

Even thus said those who had no knowledge, like what they say. But Allah shall judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they disagree.<sup>120</sup>

كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ  
قَوْلِهِمْ ۗ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ  
فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

so sure of the existence of God that he may be said to be actually seeing Him. No fear of the future darkens his faith. The dead past is buried and the living present has no sorrow for him. Every spiritual bliss is present. Such a state is termed *لقاء* or union with God" (Ā'inah).

### 120. Important Words:

*اليهود* (the Jews) signifies the followers of Moses or of what is known as Judaism. The word as already explained is either derived from *هادر* which means, he turned to God or to the truth with repentance (Aqrab); or it is derived from *يهودا* (Judah) who was one of the sons of Jacob. As the descendants of *يهودا* formed an independent kingdom at Jerusalem which became the religious centre of the Jews, therefore the Jewish religion came to be known as Judaism and the people professing that religion as *يهود* or Jews (Enc. Brit. under the word Jews. See also 2:63 and 2:112).

*يتلون* (they read) is derived from *تلا* which means: (1) he followed; (2) he read or recited (Aqrab). The Quran says *والقمر اذا تلاها* i.e. by the moon when it follows the sun; and again *يتلوا عليهم* i.e. the Prophet reads or recites to them God's Signs. In the present verse the word *يتلون* may be taken to

signify either of these two senses, i.e. they both read the same Book or they both follow the same Book. See also 2:103.

### Commentary:

Nothing is more foreign to the spirit of Islam than opposition to truth, wherever it may happen to be. Islam teaches that all faiths possess certain truths and the true religion is so called not because it has a monopoly of truth, but because it possesses all truth and is free from all defects. While, therefore, claiming to be a perfect and complete religion, Islam does not denounce other faiths but frankly acknowledges the truths and the virtues they possess. If this golden principle of Islam be properly understood and appreciated, much existing religious rancour and bitterness would disappear. But unfortunately, there is a general tendency among the followers of different religious systems to refuse to acknowledge the truth found in faiths, other than their own. The Quran declares this attitude of mind to be the result of lack of knowledge and wisdom, and this verse strongly condemns Jews and Christians for refusing to see any good whatever in the rival faith, in spite of the fact that they have a good deal in common,

115. And who is more unjust than he who prohibits the name of Allah being glorified in "Allah's temples and seeks to ruin them? It was not proper for such men to enter therein except in fear. For them is disgrace in this world; and theirs shall be a great punishment in the next.<sup>121</sup>

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَىٰ فِي خَرَابِهَا  
أُولَٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا  
خَائِفِينَ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي  
الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>9:17, 18; 22:26; 72:19, 20.

being the followers of the same Book—the Bible.

### 121. Important Words:

خرابها (their ruin) is derived from خرب. They say خرب البيت i.e. the house became desolate and deserted. The word خراب which is infinitive from it is the opposite of عمارة i.e. to build or to occupy and live in, and is used about a place when it becomes deserted and desolate and ruined (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

This verse constitutes a strong indictment of those who carry their religious differences to such extremes that they do not even refrain from perpetrating outrages against the places of worship belonging to other creeds. They hinder people from worshipping God in their sacred places and even go so far as to destroy their temples. Such acts of violence are denounced here in strong terms and a lesson of tolerance and broad-mindedness is inculcated.

The Quran recognizes for all the free and unrestricted right to use their temples and declares that if people

wish to worship God in a place of worship, they should not be prevented from doing so; for a temple or a mosque is a place dedicated to the worship of God and anyone who prevents them from worshipping Him in it, in fact, contributes to its ruin and desolation.

This is what Islam teaches about respect for the places of worship, and yet it has come to be condemned as an intolerant religion. Islam is indeed the first and the only religion to inculcate broad-mindedness and teach respect for the religious susceptibilities of all peoples and the Holy Prophet was the first person who carried this great and noble principle into actual practice. He allowed the Christians of Najrān to hold their service in his own mosque, the celebrated مسجد النبي, when they came to have a religious discussion with him at Medina (Zurqānī).

It will be noted that the verse prescribes two punishments for those who prohibit the name of Allah being glorified in places of worship. One is disgrace in this world and the other is heavy punishment in the next. The

116. "To Allah belong the East and the West; so whithersoever you turn, there will be the face of Allah. Surely, Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing.<sup>122</sup>

وَاللَّهُ الْمَشْرِقِيُّ وَالْمَغْرِبِيُّ فَأَيَّمَا تُؤْتُوا  
فَشَرَّ وَجْهٍ لِلَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:143; 26:29; 55:18.

punishment of disgrace is typical of the offence; for a person who first builds a temple or a mosque with the object that the name of God may be remembered in it and then proceeds to prevent people from worshipping Him therein cannot but bring upon himself humiliation and disgrace in the eyes of the world. The words also contain a prophecy about the disbelievers of Mecca who prevented the Muslims from entering the Ka'bah. The prophecy was fulfilled when Mecca was taken and the infidels met with humiliation and disgrace. Finally, it may be noted that the verse should not be understood to mean that the Quran advocates the unqualified access for all sorts of persons to all places of worship without regard to circumstances. In fact, only those who wish to use them for the specific purpose of God's worship and have no ulterior motive are allowed.

### 122. Important Words:

ثم (there) is a word generally used to denote a place that is remote from the speaker, unlike the word هنا which denotes a place that is near (Aqrah).

وجه الله (face of God). As explained under 2:113 the word وجه means: (1) face; (2) attention; (3) the thing itself; (4) direction; and (5) object

and purpose (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

This verse embodies a prophecy about the great and bright future of Islam. The Faithful are told that, being the teachers and proclaimers of truth and the bearers of Allah's standard, success would attend them wherever they went, and that through them Islam would spread all over the world, in the East as well as in the West. This prophecy was made at a time when the early Muslims—a mere handful of men—were being subjected to all sorts of trials and hardships and the future looked quite dark for them. But the prophecy was fulfilled not long after when, with the Fall of Mecca, the whole of Arabia entered the fold of Islam and within less than a century the flag of Islam was flying in almost all the lands of the then known world. The words, *to Allah belong the East and the West*, also hint that Islam was to spread first in the East, and then, after the advent of the Promised Messenger of the Latter Days, it will begin to penetrate the West. So let the West prepare for it, as the time is not far off.

The words, *so whithersoever you turn, there will be the face of Allah*, throw light on the very high stage of spiritual development to which the

117. And they say, "Allah has taken to *Himself* a son'. Holy is He! Nay, everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. <sup>b</sup>To Him are all obedient.<sup>123</sup>

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهُ ۗ بَل لَّهِ مَا  
فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ كُلٌّ لَّهِ  
قٰنِتُوْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>4:172; 6:101, 102; 10:69; 17:112; 18:5; 19:36, 89, 90; 21:27; 25:3; 39:5; 43:82. <sup>b</sup>30:27.

Companions of the Holy Prophet had reached. God was so pleased with them and so satisfied with their condition that He undertook to crown all their campaigns with success. The verse also implies that the Faithful would make no move that was not approved by God, and naturally therefore all their undertakings would meet with success.

### 123. Important Words:

قانتون (obedient) which is the plural of قانت is derived from قنت which means: (1) he obeyed; (2) he showed humility and submissiveness; (3) he remained silent, refraining from speech; and (4) he stood praying or he stood long in Prayer (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

The verse speaks of the Christians with whom the Muslims were to come in contact in their great march as the torchbearers of Islam. Failing to get converts from among the Jews, the early Christians turned their attention to the Romans and the Greeks but succumbed to their philosophies and freely borrowed ideas from them, incorporating them into their own beliefs and doctrines. As a result of this, Jesus began to be represented as the Son of God and

the dogma of Trinity became the basic doctrine of the Christian Faith. The expression "son of God" metaphorically used in Jewish religious literature in the sense of "a beloved servant of God" or "a Prophet" came to bear a literal connotation (Luke 20:36; Matt. 5:9, 45, 48; Deut. 14:1; Exod. 4:22; Gal. 3:26; Wisd. 2:18, etc.). The Quran has exploded this doctrine and has, in the verse under comment, given several arguments to expose its falsity: (1) If God has a son, He must be subject to sexual desires and need a wife and be divisible, because the son is a part of the father's body. Again, He must be subject to death because the procreation of species, which the attribution of a son to God implies, is the characteristic of perishable things. But Islam repudiates all such ideas; for according to it, God is Holy and free from all defects and weaknesses. (2) One sometimes needs a son or a successor to extend one's dominion and bring into subjugation such territories as do not acknowledge one's rule. But God has no such need; for *everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him*. (3) A son or helper is sometimes required to keep

118. *He is the* <sup>a</sup>*Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a thing, <sup>b</sup>He does only say to it, ‘Be!’ and it is.*<sup>124</sup>

119. And those who have no knowledge say, ‘Why does not Allah speak to us, or <sup>c</sup>a Sign come to us?’ Likewise said those before them similar to

بَدِيعُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ <sup>ط</sup> وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ  
أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿١١٨﴾

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ  
أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ <sup>ط</sup> كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ  
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ <sup>ط</sup> تَشَابَهَتْ

<sup>a</sup>6:102. <sup>b</sup>3:48; 6:74; 16:41; 36:83; 40:69. <sup>c</sup>6:38; 20:134; 21:6; 43:54.

under control the turbulent or far-flung parts of one’s kingdom; but God has no such requirement, for "all are obedient to Him." Thus, from whatever angle we may view the question, God is proved to need no son, no helper or assistant to help Him in the work of controlling and managing the universe. In fact, it is blasphemy to say so. The argument is further elaborated in the next verse.

#### 124. Important Words:

بدیع (Originator) is derived from بدع which means, he originated a thing or brought it into existence newly (i.e. for the first time, the thing not having existed before) and not after the similitude of anything pre-existing (Lane). The word ابداع (which is the infinitive form of بدیع), when used about God, means, originating a thing without any tool or instrument or pattern and without matter (Mufradât). Thus the word combines the idea of originating and creating.

#### Commentary:

This verse not only contains a contradiction of the Christian dogma

of the Godhead of Jesus but also effectively repudiates the Hindu theory that the soul and matter are primeval and eternal. God has been declared here to be: (1) the Creator of the heavens and the earth which means that He did not require the help of a son, and for that matter of anybody, in creating the universe; (2) the Originator of the Universe, i.e., He created all things out of nothing, without a pre-existing model and without pre-existing matter; (3) All-Powerful, i.e. whenever He decrees that a certain thing should come into being, it does come into being in conformity with His decree and design. It may be noted here that the verse does not necessarily mean, as is sometimes erroneously understood, that when God decrees that a certain thing should be, it comes into being at once. The verse only means that God’s will is all-powerful, so when He decrees a thing, nothing can thwart His decree. The verse does not thus refer to the factor of time, which may be short or long as God wills it.

their saying. Their hearts are alike. We have certainly made the Signs plain for a people who firmly believe.<sup>125</sup>

120. We have sent thee with the Truth, <sup>a</sup>as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. And thou wilt not be questioned about the inmates of Hell.<sup>126</sup>

قُلُوبَهُمْ ط قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ  
يُوقِنُونَ ﴿١١٩﴾

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا  
وَلَا تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٢٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:20; 6:49; 17:106; 33:46.

### 125. Commentary:

This verse refers to two very unreasonable demands of the People of the Book—Jews and Christians: (1) That God should speak to them directly and tell them that the Holy Prophet was His true Messenger; (2) That they should be shown Signs of their own devising.

In reply to the first demand, the Quran says that only ignorant people, unacquainted with the ways of God, make such a demand. This demand was made in the time of all the previous Prophets and was rejected as foolish. So it was unreasonable on their part to demand from the Holy Prophet something which their own Prophets had not complied with.

In reply to their demand for a Sign, they are told that signs are sufficient for the guidance of right-minded people have already been shown and they could, if they so desired, profit by them, but nothing could avail an obstinate and perverse person. The fact that a demand for a Sign was made from the Holy Prophet does not

show that no Signs had been shown by him. Indeed, if such a demand be considered as proof of the absence of Signs, no Prophet could be proved to have shown any Sign; for a similar demand was made from every Prophet of God, notably Jesus (Matt. 12:38, 39).

It may be also noted here that whenever disbelievers are spoken of as demanding an آية or Sign, the word means either a Sign of their own devising or a Sign in the form of divine punishment (see 21:6, 7; 6:38-51; 13:28-33; 20:134, 135; 29:51).

### 126. Commentary:

As to the disbelievers' demand for a Sign of punishment, the Quran says that punishment is bound to visit those who refuse to believe in the Holy Prophet, because, like all other Prophets, he was the bearer of glad tidings for believers, and a warner for his opponents. Every student of history knows how clearly this prophecy was fulfilled. The world witnessed the ruin of the Holy Prophet's adversaries in a manner

121. And <sup>a</sup>the Jews will by no means be pleased with thee, nor the Christians, unless thou follow their creed. Say, ‘Surely, Allah’s guidance alone is the guidance.’ <sup>b</sup>And if thou follow their evil desires after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou shalt have, from Allah, no friend nor helper. **127**

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ  
حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ إِنْ هَدَىٰ اللَّهُ  
هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ ۗ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ  
بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۗ مَا لَكَ مِنَ  
اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٢٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:112. <sup>b</sup>2:146; 13:38.

which has no parallel in history, although worldly conditions and circumstances were all in favour of the disbelievers and against the Holy Prophet.

The last-mentioned words of the verse, i.e. *thou wilt not be questioned about the inmates of Hell*, are a sort of consolation for the Holy Prophet who, owing to his great solicitude for the people who disbelieved in him, was ever anxious about their fate. Elsewhere the Quran says, *It may be thou wilt grieve thyself to death, because they believe not* (26:4).

### 127. Important Words:

ملة (creed) is derived from مل and means, among other things, religion; law of Sharī‘ah; the right way (Lane).

هوى (evil desires) is the plural of هوى (an evil desire). The verb هوى means, he or it fell or descended or came down from a higher position to a lower one. It also means, it rose or ascended. الهوى means, a desire; an evil or low desire; an evil inclination; love and attachment اتباع هواء means, he

followed his evil inclination, i.e. swerved from the way of rectitude (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

The words, *if thou follow their evil desires*, though apparently addressed to the Holy Prophet, are really general in their application, being meant for his followers. The Holy Prophet has been described in the Quran as a model for mankind and a paragon of perfection (3:32; 33:22) and therefore he was infinitely above the possibility of complying with the evil wishes of the Jews and the Christians concerning the guidance he had directly received from God. At several other places in the Quran, the same form of address has been used. This is done to emphasize the importance of the commandment which is seemingly addressed to the Holy Prophet but is really meant for his followers (see 17:24). This mode of address is not peculiar to the Quran. In the Bible we come across similar instances (e.g. Deut. 16:21, 22).

122. "They to whom We have given the Book follow it as it ought to be followed; it is these that believe therein. And whoso believes not therein, these are they who are the losers.<sup>128</sup>

**R. 15.**

123. O ye children of Israel! <sup>b</sup>remember My favours which I bestowed upon you, and that <sup>c</sup>I exalted you above all peoples.<sup>129</sup>

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ  
تِلَاوَتِهِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ  
يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ۗ

يَبْنَىٰ إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي  
أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَإِنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى  
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:114. <sup>b</sup>See 2:41. <sup>c</sup>See 2:48.

**128. Commentary:**

The words, *they to whom We have given the Book*, clearly refer here to Muslims and not to Jews and Christians, because it is the Muslims that were the true and sincere followers of the Quran and not Jews and Christians who refused to believe in the Quran and rejected it as a piece of fabrication. Jews and Christians have been referred to in the concluding portion of the verse where, owing to their rejection of the Quran, they are spoken of as the losers. The verse provides very high and well-merited praise for the Companions of the Holy Prophet who have been described as true followers of God's guidance.

**129. Commentary:**

Before proceeding to deal with the point that when the cup of the iniquities of the Jews became full to the brim, prophethood was

transferred from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael, God in this verse again reminds the Jews of the manifold favours He had conferred upon them, and by inference also reminds them of their crimes and wickednesses.

The favours which God showered upon the Israelites from the time of Moses to that of Jesus are briefly recounted in the preceding verses along with a tale of their misdeeds and iniquities. Particular reference has been made to the reprehensible treatment they meted out to the Holy Prophet of Islam and the Muslims, and finally the whole subject has been briefly recapitulated in the above verse, forming an introduction to the new theme, i.e. the transfer of prophethood from the House of Isaac to that of Ishmael. With the advent of the Holy Prophet a new era had been ushered and those who rejected him could no longer bask in the sunshine of God's favours.

124. And fear the day when <sup>a</sup>no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, <sup>b</sup>nor shall any ransom be accepted from it, nor any intercession avail it, nor shall they be helped.<sup>130</sup>

125. And *remember* when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands which he fulfilled, He said, ‘I will make thee a Leader of men. *Abraham* asked, ‘And from among my offspring?’ He said, ‘My covenant does not embrace the transgressors.’<sup>131</sup>

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۗ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۗ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:49. <sup>b</sup>See 2:49. <sup>c</sup>2:131; 16:121, 122; 60:5.

### 130. Commentary:

This verse appears to deal with the same subject which has already been dealt with in 2:49; but on comparing the two, an interesting point of difference emerges. In the former verse the word شفاعة (intercession) is put before the word عدل (ransom), whereas in the present one the order has been reversed. The reason for this change is that, in his endeavour to save himself, it is natural for man to adopt a course which is least expensive and entails minimum amount of hardship. Failing this, he tries to adopt other measures. In other words, man has recourse to offer a ransom only when he finds that he cannot gain his release without offering it. In verse 2:49 this natural order is maintained and intercession

is put before ransom. But after that verse, many transgressions of the Israelites have been brought to light, especially their opposition to the Prophets, so now they could not rely much on intercession, and naturally felt constrained to think of offering a ransom first. Hence, the order observed in the former verse has been reversed in the latter. For a discussion of the subject of شفاعة etc. see note on 2:49 above.

### 131. Important Words:

ابتلى (tried) is derived from بلى which means, it became old and worn out. ابتلاه and ابتلاه both mean, he tried or tested him or it, and this is so because a trial or a test makes one, as it were, old and worn out. بلاء means, a trial or test whether resulting in praise or disgrace (Aqrah).

126. And *remember the time* when We made the House a resort for mankind and *a place of security*; and “take ye the station of Abraham as a place of Prayer. And We commanded Abraham and Ishmael, *saying*, ‘Purify My House for those who perform the circuit and those who remain *therein* for devotion and those who bow down and fall prostrate *in Prayer*’.<sup>132</sup>

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا ط  
وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ط  
وَعِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنَّ طَهْرًا  
بَيْتِي لِّلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ  
السُّجُودِ ﴿١٢٦﴾

“3:98; 22:27.

امام (Leader of men) is derived from ام. They say ام بالقوم or ام القوم i.e. he led the people; he was or became Imām or leader of the people. The verb ام also means, he sought or aimed at a thing. The امام is a person whose example is followed, i.e. a leader or a model (Lane).

كلمات (commands) is the plural of كلمة and has a variety of meanings, e.g., a word; a clause or sentence; a command or order. Here it means, a command (Mufradāt). See also 2:38.

### Commentary:

It is pointed out in this verse that when God tried Abraham with certain commands and found him perfect in obedience, He expressed His wish to make him a Leader of men. Thereupon Abraham, ever solicitous to make others also share God’s blessings, begged Him to extend the same to his progeny as well. In reply, he was told that this covenant would

not apply to transgressors, which implied that Leaders and Reformers would be raised from his posterity, but that transgressors would not share this blessing.

The Quran refers to this covenant in order to remind the Jews that their deprivation of prophethood was quite in conformity with the promise given to Abraham which contained a clear condition that such of his descendants as defied God’s commandments would be deprived of the promised favour. The Jews are therefore told that being transgressors, they have been deprived of the blessing of prophethood. A brief reference to this covenant is also found in Gen. 17:9-14, but the Quran has mentioned it in a better and more definite form.

### 132. Important Words:

مثابة (a resort) is derived from ثاب which means, he returned. ثاب الناس means, the people gathered together.

ثاب المريض means, the patient returned to state of health. المثاب means, a place where people assemble; a place of resort; a place to which a visit entitles one to ثواب or reward (Mufradāt & Aqrab). See also 2:104.

طائفين (who perform the circuit) is the plural of طائف which is derived from طاف meaning, he performed a circuit, he went round (Aqrab).

عهدنا (We commanded) is derived from عهد which means, he promised. عهد الى فلان means, he enjoined upon or commanded him and made it a condition for him (Aqrab).

عاكفين (who remain for devotion) is the plural of عاكف which is derived from عكف. They say عكف في المكان i.e. he remained confined to a place, sticking to it. العكوف and الاعتكاف are words denoting a specified form of religious service in which the worshipper stays within the precincts of a mosque for a number of days which he passes in prayer and devotion (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

مقام (station) is derived from قام i.e. he stood. مقام means, a place where one stands (Aqrab). Here it means the Ka'bah, where Abraham stood worshipping God. مقام ابراهيم is also the name of a place near the Ka'bah where, after making circuits around it, the pilgrims perform two rak'ats of Prayer. It appears that after completing the construction of the Ka'bah, Abraham said a prayer there in token of his gratitude to God; and it is to commemorate this prayer of Abraham that Muslims are required to perform two rak'ats of Prayer

there whenever they make circuits round the Ka'bah,

### Commentary:

The verse means that a promise was made to Abraham that the Ka'bah would be made a مثابة or a place of reward and a centre where people would come together for worship. The truth of the first-mentioned part of the covenant, i.e. that the Ka'bah is a place of reward, can only be recognized by believers who irresistibly feel the ennobling influence of a visit to the Holy Shrine. But the truth of the latter part of the prophecy, i.e. that it would become a resort for men, has been established by the facts of history during the past fourteen hundred years, being testified to even by the enemies of Islam. The Ka'bah, as some traditions say and as hinted by the Quran itself, was originally built by Adam, and was, for sometime, the centre of worship for his progeny. Then in the course of time people became separated into different communities and adopted different centres for worship. Abraham then rebuilt the Ka'bah and it continued to remain a centre of worship for his progeny through his son Ishmael. But with the lapse of time it was virtually converted into a house of idols which numbered as many as 360—almost the same as the number of days in a year. At the advent of the Holy Prophet, however, the Ka'bah was again appointed the centre of worship for all nations, the Holy Prophet having been sent as a Messenger for

127. And *remember* when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, “make this a town of peace and provide with fruits such of its dwellers as believe in Allah and the Last Day,’ He said, ‘And on him too who believes not will I bestow benefits for a little while; then will I drive him to the punishment of the Fire, and an evil destination it is.’<sup>133</sup>

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا  
 آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ  
 مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ  
 كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَى  
 عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٢٧﴾

<sup>3:98; 14:36; 27:92; 28:58; 29:68; 106:5.</sup>

all mankind. Thus, the nations which diverged after Adam were again brought together at the Ka‘bah which was made the spiritual centre for all humanity and for all time.

Again, the Ka‘bah, and, for that matter, the town of Mecca, is declared to be a place of peace and security. The truth of this prophecy is also beyond doubt. Mighty empires have crumbled and large tracts of land laid waste since the dawn of history, but the peace of Mecca has never been disturbed. The religious centres of other faiths have never claimed, and have in fact never enjoyed, such peace and immunity from danger. Jerusalem, Hardwar, Benares, etc., have all been conquered by alien conquerors and have been the scenes of much bloodshed and violence. But Mecca has ever remained a place of peace. No alien conqueror has ever entered it. The Sacred Town has always remained in the hands of those who have held it in reverence.

The commandment to purify the House of God refers not only to the outward cleaning of the House, but also to its purification from the abomination of idol-worship. The commandment was originally addressed to Abraham and Ishmael but it was finally and fully carried out by the Holy Prophet who, after the conquest of Mecca, cleared the Ka‘bah of all the 360 idols that had been placed there by the idolatrous Quraish.

### 133. Important Words:

مصير (destination) is derived from صاء meaning, he returned, or he became. مصير is thus a place or condition to which a person or thing comes or returns; a destination (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

When Abraham offered the prayer, there was no town existing near the Ka‘bah. There existed only the House of God. So Abraham prayed that in that wildest of wildernesses there might grow up a town, and that that

128. And *remember the time* when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House, *praying*, ‘Our Lord, *accept this* from us; for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.<sup>134</sup>

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ  
وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ  
السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٢٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>14:41.

town might become a place of security, affording peace to mankind. In fulfilment of this prayer, there grew up the town of Mecca which has remained a place of peace and security for thousands of years. The prayer also implied that the *Baitullah*, would be the means of bringing peace and security to mankind. This was destined to come about in two ways: *Firstly*, those who accepted and followed Islam were to become secure from all evils and to become recipients of God’s blessings. *Secondly*, Islam was to be the means of bringing about peace and concord among the different nations of the world.

While praying to God to grant sustenance to the dwellers of Mecca, Abraham restricted his prayer only to its good and righteous dwellers. The reason for this was that when Abraham had previously prayed to God to raise Reformers and Religious Leaders from his progeny, God had replied that such men would be raised from among the righteous only (2:125). So when he prayed a second time to God to grant sustenance to the people of Mecca, he was more careful and confined his prayer to the

righteous only. This shows how submissive and careful God’s Prophets are. But Abraham had now evidently become overly cautious, for this time God answered, saying, that He would grant sustenance to all men, irrespective of whether they were righteous or not, because He was the Provider for the whole universe, not for the righteous only. The wicked, however, shall be duly punished for their crimes.

Another reason why Abraham restricted his prayer to the righteous was that he wished Mecca to be the abode of the righteous alone; but God knew that even that sacred town was not going to remain untarnished throughout the long centuries of history.

### 134. Commentary:

When the unfitness of the Israelites for prophethood had been proved, the question naturally arose: What nation would then be the rightful heir to this favour of God? To answer this, reference is here made to the history of the building of the Ka’bah by Abraham and Ishmael, and it is added (vv. 128-130) that while constructing the Ka’bah, Abraham and Ishmael

had offered certain prayers which were to bear fruit. These prayers were to the effect that the children of Abraham through Ishmael might multiply and prosper and there might be raised among them a great Prophet. Whether Abraham was the founder or only the rebuilder of the Ka'bah is a point that has given rise to much discussion. Some hold that Abraham was the first builder of the place, others trace the origin of the House to the days of Adam and hold that Abraham only rebuilt it on its old ruins. The Quran and authentic traditions favour the view that even prior to the erection of a building on this site by Abraham, some sort of structure did exist. Even in the verse under comment the words القواعد من البيت which may mean "the foundations that were left of the house," hint at the fact that a previous structure did exist but it had fallen into ruins and only a trace of the foundations remained. Elsewhere the Quran speaks of the Ka'bah, as *the first House founded (or built) for (the good of) mankind* (3:97). Now as people lived even before Abraham and some Prophets had also been raised before him, it stands to reason that some place of worship did exist for them and as the Ka'bah is the first house of that nature, it must be taken to have priority over all others.

Moreover, the Quran represents Abraham offering the following prayer at the time of his separation from Ishmael and his mother at Mecca: *Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in an uncultivable*

*valley near Thy Sacred House* (14:38). From this verse it is clear that the Ka'bah existed even before Abraham.

The sayings of the Holy Prophet also support this view. Describing the retreat of Abraham after leaving Hagar and Ishmael at the place where Mecca now stands, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Hagar inquired of Abraham why he was leaving them in a valley without any friend or sympathizer and without any food to eat. She asked the same question several times, but Abraham (probably overpowered by feelings) kept silent and made no reply. At last, she asked whether he was doing this under the order of God, and this time Abraham replied in the affirmative. Thereupon, Hagar said that in that case God would never let them perish. Then Abraham returned, and standing on a hillock, where he could not be seen by Hagar, he turned his face to the Ka'bah, and raising both of his hands, offered the prayer: *Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in an uncultivable valley near Thy Sacred House* (Bukhārī).

The above narrative related by the Holy Prophet shows that even before Abraham's going to the place where Mecca now stands, it was held sacred, or else how could he have turned his face to it while offering the prayer and how could he have used the words "near Thy Sacred House". Nor does history say anything contrary to this view, because whatever information can be gleaned

from it points to the fact that the Ka'bah is a very old place. Historians of established authority and even some hostile critics of Islam, have admitted that the Ka'bah has been held sacred from time immemorial. In this connection the following quotation may also be of interest. "Diodorus Siculus, Sicily (60 B.C.), speaking of the region now known as Hejaz, says that it was 'specially honoured by the natives' and adds, 'an altar is there built of hard stone and very old in years,...to which the neighbouring peoples thronged from all sides' (Translation by C. M. Oldfather, London, 1935, Book III, ch. 42 vol. ii. pp. 211-213). "These words", says William Muir, "must refer to the holy house of Mecca, for we know of no other which ever commanded the universal homage of Arabia...Tradition represents the Ka'bah as from time immemorial the scene of pilgrimage from all quarters of Arabia...So extensive an homage must have had its beginnings in an extremely remote age" (Muir, p. ciii).

Some Christian critics question the truth of the claim that Abraham came to the site of Mecca and built the Ka'bah on the flimsy ground that the Bible is silent about it. It is not difficult to see the absurdity of this objection. There is no denying that the story of Abraham's leaving his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael in a desert, the want of water, the extreme thirst of the boy and the providential appearance of a well are all mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 21:14-19). As, however, the Bible gives an

extremely brief account of Ishmael's life, owing to the antipathy of the Jews towards him, it is not safe to decide the matter solely on the authority of the Bible. It is an open secret that the sons of Israel looked upon the sons of Ishmael as their enemies. Therefore, far from preserving any record of the life of Ishmael, the Israelites were more likely to delete even such mention of him as might already have been contained in the Bible. At any rate, the Christians have no historical ground to reject the narrative of the Quran, especially when the well-known national traditions of Arabia all go to confirm it. Even some Christian writers have felt constrained to admit that the story of the Quran and the Traditions is true, or, at least, highly probable. "Freitag (Einl. p. 339) says that there is no good reason for doubting that the Caaba was founded as stated in this passage" (Rodwell under 2:128). Lieut. Burton in his *Pilgrimage* (iii. 336) refers to the Arab tradition which he says "speaks clearly and consistently as to the fact of Abraham having visited Mecca to build the Caaba", and considers it not to be without foundation. The Jerusalem Targum also speaks "of the visits of the 'very old man' Abraham to the tent of his nomad son, far away in the Arabian desert" (Jewish Foundation of Islam, p. 84). The Talmud supports the view that Abraham went twice to see Ishmael after the latter had grown up to be a young man and had married (Selections translated by H. Polano, London, Tamuz 5636, p. 51).

129. Our Lord, make us submissive to Thee and *make* of our offspring a people submissive to Thee. And show us our ways of worship, and turn to us with mercy; for Thou art Oft-Returning *with compassion and Merciful*.<sup>135</sup>

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا  
أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ ۗ وَإِرْنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ  
عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٩﴾

130. And, our Lord, raise up among them <sup>a</sup> Messenger from among themselves, who may

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو  
عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ

<sup>a</sup>2:152; 3:165; 62:3.

### 135. Important Words:

مناسكنا (our ways of worship). The word مناسك is the plural of منسك which is derived from نسك which means, he devoted himself to religious worship; he performed acts of worship for God; he slaughtered animals of sacrifice to win God's pleasure. مناسك الحج means, the religious rites or ceremonies of Pilgrimage; and also the places where these ceremonies are performed (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

Having built the House, Abraham and his son Ishmael turn towards God with the supplication that He may afford them the power to lead a life of devotion and submissiveness and show them the ways of such worship as may be performed in the Ka'bah.

This prayer of Abraham and Ishmael also brings out the very important point that even such righteous persons who stand high in the estimation of God need constant prayer for the further purification of

their souls and for the consecration of their good deeds by God, because, however noble and righteous the deeds of man may outwardly appear to be, they sometimes lack the true inner spirit and lead to evil consequences.

Abraham and Ishmael here use the words مسلم (Muslim) for themselves and also pray that from among their posterity too there may be born مسلم (Muslim) people who may be submissive and resigned to the will of God. This helps to explain another verse of the Quran which says of Abraham that it was he who first gave the name "Muslim" to the believers in the Holy Prophet (22:79). It is not of course meant that Abraham used the word مسلم in the above quoted verse as a proper name, but his using that word in his prayer certainly suggests that from among his progeny would be born a people who would not only bear that name but would also possess the spirit of اسلام i.e. submission to the will of God.

recite to them Thy Signs and teach them the Book and Wisdom and may purify them; surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise.' 136

وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَزَيَّرَكِيهِمْ ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ  
عَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمِ ۝٣٠

### 136. Important Words:

آيات (Signs) is the plural of آية which means, a sign, token, or mark by which a person or thing is known or recognized; it properly signifies any apparent thing inseparable from a thing not equally apparent, so that when one perceives the former, one knows that one also perceives the latter which one cannot perceive by itself; it also means a miracle, a wonder. The word is also used in the sense of a sentence; a part of speech; a verse (Lane & Aqrab).

كتاب (Book) means, anything written; a book; a prescribed law (Aqrab). See also 2:54.

حكمة (Wisdom) is derived from حكم (*ḥakama*). They say, حكمه i.e. he prevented or restrained him (from acting in an evil manner). حكم بالامر means, he judged and decreed in the matter. حكم (*ḥakuma*) means, he became wise (Aqrab). حكمة means, what prevents or restrains one from ignorant behaviour; knowledge or science; knowledge of the true nature of things; wisdom or wisdom underlying a commandment; an action according to the requirements thereof (Mufradāt & Lane).

يزكيهم (purify them) is derived from زكى (*zakkā*) which again is derived from زك meaning, he or it grew and

increased and developed; he or it became purified. زكى means, he purified; he caused to grow and increase. تزكية means, the act of purifying and increasing (Aqrab).

العزير (the Mighty) is derived from عز i.e. he was or became mighty, potent or powerful; or high, elevated or illustrious; or hard and resisting. عزير means, mighty and powerful or high and elevated; or hard and resisting. It also sometimes means, distressing or grievous. العزير used as the attributive name of God means, the Mighty Who overcomes everything; the Incomparable or Unparalleled (Lane). See also 2:207 and 5:55.

الحكيم (the Wise) is derived from the same root from which حكمة (for which see above) is derived. حكيم means, possessing knowledge or science or wisdom; wise; a sage; a philosopher; a physician; one who performs or executes affairs firmly, soundly, thoroughly, skilfully and well. الحكيم is one of the names of God meaning the All-Wise (Lane). Applied to the Quran the word would signify the book that is full of wisdom and is free from all defect and imperfection, having no incongruity or unsoundness; or the book which judiciously decides religious differences.

### Commentary:

In this verse which is one of the most important, attention is drawn to the prayer of Abraham when he was leaving his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael to live in the arid valley of Mecca. The great prayer was to the effect that God might raise from among the Meccans a Prophet, who should (1) lay before the people Signs of God that may carry conviction to their minds; (2) teach them the Law of God; (3) initiate them into the philosophy of divine commandments, because until the wisdom underlying a commandment is brought home, one does not feel disposed to attend to it, but rather looks upon it as a burden, as was the case with the Christians who, unable to understand the underlying wisdom of the Mosaic Law, began to look upon it as a curse (Rom. 4:15; Gal. 3:13); and finally (4) purify the lives of men and open out to them the avenues of progress. See also 2:152.

This prayer of Abraham, offered from the very depth of his heart, was fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet. The wonderful way in which the Holy Prophet combined in his person the four characteristics mentioned in this prayer is a fact of history to which even his most hostile critics have testified. By universal consent the Prophet of Islam has been acclaimed as "the most successful Prophet".

The fact that Abraham did not here pray for many Prophets, but for one Prophet only shows that while offering this prayer, he had in view a

very great Prophet, a Master-Prophet who was to transcend all. This prayer of Abraham has been applied by the Holy Prophet to himself. He is reported to have said انا دعوة ابراهيم i.e. "I am the prayer (personified) of Abraham" (Jarīr & 'Asākir).

As mentioned in the introductory remarks in the beginning of this chapter, the verse under comment serves as a summary of the entire chapter which is not only an enlargement of the subject matter of this verse but treats its various subjects in exactly the same order in which they have been mentioned in this verse, i.e. first come the Signs, then the Book, then the Wisdom of the Law, and last of all the means of national progress.

It may be of interest to note here that the Quran speaks of two separate prayers of Abraham—one about the progeny of Isaac and the other about that of Ishmael. The former prayer has been mentioned in 2:125 and the latter in the verse under comment. In his prayer about the progeny of Isaac, Abraham asks that Imāms or Reformers may be raised from among them, but he makes no mention of their special work or status—they are ordinary Reformers who will follow one another for the reformation of the Israelites. On the other hand, when Abraham prays about the progeny of Ishmael, he begs his Lord to raise among them a special Prophet with a specific and lofty mission. Again, when God answers the first-mentioned prayer of Abraham, He does not make any mention of the

Reformers to be raised but leaves their appearance to be inferred only by implication; but He does make a pointed reference to the fact that in spite of these Reformers, the Israelites will end as transgressors. On the contrary, God makes no such mention about the progeny of Ishmael, thereby hinting that after the Promised Prophet has been raised, their glorious days will continue till the end of the world. This is indeed a marvellously true portrait of the two branches of the House of Abraham.

In making mention of the prayers of Abraham in verses 127 to 130 the Quran makes an allusion to the fact that Abraham did not only pray for the prosperity of the children of Isaac but also for the posterity of Ishmael, his firstborn. When the offspring of Isaac lost the gift of prophethood on account of their evil deeds, the next descendants of Abraham were the children of Ishmael and thus the Promised Prophet must belong to the House of the latter. In order to point out that the expected Prophet was to be an Ishmaelite, the Quran makes mention of the construction of the Ka'bah by Abraham and Ishmael and of the prayers offered by Abraham for the posterity of his eldest son.

To this natural conclusion Christian critics generally bring forward two objections (1) that the Bible makes no mention of any promise having been made by God to Abraham concerning Ishmael, and (2) that, admitting that God did make such a promise, there is no proof of the fact that the Prophet of Islam was descended from Ishmael.

As regards the first objection, it should be borne in mind that even if the Bible be shown to contain no prophecy about Ishmael, the absence of such a mention in it cannot be considered as conclusive testimony that such a prophecy was not actually made. It is no secret that Sarah, the mother of Isaac, hated Ishmael and his mother, Hagar. This hatred of their mother for the House of Ishmael was inherited by her sons, the Israelites (Gen. 16:12). In these circumstances it would be idle to search for any express prophecy in favour of Ishmael and his progeny in the Bible; particularly when it was for a long time subjected to all sorts of interference on the part of the Israelites. Moreover, if the Biblical evidence can be taken to establish the existence of a promise about Isaac and his sons, why should not the evidence of the Quran and, for that matter, of the children of Ishmael, be accepted to establish the fact that promises were held out by God to Ishmael and his sons also. But the undeniable fact is that the Bible does contain references to the future prosperity of the sons of Ishmael similar to those it contains about the sons of Isaac. The following are some of these references:

(1) "And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. 17:9, 10). This covenant was made

with Abraham before the birth of Isaac and after Ishmael had been born, which shows that it applied to Ishmael and his children.

(2) "And the angel of the Lord said unto her (Ishmael's mother), I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man (it appears that here some expression like "Arab" or the dweller of a desert country, has been translated as "wild"); his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren"; i.e., although all will constantly oppose him and be jealous of him, yet he will succeed (Gen. 16:10-12).

(3) Further evidence of Ishmael and his posterity being included in the covenant which God established between Himself and Abraham and his seed after him is furnished by Gen. 17:6-8 which says, "And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Now, has not the land of

Canaan remained in the possession of the Ishmaelites for over 1,300 years? If the Arab Muslims are not the seed of Abraham, why has Canaan continued in their possession for so long?

(4) Again in Gen. 17:18-20, we read:

"And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! and God said,...And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation." It will thus be seen that the promises made for Ishmael are similar to those made for Isaac; nay, they are even greater in number, for, with regard to Ishmael, God says, (a) "I have blessed him"; (b) "I will make him fruitful"; (c) "I will multiply him exceedingly"; (d) "twelve princes shall he beget"; and (e) "I will make him a great nation".

(5) Further evidence of the fact that Ishmael was included in God's covenant is furnished by the fact that circumcision which was instituted by God as a token of His covenant with Abraham and his seed after him, has continued among the descendants of Ishmael. Though Islam also enjoined it, yet it was already in vogue among the Arabs, which shows that they were the seed of Abraham and were consequently included in the covenant of which circumcision was instituted as a symbol.

In order to exclude Ishmael from God's covenant, Christian writers

sometimes bring forward the plea that the offspring of a handmaid cannot be included in Abraham's seed. But this is entirely baseless; for, even conceding, for the sake of argument, that Ishmael's mother was a handmaid, it has been clearly said with reference to Ishmael: "And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation because he is thy seed" (Gen. 41:13).

The above-quoted verses of the Bible show (1) that Ishmael was born according to the promise of God given to Abraham before Ishmael's birth; (2) that God blessed Ishmael and his mother, Hagar; (3) that He promised to make Ishmael and his mother fruitful and to multiply them exceedingly; (4) that God was with Ishmael; and (5) that the covenant of God with Abraham about the circumcision of every male child among his progeny applied to Ishmael and his children.

As a matter of fact, the promise made to Ishmael does not differ very much from that made to Isaac; they are both to be blessed, both to be made fruitful, the descendants of both to multiply exceedingly and both are to be made great nations, and kingdom and dominion is promised to the progeny of both. So when the nature of the promise made to both the brothers does not substantially differ, the kind of reward granted to the children of Isaac will have also to be admitted for the children of Ishmael. It would be wrong to think that as in Gen. 17:21 it is written that God will establish His covenant with

Isaac, so Prophets were meant to be raised from among his children only, for a similar covenant was made with Abraham even before the birth of Isaac, and this clearly applied to Ishmael. This covenant is contained in Gen. 17:10, 11 according to which Ishmael was circumcised at the age of 13 and thenceforward circumcision became a religious rite with the posterity of Ishmael. It is therefore beyond any shadow of doubt that the covenant referred to above was intended for the children of Ishmael quite as much as for the children of Isaac. This fact has even been admitted by some eminent Christian writers of established authority (The Scofield Reference Bible, p. 25).

So far about verbal promises. Now let us see how God practically treated Ishmael. We read in Gen. 21:14-20, "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer."

This shows that God rendered miraculous help to Ishmael and brought into existence a well of water for his sake. It is now for the Christians to show what extraordinary thing God wrought for Isaac that may be compared with this. In the above passage it is also said that "God was with the lad", which means that Ishmael grew up under the special protection of the Lord.

Further evidence of the fact that Ishmael was looked upon as the seed of Abraham, on a par with Isaac, is furnished by the following circumstances:

In Gen. 25:6, we read that when Abraham grew old and was nearing his end, he sent away the sons of the concubines. And then the Bible goes on to say: "And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred three score and fifteen years, and Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah." (Gen. 25:7-9). Now, if Ishmael was also treated as the offspring of a concubine, he ought to have been treated as the other children, who were the issue of

concubines, were treated. But such was not the case; for when Abraham died, the children of the concubines were away and only Ishmael and Isaac were present, and both of them participated in the burial ceremony of their father. This shows that Ishmael was not treated as the offspring of a concubine, but was looked upon as the equal of Isaac and was treated accordingly.

In reply to the second objection that even if the covenant be understood to include the sons of Ishmael, it is yet to be proved that the Holy Prophet belonged to the House of Ishmael, the following points may briefly be noted:

(1) The best way to know the origin of a race is to refer to the traditions and the testimony of the race itself; and, as we all know, the Quraish, the tribe to which the Holy Prophet belonged, always believed and declared themselves to be the descendants of Ishmael and this claim was recognized by all the people of Arabia.

(2) If the claim of the Quraish and, for that matter, that of other Ishmaelite tribes of Arabia, to Ishmaelite descent had been false, the real descendants of Ishmael would have protested against such a false claim; but no such objection is known to have been ever raised.

(3) In Gen. 17:20 God had promised to bless Ishmael, to multiply his progeny, to make him a great nation and the father of twelve princes. If the people of Arabia are not his descendants, where is the promised nation? The Ishmaelite

tribes of Arabia are indeed the only claimants in the field,

(4) According to Gen. 21:8-14 Hagar had to leave her home in order to satisfy the vanity of Sarah. If she was not taken to Hedjaz, where are her descendants found, and which is the place of her banishment?

(5) After her banishment Hagar dwelt in the wilderness of Paran (Gen. 21:21). Christian writers have tried to prove that Paran is Feiran near Jebel Serbal in the Sinai Peninsula. But the great English commentator of the Old Testament, who devoted his whole life to the study of the Bible, Dr. S. R. Driver, has had to confess after all that "the site of Paran, from which the wilderness derives its name, is, however, unknown" (Deut. p.4). On the contrary, the Arab geographers are all agreed that Paran is the name given to the hills of Hedjaz (Mu'jamul-Buldān).

(6) We are told that the generations of Ishmael "dwelt from Havilah unto Shur" (Gen. 25:18) and the phrase "from Havilah unto Shur" designates the opposite extremes of Arabia (Bib. Cyc. by J. Eadie, London, 1862).

(7) The Bible calls Ishmael "a wild man" (Gen. 16:12) and the word اعرابي (*A'rābī*) "a dweller of the desert" conveys almost the same sense.

(8) Even Paul has admitted Hagar's connection with Arabia (Gal. 4:25).

(9) Kedar was a son of Ishmael and it is admitted that his descendants settled in the southern part of Arabia (Bib. Cyc. London, 1862).

(10) Prof. C. C. Torrey says: "The

Arabs were Ishmaelites according to the Hebrew tradition...The 'twelve princes' (Gen. 17:20) subsequently named in Gen. 25:13ff, represent Arabian tribes or districts; notice especially Kedar, Duma (Dumatul-Jandal), Teima. The great nation is the people of Arabia." (*Jewish Foundation of Islam*, p.83).

(11) Similarly, the learned authors of the Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature, New York, (1877, p. 685) admit that "the Arabs, from physical characteristics, language, the occurrence of native traditions...and the testimony of the Bible are mainly and essentially Ishmaelites."

(12) Lastly there is the opinion of Narsai, a Syrian writer who lived about a hundred years before the birth of the Holy Prophet. Mingana quotes Narsai as saying: "The raid of the sons of Hagar was more cruel even than famine, and the blow that they gave was more sore than disease; the wound of the sons of Abraham is like the venom of a serpent and perhaps there is a remedy for the poison of reptiles but not for theirs—let us always blame the foul inclination of the sons of Hagar, and specially the people (the tribe) of Kuraish who are like animals." (Leaves from Three Ancient Qurans, edited by the Rev. A. Mingana, D.D. Intro. xiii).

In the face of these conclusive proofs both the objections, that (1) Ishmael was not included in the covenant which God made with Abraham, and that (2) Ishmael did not settle in Arabia or that the Holy Prophet of Islam was not a descen-

**R. 16.**

131. And who will turn away from "the religion of Abraham but he who is foolish of mind? <sup>b</sup>Him did We choose in this world, and in the next he will surely be among the righteous.<sup>137</sup>

وَمَنْ يَّرْغَبْ عَنْ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ<sup>ط</sup> وَلَقَدْ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا<sup>ج</sup> وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لِمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ<sup>١٣٧</sup>

<sup>a</sup>3:96; 4:126; 6:162. <sup>b</sup>2:125; 3:34; 16:121, 122; 60:5.

dant of Ishmael, fall to the ground.

Before passing on to the next verse a brief reference to Hagar, mother of Ishmael, will not be out of place here. C. J. Ellicott, Lord Bishop of Gloucester, says in his Commentary: "Hagar...was to be, not Abraham's concubine, but his wife" (Vol. 1, p. 69). The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel tell us that "Sarah...took Hagar...and set her free, and gave her to Abraham, her husband, to wife" (Translation by J. W. Etheridge, London, 1862, p. 205). This setting free of the "handmaid" or "bondwoman" does not imply that Hagar was a barbarian slave or that she was a slave from her very childhood. Sir Leonard Wooley says that she was a "civilised creature sprung from the second great centre of culture in the ancient world" (Abraham, London, 1936, p. 144).

"According to Midrash", says another authority, "Hagar had been given as a slave to Abraham by her father, the Pharaoh of Egypt, who said, "My daughter had better be a slave in the house of Abraham, than mistress in any other" (Translation of

the Targums by J. W. Etheridge, note 8, on page 204).

**137. Important Words:**

يرغب (will turn away) is derived from رغب which is used either with the preposition في or عن giving different meanings. رغب فيه means, he sought or desired it; and رغب عنه means, he turned away from it or he left or loathed it (Aqrab).

سفه نفسه (is foolish of mind). The word سفه is used in three different forms: سفه (1) (*safiha*), (2) (*safaha*), and (3) (*safuha*). All these give different meanings. The Quran uses the first form, i.e. سفه (*safiha*) which means, he was ignorant or he behaved ignorantly; he was foolish or he acted foolishly; he was lightwitted or he behaved light-wittedly. When the word سفه is used with نفسه as its seeming object as in the verse under comment, it does not actually become transitive but simply looks so (as does the verb حسر which see under 2:28). In fact, as most lexicographers have explained, the expression سفه نفسه is really either سفه في نفسه or سفه هو نفساً or سفهت نفسه and means, either he is foolish of mind, or he is foolish

132. When his Lord said to him, 'Submit', he said, "I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds".<sup>138</sup>

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ<sup>١٣٢</sup> قَالَ أَسَلَّمْتُ  
لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

"3:68; 4:126.

himself, or his mind acts foolishly (Aqrab, Mufradât, Lisân & Lane).

اصطفيناه (him did We choose) is derived from صفا which means, it became pure and clean. اصفاه بكذا means, he chose him for that, or he honoured him with that. اصطفاه means, he chose or selected him from among others; he chose him in preference to others (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The attention of Jews and Christians is drawn to the point that when it has been proved that, in accordance with the prayer of Abraham, a Prophet was to appear from among the children of Ishmael and that Prophet has actually appeared, it is incumbent upon them to ponder over his claims and not to belie the prayer of Abraham and go against their own religion. The verse emphasizes the fact that anybody who departs from the way of the great patriarch of the People of the Book betrays his own folly. The religion of Abraham leads to salvation, whereas defection from it leads to ruin and deprivation.

### 138. Important Words:

اسلم (submit), being in the imperative mood, means, submit or surrender or resign thyself; or become a Muslim, i.e. one resigned to God.

For a fuller discussion of the word see 2:113.

### Commentary:

The Jews are here told that the greatness of their ancestor Abraham lay in the fact that he was always ready to submit fully and resign himself completely to the will of God. Therefore, if they too wish to become great in the sight of God, they should also submit to Him and obey His commands and accept His Prophet.

The verse beautifully describes Abraham's religion. When God asked him to submit, he immediately replied, *I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds*. This reply of Abraham points to two important inferences: (1) That Abraham does not use the words "I will submit" or even "I do submit" but *I have submitted*, which means that he was so eager to obey his Lord that he took no time in making his submission, as if the act were already a thing accomplished. (2) That Abraham does not merely say *I have submitted*, but adds the words *to the Lord of the worlds*, which signifies that his submission was not based on any ulterior motive but on the simple fact that the "Being" to Whom he was submitting was the Lord and Master of the world and hence entitled to obedience.

133. The same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons,—and so did Jacob—*saying*: ‘O my sons, truly Allah has chosen this religion for you; <sup>a</sup>so let not death overtake you except when you are in a state of submission.’<sup>139</sup>

وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ ط  
يَبْنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمْ الدِّينَ  
فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ط

<sup>a</sup>3:103.

### 139. Important Words:

وصى (did enjoin upon). وصى فلانا بكذا means, he enjoined this upon him, he ordered him to do this, he charged him with this. وصى عليه بالصلاة means, he exhorted him or enjoined him to observe Prayers. وصى له بحاله means, he made a will in his favour, making him heir of his property after his death (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

Abraham not only submitted himself to the will of God but also took special care that his children too should inculcate that spirit and lead lives of submission and resignation. The name of Jacob or Israel (grandson of Abraham) has been particularly added here to point to the fact that as Jacob also issued a similar injunction to his children, it becomes all the more binding on the Israelites to submit to the will of God and accept the Prophet who has come with the specific mission of اسلام i.e. submission to God’s will.

The words, *so let not death overtake you except when you are in a state of submission*, beautifully point to the fact that as nobody knows

the time of his death, one should always lead a life of submission to God’s will so that whenever death comes, it may not find one in a state other than that of submission. The words may also mean that a true believer should be so perfectly resigned to God’s will and should so completely win His pleasure that He may, out of His limitless bounty, arrange that death may not come to him except at a time when he is resigned to His will.

This, as well as the preceding verse, forcefully brings out the important point that Islam really means absolute obedience and complete submission to the will of God. Only he who is completely resigned to the will of God is a true Muslim. Thus every true pre-Islamic religion that inculcated the spirit of submission will, within this meaning of the term, fall under the true definition of Islam, because previous to the religion preached by the Holy Prophet, to follow Islam was to obey the then expressed will of God, or, in other words, the revelation of the day. The point of difference between the religion brought by the Holy Prophet and the

134. Were you present when death came to Jacob, when he said to his sons, ‘What will you worship after me?’ They answered, ‘We will worship thy God, the God of thy fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, the One God; and to Him we submit ourselves.’<sup>140</sup>

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ  
الْمَوْتَ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنِّي  
بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ  
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا  
وَنَحْنُ بِلَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

other true preceding faiths is— although they are Islamic in essence—those faiths were not called by the name of Islam, the reason for this being that they were not perfect and each of them was to be replaced by a succeeding one, and so, if all these had been given the name of Islam, there would have been great confusion. Hence, only the faith which was perfect in every way and was meant for all mankind and was to last forever was given that name so that its very name might be illustrative of its underlying purpose. The name *Islam* is "the new name" referred to in Isa. 62:2.

When the Quran calls the former Prophets Muslims, it obviously does not mean that they followed Quranic teachings. It simply means that, as explained above, they followed the true faith of their day and manifested in themselves, though partly of course, the spirit of اسلام i.e. submission to the will of God.

#### 140. Important Words:

الله (God) is derived from الله (*alaha*) which means, he worshipped. So الله means, a thing or person or being

worshipped, whether true or false; a deity (Aqrab).

#### Commentary:

Jacob or Israel was the son of Isaac who was a son of Abraham. Thus Ishmael was the uncle of Jacob, and yet the children of Jacob here include Ishmael among their "fathers" which proves two things: *firstly*, that the word اب (father) is also used of uncle; and *secondly*, that up to the time of Jacob's sons, Ishmael was held in due respect by the Israelites. Nay, the children of Israel mention the name of Ishmael even before that of their own grandfather, Isaac, and do not mention any other son of Abraham.

The words, *were you present when death came to Jacob*, signify that the principle of submission to the will of God is not an innovation introduced by Islam, but has been recognized by good and righteous people in all times and even Israel, the founder of the Jewish tribes, acted upon that principle, so much so, that the only thought that came to his mind when death approached him was to enjoin the same noble principle upon his children. Israel wished his sons to become pious Muslims; will not the

135. <sup>a</sup>Those are a people that have passed away; for them is that which they earned, and for you shall be what you earn, and you shall not be questioned as to what they did.<sup>141</sup>

136. And they say, <sup>b</sup>‘Be ye Jews or Christians that you may be rightly guided.’ Say: ‘Nay, follow ye the religion of Abraham who was <sup>c</sup>ever inclined to God; he was not of those who set up gods with God.’<sup>142</sup>

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ  
وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا  
كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا  
قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ  
الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:142. <sup>b</sup>2:112. <sup>c</sup>3:68; 6:80; 16:124; 22:32.

Jews of the Holy Prophet’s day act upon that principle?

In corroboration of what the Quran says about Jacob’s will to his sons, Rodwell quotes the following from Midrash Rabbah: "At the time when our father Jacob quitted this world, he summoned his twelve sons and said to them, Hearken to your father Israel (Gen. 49:2). Have you any doubts in your hearts concerning the Holy One, blessed be He. They said, Hear, o Israel, our father, as there is no doubt in thy heart, so neither is there in ours. For the Lord is our God, and He is One" (Midr. Rabbah on Gen. par. 98, and on Deut. par. 2). Compare also Targ. Jer. on Deut. 6:4.

#### 141. Commentary:

The People of the Book are here warned that the fact that they are the descendants of God’s Prophets would

not avail them in any way. Their forefathers reaped the rewards of their good deeds and won God’s favours; and if they also wish to become His favourites, they must perform similar deeds and show implicit obedience to God and complete submission to His will. The fact that they are descended from holy persons makes them all the more responsible.

#### 142. Important Words:

حنيفًا (ever inclined to God) is derived from حنف which means, he became inclined. حنيف means: (1) one who turns away from error to guidance (Mufradāt); (2) one who steadily follows the right faith and never swerves from it; (3) one inclining in a perfect manner to Islam and continuing firm therein (Lane); (4) one who follows the religion of Abraham (Aqrah).

137. Say ye: <sup>a</sup>“We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and *his* children, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to *all other* Prophets from their Lord. <sup>b</sup>We make no difference between any of them; and to Him we submit ourselves’.<sup>143</sup>

قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا  
 أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ  
 وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ  
 وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ  
 لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ  
 لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:85. <sup>b</sup>2:286; 3:85; 4:153.

### Commentary:

There is a notion prevalent among the followers of different religions that salvation is confined to their respective folds only. This view is, however, quite erroneous. Salvation depends upon the grace and mercy of God, and submission to His will is the only way to win His grace and mercy. So long as the following of a religion involves submission to God’s will, there is salvation in it. But when this condition ceases to exist in a religion, that religion can no more offer salvation. The verse points out that the Jews and the Christians are wrong in asserting that the bare entry of a person into their respective religions assures salvation. Not so, says Allah, but salvation lies in what Abraham taught—absolute submission to God’s will. And Abraham was a rightly guided person who taught and practised the spirit of Islam.

The words, *he was not of those who*

*set up gods with God*, are not used here to remove any misconception about Abraham but to point out to the People of the Book that, while their progenitor Abraham was not an idol-worshipper, they had for themselves practically set up so many equals to God. They outwardly professed belief in God’s Oneness but in their hearts lay hidden, scores of idols which they loved and revered as one should love and revere God alone.

### 143. Important Words:

اسباط (children) is derived from سبط. They say سبط الشعر i.e. the hair was or became loose and hanging. سبط المطر means, the rain was copious and extensive. سبط signifies the idea of length and extensiveness. شعر سبط means, hair that is long and not curly. سبط الكفين means, a generous man, literally one possessing long and open hands, because his helping hand extends to every needy person. A grandson is also called سبط (*sibt*)

because his birth signifies increase of progeny. In a still wider sense, the word might signify progeny generally. The expression here refers to the twelve tribes of Israel named after the twelve sons of Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher (Gen. 35:23-26; 49:28).

### **Commentary:**

The verse is addressed to Muslims who are enjoined to reply to Jews and Christians by saying that the central point in religion is belief in, and submission to, God; and so everything that comes from God must be accepted and it is simply foolish to say that a people believing in some Prophets of God need not believe in others. All Messengers of God and all revelations coming from Him must be accepted and no distinction is to be made between this Prophet and that or between this revelation and that, so far as belief in them is concerned. One Prophet may be higher in status than another and one revelation may be more important than another; but all of them must be accepted without discrimination. The words, *to Him we submit ourselves*, have been used as an argument in support of the above assertion. When we submit to God, everything coming from Him must be accepted.

It indeed redounds to the great credit of Islam that it is the only religion which recognizes the Prophets of all countries and all nations, whereas other faiths limit

prophethood only to their own respective spheres. Naturally the Quran mentions only the names of those Prophets who were known to the Arabs to whom the message of Islam was first given; but it makes a general remark to the effect that, *there is no people to whom a warner has not been sent (35:25)*.

As already pointed out, this verse should not be understood to mean that the Quran regards all Prophets to be equal in rank. In fact, the Quran clearly states that different Prophets possess different ranks, some of them being spiritually higher than others (2:254). The sentence, *We make no difference between any of them*, thus only means that a Muslim makes no distinction between the different Prophets in respect of their prophethood.

Some Christian critics have objected to the verse under comment and have demanded proof of the prophethood of Ishmael. But what proof is there, it may be asked, of the prophethood of Isaac? If the Bible testifies to the prophethood of Isaac, the Quran testifies to the prophethood of Ishmael. If the testimony of the Quran cannot be accepted as a proof for the prophethood of Ishmael, there is no earthly reason why the testimony of the Bible be accepted as a proof for Isaac's prophethood. And even the Bible is not without evidence of the fact that God made a number of promises to Abraham about the future greatness of Ishmael and his progeny (see note on 2:130).

138. And <sup>a</sup>if they believe as you have believed, then are they surely guided; but if they turn back, then they are only creating a schism, and Allah will surely suffice thee against them, for He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.<sup>144</sup>

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ اهْتَدَوْا  
وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ  
فَسَيَكْفِيكُمْ اللَّهُ<sup>ج</sup> وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ<sup>ط</sup>

139. Say, 'We will adopt the religion of Allah; and who is better than Allah in teaching religion, and Him alone do we worship.'<sup>145</sup>

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ<sup>ج</sup> وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً  
وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عِبْدُونَ<sup>ط</sup>

<sup>a</sup>3:21.

#### 144. Important Words:

شقاق (schism) is from شاق which is from شق meaning, he split up a thing, or he tore it up. شق عصا القوم means, he created a split or schism in the community which before stood united. شق النبات means, the vegetation sprouted forth from the earth. الشق means, one side as opposed to another. شاته means, he opposed him and became hostile to him so that each sided with a different party. شقاق means, opposition.; hostility; schism; being mutually remote (Aqrab). The word شقاق however, is not used about the party which sides with the truth (Muḥīṭ).

#### Commentary:

Muslims are here told that if Jews and Christians come to agree with them in holding that religion is not an hereditary matter, but consists in accepting all revealed guidance, then

they are one with them; otherwise, their ways stand apart and a wide gulf separates them, responsibility for the schism and the resulting hostility in this case lying with Jews and Christians and not with the Muslims.

In this case, however, Muslims should not be afraid of Jews or Christians; for God is on their side and the God of Islam is All-Hearing and All-Knowing. If they pray to Him for protection, He will answer their prayers and even if there comes a time when they cannot pray, He will protect them; for He is not only All-Hearing but is also All-Knowing. The verse also refers to the special and personal divine protection promised to the Holy Prophet (5:68) in view of the repeated attempts made by the Jews upon his life.

#### 145. Important Words:

صبغة (religion) is derived from صبغ.

140. Say: ‘Do you dispute with us concerning Allah, while He is our Lord and your Lord? And <sup>a</sup>for us are our works, and for you your works; and to Him alone we are sincerely devoted.’<sup>146</sup>

قُلْ أَتَحَاجُّونَنَا فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا  
وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ  
وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>28:56; 42:16; 109:7.

They say صبغه i.e. he dyed or coloured it. صبغ يده في الماء means, he immersed his hand in the water. صبغ يده بالعمل means, he laboured in work and became notable therein. اصطبغ بكذا means, he became dyed or coloured with it. صبغة means, dye or colour; kind or mode of a thing; religion; code of laws; baptism. صبغة الله means, God’s religion; the nature with which God has endowed men (Aqrab). Religion is called صبغة because it covers a man like a dye or colour.

### Commentary:

In the verse the word صبغة (religion) is used as an object, the subject of which is understood. According to the rules of Arabic grammar, sometimes when it is intended strongly to induce a person to do a certain thing, the verb is omitted and only the object is mentioned. Therefore words like خذوا (adopt) or اتبعوا (follow) will be taken to be understood before the words صبغة الله and the clause would mean, "adopt or follow the religion which God wishes you to adopt or follow". This indeed is the true baptism which can make one acquire God’s attributes and become His living manifestation. Compare with it the Christian

baptism which seeks to procure for a man forgiveness of sins and everlasting life by the mere act of immersing him in water or sprinkling it on him at his christening ceremony.

### 146. Important Words:

مخلصون (sincerely devoted) is derived from خلص which means, he or it became pure. اخلص في الطاعة means, he was or became sincere in obedience. اخلص له الحب means, he was sincere in his love for him, lit. he made his love true for him (Aqrab). اخلص لله means, he was sincere to God or he was sincere in his connection with Him (Lane & Mufradāt)

### Commentary:

The Holy Prophet is here commanded to say to the People of the Book that it is God Who has sent His revelation to him and that they should not dispute God’s choice, because He is as much the God of the Muslims as He is theirs, and He knows the works of both. He is the Creator of all and His grace is not confined to any one tribe or country. So, if God has now selected an Ishmaelite for the office of prophethood and has chosen the Arabs for His grace, they should not

141. ‘Do you say that Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and *his* children were Jews or Christians?’ Say, ‘Do you know better or Allah?’ And <sup>b</sup>who is more unjust than he who conceals the testimony that he has from Allah? And Allah is not unaware of what you do.<sup>147</sup>

142. <sup>c</sup>Those are a people that have passed away; for them is what they earned, and for you shall be what you earn; and you

أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ  
وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوا  
هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى ۗ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَعْلَمُ أَمْرَ  
اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً  
عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا  
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤١﴾

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ  
وَلَكُمْ مِمَّا كَسَبْتُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا

<sup>a</sup>3:85; 4:164. <sup>b</sup>2:284. <sup>c</sup>See 2:135.

reject him on that account. The central point of faith is the person of God, and if one is sincere in his connection with Him, there should be no hesitation in accepting anything that emanates from Him. The real question is, whether God has indeed chosen Muḥammad to be His Messenger. If that question is answered in the affirmative, nothing should stop a man from accepting Islam; and if he rejects Islam, he ranges himself against God, be he a Jew, a Christian, a Hindu or any other.

#### 147. Commentary:

In this verse Jews and Christians have been indirectly asked how Abraham and his children would fare, if salvation were monopolized by them. If they replied that these holy persons were also Jews or Christians, it would be against all the facts of history, because they belonged to pre-

Mosaic times when Jewish and Christian religions had not yet come into existence.

Some short-sighted persons attach so much importance to their own views that they begin to ascribe them to every righteous servant of God. In their discussions, Jews and Christians represented even those of their ancestors who lived before their religions came into existence as the followers of their own faiths.

This is the attitude not only of the ignorant masses, but even educated people sometimes fall a prey to this delusion. Many Christians of great learning hold the untenable belief that even those Prophets and other righteous people who lived before Jesus were saved through his alleged death on the cross. Such men should beware of God’s judgement, as He is not unaware of their deeds.

shall not be questioned as to what they did.<sup>148</sup>

٤٢

كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ٤٢

**R. 17.**

143. The foolish among the people will say: ‘What has turned them away from their Qiblah which they followed?’ Say: ‘To Allah belong the East and the West. He guides whom He pleases to the right path’.<sup>149</sup>

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّهُمْ ٤٣

عَنْ قِبَلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا ٤٣ قُلْ لِلَّهِ

الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى

صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ٤٣

<sup>a</sup>See 2:116.

**148. Commentary:**

Jews and Christians are once more warned against relying upon those of their forefathers who won the pleasure of God by their good deeds. It is their own deeds and not those of others that will save them. Their own good actions alone can bring them salvation and not the fact that they are the descendants or followers of Abraham, Jacob, Moses or Jesus. *No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another*, says the Quran (6:165).

**149. Important Words:**

قبلة (their *Qiblah*). The word قبلة is derived from قبل. They say قبل على الشيء i.e. he began the thing and stuck to it. قبل المكان means, he came facing the house. قبل عليه means, he advanced facing him. قبل فلانا الشيء means, he put the thing before such a one or in front of him. قبلة means: (1) direction.; (2) direction to which a man turns while praying; (3) anything which one faces; (4) the Ka‘bah at Mecca to which Muslims turn their faces when praying (Aqrah).

**Commentary:**

In the preceding verses the Quran spoke of the people that have gone before, at the same time hinting at the difference between their deeds and those of the Muslims. In the present verse it introduces a subject in which the Muslims differ from other People of the Book, i.e. the subject of *Qiblah*.

It is a usual practice with the Quran that it does not abruptly give any new commandment such as might appear hard to men. It generally begins by preparing the ground for the acceptance of such commandment by giving arguments in its favour and answering some objections that might possibly arise against it. See also 2:184, 185.

Similar is the case here. As the commandment regarding the change of *Qiblah* was likely to prove a stumbling block for some people, so the ground is prepared by making a general observation to the effect that the selection of a particular direction does not really matter. What matters

144. And thus have <sup>a</sup>We made you an exalted nation, <sup>b</sup>that you may be guardians over men, and the Messenger of God may be a guardian over you. And We did not appoint the Qiblah which thou didst follow, except that We might know him who follows the Messenger of God from him who turns upon his heels. And this is indeed hard, except for those whom Allah has guided. And it does not behove Allah to let your faith go in vain; surely, Allah is Compassionate and Merciful to the people. **150**

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا  
شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ  
عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي  
كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ  
الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ ۗ وَإِنْ  
كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ ۗ  
وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
بِالنَّاسِ لَرءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:111. <sup>b</sup>22:79.

is the spirit of obedience to God on the one hand and unity among the Faithful on the other. The clause, *To Allah belong the East and the West*, signifies that the selection of the East or the West is not of much importance, the real object being God only. The selection of a particular direction is primarily meant for the purpose of unity among the Faithful. But the direction must also be good, and God was now going to choose a good direction for the Muslims and the objections of the people would prove their own folly.

### 150. Important Words:

وسط (exalted) is derived from وسط meaning, he stood in between two things. *(wasata)* or وسط

(*wasuta*) means, he was or became good and noble. الوسط means: (1) occupying the middle position or taking the middle course; (2) good and exalted in rank (Aqrab). That the word وسط is used here in the sense of good and exalted, is clear from 3:111 where Muslims are called the best people.

لنعلم (that We might know) signifies that We may make known or distinguish. In fact, God being Omniscient knows all things; so He does not stand in need of knowing a thing because everything is already known to Him. The word has been used elsewhere also in this sense (33:51). The expression من (from him who) occurring after it also shows

that the word is used here in the sense of distinguishing or making known to the people.

**Commentary:**

The clause, *and thus have We made you an exalted nation*, refers to, and is connected with, the concluding clause of the preceding verse, i.e. *He guides whom He pleases to the right path*. God means to say that whatever guidance He sends down to the Muslims is for their own good and it is through His guidance that they have been made an exalted nation. So in the matter of the *Qiblah*, too, they should be prepared to accept His guidance which is meant for their own good. This will make them "guardians over men" and the Messenger of God a "guardian over the Muslims".

Muslims are told that, as decreed by God, they are to become the leaders of men and win the pleasure of God by their good deeds and that on that account they will naturally become recipients of God's special favours, with the result that other people will be forced to the conclusion that the religion which they follow is the true religion. In this way will Muslims bear witness to the truth of Islam, just as the Holy Prophet was a witness of its truth for them.

Another meaning of the clause, *that you may be guardians over men*, is that each generation of Muslims should guard and watch over the next generation. Being the best of people, it is incumbent upon them to be always on their guard against falling away from the high standard of life

expected of them, and to see that each succeeding generation also follows the path pursued by those who enjoyed the ennobling company of the Holy Prophet. Thus the Holy Prophet was to be a guardian over his immediate followers, while they in turn were to be guardians over their successors, and so on.

Taking the particle *على* (over) in the clause under discussion to mean "against" and the word *شهيد* (guardian) to mean "witness", which it often does, the clause would mean "that you may be witnesses against men and the Holy Prophet may be a witness against you"; i.e., the Holy Prophet would serve as a mirror for the Muslims by looking into which they would be able to see their own shortcomings, while the lives of true Muslims would serve as a model for other people who, by comparing their lives with those of true Muslims, would see and realize their own defects and correct them accordingly. This state of affairs could be brought about only if Muslims faithfully followed all the behests of God including the one regarding *Qiblah*, which was important as a rallying-point for the new community.

It may be noted here that, as hinted in the words, *and We did not appoint the Qiblah which thou didst follow*, the Holy Prophet had adopted the Temple at Jerusalem as his *Qiblah* by God's command; but as it was meant by God to be only a temporary *Qiblah*, and was to be subsequently replaced by the Ka'bah which was to be the Islamic *Qiblah* for all time, the

145. Verily, We see thee turning thy face often to heaven; surely, then, will We make thee turn to the Qiblah which thou likest.

قَدَرْنَا نَقَّبَ وَجْهَكَ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ  
فَلَنُوَلِّينَاكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ

command with regard to the temporary *Qiblah* was not included in the Quran. This shows that all such commandments as possessed temporary application were not included in the Quran; only those were included which were of a permanent nature. Hence the theory that the Quran contains some verses that now stand abrogated is quite unfounded.

The Arabs were greatly attached to the Ka'bah, the ancient house of worship at Mecca. It was their national Temple which had come down to them from the days of Abraham. It, therefore, proved a severe trial for them when they were asked at the very inception of Islam at Mecca to abandon the Ka'bah in favour of the Temple at Jerusalem which was the *Qiblah* of the People of the Book. And later on at Medina, the change of the *Qiblah* from the Temple at Jerusalem to the Ka'bah proved a great trial for both Jews and Christians. It was very hard for them to abandon their *Qiblah* for a rival temple which had been held sacred by the pagan Arabs. Thus God provided a trial for both the People of the Book and the idolaters of Mecca.

The Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem was not adopted as *Qiblah* by the Holy Prophet to conciliate the Jewish population of Medina, as is wrongly supposed by Sale and other

Christian critics, because it was not at Medina that this Temple was adopted as the *Qiblah*. It had already been the *Qiblah* of the Muslims at Mecca where there was no Jewish or Christian population to placate (Bukhārī & Jarīr). If, by appointing a *Qiblah*, the Holy Prophet had intended to win over a people, the natural course would have been to appoint the Ka'bah as a *Qiblah* while at Mecca and turn round to the Temple of Jerusalem while at Medina. But what actually happened was quite the reverse. Moreover, the Quran expressly says that the adoption of neither of the *Qiblahs* was meant to win over any people to Islam, but was intended only as a trial to distinguish the true believers from those not true.

The words *it does not behove Allah to let your faith go in vain* have a twofold meaning: (1) that this change of *Qiblah* is in no way calculated adversely to affect the faith of Muslims but would actually strengthen it; (2) that if Muslims were not directed to turn to the Ka'bah, they would not inherit the blessings resulting from the prayers of Abraham offered at the time of its building (2:130). It was impossible that the Companions of the Holy Prophet who had displayed such steadfast loyalty and devotion to their noble ideals, should not have been made heirs to the blessings contained

“So, turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it. And they to whom the Book has been given know that this is the truth from their Lord; and Allah is not unmindful of what they do.<sup>151</sup>

شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ط وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ  
فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ط وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ  
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ  
رَبِّهِمْ ط وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:150, 151.

in Abraham’s prayers with which the Promised Prophet was to be so closely associated. The faith of Muslims would, as it were, go in vain if they remained detached from the Ka‘bah and did not inherit its blessings.

### 151. Important Words:

قد (verily) means, already; sometimes; often; verily, etc. (Lane).

تقلب (turning) is derived from قلب. They say قلب الشيء i.e. (1) he made the thing change direction; (2) he turned it about so that its face and back changed directions; (3) he turned it upside down; (4) he turned it inside out; (5) he changed its condition. The word قلب (*qallaba*) gives almost the same meaning but with greater intensification. قلب الشيء means, the thing turned over and over, doing so much and repeatedly (Aqrab). The expression قلب وجهك would therefore mean, turning thy face with eagerness and anxiety to receive an order.

فلنولينك (We will make thee turn) is derived from ولي (*wallā*) which again is derived from ولي (*waliya*). The expression ولاه gives two distinct meanings: (1) he made him ruler or

master or guardian of it; (2) he made it change direction or he made it turn towards a thing or away from it as the case may be (Aqrab).

الحرام (Sacred) is derived from حرم which means, it was or became forbidden, prohibited or unlawful whether from sanctity or owing to its being injurious. حرمه الشيء means, he denied or refused him the thing. Thus

حرام means: (1) forbidden and unlawful; (2) sacred and inviolable (Aqrab). المسجد الحرام signifies, the Sacred Mosque at Mecca, i.e. the Ka‘bah.

### Commentary:

While at Mecca, the Holy Prophet had orders to turn his face in Prayers towards the sacred Temple at Jerusalem. The Prophet, of course, obeyed the divine behest; but, as in his heart of hearts he desired the Ka‘bah to be his *Qiblah* and had a sort of intuition that eventually he would be ordered to turn his face towards it, he generally tried to choose such a place for worship where he could keep both the sacred Temple at Jerusalem and the Sacred Mosque of Mecca before him. When,

however, the Holy Prophet migrated to Medina, it became impossible for him to turn his face to both the places at one and the same time, and in compliance with divine command he was forced to turn his face to the Temple at Jerusalem alone. With this change the inner desire of the Holy Prophet naturally became intensified, and though, out of deference to God's command, he did not actually pray for the change, yet he anxiously and eagerly looked towards heaven for an order to that effect. The clause, *verily We see thee turning thy face often to heaven*, is therefore highly eulogistic of the Prophet, inasmuch as it indicates (1) that the Holy Prophet had such great insight into spiritual matters that in spite of the interim command from God he knew that sooner or later the order for turning the face towards the Ka'bah would come; (2) that despite his great desire that the Ka'bah should be appointed as *Qiblah*, the Holy Prophet had such extraordinary respect for his Lord's command that he refrained from even praying to that effect; (3) that God the Almighty had such great love for His Messenger that He most graciously refers to his turning his face towards heaven and expedites the command about the change of *Qiblah*, lovingly adding, *We will make thee turn to the Qiblah which thou likest*; and (4) that God had such great regard for the wish of the Prophet that He not only ordered him to turn his face towards the *Qiblah* of his liking but at the same time hinted that He would soon make him master and guardian of it;

for, as explained under Important Words, the expression نولينك also means, "We will make thee master or guardian". Truly did 'Ā'ishah say to her illustrious husband, "I see that God hastens to fulfil your wishes" (Bukhārī, ch. on *Tafsīr*).

After the above introduction follows the commandment about the change of *Qiblah* in the words, *So turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it*. This commandment was given after the Holy Prophet had migrated to Medina and had stayed there for about sixteen months. The words "Sacred Mosque" do not merely stand for the Ka'bah but also provide an argument in favour of the change ordered. The Mosque was sacred and full of blessings and would prove a sanctuary for the faithful. The words, *wherever you be, turn your faces towards it*, have been added with a threefold purpose: (1) to make it clear that the order was not meant for the people of Medina only but for all Muslims wherever they might be; (2) to point to the fact that one of the reasons underlying the order relating to the *Qiblah* was to bring about unity and uniformity among all Muslims, wherever they might be; and (3) to hint that the commandment did not apply to the Holy Prophet only but extended to all Muslims, for whereas, in the preceding clause the Quran says, *turn thy face*, in the clause under comment it says, *turn your faces*.

The words, *They to whom the Book has been given know that this is the*

146. And even if thou shouldst bring every Sign to those who have been given the Book, <sup>a</sup>they would never follow thy Qiblah; nor wouldst thou follow their Qiblah; nor would some of them follow the Qiblah of others. <sup>b</sup>And if thou shouldst follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to thee, then thou shalt surely be of the transgressors. **152**

وَلَيْنُ أَتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَّا تَبِعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ ط وَلَيْنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ لَإِنَّكَ إِذًا لَّمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>109:3, 7. <sup>b</sup>6:57; 13:38.

*truth from their Lord*, mean that Jews and Christians were convinced on the basis of prophecies found in their Scriptures having special reference to the Ka'bah and the Holy Prophet (Isa. 45:13, 14; John 4:21; Deut. 33:2; Gen. 21:21), that the commandment about the change of the *Qiblah* from the Temple at Jerusalem to the Ka'bah at Mecca was truly from God. Mecca lies in what is known as the Desert of Faran or Paran mentioned in some of the above-mentioned verses of the Bible, and therefore the Jews knew that the prophecies contained in them applied to the Ka'bah and the Holy Prophet.

It may be noted here that, though in ordinary circumstances, the Muslims are enjoined to turn their faces to the Ka'bah when saying their prayers, yet as direction is of secondary importance, Islam ordains that, if in special circumstances, it becomes difficult for a man to turn his face to the Ka'bah or to keep it so turned, he

can say his Prayers in any direction that may be convenient. For instance, when a man does not know in which direction the Ka'bah lies, while travelling at night in a Railway train or on the back of an animal, etc., he can pray facing any direction. Similarly, a sick man lying in bed may pray in a lying posture facing any direction that he may find convenient.

### 152. Commentary:

This verse points to the hostility of Jews and Christians not only to Islam but also to one another. The Jews had Jerusalem as their *Qiblah* (See I. Kings 8:22-30; Dan. 6:10; Ps. 5:7; Jonah, 2:4) while the Samaritans, a disowned section of the Jews, who also followed the Mosaic Law, had adopted a certain mountain in Palestine, named Gerizim, as their *Qiblah* (John, 4:20 and Commentary on the New Testament by Right Rev. W. Walsham How, D.D., published by Society for Promoting Christian

147. <sup>a</sup>Those to whom We have given the Book recognize it even as they recognize their sons, but surely some of them <sup>b</sup>conceal the truth knowingly. 153

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا  
يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ  
لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

<sup>a</sup>6:21. <sup>b</sup>2:175; 5:16; 6:92.

Knowledge, London, under this verse). As regards the early Christians, they followed the *Qiblah* of the Jews (Acts 3:1; Enc. Brit., 14th edition, v. 676; Jew. Enc. vi. 53) but we learn from authentic sources that when a party of the Christians of Najrān paid a visit to Medina to have a discussion with the Holy Prophet on some doctrinal point, they worshipped in the Holy Prophet's mosque at Medina with their faces turned to the East (Zurqānī, iv. 41). Thus the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Christians followed different *Qiblahs* owing to their mutual jealousy and enmity. In these circumstances it was vain to expect them to follow the *Qiblah* of the Muslims, and when obsolete faiths refused to follow the true *Qiblah*, how could a true believer follow a *Qiblah* that had become obsolete.

The concluding clause speaks of the practice of the People of the Book as vain "desires," not because they were not originally based on revelation but because they were opposed to the new revelation that had appointed the Ka'bah as *Qiblah*. He who insists on sticking to an order that is no longer in force, really follows naught but his own desire.

The words, *then thou shalt surely be of the transgressors*, do not

evidently refer to the Holy Prophet, because, (1) he could in no circumstances go against Allah's commandment, and (2) the foregoing part of this very verse says about him, *nor wouldst thou follow their Qiblah*, and (3) it is clearly stated in the preceding verse that he loved to turn his face towards the Ka'bah and eagerly awaited a divine commandment to that effect. It is, therefore, unthinkable that the Prophet could forsake the *Qiblah* of his own liking. The words obviously refer, as supported by the rules of the Arabic language as well as the usage of the Quran, either to the reader in general or to every individual Muslim who followed the Holy Prophet.

### 153. Important Words:

يعرفون (recognise) is derived from عرف which means, he knew or recognized or perceived a thing. Though the word is also used of such knowledge as is derived through the senses, it is particularly used of such knowledge as is obtained by thinking and meditating (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

### Commentary:

The pronoun *hū* (him or it) occurring in the clause "recognise him or it" may be taken as referring either to the change of *Qiblah* or to the Holy Prophet. The clause means

148. <sup>a</sup>It is the truth from thy Lord; be not therefore of those who doubt.<sup>154</sup>

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ  
الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

**R. 18.**

149. And every one has a goal which dominates him; <sup>b</sup>vie, then, with one another in good works. Wherever you be, Allah will bring you all together. Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills.<sup>155</sup>

وَلِكُلِّ وِجْهَةٍ هُوَ مَوْتِبٌ فَاسْتَبِقُوا  
الْخَيْرَاتِ ۗ إِنَّ مَا تَكُونُوا يَاتِ بِكُمْ  
اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٤٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:61; 6:115; 10:95. <sup>b</sup>3:134; 5:49; 35:33; 57:22.

that the People of the Book know, on the basis of the prophecies found in their Scriptures, that a Prophet would appear among the Arabs and that he would be connected with the Ka'bah.

The sentence, *some of them conceal the truth knowingly*, refers to the learned men of the Jews who were well versed in their scriptures and knew the prophecies relating to the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam but deliberately suppressed those prophecies in order to conceal them from the people.

**154. Important Words:**

الحق (truth) means: (1) a truth; (2) a thing foreordained by God; (3) an established fact (4) a right; (5) certainty and conviction (Aqrab).

الممترين (those in doubt) is the plural of المتمر which is derived from امترى which again is derived from مرى. They say مرى حقه i.e. he contested or refused his right. امترى means: (1) he doubted; (2) he contested or raised objections. Thus ممترين means: (1) those who doubt; (2) those who contest and raise

objections (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

This verse refers to the great future of Islam. The revelation sent down to the Holy Prophet had come to stay and all obstacles that stood in its way were doomed to disappear. This is ordained by God, the Controller of man's destiny, and is as good as an established fact. Therefore, O reader, do not waste your energies in doubting or disputing a thing that must prevail.

**155. Important Words:**

وجهة (goal) is derived from وجه meaning, the face. وجهة therefore, means: (1) a direction to which one turns one's face; (2) a goal or an object (Aqrab).

استبقوا (vie with one another) is formed from استبق which is derived from سبق which means, he went ahead of him and left him behind; he outstripped him; he excelled him in some quality. استبق means: (1) he tried to go ahead of others so as to reach the goal first; (2) he hastened and

employed his full powers to attain or reach an object (Aqrab & Lane).

خيرات (good works) is the plural of خيرة which means (1) anything excessively good; (2) anything superior to other things (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This short verse contains, in a few words, a mighty lesson as to how the Muslims can achieve success in life. First, they should fix for themselves a goal and that goal should not be the attainment of a particular good but of every good. Nay, they should aspire for more than that. They should try to attain such things as are exceedingly good and superior to others. Again, they should not seek these things in a careless and haphazard manner but should hasten towards them, vying with one another in a spirit of healthy emulation to reach the goal before others.

The expression استبقوا (vie with one another) used here in the plural form also points to the fact that in this race for all that is good, Muslims should try to help those who are weak and assist them in the attainment of virtue. A true Muslim should not only himself strive after virtue but should also invite others to attain to the same stage of virtue which he himself has attained. The spiritual race referred to in the verse thus becomes a most peculiar race in which the competitors not only vie with one another but also look towards their comrades and help such of them as may stumble on their way or be lax in other respects.

The clause, *Wherever you be, Allah will bring you all together*, means

that a Muslim should not think of vying with only those who immediately surround him and thus be satisfied by outstripping them, but should also remember the fact that in far-off places there may be those who are running very fast—faster than those who surround him—and as God will judge all together, a Muslim should not be unmindful of the unknown competitors but should try to spend his energies to the fullest possible extent so that he may truly top the list.

The clause is capable of yet another interpretation. It is human nature that when a man comes to know that the result of his works would be announced publicly, he strives all the harder to outdo others in the discharge of his duties. Hence, God calls upon Muslims to bear in mind that on a certain day they will be gathered together with the peoples of all ages and the results of their deeds will be announced before that huge assemblage; so they should exert themselves accordingly.

The clause, *Surely, Allah has the power to do all that He wills*, is intended to remind Muslims that there is no limit to man's spiritual progress and development. A man can rise to any stage of progress and yet the All-Powerful God can help and guide him to the attainment of a still higher stage.

The words هو موليا (which dominates him) literally mean, which he makes dominant over him, i.e. a man first sets up an objective and then makes it a dominating factor in his life. The expression هو موليا also means, to

150. And from wheresoever thou comest forth, <sup>a</sup>turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; for that is indeed the truth from thy Lord. And Allah is not unmindful of what you do.<sup>156</sup>

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ  
الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

151. And <sup>b</sup>from wheresoever thou comest forth, turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it that people may

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ  
الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا  
وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ

<sup>a</sup>See 2:145. <sup>b</sup>2:145, 150.

which he turns his face. In both these senses the underlying idea is that of engrossment and devotion.

### 156. Important Words:

خرج (thou comest forth) is from خرج which means: (1) he came forth; (2) he went forth; (3) he came forth or went forth for a battle (Aqrah).

### Commentary:

Now when the Ka'bah had been appointed the *Qiblah* of Muslims, it became necessary that Mecca should come under their control. The verse under comment suitably refers to that matter. Muslims are bidden henceforward to direct all their energies to the conquest of Mecca. In all his campaigns, the Holy Prophet was commanded to keep in view the taking of Mecca, which had now become the centre of Islam. This is borne out by the expression خرجت (thou comest forth) which also means "thou goest forth for a battle". The word خرجت "thou comest forth or goest forth" has thus nothing to do with the turning of the face to the

Ka'bah, at the time of Prayers; for Prayers are not performed walking. Obviously the commandment cannot mean that one should, while walking, pray with one's face turned toward the Ka'bah.

The words, *for that is indeed the truth from thy Lord*, evidently imply that Mecca was sure to fall one day into the hands of the Holy Prophet. As considering the then helpless condition of the Muslims, such an achievement appeared to be almost impossible, so God gave His Messenger the assurance that the promise was a true one and its fulfilment was absolutely certain.

The expression, *and Allah is not unmindful of what you do*, provides a reason for the above promise. God was well aware of the deeds of the Muslims, knowing full well how they were striving to win His favour; so He could not let their labours go unrewarded. Just as He had established their connection with the Ka'bah spiritually, so would He make them its masters physically.

have no argument against you, except those who are unjust—<sup>a</sup>so fear them not, but fear Me—and <sup>b</sup>that I may perfect My favour upon you; and that you may be rightly guided.<sup>157</sup>

عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ ۖ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا  
مِنْهُمْ ۗ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي ۗ  
وَلَا تَمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ  
تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:4. <sup>b</sup>5:4; 12:7.

### 157. Commentary:

The singular person in *خرجت* (thou comest forth) is used to emphasize the fact that the conquest of Mecca was the personal responsibility of the Holy Prophet. If he could persuade others to help him, well and good; if not, he alone stood responsible before God—a mighty responsibility indeed which also strikes at the very root of the objection that Islam waited for a declaration of the defensive war till it was strong enough to hit back.

The plural person in *حيث ما كنتم* (wherever you be) is used so as to include the Muslims of all places. Next to the Holy Prophet, they are also commanded to keep the same object in view, i.e. the conquest of Mecca. This verse and the preceding one should afford no ground for inferring that Islam bids its followers to wage an aggressive war. For, as amply borne out by history, by the time these verses were revealed, war had already commenced with the Meccans and it was they that had forced it upon the unwilling Muslims.

The words, *that people may have no argument against you*, mean that if the Muslims failed to conquer Mecca, the objection would quite legitimately

be raised by the enemies of Islam, that the Holy Prophet had not fulfilled the prayer of Abraham, contained in 2:130, and therefore, could not claim to be the Promised Prophet. Moreover, the House to which the Muslims were commanded to turn their faces during Prayers was, while under the control of the heathen Meccans, full of idols. If the idols had continued to remain in the Ka'bah, the Muslims might have been accused of worshipping idols. This objection could be effectively answered, if the Holy House, which had been originally dedicated to the worship of One God, had been cleared of idols. Hence the commandment to substitute the Ka'bah for the Temple at Jerusalem as *Qiblah* was naturally followed by the injunction about the conquest of Mecca.

It may be added here that the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims had also been predicted in the Quran in 28:86, and 17:81. The prophecy contained in Deut. 33:2 was also fulfilled when the Holy Prophet entered Mecca as a conqueror at the head of ten thousand Muslims.

The clause, *that I may perfect My favour upon you*, provides yet another

152. Even as "We have sent to you a Messenger from among yourselves who recites Our Signs to you, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُوا  
عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ  
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ

<sup>a</sup>See 2:130.

argument in favour of the commandment relating to the conquest of Mecca. God means to say that, with the taking of Mecca, God's favour on the Muslims would begin to be perfected; for it would mean the subjugation of all Arabia and the influx of thousands of men into the fold of Islam. The result amply justified the prophecy; for the conquest of Mecca was rapidly followed by the conversion to Islam of thousands of Arabs. Most of the Arabs, at heart victims of the beauty of Islam, had deferred their acceptance of the new faith till the issue of the struggle between Muslims and Meccans had been finally settled, and now they virtually came forward in "troops" to join it.

Another reason why the conquest of Mecca was followed by a general influx of Arabs into Islam was that although the Arabs followed no revealed Book, yet the prophecy of Abraham that Mecca would not be conquered by the followers of any false Prophet, and any people attempting it would meet with destruction was well known to them. They had only recently seen a remarkable illustration of the fulfilment of this prophecy in the miraculous destruction of the Abyssinian invader Abraha and his

powerful army. Thus when Mecca fell into the hands of the Holy Prophet, they were at once convinced of his truth and thousands of them hastened to embrace Islam.

In this and the preceding verses (vv. 145 and 150), the command to turn to the Ka'bah has been mentioned thrice. This is not a repetition; for the first command, i.e. in v. 145, pertains to the change of the *Qiblah*, while the second and the third, i.e. in vv. 150 and 151, refer to the conquest of Mecca. But here, too, there is truly speaking no repetition, for the command about the conquest of Mecca contained in each of these two verses serves a different purpose. In v. 150 Muslims are asked to turn their attention to the conquest of Mecca because God wished them to do so. So they were duty bound to carry it out undeterred by any fear of failure; whereas in the verse under comment, i.e. v. 151, the benefits which were to accrue to Muslims on their carrying out the command relating to the conquest of Mecca have been mentioned. Those benefits briefly are: (1) refutation of the objections and criticism of the enemy; (2) conversion to Islam of hundreds of thousands of Arabs, including the kith and kin of the Muslims; and (3) enlargement of the political power of Islam.

Wisdom, and teaches you that which you did not know.<sup>158</sup>

153. Therefore "remember Me, I will remember you; and be thankful to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me."<sup>159</sup>

مما تلقون  
عبدوا الأصنام

تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

١٥٩

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي

وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿١٥٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:204; 8:46; 62:11.

### 158. Commentary:

The word كما meaning "even as" has been used to connect this verse with the preceding one by pointing out that God will bestow upon the believers the favours mentioned in the preceding verse even as, or just as, He has favoured them with a Prophet.

With a slight change in the arrangement of the words this verse refers to the work of the Holy Prophet in exactly the same words in which Abraham prayed to God about the appearance of a Prophet among the Meccans (2:130), which clearly shows that Abraham's prayer had found fulfilment in the person of the Holy Prophet. The change in arrangement is that, while recounting the favours of God, this verse, unlike verse 2:130, mentions the work of purification before that of the teaching of the Book and Wisdom, because though in theory the teaching of the Book may come first, in actual practice purification is more important than the teaching of the Book and Wisdom; for whereas the former is the end, the latter is simply the means to that end.

Another difference between this verse and 2:130 is that whereas the latter ends with the words, *Thou art*

*the Mighty, the Wise*, the former concludes with the words, *And (he) teaches you that which you did not know*. The reason for this change is not far to seek. Abraham had used the words, *Surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise*, in his prayer, meaning that God being Mighty, it was not difficult for Him to accept his prayer; and as He was also Wise, He knew best what the requirements of his posterity would be. But when God spoke of the actual fulfilment of this prayer, it was quite unnecessary to repeat these words. So in place of the above-quoted words, the words, *(he) teaches you that which you did not know*, have been added to signify: *firstly*, that, while accepting the prayer God had granted even more than Abraham had prayed for; and *secondly*, that the teachings of the Holy Prophet were far in advance of the teachings of the former Prophets and were such as the world really needed but had not so far known.

### 159. Important Words:

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ (so remember Me, I will remember you). The verb ذكروه means, he remembered him; he bore it or him in mind; he spoke or talked of him. ذكروا الله means, he remembered God; he glorified God and extolled His

## R. 19.

154. O ye who believe, <sup>a</sup>seek help with patience and Prayer; surely, Allah is with the steadfast.<sup>160</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ  
وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٤﴾

<sup>a</sup>See 2:46.

greatness; he prayed to Him or offered prayers to Him. ذكره الله means, God bestowed His favours on him; He called him to His presence to do him honour. The noun ذكر means, remembrance; mentioning or speaking of; eminence; honour; good name (Aqrab, Mufradât & Lane).

اشكروا (render thanks) is from شكر i.e. he thanked; he was grateful. شكر الله means, he acknowledged the beneficence of God, rendering Him obedience and abstaining from disobedience (Lane).

**Commentary:**

Remembrance of God on the part of man means, to remember Him with love and devotion, to carry out His behests, to bear in mind His attributes, to glorify Him and offer prayers to Him; and remembrance of man on the part of God signifies, God's drawing him near to Himself, bestowing favours on him and making provision for his welfare. Thus we are here told that if we seek nearness to God, He will certainly draw us near to Himself. According to yet another meaning of the word ذكر i.e. honour and eminence, the verse would mean that if the Muslims will remember God, He will make them honoured and eminent in the world.

The expression, *remember Me, I*

*will remember you*, can also mean that one who truly loves God will eventually attract the love of God. Remembrance is really born of love and is in a way synonymous with it. Indeed, nobody can remember an object more than a lover does the object of his love.

**160. Important Words:**

صبر (patience) means: (1) to be steadfast and constant in something; (2) to endure afflictions with fortitude and without complaint or murmur; (3) to hold fast to the divine law and the dictates of reason; (4) to refrain from doing what the divine law and reason forbid (Mufradât).

**Commentary:**

The verse contains a golden principle of success. *Firstly*, a man should be constant in his endeavours, never relaxing his efforts and never losing heart, at the same time avoiding what is harmful and sticking fast to all that is good. *Secondly*, he should pray to God for success; for He alone is the source of all good.

The word صبر (patience) precedes the word صلاة (prayer) in the verse to emphasize the importance of observing the laws of God which are sometimes flouted in ignorance. Ordinarily, a prayer can be effective only when it is accompanied by the

155. And <sup>a</sup>say not of those who are killed in the cause of Allah that they are dead; nay, they are living; only you perceive not. **161**

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
أَمْوَاتٌ ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ ۖ وَ لَكِن لَّا  
تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:170.

use of all the necessary means created by God for the attainment of an object. This fact, however, does not minimize the importance of prayer, nor does it impose any limit on the omnipotence of God. If God so wills it, prayer can work wonders even where all earthly means fail.

Islam does not teach utter and blind dependence on material means. Prayer indeed is the essence of Islam. Man is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, and if he does not seek divine guidance and assistance, he can neither see all good nor can he secure it for himself.

As explained under Important Words, the word صبر also signifies, enduring afflictions with fortitude and without complaint and murmur. In this sense the verse would mean that, the present being the time of war and bloodshed, Muslims should bear these hardships with perfect patience and fortitude and that if they did so, God would succour them in their trails.

The concluding portion of the verse, i.e. *Allah is with the steadfast*, seems to confine itself to صبر only, excluding the element of صلاة. But it is not so really, for صبر in its wider sense includes prayer also. What is meant is that Allah is with those who are steadfast in their endeavours and are steadfast in their prayers. The principle

provides a wonderful key to success.

### 161. Important Words:

أحياء (living) is the plural of حي which, among other things, means: (1) one whose life work does not go in vain; (2) one whose death is avenged. A well-known pre-Islamic poet, Ḥārith ibn Ḥillizah, author of the seventh *Mu‘allaqah*, says:

إن نبشتم ما بين ملحاة فالصا قب فيها الاموات والاحياء i.e. If you dig the graves between *Milḥah* and *Ṣāqib*, you will find some who are dead, and others who are living. In this couplet by the "living", the poet means such persons as were slain in battle but whose blood was avenged, and by the "dead" he means those whose blood was not avenged.

### Commentary:

The teaching about صبر (steadfastness) naturally brings in the question of sacrifices that Muslims were making in the cause of Islam. Therefore the Quran suitably refers here to the subject of martyrdom. Death is not the end of life, and in this respect believers and unbelievers stand on the same footing and the martyrs too enjoy no distinction. Nor would it be wrong to speak of them as dead in the ordinary sense of the word. But the word أحياء (living) has been used here about martyrs in a special sense.

As explained under Important

156. And <sup>a</sup>We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient.<sup>162</sup>

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ  
وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ  
وَالشَّمْرِ ۗ وَبَشِيرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ۝١٥٦

“3:187.

Words above, the word حَيٌّ (living) is also applied to him whose work, or, more properly speaking, the cause for which he lays down his life, does not come to an end with his death. The verse, therefore, points out that those who lay down their lives for Islam should not be regarded as dead, because the cause for which they give their lives still stands and is all the more strongly upheld by others who take their places.

Again, according to the Arabic idiom, حَيٌّ (living) is also one whose blood is avenged. The verse, therefore, implies that as full satisfaction is taken for the blood of Muslims killed in the way of God, not only in the sense that far more non-Muslims join the fold of Islam than those killed in the wars but also in the sense that the number of non-Muslims killed is much larger than those killed among the Muslims, therefore Muslim martyrs are not really dead.

The word حَيٌّ (living) may possess yet another significance. As a rule, life after death does not fully begin immediately after death. The soul of man continues in a state of torpor for sometime after death. This period varies with different persons according to the degree of their spiritual purity. As martyrs sacrifice their lives for the sake of God, their

souls do not remain long in torpor but are quickly revived into a new life. This is one of the reasons why martyrs are called living, not dead.

The verse comprises a great psychological truth which is calculated to exercise immense influence on the life and progress of a people. A community that does not duly honour those of its members who lay down their lives for the cause for which the community stands, sows the seed of its own ruin. Again, a community which does not arrange to remove the fear of death from the hearts of its members, seals its own fate. The verse under comment provides an effective safeguard against both these dangers.

### 162. Important Words:

لَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ (and We will try you). لَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ is derived from بَلَاءٌ which has two meanings: (1) learning the state or condition of a person by means of a trial or test whether through favours or afflictions; (2) manifesting the goodness or badness of an object by a similar means. اِبْتِلَاءٌ also means, a trial or a test imposed on a person with a view to learning or manifesting his true condition (Aqrab & Lane). See also 2:50.

### Commentary:

This verse comes as a fitting sequel to the preceding one. Muslims should

157. Who, <sup>a</sup>when a misfortune overtakes them, say, <sup>b</sup>‘Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.’<sup>163</sup>

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا  
إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

<sup>a</sup>22:36. <sup>b</sup>7:126; 26:51.

be prepared not only to lay down their lives in the cause of Islam but also to suffer diverse forms of affliction which will be imposed on them as a trial. According to the Quran, God has generally two purposes in "proving" men. He "proves" or tries those who have attained to a high stage of spiritual advancement, as was the case with Abraham (2:125); and He also tries those who have not yet attained to that stage (29:3). His object in "proving" the former is to bring them to the notice of the people and make them shine as models of virtue and purity; while in the case of the latter, the purpose is to make them acquainted with their own weaknesses so that they may try to improve their condition. Though misfortunes and afflictions involve a certain amount of pain, they also afford a good opportunity for spiritual reformation and purification. Thus afflictions and calamities have their use. They serve to strengthen the faith. Those who remain steadfast under trials, despite afflictions, become entitled to a great reward from God. A trial also sometimes becomes a means of exposing the weakness of a person and of his downfall; for after all it is an examination which, though held with the object of promoting a student, sometimes results in his failure. See 7:177.

The tests by means of which God

intended to "prove" the faithful are, as stated in this verse: (1) Fear, i.e. a state or condition in which fear will dominate them, the enemy surrounding them with diverse dangers. (2) Hunger, i.e. shortage of food; the enemy will not only cut off their means of communication but will also completely boycott them, leaving them stranded without food or provision. The word "hunger" may also signify a state of famine. (3) Loss of wealth and property. The enemy will raid Muslims repeatedly and inflict heavy losses on them. (4) Loss of lives, i.e. the cruel war inflicted on them by the enemy will also cause loss of life. (5) Loss of fruits. The action of the enemy will not be confined to inflicting loss of lives and property only but will extend to inflicting loss of crops as well. As *ثمرة* (fruit) also means the fruit of one's labour or the profit accruing to a man from any source, loss of fruits also signifies disorganization of trade and industry.

All these losses coming together constituted indeed a very heavy burden; but they were borne by the Muslims with such patience and fortitude as is unrivalled in all history. God tried them and found them truly patient.

### 163. Commentary:

This verse provides a true definition

158. It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is these who are rightly guided.<sup>164</sup>

أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ  
وَرَحْمَةٌ ۖ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

of the term صابر (a patient person) as mentioned in the concluding portion of the preceding verse. A صابر who is vouchsafed glad tidings in the foregoing verse is one who bears all sorts of calamities and afflictions with complete restraint and fortitude, uttering no word of complaint or murmur but sincerely saying, *Surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return*. These words comprise a formula which every Muslim is directed to utter when he is afflicted with any misfortune relating to life, property, etc.

God is the Master of all we possess, including our own selves. If the Owner in His infinite wisdom deems fit to take away anything from us, we have no ground for complaint or murmur. We should indeed be grateful for what we receive from God, but there is no justification for murmuring at a loss, because we possess no inherent right to any gift.

The clause *to Allah we belong* also teaches us the great spiritual truth that we have no real connection with the things of this world and, therefore, the loss of such things should cause us no real grief. Similarly, the other part of the formula, *viz., and surely to Him shall we return*, also contains an equally grand principle. We come from God and will have to go back to Him, when we shall have to render an account of all our deeds. So every misfortune that befalls us should,

instead of depressing us, spur us to make yet greater efforts to achieve still better results in life. Thus the formula contained in this verse is not a mere verbal incantation but a great counsel and a great warning. When a Muslim sincerely utters this formula on occasions of loss, grief or bereavement, its true import is bound to be deeply impressed upon his mind and to sustain him in his hours of trials and tribulations. Nay, it is calculated to do something more; it helps to strengthen his connection with his Maker and make Him the centre of all his thoughts and actions.

#### 164. Commentary:

This verse speaks of the great reward of those who prove themselves to be truly صابر or patient. It is, in fact, an explanation of the word, *glad tidings*, occurring in 2:156. Truly patient people who are steadfast in their connection with God and whom each and every affliction finds spiritually rising higher and higher will inherit three things: (1) blessings from their Lord; (2) His mercy; and (3) His guidance. God will bless them in every way, will cover them with His mercy and forgiveness and will look after them, providing guidance for them whenever they may need it. He will, as it were, become their friend and guardian, eager to come to their help on all occasions.

159. Surely, Aṣ-Ṣafā and Al-Marwah are among the “Signs of Allah. It is, therefore, no sin for him who is on pilgrimage to the House, or performs ‘Umrah, to go round the two. And whoso does good beyond what is obligatory, surely then, Allah is Appreciating, All-Knowing.<sup>165</sup>

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوِ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٩﴾

“22:33.

### 165. Important Words:

الصفَا والمروة (Aṣ-Ṣafā and Al-Marwah) are the names of two hills near the Ka‘bah in Mecca, the first-mentioned being the nearer of the two. Both Arabian history and the traditions of Islam connect these hills with the story of Hagar and Ishmael when Abraham left them near these hills under God’s command. Ishmael was yet a child, and when the scanty provisions ran out and he was in a pitiable condition for want of water, Hagar anxiously and repeatedly ran between these two hills in search of water and help, but none was found. When, however, she was in her seventh circuit, an angel of God called to her saying that God had brought forth a spring of water near her son and that she should go and look to it (Bukhārī, ch. on *Anbiyā*). Thus the hills of صفَا (Ṣafā) and مروة (Marwah) became شعائر الله i.e. Signs of God worthy of due honour and respect in the sight of every true believer. The Bible also makes mention of مروة in a somewhat changed form (Gen. 22:2; also Enc. Bib. under Moriah) in connection

with the sacrifice of Abraham’s son.

شعائر (Signs) is the plural of شعيرة which is derived from شعر meaning, he knew or he perceived. Thus شعيرة means: (1) anything by means of which another thing may be known; (2) a sign; (3) anything which is considered or is performed as a mark of submission to God; (4) the rites of pilgrimage and practices pertaining thereto (Aqrah).

حج (is on pilgrimage) means: (1) he sought a person or thing; (2) he went or repaired to a person or thing; (3) he went to a person again and again; (4) he visited a holy place; (5) he performed حج (Pilgrimage) to the Ka‘bah; (6) he overpowered a person in argument (Aqrah).

اعتمر (performs ‘Umrah) is derived from عمر which means, he occupied or tenanted a house; he worshipped God and prayed to Him. اعتمر means, he went to, or visited, a place. عمرة means, visiting a place; worshipping and praying to God; performing Lesser Pilgrimage in which some of the rites of حج are left out (Aqrah).

تطوع (does beyond what is obligatory) is derived from طاع i.e. he

obeyed; he did an act willingly and voluntarily. The infinitive الطوع means: (1) obedience; (2) doing an act willingly without its being obligatory on one. تطوع means, he performed an act with effort and volition. تطوع خيرا means, he performed a good act which was not obligatory on him (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

To a superficial observer the verse under comment dealing with the subject of Pilgrimage appears to have no connection with the preceding ones which deal with the subject of trials and sacrifices. But a deeper study will at once disclose a very close connection between the two. The preceding verses warned Muslims to be prepared for sacrifices and gave them the glad tidings that if they performed the required sacrifices willingly and patiently, God would bless them greatly and would show special mercy to them and would remember them with kindness and would provide guidance for them whenever needed. Now, in order to bring home to them the truth of this promise, He invites the attention of Muslims to the great sacrifice of Abraham near the site of Aş-Şafā and Al-Marwah. Abraham obeyed His Lord and left his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael near these two hills of Mecca, which was then a most desolate tract. The seed was sown in a soil which was apparently the most barren of all soils, but how wonderfully it prospered! God was a most Loving and Faithful God who so fondly remembered His servants, Abraham and Ishmael, even after the

lapse of 2,500 years, and Muslims can expect the same love and the same fidelity from Him, if they too love and obey Him. Şafā and Marwah, as explained under Important Words above, are two hills which stand as a memorial to Hagar's great patience and extraordinary loyalty to God on the one hand and to God's special treatment of her and her son on the other. A visit to these hills makes the pilgrim deeply impressed with the love, fidelity and power of God.

The words, *it is no sin for him*, should not be taken to mean that performing the circuit between Şafā and Marwah is only permissible and not obligatory. The expression is used simply to remove the aversion to such performance found among certain persons on the basis of the fact that heathen Arabs had placed two idols on these two hills (Muslim). God removed this erroneous notion by saying that it was no sin to perform the circuit between Şafā and Marwah, which on account of the great sacrifice of Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael on the one hand and the resulting blessings of God on the other, had become شعائر الله i.e. great Signs of God. That the performance of these circuits is obligatory in both حج and عمرة (the Greater and the Lesser Pilgrimage) is clear from the practice of the Holy Prophet and his injunctions to his followers (Bukhārī, ch. *Al-Hajj*).

The words, *whoso does good beyond what is obligatory*, do not refer to حج (Greater Pilgrimage), which under certain conditions is

160. Those who conceal what We have sent down of Signs and guidance after We have made it clear for the people in the Book, <sup>a</sup>it is these whom Allah curses; and *so* curse them those who curse.<sup>166</sup>

161. But <sup>b</sup>they who repent and amend and openly declare *the*

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ  
وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي  
الْكِتَابِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ  
اللُّعُنُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ

<sup>a</sup>2:175. <sup>b</sup>3:90; 4:147; 5:40; 24:6.

obligatory on each Muslim once in a lifetime, but to *عمرة* (Lesser Pilgrimage) which is not obligatory but simply supererogatory. The words may also be considered to refer to any additional *حج* or Pilgrimage which a Muslim may perform, after he has performed the one obligatory Pilgrimage.

As this verse mentions the subject of Pilgrimage only secondarily, we are not giving here a note on the rites and philosophy of which will be discussed when we come to the relevant verses.

### 166. Important Words:

*يلعنهم* (curses them). For the meaning of *لعن* see note on 2:89.

### Commentary:

The present verse has been taken to apply either to Muslims or Jews. In the former case the verse would be taken as a warning to Muslims that they should ever be careful to preach the truth of Islam and should in no circumstances hide or neglect it but should ever be ready to proclaim it, however bitter the opposition. Failing

this, they will not only not attain the nearness of God but will be cast away from Him. If applied to Jews, and that indeed is the right application, the connection with the preceding verse may be easily seen in the reference to *Aş-Şafā* and *Al-Marwah* in that verse. It was at these places that Abraham left his wife Hagar, and his son, Ishmael, under God's command and it was here that, while building the *Ka'bah*, Abraham and Ishmael prayed to God for the appearance of a great Prophet among their progeny. The Quran thus refers here to the Jews who were concealing the prophecies contained in their Scriptures about the Holy Prophet. The Jews are warned that if they concealed the clear prophecies given to them about the Arabian Prophet, in spite of the fact that they have now been reminded of them through the Quran, God would cast them away, depriving them of His mercy and condemning them to punishment in Hell. They are further warned that as God is the Lord of the entire universe, His curse will not come alone but everything which is subservient to Him will then begin to

*truth*, it is these to whom I turn with forgiveness, and I am Oft-Returning *with compassion and Merciful*.<sup>167</sup>

162. Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, <sup>a</sup>on them shall be the curse of Allah and of angels and of men all together.<sup>168</sup>

أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦٧﴾

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارًا  
أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ  
وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٦٨﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:88.

curse them—angels, men, the elements, laws of nature and all.

### 167. Important Words:

اصلحوا (amend) is derived from صلح which means, he or it was or became good or virtuous or just or proper. اصلح means, he reformed him or he reformed himself or he amended. When اصلح is followed by the preposition بين (between) as in اصلح بينهم it means, he brought about reconciliation between them (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

God, not being vindictive, is ever ready to pardon those who repent and rectify their mistakes. But repentance must be sincere and real. Mere verbal expression of regret is not sufficient. The evildoer must try to make full amends for the wrong committed and should promise to bring about in himself a real change in future. It is only after a real change takes place in the sinner that forgiveness is promised to him. As to the Jews who concealed prophecies regarding the Holy Prophet, the verse lays down three conditions as a proof of real

repentance. *Firstly*, they should declare their repentance and turn back from their wrong course. *Secondly*, they should make amends practically, not only by reforming themselves but also by trying to reform those who have been misled through them. *Thirdly*, they should openly declare the truth which they have been hiding regarding the prophecies in their Scriptures. If they fulfilled these conditions, they would yet find God Forgiving and Merciful.

### 168. Commentary:

The word الناس (men) may either mean "all men" or "holy and virtuous men", i.e. those who deserve to be called "men" in the real sense of the word. This distinction is not arbitrary; for there is a class of men whom the Quran describes as "cattle or even worse" (7:180).

The cursing of the angels and the holy men means that as angels and holy men obey their Lord and Master and never go against His wishes, they would naturally sever connections with the disbelievers—the Jews—when they see Him doing the same.

163. <sup>a</sup>They shall remain under it. The punishment shall not be lightened for them, nor shall they be granted respite. **169**

164. And <sup>b</sup>your God is One God; there is no God but He, the Gracious, the Merciful. **170**

خَلِيدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ  
وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

وَاللَّهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ  
الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٧٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:89. <sup>b</sup>2:256; 16:23; 22:35; 37:5; 59:23, 24; 112:2.

The angels, one of whose works is to help good men and punish the wicked, will turn against them and all good men will also strive to bring their evil efforts to naught. They will find the entire forces of God ranged against them.

If the word *الناس* (men) be taken to refer to all men, then the clause would mean that all men being subordinate to God, He would so arrange that no people would be able to help them against His decree.

### 169. Important Words:

*ينظرون* (be granted respite) is formed from *نظر* which means, (1) he looked; (2) he granted respite. They say *نظر فلانا الدين* i.e. he granted him respite in respect of the payment of debt (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

God is slow to punish but when the cup of the iniquities of a disbelieving people becomes full to the brim and all warning is lost upon them, then severe punishment overtakes them, and no further respite is granted; and as the punishment is primarily meant as a cure, it is of sufficiently long duration and persists till all vestige of spiritual disease is rooted out.

### 170. Commentary:

As all sin springs from feebleness of faith, this verse fittingly refers to the Unity of God, signifying that if people only believed in God's Unity and refrained from setting up false gods, they would never digress from the right path. It must not, however, be understood that idol-worship consists in worshipping images only. Every man who loves anyone other than God as he ought to love Him, or fears anyone as he ought to fear Him, or trusts in anyone as he ought to trust in Him, is really guilty of idol-worship and must suffer the consequences thereof. In fact, the principal and primary object of religion, is to establish the Unity of God, and the Quran has dealt with this subject in a manner and to an extent which has no parallel in any other Book. Islam condemns both *شرك جلي* (manifest or visible idolatry) and *شرك خفي* (hidden or invisible idolatry) in the strongest of terms.

The verse may also signify that, with the advent of Islam, God, the Maker of heavens and earth, no longer remains the God of this or that people only, but becomes the God of all peoples and all mankind. The

## R. 20.

165. "Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day, and in the ships which sail in the sea with that which profits men, and in the water which Allah sends down from the sky and quickens therewith the earth after its death and scatters therein all kinds of beasts, and in the change of the winds, and the clouds pressed into service between the heaven and the earth,—are indeed Signs for the people who understand.<sup>171</sup>

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَاجْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلِّ الَّتِي  
تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا  
أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ  
الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ  
دَابَّةٍ ۗ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ  
الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ  
لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾

<sup>a</sup>3:191; 10:7; 30:23; 45:6.

word الرحمن (the Gracious or the Provider for all peoples) occurring at the end of the verse also points to the same truth. In this sense the verse would be considered to be particularly connected with 2:159 above which speaks of the Şafā and the Marwah as the special Signs of Allah, serving as pointers to the mission of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

### 171. Important Words:

اختلاف (alternation) is derived from خلف. They say خلفه i.e. he or it was or became his or its successor. خلف الرجل means, he came after or remained after the man and stood in his place. خلفه means, he followed him as his successor. اختلفوا means (1) they came one after another by turn; (2) they differed or disagreed (Aqrab).

الفلك (ships) is derived from the verb

فلك meaning, it became round or circular. الفلك (*al-fulk*) means a ship, or a boat, probably because it looks round and shapeless when seen at sea from a distance. The word is both singular and plural. الفلك (*al-falak*) means, the vault of heaven or the firmament in which the stars move. This is also probably owing to the apparently round shape of the sky (Aqrab, Mufradāt & Lane).

دابة (beast) is the active participle from دب which means, he or it crept or crawled or walked slowly like an ant or a reptile or a child or a weak or sickly person. دابة means, all such animals or insects as creep or crawl or walk slowly (Aqrab). The word is used about all moving animals, whether big or small, whether walking on two legs or on four legs or creeping on the belly, etc. (24:46).

It is also used about beasts used for riding or for carrying burden, like the horse, the mule, the donkey, etc. (Lane).

المسخر (pressed into service) is the passive participle from سخر *sakhkhara*. They say سخرة (*sakhkhara-hū* or سخرة *sakhara-hū*, not سخر *sakhira* which gives a different meaning), i.e. (1) he employed him or imposed on him a task without compensation; (2) he subjugated him and made him subservient to himself. Thus مسخر is that who or which has been made subservient to another, being unable to free himself or itself from constraint (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse gives a twofold meaning, one literal and the other metaphorical. In the former sense, it supplies an argument in support of the existence of God referred to in the preceding verse. A careful study of the universe unfailingly points to a Creator on the one hand and to man being created with a definite object on the other. It also proves that, having created the world, God did not leave it alone but continues to watch over and control its affairs and is the First Cause of all change and every working in the universe. Heaven and earth, night and day (with alternating light and darkness), the supply of provisions, rainfall with its power of quickening and devastating, the means of communications, the blowing of winds, and shade and sunshine, all point to one controlling agency, God, the Maker of heavens and earth. And if God has done so much for the material requirements of

man, He cannot be imagined to have neglected his spiritual needs which are much more important. Let all thinking men think and ponder and again think and ponder.

The Quran takes the universe as a whole to prove its theme. The objects of nature taken individually do not furnish such conclusive evidence of the existence of God as the whole universe taken together. The earth may be said to owe its existence to a fortuitous concourse of atoms, or a similar reason may be given for the origin of the sun and the moon and so on. But when the universe as one united whole and the deep order that permeates it are taken into consideration, it becomes impossible to escape the conclusion that this universe has not come into existence accidentally. Indeed, the consummate harmony that prevails throughout the universe, forcefully points to the fact that the whole system has been created and is being directed by one Intelligent Being Who is All-Powerful and All-Knowing.

Taken in the metaphorical sense, the ship mentioned in the verse will be taken to stand for Prophets who help men to cross the gulfs of carnal desires and materialistic concepts of things which separate men from God, rain being likened to God's revelation which comes down like rain and gives life to the world after it has become dead. The clouds send down no new water. Water already exists in the vast oceans of the earth but, as it is impure, men cannot make use of it. God purifies it and changes it into clouds and then sends it back to earth in the form of pure rainwater.

166. And there are some among men who take for themselves objects of worship other than Allah, loving them as they should love Allah. But believers are stronger in their love for Allah. And if those who transgress could *now* see the time when they shall see the punishment, *they would realize* that all power belongs to Allah and that Allah is severe in punishing.<sup>172</sup>

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ  
أُنْدَادًا يُحِبُّوهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ  
أَمُّوا أَشَدَّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ  
ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يُرُونَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ  
جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ ﴿١٦٦﴾

Similarly, by sending a new revelation God purifies beliefs, which, with the passage of time, get mixed up with false notions and superstitious ideas. It is inconceivable that God Who supplies man with fresh rainwater for the maintenance of his physical life should have omitted to supply him with heavenly water which is so necessary for the preservation of his spiritual life. Similarly, night and day stand for the alternating periods of light and darkness, it being hinted that the coming of the Holy Prophet heralds the dawn of a new day.

Moreover, by laying special emphasis on the study of the phenomena of nature in the verse under comment, the attention of disbelievers is also drawn to the fact that they could not possibly hope to succeed in their designs against the Holy Prophet, because the whole universe is controlled by God and is working in favour of His Prophet and in furthering his cause.

### 172. Important Words:

دان (other than) is derived from دان i.e. he or it was or became low, mean or weak. دان used as an adjective means, low, mean, paltry, or contemptible; also high and noble. When used as a preposition, as in the present verse, دان gives the sense of (1) this side of, i.e. behind or lower in rank; (2) that side of, i.e. ahead or higher in rank; (3) other than (Aqrab).  
انداد (objects of worship). See 2:23.

### Commentary:

While dealing with the subject of idolatry the Quran makes use of the following four words: (1) د (like or equal); (2) شريك (co-partner or sharer); (3) اله (worthy of worship); and (4) رب (sustainer). While the first two words are used only about those objects of worship that are other than God, the last two are used about God also. The word د (like or equal) which is used in the present verse refers to such objects of worship as are supposed to

167. *Aye, they would certainly realize if they could see the time* <sup>a</sup>when those who were followed shall disown their followers and shall see the punishment, and all their ties shall be cut asunder.<sup>173</sup>

168. And those who followed shall say: <sup>b</sup>‘If we could only return, we would disown them

إذ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا  
وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ  
الْأَسْبَابُ ﴿١٧٣﴾

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً  
فَنَتَّبَرَأَ مِنْهُمُ كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوا مِنَّا ۗ كَذَلِكَ

<sup>a</sup>28:64, 65; 34:33, 34. <sup>b</sup>23:100; 26:103.

be like God or equal to Him, being contrary or opposed to the true God. Among those who have set up انداد (equals) with God may be mentioned the Zoroastrians who believe in two independent gods, i.e. Ormazd, the God of Light, and Ahriman, the God of Darkness.

Love of God is the essence of all religion. In Islam it forms the central point, the pivot round which the whole Islamic teaching revolves. No religion has emphasised the love of God as much as Islam has. The Holy Prophet was so much engrossed in God that he was spoken of by the pagan Arabs as having fallen in love with Him, even as a lover falls in love with his beloved. No other subject has been so completely and so repeatedly dealt with in the Quran as God's beauty and excellence and such of His attributes as create an irresistible love and longing in the human soul for his Lord and Master Who is spoken of in the Quran as a "Most Loving God" (11:91; 85:15). Yet Christian writers accuse Islam of being a cold and calculating religion,

bereft of all love for God. Can anything be farther from the truth?

### 173. Important Words:

تبرأ (disown) is derived from برى. They say برى من العيب او الدين i.e. he became free from defect or got clear of debt. بامراً شريكه means, he became separated from his partner. تبرأ من فلان means, he separated from such a one; he got clear of him; he declared to have no connection with him; he renounced or disowned him (Aqrab).

اسباب (ties) is the plural of سبب which signifies: (1) a tie or a rope; (2) a means which helps a person to reach his destination; (3) a way or a path, leading to something; (4) love or relationship (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse vividly describes the scene when those guilty of idolatry will be called to account for their evil beliefs and practices. They will look to their leaders for help and guidance, but the latter will disown them and all ties of love and kinship between them will be cut asunder and all supports and all means of rescue will be lost.

as they have disowned us.’ Thus will Allah show them their works as anguish for them, and they shall not get out of the Fire.<sup>174</sup>

**R. 21.**

169. O ye men, eat of “what is lawful *and* good in the earth;

يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ ﴿٢١٩﴾

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا

“5:89; 8:70; 16:115.

The verse is a stern warning to those who blindly follow their leaders and, being misled by them, reject God’s Messengers.

**174. Important Words:**

كرّة (return) is the infinitive noun from كر. They say كر الفارس i.e. the horseman returned to the attack after he had raced back. فعله كره بعد كره means, he did it again and again. كره therefore means: (1) returning to the attack; (2) returning to the original state (3) a turn or time (Mufradāt & Aqrab).

حسرة (anguish) is the plural of حسرة which is derived from حسر. They say حسر البحر i.e. the sea sank or receded from the shore. حسر الرجل means: (1) the man was tired and wearied (2) he was sorrowful and grieved. حسرة means: (1) feeling intense anguish at a loss sustained or harm suffered; (2) regret or compunction; (3) grief or sorrow for a thing that has escaped one (Aqrab & Tāj).

**Commentary:**

Having despaired of receiving help from their leaders, the disbelievers will, on the Day of Judgement, wish that they may be sent back to the world so that they may denounce

these leaders in this world just as they were disowning them in the next. But this will be only a vain desire doomed to perish unfulfilled. Nay, the selfsame desire will become a source of anguish and punishment for them.

The clause, *they shall not get out of the Fire*, does not mean that the punishment of Hell will be unending. Islam does not believe in the eternity of Hell. While the Quran speaks of the blessings of Paradise as never-ending and everlasting, it does not say so of the punishment of Hell but simply speaks of it as being very long (11:108, 109). The sayings of the Holy Prophet also support this view. "There will come a time over Hell," he is reported to have said, "when there will remain none in it" (‘Ummāl). The verse only means that, being unable to bear the torment of Hell, the dwellers of the Fire will wish to come out of it, but will not be able to do so (32:21), until their term of punishment is over. The word *Fire* as used in this verse may also mean the fire of anguish and agony in which they shall burn on account of their designs and cherished hopes having come to naught.

and <sup>a</sup>follow not the footsteps of Satan; surely <sup>b</sup>he is to you an open enemy.<sup>175</sup>

طَيِّبًا ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ط إِنَّهُ  
لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٦٩﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:209; 6:143; 24:22. <sup>b</sup>7:23; 12:6; 28:16; 35:7; 36:61.

### 175. Important Words:

حلال (lawful) is the noun-infinitive from حل which has several meanings. حل العقد means, he unloosened the tie. حل بالمكان means, he alighted at the house. حل عليه غضب الله means, God's punishment came down on him or befell him. حل الشيء means, the thing became lawful. حل اليمين means, he absolved himself from the oath. حلال is, therefore, that the use of which has been permitted by God; a lawful thing. The word is the opposite of حرام which means, a forbidden or unlawful thing (Aqrab).

طاب (good) is derived from طاب meaning, he or it became good. طاب الشيء means, the thing was good or pure or wholesome. Thus طيب would mean, good, pure, wholesome and agreeable (Aqrab).

خطوة (footsteps) is the plural of خطا which is derived from خطا which means, he stepped or walked, خطوة means, the distance between the two feet of a person while walking. The clause لا تتبعوا خطوات الشيطان would also mean, do not follow the ways of Satan (Aqrab).

مبين (open) is derived from بان meaning: (1) it became clear and manifest; or (2) it became separated or disunited or cut off. بان الشيء means (1) he or it made the thing clear; or (2) he or it cut the thing into pieces or made it disunited. بان الشيء means, the thing became clear. Thus مبين would

mean: (1) a being or thing which is clear and manifest; (2) a being or thing which makes other things clear; and (3) a being or thing which cuts another thing into pieces and makes it disunited (Aqrab).

### Commentary:

Good actions must accompany true faith. So with this verse begins a discussion of the second part of Abraham's prayer regarding the work of the Promised Prophet, i.e., the teaching of the laws of Shari'ah and of the wisdom underlying them.

Henceforward ordinances about Prayer, Fasting, Pilgrimage and Zakah are given and so are the laws relating to social matters and as food plays an important part in the formation of a man's character, regulations concerning it are mentioned first. According to Islam, all food should be: (1) حلال i.e. allowed by the Law; and (2) it should also be طيب i.e. good, pure, wholesome and agreeable. Under the second condition, sometimes even lawful things become forbidden. Thus, for instance, the eating of goat's flesh is حلال or lawful; but if some flesh becomes rotten and putrefied, it will not be طيب and will consequently not be permissible. This distinction between حلال (lawful) and طيب (good and pure) food is not to be found in any teaching except that of Islam. So comprehensive is the

170. He only <sup>a</sup>enjoins upon you what is evil and what is foul, and that you say of Allah what you do not know.<sup>176</sup>

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَإِنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:269; 24:22.

Islamic teaching on this subject that not only are conditions laid down as to when lawful things become prohibited, as in this verse, but also as to when even unlawful food becomes permissible (2:174; 5:4; 6:120, 146; 16:116).

The prohibition against following Satan, coming immediately after the commandment with respect to food, alludes to the influence which physical actions exercise on the moral and spiritual conditions of man. The use of unlawful and unwholesome food tends to impair our moral and spiritual faculties, while lawful and wholesome food improves our morals and helps the development of our spiritual powers. This subject is also dealt with in 23:52.

As explained under Important Words above, the word *مبين* gives three different meanings. Thus *عدو مبين* would mean (1) that Satan is a manifest and open enemy of man; (2) that Satan is not only manifest himself but also makes his connections manifest—leaving a visible trace of wickedness wherever he treads; and (3) that he is always striving to create disunion among the Faithful and to cut asunder all such ties as God has ordered to be made firm. In this connection see also 2:28.

### 176. Important Words:

*سوء* (evil) is the noun-infinitive from

*ساء* meaning, he or it became bad or evil. *ساء الامر فلانا* means, the thing was disagreeable to such a one and made him sorrowful. *سوء* means: (1) evil, bad or wicked; (2) mischief and corruption; (3) anything that makes a person sad and sorrowful (Aqrab & Mufradāt).

*فحشاء* (foul) is derived from *فحش* i.e. it became excessive or immoderate; or it became manifestly or excessively bad, evil or unseemly. Thus *فحشاء* means: (1) anything manifestly or excessively bad, evil, etc.; (2) anything forbidden by God; (3) foul talk or saying; and (4) illegal intercourse or fornication (Lane & Aqrab).

### Commentary:

This verse speaks of the subtle ways by which Satan misleads man. He first prompts him to do deeds which do not appear to be manifestly wicked and the influence of which is confined to the person of the doer alone. Then, step by step, he makes the deluded person a hardened sinner, causing him to lose all sense of modesty, till finally the man goes so far as to make innovations in religion for which he possesses neither knowledge nor authority. As Satan's promptings are never based on knowledge, so the natural consequence is that those who follow him begin to attribute to God things without having the least authority for

171. And “when it is said to them, ‘Follow that which Allah has sent down,’ they say: ‘Nay, we will follow that wherein we found our fathers.’ What! even if their fathers had no sense at all and no guidance?<sup>177</sup>

172. And the case of those who disbelieve is like the case of one who shouts to that which hears nothing but a call and a cry. <sup>b</sup>They are deaf, dumb, and blind—so they do not understand.<sup>178</sup>

وَإِذِ اقْتُلْتُمْ لَهُمْ آتِيعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا  
بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا آفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوْ لَوْ كَانَ  
آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ  
بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً ط صَمْ  
بِكُمْ عُمَىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:105; 10:79; 21:53, 54; 31:22. <sup>b</sup>See 2:19.

so doing. Their theories are based on ignorance and not on knowledge. In fact, all knowledge is based on close observation, and close observation cannot be had, unless one enjoys nearness of a thing. So it is futile to expect true knowledge of God from those who are away from Him.

### 177. Commentary:

It is indeed strange, but nevertheless a hard fact, that in matters of religion which so deeply concern man, he is often content to follow blindly the footsteps of his forefathers and does not even care to satisfy himself that his forefathers were wise and well-guided people. On the other hand, in worldly matters where only the interests of this life are at stake, and that too partially, he often takes meticulous care to see that he adopts the right course and does not blindly follow others.

### 178. Important Words:

نعق (shouts) is derived from نعن which means, he cried aloud. They say نعن الراعي بغممه i.e. the shepherd shouted to his flock. نعن المؤذن means, the (*Mu'adhdhin*) raised his voice to call people to Prayer (Aqrab).

دعاء (call). دعاه means, he called a person by addressing him (Aqrab).

نداء (cry) means: (1) a loud voice or cry; (2) a general call without any specific person being addressed (Aqrab & Lane).

### Commentary:

In this verse the Holy Prophet has been likened to a herdsman who shouts to his flock but they hear nothing except the sound, being unable to understand the meaning of the words uttered by him. Similarly, the people whom the Prophet addresses are like a herd of animals

173. "O ye who believe, eat of the good things We have provided for you, and render thanks to Allah, if it is He Whom you worship.<sup>179</sup>

174. <sup>b</sup>He has made unlawful to you only that which dies of itself, and blood and the flesh of swine, and that on which the name of any other than Allah has been invoked. But he who is driven by necessity, being neither disobedient nor exceeding the limit, it shall be no sin for him. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.<sup>180</sup>

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ  
مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ

إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ  
الْخِزْيِيرِ وَمَا أَهَلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَن  
اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ  
عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٨٠﴾

<sup>a</sup>5:6; 16:115; 23:52; 40:65. <sup>b</sup>5:4; 6:146; 16:116.

unable to follow and understand his call. The words of the verse fully expressed would read somewhat like this: مثل الذين كفروا كمثل اصحاب الذي ينطق i.e. "The case of those who disbelieve is like that of a people surrounding one who shouts, etc." The Holy Prophet conveyed the Divine Message to disbelievers. They heard his voice but made no effort to grasp the meaning of his message. His words fell, as it were, on deaf ears, with the result that the spiritual faculties of the disbelievers became wholly vitiated and they stooped low to the level of animals and beasts (7:180; 25:45).

### 179. Commentary:

The injunction contained in the words, "eat of طيبات i.e. good, pure and wholesome things", indicates that

Muslims are not allowed to use things which may, in any way, injure their physical or moral or spiritual health, though they may be حلال i.e. allowed by Law. The injunction is thus very important and far-reaching in its effect. The words, *We have provided for you*, further imply that Muslims are also not allowed to make use of things acquired by unfair and unlawful means. Only the things bestowed by God, i.e. those lawfully earned, are to be used.

### 180. Important Words:

الميتة (that which dies of itself) is derived from مات i.e. he died. ميتة means: (1) an animal that has died a natural death (Aqrab); (2) an animal that has not been slaughtered in a manner prescribed by Law (Lane & Mufradāt).

الخنزير (swine). Authorities differ as to the derivation of this word, some deriving it from خنزير and others from خنز. The word الخنزيرة means, hard and rugged land; or a clumsy, badly-finished axe. خنز الرجل means, the man looked with the hinder parts or outer angles of his eyes (Lisān). خنزرت العين means, the eye was or became narrow and small. خنز الرجل means, the man looked from the outer angle of the eye; or he had a distortion of one of his eyes. The Arabs say: كل خنزيرا خنز i.e. all swine look from the outer angles of their eyes. خنز المرء means the man affected or pretended to be cunning. الخنزير means, the swine, the hog, the pig; a certain well-known foul animal the eating of whose flesh is said to be forbidden by every Prophet (Lane). The Holy Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement says of the word خنزير: "The very name of this foul animal contains an allusion to the prohibition of its flesh. It is a combination of خنز and ار, the first part meaning, 'very foul' and the second, 'I see'. The word thus literally means, 'I see it very foul'...What is yet more remarkable is that in Hindi this animal is known by the name सूँ which is similarly composed of two words, i.e. सूँ and ار, the latter part being identical with the latter part of the Arabic word and the former being the exact equivalent of the first part of the Arabic form. The Hindi word, therefore, exactly means the same as the Arabic, viz. 'I see it very foul'...In Hindi this animal is also known as بد meaning bad or foul which is probably a translation of the original Arabic word" (Teachings of Islam).

هل (invoked) is derived from هل

meaning, it (the moon) made its appearance; he (the man) cried aloud. هل also means, it made its appearance; he called or cried aloud. هل بالتسمية على الذبيحة means, he invoked or pronounced the name of God while slaughtering an animal. هل السيف بفلان means, the sword cut into him (Aqrab). هللال which is the infinitive-noun from هل means, to raise one's voice aloud by way of exclamation, on seeing the هللال or the moon of the first night (Mufradāt). Thus هل به لغير الله would mean, on which the name of anything besides God has been invoked at the time of slaughter; or which has been cut or slaughtered for a being other than God.

اضطر (driven by necessity) is derived from ضر which means, it did harm. ضره الى كذا means, it forced him to resort to that. اضطره means, he compelled him against his will. اضطره الى كذا means, he compelled him against his will to have recourse to that (Aqrab).

باغ (disobedient) is derived from بغى meaning, he rebelled; he disobeyed; he committed a wrong. باغ is really باغى being the active participle from بغى meaning, one who disobeys; one who is rebellious (Aqrab).

عاد (exceeding the limit) is the active participle from عاد i.e. he exceeded the proper or the prescribed limit. عادى عليه means, he transgressed against him. عاد is really عادى meaning, one who exceeds the limit (Aqrab).

اثم (sin). The verb اثم means, he did a thing which was unlawful for him; he did a thing which made him deserving of punishment. Thus the noun اثم means: (1) anything unlawful, i.e. a sin; (2) anything which makes a person deserving of punishment

(Aqrab); (3) anything that pricks the mind as something evil (Mufradāt).

### Commentary:

This verse speaks only of food that is حرام or unlawful. It makes no mention of طبيات or pure and wholesome things to which reference has already been made in the preceding verse. It should not be supposed that the four things mentioned in this verse are the only things prohibited in Islam. As a matter of fact, Islam prohibits the use of many things; but they are divided into grades or classes, some of them being حرام or unlawful and others being ممنوع or simply forbidden. The verse under comment mentions only the former class. The forbidden things have been stated by the Holy Prophet and are mentioned in Ḥadīth. They must not be used by the Faithful but they cannot be called حرام or unlawful. In fact, there is a great difference between unlawful (حرام) and forbidden (ممنوع) things. Islam recognizes due difference in the importance of different things, and so all prohibitions cannot be classed together and treated as of equal importance. The use of حرام or an unlawful thing has a great and direct bearing on the moral and spiritual development of man but it is not so with a ممنوع or forbidden thing which stands on a lower level of importance, though both are prohibited.

Among the things declared حرام or unlawful in this verse, the injuriousness of consuming blood and the flesh of a dead animal as food has been recognized by most authorities on medicine. The use of the flesh of

swine has also proved to be injurious not only to the physical health of man, but also to his moral and spiritual health. The swine eats filth and takes delight in living in dirty places. It has indecent habits and possesses the evil trait of sex-perversion. Tape-worms, scrofula, cancer and encysted trichina are known to be more prevalent among pork-eating peoples. The use of pork also causes trichinosis.

The clause, *and that on which the name of any other than Allah has been invoked*, refers to that animal at the time of whose slaughter the name of any deity other than Allah is invoked or that animal which is slaughtered with a view to winning the pleasure of an idol or a saint etc., even though the name of Allah may have been mentioned while slaughtering it. Hence, all such animals as are sacrificed in order to propitiate a false deity or a saint, or any food that is cooked as an offering to a deceased person have been condemned as unlawful. Such foods are spiritually harmful. The incentive to these offerings is شرك (i.e. idolatry) and شرك is tantamount to rebellion against God.

In spite of the fact that the above mentioned things have been declared to be unlawful, the verse goes on to say that if for want of food the very life of a person should be in danger, considerations of the preservation of human life must temporarily prevail over other considerations. This is a case of choosing the lesser of two evils. Hence the verse very wisely makes an exception in case of a real and urgent necessity when no other

175. <sup>a</sup>Those who conceal that which Allah has sent down of the Book and <sup>b</sup>take in exchange for that a paltry price, they fill their bellies with nothing but

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ  
الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا  
أُولَئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا

<sup>a</sup>See 2:147. <sup>b</sup>See 2:42.

food is available and one is in real danger of losing one's life if one does not use the unlawful food. In fact, of the four unlawful things, the first three have been declared unlawful mostly on the basis of the fact that they are injurious to physical and moral health, and it is certainly wise to permit their use in case of urgent necessity when there is real danger to life. As for the fourth thing, i.e. a food consecrated to any other being beside Allah, it is evident that it is not injurious intrinsically. It is injurious only from the point of view of faith. Therefore when such a thing is used merely to save one's life, which may be so usefully employed in the service of religion, there can be no real objection in eating it, because this extremely rare act cannot be considered as involving شرك or idolatry, particularly when it is performed with the sanction of God.

Permission for the exceptional use of such things is, however, qualified by two important conditions: (1) that one who resorts to this use must not be باغى (i.e. disobedient). There should be no lurking spirit of revolt or disobedience behind the act. The circumstances must be real and the condition genuine, and nothing should be done out of design and wilfulness; (2) that the user of

unlawful food under exceptional circumstances should not become عار i.e. he should not exceed the limit. He should confine himself to such quantity only as is absolutely essential to save life. Thus the exceptional use is permissible only at a time when one is under *bona fide* constraint and is in real danger, and then only to the extent which is absolutely necessary for saving life.

Though it has been declared in this verse that there is no sin in partaking of a prohibited food when no revolt or transgression is intended, yet as one might err in judging what is revolt or transgression and what is not, and thus be unconsciously guilty of breaking a divine commandment, the Quran adds the words: *surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful*, meaning that an unintentional deviation will be forgiven by the Merciful God. The clause also reminds a Muslim that though it has been made permissible for him to take unlawful food in exceptional circumstances, yet such circumstances may be due to certain hidden shortcomings of his own for which he should seek God's forgiveness, and that if he does so he will find God Forgiving and Merciful. In this connection see also 5:4; 6:146 & 16:116.

fire. <sup>a</sup>Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And for them is a grievous punishment. **181**

176. It is they <sup>b</sup>who have taken error in exchange for guidance and punishment for forgiveness. How great is their endurance of the Fire! **182**

النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ  
وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ ۗ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهَدَىٰ  
وَالْعَذَابِ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ ۚ فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ  
عَلَى النَّارِ ﴿١٧٦﴾

<sup>a</sup>2:160. <sup>b</sup>2:17; 3:178; 4:45.

### 181. Important Words:

يُزَكِّيهِمْ (purify them) is from زَكَّى meaning, he purified him; he elevated him (Aqrab). See also 2:130.

### Commentary:

Sin generally originates from an undue love of the world but the world is indeed a small thing as compared with the Hereafter (9:38). Those who forsake truth or conceal it for the things of this world eat naught but fire which will eventually consume their own bodies. The verse beautifully hints that the things of this world, as opposed to spiritual blessings, are like the hellfire of the next. As food goes to make up the tissues of the body, so will the body of an enemy of truth eating fire become one whole mass of fire, serving as fuel for the fire of Hell. The words also signify that as fire cannot satisfy hunger and thirst, but rather increases them, so the things of this world cannot bring about peace of mind and contentment but rather the reverse of them. The verse also constitutes a stern warning to those preachers who, in order to gain worldly ends, accommodate their

sermons to the views of the listeners and refrain from speaking the truth.

The words *Allah will not speak to them* do not mean that God will not speak to them at all; for God, being the Lord and Master, will speak even to the guilty on the Day of Judgement, but such speech will be like that of a judge condemning a criminal to punishment. What is meant is that God will not speak to them with love and affection.

The words, *nor will He purify them*, mean that He will not adjudge them as purified but will declare them unclean and unholy. These words may also mean that on the Day of Judgement, God will not elevate them or exalt them to Himself but will leave them abased and neglected. Again, as these people opposed the truth in the world in order that they might enjoy the good things thereof, they will correspondingly have a painful punishment in the Hereafter and will be deprived of all sweetness of life in the world to come (see important Words under 2:8).

### 182. Commentary:

The words *على النار* i.e. *how*

177. That is because <sup>a</sup>Allah has sent down the Book with the truth; and surely, they who disagree concerning the Book are gone far in enmity.<sup>183</sup>

**R. 22.**

178. <sup>b</sup>It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but truly righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and <sup>c</sup>spends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask for charity, and for ransoming the captives; and who observes

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ ط  
وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اِخْتَفَتُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي  
شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ؕ

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ  
الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ  
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ  
وَالنَّبِيِّينَ ؕ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي  
الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ  
السَّبِيلِ ؕ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ ؕ  
وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ ؕ وَالْمُوفُونَ

<sup>a</sup>17:106. <sup>b</sup>2:190. <sup>c</sup>76:9.

*great is their endurance of the Fire*, and similar other expressions are used in the Arabic language to express wonder on the part of the onlooker and tenacity and intensiveness of the relevant quality in the object. The expression, therefore, means that though the deeds of disbelievers are sure to bring down upon them the great punishment of Fire, yet they so tenaciously persist in their wicked course as to indicate that they are, as it were, possessed of great endurance of its torment.

**183. Commentary:**

The estrangement of the disbelievers from the truth and their long association with falsehood have

made them callous and incapable of knowing and accepting the Quranic revelation. Just as a sick person sometimes loses his faculty of taste and consequently declines to partake of delicious things, similarly these people, owing to their lack of contact with truth for a long time, have become inclined to reject the word of God. They prefer small worldly gains to the great spiritual and material advantages that would certainly have accrued to them, if they had accepted the truth. The words *في شقاق بعيد* i.e. "gone far in enmity" signify that there has come to exist a wide gulf between these people on the one hand and the truth on the other.