literally, "word" (kalimah).

65 - Lit., "lightly or heavily". The rendering adopted by me corresponds to the interpretation given to this expression by most of the classical commentators (e.g., Zamakhshari and Razi).

66 - A reference to the unwillingness of some of the Muslims to follow the Prophet's call and to set out on the expedition to the frontier (see last paragraph of note [59] above). A strenuous march of about fourteen



days was needed to reach Tabuk, the goal of this expedition; and the uncertainty of its outcome, as well as the hardships involved, gave rise to all manner of spurious excuses on the part of the half-hearted believers and hypocrites. As the next verse shows, the Prophet accepted these excuses in many cases, and allowed the men concerned to remain at Medina.

67 - All the commentators agree in that this phrase, although expressed in the form of an invocation has the meaning of a statement - "God pardons thee" or "has pardoned thee" - absolving the Prophet of any moral responsibility for his mistaken, but humanly understandable, acceptance of equivocal pleas on the part of those who wished to be excused from participating in the campaign. To me it seems that this statement of "absolution" was primarily intended to free the Prophet from any self-reproach for his too-great liberality in this respect. (It should be borne in mind that this part of At-Tawbah was revealed during or immediately after the expedition.)

68 - Lit., "has full knowledge of the God-conscious (bi'l-muttaqin)".

69 - This may refer to the permission granted by the Prophet (see verse {43}) to certain of his followers who, for apparently legitimate reasons, were unable to take part in the campaign (Tabari, Zamakhshari, Razi) - a permission of which the hypocrites only too readily availed themselves. As regards God's "causing" those hypocrites to sin in this way, see [2:7](#) and the corresponding note [7], as well as surah {3}, note [117].

70 - I.e., before the expedition to Tabuk, during which these passages were revealed.

71 - I.e., at the time when the Prophet was making preparations for the campaign.

72 - See verses {44} and {45} above. It is to be noted that both the verbal form la taftinni (rendered by me as "do not put me to too hard a test") and the noun fitnah have the same root, comprising a great complex of meanings: e.g., test, trial, affliction, temptation to evil, seduction, persecution, oppression, discord, civil strife, etc. ({cf. surah 8, note 25}). Since it is impossible in any language but Arabic to reproduce all these many shades of meaning in a single expression, the rendering of the term fitnah must necessarily vary in accordance with the context in which it is used.

73 - I.e., in the course of the expedition to Tabuk, during which most of this surah was revealed. One should, however, bear in mind that these verses have not merely a historical connotation but, rather, aim at depicting hypocrisy as such.

74 - I.e., either victory or martyrdom in God's cause. The verb tarabbasa has usually the connotation of waiting with expectancy, and is, therefore, most suitably rendered as "he hopefully waited".

75 - Sc., in the life to come.

76 - I.e., "it shall never be acceptable to God": an allusion to the readiness on the part of many hypocrites to contribute financially to "good causes", ostensibly for the sake of moral considerations but, in reality, "only to be seen and praised by men" (cf. [2:264](#) and [4:38](#)).

77 - Lit., "nothing prevents their spending from being accepted from them except that...", etc.

78 - Lit., "and they do not approach prayer without being reluctant" - i.e., when they participate in acts of worship they do it only for the sake of outward conformity, and not out of inner conviction.

79 - Sc., "for which sin they will have to suffer in the life to come". See also [3:178](#) and [8:28](#), and the corresponding notes.

80 - Thus the Qur'an shows that the innermost cause of all hypocrisy is fear - fear of a moral commitment and, at the same time, fear of an open breach with one's social environment. In their overriding, immoral

desire for social conformity, "the hypocrites seek to deceive God - the while it is He who causes them to be deceived [by themselves]" (4:142); and as "they are oblivious of God, so He is oblivious of them" (9:67). One should note, in this connection, that the Arabic term munafiq - which, for want of a better word, is rendered as "hypocrite" - applies both to conscious dissemblers bent on deceiving their fellow-men, as well as to people who, out of an inner uncertainty, are deceiving themselves. For a fuller discussion of this term, see note [7] on 29:11, which probably represents the earliest instance of its use in the Qur'an.

81 - Since there is no English equivalent for the term sadaqat (sing. sadaqah), I am rendering it here as "offerings given for the sake of God". This comprises everything that a believer freely gives to another person, out of love or compassion, as well as what he is morally or legally obliged to give, without expecting any worldly return: that is, charitable gifts and deeds of every description (which is the primary meaning of sadaqat - e.g., in 2:263 and {264}), as well as the obligatory tax called zakah ("the purifying dues", because its payment purifies, as it were, a person's property from the taint of selfishness). In the context of the above verse, this term refers to the funds thus collected and administered by the Muslim community or state. When these funds are disbursed for the purposes stipulated in verse {60}, they assume once more - this time in relation to the recipients - the aspect of "charitable gifts".

82 - Lit., "what God has given them, and His Apostle": a typically Qur'anic construction meant to bring out the fact that the real giver is God, and that the Apostle is His instrument. Although this passage relates, primarily, to the hypocrites at Medina and the historical situation obtaining at the time of the expedition to Tabuk, the import of these verses goes beyond the historical occasion of their revelation, describing as it does "the attitude and mentality of hypocrites of all times, and everywhere" (Manar X, 567). Consequently, we may assume that the reference, in this context, to "God's Apostle" is not confined to the person of the Prophet Muhammad but implies, metonymically, the Law of Islam as revealed through him - and, thus, to every government that holds authority by virtue of that Law and rules in accordance with it.

83 - See note [81] above.

84 - I.e., the officials entrusted with the collection and administration of zakah funds.

85 - These eight categories circumscribe all the purposes for which zakah funds may be expended. By "those whose hearts are to be won over" are apparently meant such non-Muslims as are close to understanding and, perhaps, accepting Islam, and for whose conversion every effort should be made, either directly or indirectly (i.e., by means of the widest possible propagation of the teachings of Islam). As regards the expression fi 'r-riqab ("for the freeing of human beings from bondage"), which relates both to

the ransoming of prisoners of war and to the freeing of slaves, see surah {2}, note [146]. The term al-gharimun describes people who are overburdened with debts contracted in good faith, which - through no fault of their own - they are subsequently unable to redeem. The expression "in God's cause" embraces every kind of struggle in righteous causes, both in war and in peace, including expenditure for the propagation of Islam and for all charitable purposes. Regarding the meaning of ibn as-sabil ("wayfarer"), see surah {2}, note [145].

86 - I.e., "he believes everything that he hears". Most of the commentators assume that the hypocrites were thus alluding to the Prophet's alleged propensity to believe everything - good or bad - that he was told about other people (cf. Manar X, 600). Since, however, there is no historical evidence of such a "propensity" on his part, it seems to me that what the hypocrites referred to was the Prophet's readiness to listen to what they - in common with many other unbelievers - regarded as mere hallucinatory sounds, and to interpret them "mistakenly" as revelations. This would explain the statement that "they malign the Prophet" - namely, by attributing to him self-deception - and that this saying of theirs "amounts to a denial of the truth" (see verse {74} of this surah). - The verb adha signifies primarily "he molested" or "annoyed [another]", i.e., in a manner not amounting to actual harm (darar). Since in the above context this verb is used in the sense of making a derogatory remark, yu'dhun is best rendered as "they malign".

87 - I.e., to divine revelation.

88 - Lit., "the while God and His Apostle are most entitled that they should seek His pleasure...", etc. As has been pointed out by many of the commentators (and most succinctly by Rashid Rida' in Manar X, 607f.), there is no question of any juxtaposition of God and His Apostle in this phrase. This is made clear by the use of the singular pronoun in an yurduhu ("that they should seek His pleasure"), which is meant to bring out - in the inimitable elliptic form so characteristic of the Qur'an - the idea that God's pleasure is the only worthwhile goal of all human endeavour, and that a believer's duty to surrender to the Prophet's guidance is but an outcome of the fact that he is the bearer of God's message to man. Cf. in this connection, "Whoever pays heed unto the Apostle pays heed unto God thereby" ([4:80](#)), or, "Say [O Prophet]: 'If you love God, follow me, [and] God will love you'" ([3:31](#)).

89 - This refers to a particular type of hypocrite: namely, to the doubter who, not having any real convictions on this score, leaves the question of God's existence and/or Muhammad's prophethood open (Manar X, 610), but nevertheless, for the sake of worldly advantage, would like to be regarded as a believer. (Since, obviously, not all hypocrites belong to this category, my interpolation of the words "some of" at the beginning of this verse would seem to be justified.) The ambivalent attitude of mind alluded to here implies hypocrisy not merely with regard to one's social environment but also with regard to oneself: an unwillingness - or, rather, fear - on the part of such people to admit to themselves "what is really going on in their hearts" (cf. verses {56-57} and note [80] above), and the dim realization that this ambivalence is only a cover for their desire to escape from all spiritual commitment (cf. [2:9](#) - "they would deceive God and

those who have attained to faith - the while they deceive none but themselves").

90 - Namely, self-knowledge. The accusation of "mocking" refers to their frivolous allusion to the Prophet, "He is all ear" (see verse {61} and note [86] above).

91 - Most of the classical commentators assume that this refers to the derisive remarks made by some of the hypocrites about the alleged futility of the expedition to Tabuk. In view of the sequence, however, I am of the opinion that this is a further reference to those who "malign the Prophet by saying, 'He is all ear'" (verse {61}) - i.e., accuse him of self-deception - and thus, by implication, "mock at God and His messages" (see next sentence).

92 - See note [89] above.

93 - I.e., consciously persevered in hypocrisy (Zamakhshari). The above Qur'anic sentence expresses the doctrine that in His final judgment God will take into account all that is in a sinner's heart, and will not indiscriminately condemn everyone who has been sinning out of weakness or out of an inner inability to resolve his doubts, and not out of a conscious inclination to evil (cf. [4:98](#) - "excepted shall be the [truly] helpless - be they men or women or children - who cannot bring forth any strength and have not been shown [or "cannot find"] the right way").

94 - I.e., their behaviour is - in its effect, at least - the exact opposite of that expected of the believers (cf. [3:104](#), {110} and {114}; [9:71](#) and {112}; and [22:41](#)).

95 - It is to be borne in mind that this and the following verses refer to the conscious hypocrites spoken of in the last sentence of the preceding verse, and not to the waverers, whose hypocrisy is an outcome of inner fears and uncertainties.

96 - A reference to the statement, in verse {67}, that conscious hypocrites are intrinsically "all of a kind" (ba'duhum min ba'd).

97 - Sc., "and the same will happen to you unless you repent".

98 - I.e., Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of Lot's people (see {7:80-84} and {11:69-83}). References to the chastisement meted out to Noah's people as well as to the 'Ad and Thamud and the folk of Madyan (the Biblical Midian) are found in several places in the Qur'an; see, in particular, {7:59-79} and {85-93}, and the corresponding notes. The reference to "Abraham's people" seems to point to the Babylonians, who rejected the monotheism preached by him, and to the overthrow of their first empire, at about 1100 B.C., by the Assyrians.

99 - Or: "are the protectors [or "friends and protectors"] of one another". Since, however, the believers are here contrasted with the hypocrites, spoken of in verse {67} as being "all of a kind", it is preferable to render the term wali (of which awliya' is the plural) in its primary meaning of being near" or "close" to one another.

100 - For an explanation of this rendering of 'adn (akin to the Hebrew 'eden, "delight" or "bliss") see note [45] on [38:50](#), where this expression occurs for the first time in the chronological order of Qur'anic revelation.

101 - I.e., "do not compromise with them in matters of principle". Regarding the meaning of the verb jahada ("he strove hard", i.e., in a righteous cause), see surah {4}, note [122]. The imperative jahid is obviously used here in its spiritual connotation, implying efforts at convincing both the outspoken unbelievers and the waverers, including the various types of hypocrites spoken of in the preceding passages. Although the imperative is addressed in the first instance to the Prophet, it is considered to be morally binding on all believers.

102 - See the first sentence of verse {61} above, and the corresponding note [86]. The allegation that the Prophet deceived himself in the matter of revelation is, naturally, equivalent to disbelief in the outcome of his revelation, i.e., the Qur'an.

103 - Lit., "which they were unable to attain to". The classical commentators take this as a reference to an abortive plot, on the part of some of the hypocrites, to kill the Prophet during the expedition to Tabuk. However, without contesting the validity of this historical interpretation, I believe that the above allusion has a far deeper meaning - namely, the existential impossibility of one's ever attaining to inner peace without a positive belief that man's life has meaning and purpose, either of which can be glimpsed only through the revelations bestowed on those exceptionally gifted and receptive personalities, the prophets. (An indirect reference to divine revelation as the only source of this kind of cognition appears in [96:5](#), that is, in the earliest Qur'anic passage revealed to the Prophet.) Thus, torn between their half-hearted desire to "surrender themselves to God" and their unwillingness to accept the divine guidance offered them by the Prophet, the hypocrites "were aiming at something which was beyond their reach".

104 - I.e., by means of the spiritual guidance contained in the Qur'an and the material welfare resulting from an adherence to its moral and social principles. The above phrase implies that the reluctance of the hypocrites to pay heed to the Prophet was not due to their finding fault with the Faith as such but, rather, to their lack of gratitude for the spiritual and material benefits which they had derived from it. (Because of its historical associations, most of this verse is expressed in the past tense, although its moral import is obviously timeless.)

105 - Lit., "He has caused hypocrisy to become for them consequence (a'qabahum) in their hearts until the Day on which they shall meet Him" (i.e., until their resurrection). Thus, the Qur'an states that it is excessive love of worldly possessions which gives rise, in a certain type of man, to the attitude of mind described as "hypocrisy" - and not vice versa (see also [29:11](#) and the corresponding note [7]). Cf. in this connection the Prophet's saying, reported by Abu Hurayrah: "The mark (ayah) of the hypocrite is threefold: when he speaks, he lies; and when he promises, he breaks his promise; and when he is trusted, he betrays" (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi and Nasa'i; similar Traditions, on the authority of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr, are quoted by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Da'ud, Nasa'i, Ibn Majah and Ibn Hanbal).

106 - I.e., to themselves, trying to find excuses for their breaking their vow.

107 - Regarding my rendering of sadaqat as "that which is given for the sake of God", see [note 81] above.

108 - There are many authentic Traditions to the effect that the hypocrites at Medina used to deride the offerings which the believers brought to the Prophet (as head of the community and the state) in response to the Qur'anic ordinance that they should "give for the sake of God". For instance, the Companion Abu Mas'ud reports: "[When] a man brought an ample offering, they [i.e., the hypocrites] would say, 'He [only] wants to be seen and praised by men'; and when a man brought an offering of a small measure [of dates or grain], they would say, 'God does not stand in need of such an offering'" (Bukhari and Muslim, and many similar versions in other hadith compilations). The above verse, however, does not allude merely to these historical incidents but serves to illustrate the mentality of the hypocrite whose own insincerity colours his view of all other people.

109 - Lit., "God will scoff at them": a turn of phrase often occurring in the Qur'an (e.g., in [2:15](#)), indicating God's requital.

110 - I.e., many times. In Arabic usage, the number "seventy" often stands for "many", just as "seven" is a synonym for "several" (see *Lisan al-'Arab* and *Taj al-'Arus*). It is evident from many authentic Traditions (recorded, among others, by Bukhari and Muslim) that the Prophet often prayed to God that He pardon his enemies.

111 - I.e., "those who are so deeply rooted in their iniquity and in their insolent persistence in evildoing (tamarrud)... [that] they have lost all disposition for repentance and belief" (*Manar* X, 657).

112 - Lit., "rejoiced in their sitting [at home]" - a reference to those who, under one pretext or another, excused themselves from participating in the expedition to Tabuk (see notes [59] and [66] above). As is evident from the sequence - and clearly stated in many authentic Traditions - one of the excuses advanced was the extreme heat of the season.

113 - Lit., "and let them weep a lot".

114 - Lit., "if God brings thee back [from the campaign] to a group of them" - i.e., to those hypocrites who remained at home under false pretences.



115 - I.e., with the old men, the women, the children and the sick, who are not able or not expected to go to war (Manar X, 662).

116 - I.e., unless he has repented before his death. It is reported that when the life-long opponent of the Prophet and leader of the hypocrites of Medina, 'Abd Allah ibn Ubayy was dying, he sent his son to the Prophet with the request that the latter give him his (the Prophet's) shirt, so that he might be buried in it, and that the Prophet should pray over him after his death. The Prophet took this request as a sign of Ibn Ubayy's repentance, and gave him his shirt and later led the funeral prayers over his body. When 'Umar ibn al-Khattab vehemently protested against this clemency towards the man whom all the believers had regarded as "God's enemy", the Prophet answered, "God has granted me a choice in this matter [a reference to verse {80} of this surah, "whether thou dost pray that they be forgiven or dost not pray...", etc.], and so I shall pray [for him] more than seventy times." Several variants of this Tradition are to be found in Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, Ibn Hanbal. on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas; Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Ibn 'Umar; Muslim, on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah; and in various other hadith compilations. Since 'Abd Allah ibn Ubayy died some time after the Prophet's return from Tabuk, while verse {84} - like most of this surah - was revealed during the campaign, it is clear that the prohibition expressed in this verse relates only (as the sequence shows) to those who "were bent on denying God and His Apostle, and [who] died in this their iniquity" - that is, to unrepentant sinners.

117 - Lit., "while they were iniquitous".

118 - Cf. [3:178](#) and [8:28](#), as well as the corresponding notes. This (almost literal) repetition of {verse 55} above is meant to stress the psychological importance of this problem (Zamakhshari) - namely, the insignificance of worldly happiness as compared with spiritual righteousness or the absence of it.

119 - Lit., "when a surah was bestowed from on high": the word surah being here synonymous with "revealed message" (see note [25] on [47:20](#)).

120 - I.e., with those who were either not expected to go to war - like women and children - or were handicapped by old age or illness.

121 - Cf. [2:7](#) and the corresponding note, as well as {7:100-101}.

122 - I.e., from participating in the expedition to Tabuk. The term al-mu'adhhirun connotes both "those having a valid excuse ('udhr)" and "those offering false excuses"; it is, therefore, best rendered as "such as had some excuse to offer". The specific mention of the a'rab ("bedouin") in this and the following passages probably arises from the fact that their attitude - positive or negative - towards Islam was of the greatest importance within the context of early Muslim history, inasmuch as the message of Muhammad could not obtain a real, lasting foothold in Arabia without first securing the allegiance of those warlike nomads and half-nomads, who constituted the great majority of the Peninsula's population. At the time when the Prophet was preparing to set out towards Tabuk, many of the already-converted tribesmen were willing to go to war under his leadership (and, in fact, did so), while others were afraid lest in their absence their encampments, denuded of man-power, be raided by hostile, as yet unconverted tribes (Razi); others, again, were simply averse to exposing themselves to the hardships of a campaign in distant lands, which did not seem to them to have any bearing on their own, immediate interests.

123 - I.e., without even caring to come to Medina and to excuse themselves.

124 - I.e., the old and the infirm.

125 - Lit., "who do not find anything to spend", i.e., on their equipment. At the time in question a public treasury did not yet exist, and every participant in a military expedition was expected to provide his own weapons and mounts.

126 - Lit., "who ask thee for exemption while they are rich". The term ghani denotes "one who is rich" or "free from want" or "self-sufficient"; in this context it obviously refers to physical competence in addition to financial means: that is, to people who were able-bodied as well as financially in a position to equip themselves (cf. verses {86-87} above).

127 - Lit., "and thereafter you will be brought back unto Him".

128 - See surah {6}, note [65].

129 - Sc., "and not punishing them". As a matter of fact, their fears were unfounded, since, on his return from Tabuk, the Prophet took no punitive action against any of those who had failed to follow him on his campaign.

130 - The words interpolated by me between brackets at the beginning of this sentence are based on the interpretation given by Razi (see also Manar XI, 8), obviously in view of verse {99}, which speaks of believers among the bedouin.

131 - Owing to their nomadic way of life and its inherent hardship and crudity, the bedouin find it more difficult than do settled people to be guided by ethical imperatives unconnected with their immediate tribal interests - a difficulty which is still further enhanced by their physical distance from the centres of higher culture and, consequently, their comparative ignorance of most religious demands. It was for this reason that the Prophet often stressed the superiority of a settled mode of life to a nomadic one: cf. his saying, "He who dwells in the desert (al-badiyah) becomes rough in disposition", recorded by Tirmidhi, Abu Da'ud, Nasa'i and Ibn Hanbal on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, and a similar Tradition, on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, by Abu Da'ud and Bayhaqi.

132 - In the above context, the term muhajirun - lit., "emigrants", rendered by me as "those who have forsaken the domain of evil" (see surah {2}, note [203], and surah {4}, note [124]) - applies primarily to the Meccan followers of the Prophet who migrated (hajar) from Mecca to Medina - which until then was called Yathrib - at a time when Mecca was still in the possession of the enemies of Islam, the "first and foremost" among them were the earliest emigrants, i.e., those who left Mecca in or before the year 622 of the Christian era (which marks the beginning of the Islamic hijri era) and in the course of the next few years, when the Muslim community at Medina was still in danger of being overrun by the powerful Quraysh of Mecca. Similarly, the term ansar (lit., "helpers") applies here to the early converts from among the people of Medina who sheltered and succoured (nasaru) their brethren in faith - the "first and foremost" among them being those who embraced Islam before and shortly after the Prophet's and his Companions' exodus (hijrah) from Mecca, and particularly those who did so on the occasion of the two meetings, at Al-'Aqabah near Mecca between the Prophet and deputations of the Yathrib tribes of Al-Aws and Khazraj (a little over a year and a few months, respectively, before the Prophet's hijrah). Apart, however, from their

purely historical connotations, both the terms *muhajirun* and *ansar* bear in the Qur'an a spiritual meaning as well, and are often used to describe those who morally "forsake the domain of evil" and those who "shelter and succour the Faith" (see surah {8}, note [78]).

133 - I.e., Medina. Originally, the city bore the name *Yathrib*; but after the exodus of the Prophet from Mecca it came to be known as *Madinat an-Nabi* ("the City of the Prophet") and, eventually, as *Al-Madinah* ("The City" par excellence).

134 - I.e., first through failure in their worldly concerns, accompanied by pangs of conscience and the resulting spiritual distress, and then through a full realization, at the moment of dying, of the unforgivable nature of their sin (*Manar XI*, 19).

135 - I.e., neither believers in the full sense of the word nor hypocrites, but half-hearted, confused waverers between right and wrong, or between truth and falsehood.

136 - Lit., "who have acknowledged their sins [after] having mingled a righteous deed with another that was evil". Although it relates primarily to the vacillating Muslims who refused to participate in the expedition to Tabuk, this verse alludes, in its wider meaning, to all sinners who - without external prompting - become conscious of their wrongdoing and repent of it.

137 - Lit., "take out of their possessions an offering for the sake of God (*sadaqah*)". For the meaning of this term, see note [81] above. In this context, it primarily denotes the tax called *zakah* ("the purifying dues") incumbent on every Muslim enjoying a certain minimum of property and/or income. Since an acceptance of *zakah* by the head of state (or of the community) amounts to a recognition of the giver as a "Muslim" in the Qur'anic sense of this term, the Prophet refused to accept it from all whose behaviour had made it obvious that they were hypocrites; the above verse, however, authorizes him (and, by implication, the authorities of an Islamic state at all times) to accept the payment of *zakah* from those who express their repentance by deeds as well as by words.

138 - Lit., "who accepts repentance from His servants": thus pointing out that no human being, not even the Prophet, has the power to absolve a sinner of his guilt (*Manar XI*, 32). A prophet can do no more than

pray to God that He forgive the sinners.

139 - This connects with the injunction in verse {103} above, "accept that [part] of their possessions which is offered for the sake of God,...and pray for them". The stress on action as an integral part of faith is of fundamental importance in the ethics of the Qur'an: cf. the frequent juxtaposition of the concepts of "believing" and "doing good works", and the condemnation of all "who, while believing, wrought no good works" (see [6:158](#) and the corresponding note [160]).

140 - See surah {6}, note [65].

141 - Lit., "deferred unto God's decree (amr)" - i.e., kept in abeyance in anticipation of their future repentance. As in the preceding four verses, the people referred to here are, in the first instance, the waverers who stayed away from the campaign of Tabuk, and, by implication, all half-hearted believers who confusedly hover between right and wrong: with the difference, however, that whereas the repentant sinners spoken of in verses {102-105} are said to have realized their sinfulness spontaneously, the kind of people referred to in verse {106} have not yet reached the stage of moral self-examination and repentance, with the result that their cases are "deferred" until such a time as their impulses sway them entirely one way or another. From a psychological point of view, it is possible to discern a subtle connection between this verse and {7:46-47}.

142 - Lit., "who have been warring against God and His Apostle aforesaid" - i.e., before the expedition to Tabuk. The historical occasion to which this verse refers may be thus summarized: Ever since his exodus from Mecca to Medina the Prophet was violently opposed by one Abu 'Amir ("The Monk"), a prominent member of the Khazraj tribe, who had embraced Christianity many years earlier and enjoyed a considerable reputation among his compatriots and among the Christians of Syria. From the very outset he allied himself with the Prophet's enemies, the Meccan Quraysh, and took part on their side in the battle of Uhud (3 H.). Shortly thereafter he migrated to Syria and did all that he could to induce the Emperor of Byzantium, Heraclius, to invade Medina and crush the Muslim community once and for all. In Medina itself, Abu 'Amir had some secret followers among the members of his tribe, with whom he remained in constant correspondence. In the year 9 H. he informed them that Heraclius had agreed to send out an army against Medina, and that large-scale preparations were being made to this effect (which was apparently the reason for the Prophet's preventive expedition to Tabuk). In order that his followers should have a rallying-place in the event of the expected invasion of Medina, Abu 'Amir suggested to his friends that they build a mosque of their own in the village of Quba', in the immediate vicinity of Medina (which they did), and thus obviate the necessity of congregating in the mosque which the Prophet himself had built in the same village at the time of his arrival at Medina (see note [145] below). It is this "rival" mosque to which the above verse refers. It was demolished at the Prophet's orders immediately after his return from the Tabuk expedition. Abu 'Amir himself died in Syria shortly afterwards. (For all the relevant Traditions, see Tabari's and Ibn Kathir's commentaries on this verse.)

143 - Although the whole of this verse relates primarily to the historical occasion explained in the preceding note, it has a definite bearing on all attempts at creating sectarian divisions among Muslims, and is thus a clear amplification of an earlier injunction to this effect (see [6:159](#) and the corresponding note [161]).

144 - Lit., "in it" - sc., "to pray therein".

145 - Lit., "Indeed, a house of worship founded...upon God-consciousness (taqwa) is most deserving...", etc. Some of the commentators believe that this is a reference to the mosque founded by the Prophet at Quba', a village close to Medina, on his arrival there in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal in the year 1 H., since it was the first mosque ever built by him or his followers. There are, however, authentic Traditions to the effect that the Prophet applied the designation of "a house of worship founded on God-consciousness" to his (later-built) mosque at Medina as well (Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, Ibn Hanbal). It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that it applies to every mosque sincerely dedicated by its founders to the worship of God: a view which is supported by the next verse.

146 - Lit., "unless their hearts are cut into many pieces" - i.e., until they die. In verses {109-110}, the reference to "the building which they have built" is, obviously, widened beyond the preceding allusion to houses of worship, and allegorically circumscribes here all the "works" and the behaviour of men.

147 - Most of the commentators attribute to the expression as-sa'ihun (lit., "those who wander") the meaning of as-sa'imun, i.e., "those who fast", since he who fasts deprives himself, temporarily, of worldly enjoyments similar to one who wanders about the earth (Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, as quoted by Razi); and they justify this metaphorical equation of siyahah ("wandering") with siyam ("fasting") by the fact that several Companions and some of their successors have thus interpreted the term as-sa'ihun in the above context (see Tabari). Other authorities, however, (e.g., Abu Muslim, as quoted by Razi) prefer the original significance of this term and explain it as more or less synonymous with al-muhajirun ("those who forsake the domain of evil"). To my mind, the expression as-sa'ihun is best rendered as "those who go on and on [seeking God's goodly acceptance]", thus combining the literal and metonymical connotations of the term siyahah.

148 - As is obvious from the sequence, this prohibition relates to the dead among such sinners - i.e., those who have died without repentance (Zamakhshari, Razi) - and not to those who are still living: for "a prayer for forgiveness in respect of a living [sinner]...amounts to asking God that He grace him with His guidance...and this is permissible" (Manar XI, 60).

149 - Abraham's promise to his father is mentioned in {19:47-48} and [60:4](#); for the actual prayer, see {26:86-87}.

150 - Lit., "it is not for God" - i.e., it is not compatible with God's omniscience and majesty - "that He should cause people to go astray after He has guided them". My rendering of the phrase "that He should cause people to go astray" as "condemn people for going astray" is based on the interpretation given to it by some of the greatest classical commentators (e.g., Tabari, Razi). As regards the phrase, "after He has guided them", Razi interprets it as meaning "after He has invited them to the way of rectitude (ar-rushd)".

151 - Most of the commentators assume that the people referred to are the believers who, before the revelation of {verse 113}, used to pray to God that He grant His forgiveness to their relatives and friends who had died in the state of shirk ("ascribing divinity to aught beside God"): in other words, the believers need not fear to be taken to task for something which they did before the prohibition laid down in verse {113} was revealed (i.e., "ere He has made clear unto them of what they should beware"). However, Razi advances also an alternative interpretation of verse {115}, suggesting that it is meant to explain the severity with which the whole of this surah condemns the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites who are going astray after God "has made clear unto them of what they should beware". (See in this connection {6:131-132} and the corresponding notes.) This interpretation is, to my mind, the more plausible of the two, and particularly so in view of the sequence (verse {116}).

152 - See note [132] above.

153 - Lit., "after the hearts of a group of them had well-nigh swerved [from faith]": a reference to the believers who - without valid excuse - failed to respond to the Prophet's call when he was setting out on the expedition to Tabuk, and who afterwards repented.

154 - See surah {6}, note [31]. According to Zamakhshari and Razi, the particle thumma has here the meaning given in my rendering, and serves to emphasize the statement that "God has turned in His mercy unto the Prophet...and all those who followed him in the hour of distress".

155 - Or: "had been left behind", i.e., at the time of the expedition to Tabuk. My rendering of alladhina khullifu as "those who had fallen prey to corruption" is based on the tropical meaning of the verb khalufa or khullifa, "he was [or "became"] altered [for the worse]", or "he became corrupt" in the moral sense (see Asas, Nihayah, Lisan al-'Arab, Qamus, Taj al-'Arus). This interpretation of alladhina khullifu - applying, in the above context, to those who remained behind under false pretences - has the support of some of the most outstanding Arab philologists, e.g., 'Abd al-Malik al-Asma'i (as quoted by Razi, in his commentary on verse {83} of this surah). - As regards "the three who had fallen prey to corruption", the classical commentators assume that it is a reference to three persons - namely, Ka'b ibn Malik, Mararah ibn ar-Rabi' and Hilal ibn Umayyah (all of them from among the ansar) - who abstained from the campaign and were thereafter ostracized by the Prophet and his Companions until the revelation of the above verse. But while it is historically established that these three Companions were indeed among the believers who thus failed in their duty (the relevant Traditions will be found in extenso in Tabari's and Ibn Kathir's commentaries on this verse), it seems to me that the context does not warrant such a restriction of its meaning to three particular persons, and that by "the three" are meant three groups of erring believers: (1) those who had advanced equivocal excuses and were thereupon permitted by the Prophet to remain at home (as has been alluded to in verses {43-46} as well as in the first sentence of verse {90}); (2) those who absented themselves without permission, but afterwards spontaneously repented their sin (verses {102-105}); and (3) those whose cases were at first "deferred" (verse {106}), and who repented shortly after the Prophet's return from Tabuk (at which time verse {118} was revealed).

156 - In its wider implication - as contrasted with a purely historical allusion - the above verse relates to all believers who temporarily deviate from the right path and then, after having realized - either spontaneously or in consequence of outside reprobation - that they had "fallen prey to corruption", sincerely repent their sin.

157 - Although this and the following verses relate, on the face of it, to "the people of the Prophet's City" (see note [133] above) and to "the bedouin who live around them", their purport is obviously general, and applies to all believers at all times. The specific reference to "the Prophet's City" is due to the fact that it was the place where the revelation of the Qur'an was completed and Islam came to its full fruition under the Prophet's guidance.

158 - Lit., "causes wrath to".



159 - Lit., "[whenever] they get from the enemy whatever they get" - i.e., victory or death or injury.

160 - In its original construction, this sentence reads thus: "and neither thirst afflicts them..., nor do they take any step..., nor do they get from the enemy..., without that a good deed is recorded in their behalf". The same construction is applied to the next verse.

161 - Lit., "cross a valley". As Zamakhshari rightly points out in his commentary on this verse, the term wadi ("valley" or "river-bed") is often used in classical Arabic to denote "the earth" - a usage which even in our days is familiar to the bedouin of the Arabian Peninsula, especially when combined with the verb qata'a (lit., "he cut") in its connotation of "cutting across" or "traversing [a distance]" or "advancing [on a journey]". Thus, the above Qur'anic phrase may be suitably rendered as "whenever they move on earth". (As regards the construction of this sentence, see preceding note.)

162 - Lit., "admonish their people when they come back to them, so that they might be on their guard". Although the above injunction mentions specifically religious knowledge, it has a positive bearing on every kind of knowledge - and this in view of the fact that the Qur'an does not draw any dividing-line between the spiritual and the worldly concerns of life but, rather, regards them as different aspects of one and the same reality. In many of its verses, the Qur'an calls upon the believer to observe all nature and to discern God's creative activity in its manifold phenomena and "laws", as well as to meditate upon the lessons of history with a view to gaining a deeper insight into man's motivations and the innermost springs of his behaviour; and, thus, the Qur'an itself is characterized as addressed to "those who think". In short, intellectual activity as such is postulated as a valid way to a better understanding of God's will and - if pursued with moral consciousness - as a valid method of worshipping God. This Qur'anic principle has been emphasized in many well-authenticated sayings of the Prophet, for instance, "Striving after knowledge is a sacred duty (faridah) for every man and woman who has surrendered himself or herself to God (muslim wa-muslimah)" (Ibn Majah); or, "The superiority (fadl) of a learned man over a [mere] worshipper [i.e., one who merely prays, fasts, etc.] is like the superiority of the full moon over all the stars" (Tirmidhi, Abu Da'ud, Ibn Majah, Ibn Hanbal, Darimi). Consequently, the obligation of the believers to "devote themselves to acquiring a deeper knowledge of the Faith" (li-yatafaqqahu fi 'd-din) and to impart its results to their fellow-believers relates to every branch of knowledge as well as to its practical application.

163 - I.e., uncompromising with regard to ethical principles. For the general circumstances in which war is permitted, see {2:190-194}, [22:39](#), {60:8-9}, and the corresponding notes, as well as notes [7] and [9] on verse {5} of this surah. The reference to "those deniers of the truth who are near you" may arise from the fact that only "those who are near" can be dangerous in a physical sense or, alternatively, that - having come from afar - they have already approached the Muslim country with an aggressive intent.

164 - Lit., "there are among them such as say". The "saying" that follows is perhaps an oblique, sarcastic reference to [8:2](#), which speaks of the believers "whose faith is strengthened whenever His messages are conveyed unto them".

165 - A reference to the promise of paradise expressed in verse {111} above.

166 - Lit., "it but adds [another] loathsome evil to their loathsome evil" - i.e., makes them more stubborn in their denying the truth of God's messages because they are a priori determined to deny everything that is incompatible with their refusal to admit the existence of anything that is beyond the reach of human perception (al-ghayb - see surah {2}, note [3]).

167 - Lit., "every year once or twice" - a figure of speech denoting continuity (Manar XI, 83 f.). The "test" consists in the fact that man has been endowed with reason and, therefore, with the ability to choose between right and wrong.

168 - Lit., "who sees you" - thus implying that God does not exist.

169 - Cf. [8:55](#).

170 - I.e., "a human being like yourselves, not endowed with any supernatural powers, but only chosen by God to convey His message to you". (See note [2] on [50:2](#).)

171 - Lit., "the Sustainer (rabb) of the awesome throne of almightiness". For my rendering of al-'arsh as

"the throne of almightiness", see note [43] on [7:54](#).

[View Page](#)

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