



اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ



Allah! there is no Allah but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

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Introduction and Summary

This Surah is cognate to Surah 2, but the matter is here treated from a different point of view. The reference to Badr (Ramadan A.H. 2) and Uhud (Shawwal A.H. 3) give a clue to the dates of those passages.

Like Surah 2, it takes a general view of the religious history of mankind, with special reference to the people of the Book, proceeds to explain the birth of the new people of Islam and their ordinances, insists on the need of struggle and fighting in the cause of Truth, and exhorts those who have been blessed

with Islam to remain constant in Faith, pray for guidance, and maintain their spiritual hope for the future.

The new points of view developed are:

1. The emphasis is here laid on the duty of the Christians to accept the new light; the Christians are here specially appealed to, as the Jews were specially appealed to in the last Surah;
2. The lessons of the battles of Badr and Uhud are set out for the Muslim community; and
3. the responsibilities of that community are insisted on both internally and in their relations to those outside.

Summary- Allah having revealed His Book, confirming previous revelations, we must accept it in all reverence, try to understand its meaning, and reject the base motives which make truth unacceptable to those who reject Faith (3:1-20, and C 54).

The People of the Book had only a portion of the Book, and if they reject the complete Book, the People of Faith must part company with them, and their day is done (3:21-30, and C. 55).

The story of the family of 'Imran (the father of Moses) leads us from the Mosaic Dispensation to the miracles connected with the birth of Jesus and his ministry (3:31-63, and C 56).

Allah's revelation being continuous, all people are invited to accept its completion in Islam, and controversies are deprecated. The Muslims are asked to hold together in union and harmony, and are promised security from harm from their enemies, and enjoined to seek friendship among their own people (3:64-120, and C. 57).

The battle of Badr showed how Allah helps and upholds the virtuous, and how patience, perseverance, and discipline find their reward; on the other hand, the lessons of Uhud must be learnt, not in despair, but in the exercise of the higher; virtues and in contempt of pain and death (3:121-148, and C. 58).

The misfortunes at Uhud are shown to be due to the indiscipline of some, the indecision and selfishness of others, and cowardice on the part of the hypocrites, but no enemy can hurt Allah's Cause (3:149-180, and C. 59).

The taunts of the enemy should be disregarded, and sincere prayer offered on Allah Who would grant His servants success and prosperity (3:181-200, and C. 60).

C.54 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:1-20)

*The Quran revelation has, step by step,
Confirmed the Law of Moses and the Gospel
Of Jesus. It is a guide from Allah,
And appeals to reason and understanding.
Let us understand it rightly, in reverence
And truth, unswayed by those who reject
Faith, and seeking ever the reward
Of the pleasure of Allah, through firmness,
Patience, discipline, and charity, ad offering others
The light which we have ourselves received.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

الم (۱)

1. A.L.M.

C342. See n. 25 to 2:1.

اللّٰهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ (۲)

2. Allah! there is no Allah but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal.

C343. Cf. 2:255.

نَزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ...

3. It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it;

... وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ (٣)

and He sent down Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus).

C344. In some editions the break between verses 3 and 4 occurs here in the middle of the sentence, but in the edition of Hafiz Uthman, followed by the Egyptian Concordance Fath-ur-Rahman, the break occurs at the word **Furqan**.

In verse-divisions our classicists have mainly followed rhythm. As the word **Furqan** from this point of view is parallel to the word **Intiqam**, which ends the next verse. I have accepted the verse-division at **Furqan** as more in consonance with Quranic rhythm. It makes no real difference to the numbering of the verses, as there is only a question of whether one line should go into verse 3 or verse 4. (R).

مِنْ قَبْلُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ ...

4. Before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the Criterion (of judgment between right and wrong).

C345. Criterion: Furqan: for meaning see 2:53 n. 68.

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ...

Then those who reject Faith in the Signs of Allah will suffer the severest penalty,

...وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انتِقَامٍ (٤)

and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ (٥)

5. From Allah, verily nothing is hidden on earth or in the heavens.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ...

6. He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases.

C346. Who can penetrate the mystery of life when a new life is just being born, except Allah?

The reference to the mystery of birth prepares us for the mystery of the birth of Jesus mentioned in [3:41](#) and the following verses.

...لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٦)

There is no god but He, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ...

7. He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: in it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning);

...هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخْرَى مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ...

they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical.

C347. This passage gives us an important clue to the interpretation of the Holy Quran. Broadly speaking it may be divided into two portions, not given separately, but intermingled: viz.

1. the nucleus or foundation of the Book, literally "the mother of the Book".
2. the part which is not entirely clear.

It is very fascinating to take up the latter, and exercise our ingenuity about its meaning, but it refers to such profound matters that are beyond human language and though people of wisdom may get some light from it, no one should be dogmatic, as the final meaning is known to Allah alone.

The Commentators usually understand the verses "of established meaning" (muhkam) to refer to the categorical orders of the Shariah (or the Law), which are plain to everyone's understanding. But perhaps the meaning is wider:

- the "mother of the Book" must include the very foundation on which all Law rests, the essence of Allah's Message, as distinguished from the various illustrative parables, allegories, and ordinances. (R).

... فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ ...

But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part there of that is allegorical,

... مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ ...

seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings,

... وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ...

but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah

... وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ...

and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say:

C348. *One reading, rejected by the majority of Commentators, but accepted by Mujahid and others, would not make a break at the point here marked Waq Lazim, but would run the two sentences together.*

In that case the construction would run:

"No one knows its hidden meanings except Allah and those who are firm in knowledge. They say", etc.

... آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا ...

"We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord;"

... وَمَا يَدَّكُرُ إِلَّا أَوَلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٧)

and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً ...

8. "Our Lord!" (they say),

"Let not our hearts deviate now after Thou hast guided us, but grant us mercy from Thine own Presence;

...إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ (٨)

for Thou art the Grantor of bounties without measure."

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهِ...

9. "Our Lord!

Thou art He that will gather mankind together against a day about which there is no doubt:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ (٩)

for Allah never fails in His promise."

C349. This is the prayer of those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. The more they know the more they realise how little they know.

But they have Faith. The glimpses they get of Truth they wish to hold fast in their hearts, and they pray to Allah to preserve them from deviating even from what light they have got.

They are sure of their eventual return to Allah, when all doubts will be solved.

Section 2

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ نُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا...

10. Those who reject faith, neither their possessions nor their (numerous) progeny will avail them aught against Allah:

...وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ وَقُودُ النَّارِ (١٠)

they are themselves but fuel for the fire.

كَذَّابِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ...

11. (Their plight will be) no better than that of the people of Pharaoh, and their predecessors:

C350. From the beginning of the world, sin, oppression, arrogance, and want of Faith have gone together.

The Pharaoh of the time of Moses relied upon his power, his territory, his armies, and his resources to mock at

Moses the messenger of Allah and to oppress the people of Moses. Allah saved the Israelite and punished their oppressors through many plagues and calamities. (R).

...كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ...

they denied Our Signs, and Allah called them to account for their sins.

وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (١١)

For Allah is strict in punishment.

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ...

12. Say to those who reject Faith:

... سَنُغْلِبُونَ وَنُحْشِرُونَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وَيَسَّ الْمِهَادُ (١٢)

"Soon will ye be vanquished and gathered together to hell, an evil bed indeed (to lie on)!

C351. As Moses warned the Egyptians, so the warning is here sounded to the Pagan Arabs, the Jews and the Christians, and all who resisted Faith that their resistance would be in vain.

Already the battle of Badr (referred to in the next verse) had been a warning how Faith must conquer with the help of Allah. The next few decades saw the Byzantine and the Persian Empires overthrown because of their arrogance and their resistance to the Law of Allah.

قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فِي فِئَتَيْنِ الَّذِينَ التَّقَاتَا ...

13. "There has already been for you a Sign in the two armies that met (in combat):

C352. This refers to the battle of Badr in Ramadhan in the second year of the Hijrah.

The little exiled community of Makkan Muslims, with their friends in Madinah had organized themselves into a God-fearing community, but were constantly in danger of being attacked by their Pagan enemies of Makkah in

alliance with some of the disaffected elements (Jews and Hypocrites) in or near Madinah itself.

The design of the Makkans was to gather all the resources they could, and with an overwhelming force, to crush and annihilate Muhammad and his party. To this end Abu Sufyan was leading a richly-laden caravan from Syria to Makkah. He called for armed aid from Makkah,

The battle was fought in the plain of Badr, about 150 kilometers south-west of Madinah. The Muslim force consisted of only about 313 men, mostly ill-armed, but they were led by Muhammad, and they were fighting for their Faith.

The Makkan army well-armed and well-equipped, numbered over a thousand and had among its leaders some of the most experienced warriors of Arabia, including Abu Jahl, the inveterate foe and persecutor of Islam.

Against all odds the Muslims won a brilliant victory, and many of the enemy leaders, including Abu Jahl, were killed. (R).

...فِنَّهُ يُفَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأُخْرَى كَافِرَةٌ يَرَوْنَهُم مِّثْلِيهِمْ رَأْيَ الْعَيْنِ ...

one was fighting in the Cause of Allah, the other resisting Allah; these saw with their own eyes twice their number.

C353. It was impossible, without the miraculous aid of Allah, for such a small and ill-equipped force as was the Muslim band, to defeat the large and well-found force of the enemy. But their Faith firmness, zeal, and discipline won them divine aid.

Enemy prisoners stated that the enemy ranks saw the Muslim force to be many times larger than it was.

...وَاللَّهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصَرِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ...

But Allah doth support with His aid whom He pleaseth.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ (١٣)

In this is a warning for such as have eyes to see."

زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ...

14. Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons;

C354. The pleasures of this world are first enumerated:

- women for love;
- sons for strength and pride;
- hoarded riches, which procure all luxuries;
- the best and finest pedigree horses;
- cattle, the measure of wealth in the ancient world, as well as the means and symbols of good farming in the modern world; and
- broad acres of well-tilled land.

By analogy, we may include, for our mechanized age, machines of all kinds -tractors, motor-cars, aeroplanes, the best internal-combustion engines, etc.

...وَالْقَنَاطِيرَ الْمُقَنْطَرَةَ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ ...

heaped-up hoards of gold and silver;

In "heaped-up hoards of gold and silver," the Arabic word translated hoards is **qaintir** plural of qintar, which literally means a Talent of 1.200 ounces of gold. (R).

...وَالْخَيْلَ الْمُسَوَّمَةَ وَالْأَنْعَامَ وَالْحَرَثَ...

horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land.

...ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

Such are the possessions of this world's life;

...وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَآبِ (١٤)

but in nearness to Allah is the best of the goals (to return to).

قُلْ أُوذِبْتُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ دَلِكُمْ ...

15. Say: shall I give you glad tidings of things far better than those?

...لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

For the righteous are gardens in nearness to their Lord, with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home;

...وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ...

with companions pure (and holy), and the good pleasure of Allah.

C355. Cf. 2:25 and n. 44.

...وَاللَّهُ بِصِيرُ بِالْعِبَادِ (١٥)

For in Allah's sight are (all) His servants.

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (١٦)

16. (Namely), those who say:

"Our Lord! we have indeed believed: forgive us, then, our sins, and save us from the agony of the fire."

...الصَّابِرِينَ ...

17. Those who show patience, firmness and self-control;

C356. Sabr (**Sabirin**) includes many shades of meaning: I have specified three here, viz., patience, firmness, and self-control.

See 2:45 and 2:153 and notes 61 and 157.

... وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ (١٧)

who are true (in word and deed);

who worship devoutly;

who spend (in the way of Allah);

and who pray for forgiveness in the early hours of the morning.

C357. True servants of Allah are described in [3:16](#) and [17](#). They have faith, humility, and hope ([3:16](#)); and they have certain virtues ([3:17](#)) viz.

1. patience, steadfastness, self-restraint, and all that goes under the full definition of **Sabr**;

this shows a certain attitude of mind:

2. in all their dealings they are true and sincere as they are also in their promises and words;
this marks them out in social conduct:
3. further, their spiritual worship is earnest and deep, an inner counterpart of their outward conduct;
4. their worship of Allah shows itself in their love of their fellow-men, for they are ready and liberal in charity: and
5. their self-discipline is so great that the first thing they do every morning is humbly to approach their God.

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ...

18. There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice.

C358. Allah Himself speaks to us through His revelations (through angels) and through His Creation, for all Nature glorifies Allah.

No thinking mind, if it only judges the matter fairly, can fail to find the same witness in his own heart and conscience.

All this points to the Unity of Allah, His exalted nature, and His wisdom.

...لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١٨)

There is no god but He, the Exalted in Power, the Wise.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ...

19. The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His will):

...وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوْتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًّا
بَيْنَهُمْ...

nor did the People of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them.

C359. Baghyan:

- through envy,
- through selfish contumacy or obstinacy,
- through sheer contrary-mindedness, or desire to resist or rebel.

Cf. 2:90, and 2:213.

...وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (١٩)

But if any deny the Signs of Allah, Allah is swift in calling to account.

فَإِنْ حَاجُّوكَ فَقُلْ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ ..

20. So if they dispute with thee, say:

"I have submitted my whole self to Allah and so have those who follow me." .

C360. Wajh: whole self. See n. 114 to 2:112.

...وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَالْأُمِّيِّينَ أَسْلَمْتُمْ ...

And say to the People of the Book and to those who are unlearned: "Do ye (also) submit yourselves?"

C361. The People of the Book may be supposed to know something about the previous religious history of mankind. To them the appeal should be easy and intelligible, as all Religion is one, and it is only being renewed in Islam.

But the appeal is also made to the Pagan Arabs, who are unlearned, and who can well be expected to follow the example of one of their own, who received divine enlightenment, and was able to bring new knowledge to them.

A great many of both these classes did so. But the few who resisted Allah's grace, and actually threatened and persecuted those who believed, are told that Allah will look after His own.

...فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُوا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ ...

If they do, they are in right guidance, but if they turn back, thy duty is to convey the Message;

...وَاللَّهُ بِصِيرٍ بِالْعِبَادِ (٢٠)

and in Allah's sight are (all) His servants.

C362. Note the literary skill in the argument as it proceeds.

The mystery of birth faintly suggests that we are coming to the story of Jesus.

The exposition of the Book suggests that Islam is the same religion as that of the People of the Book.

Next we are told that the People of the Book made their religion one-sided, and through the priesthood of the family of Imran, we are brought to the story of Jesus, who was rejected by a body of the Jews as Muhammad was rejected by a body of both Jews and Christians.

C.55 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:21-30)

*If the people who received
Earlier revelations confine themselves
To partial truths, and in their pride
Shut their eyes to the whole of the Book
Of Allah, their day is done
Let the Muslims seek the society
And friendship of their own, and trust
In Allah, who knows all, and holds
Every soul responsible for its own deeds.*

Section 3

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ...

21. As to those who deny the Signs of Allah, and in defiance of right, slay the Prophets,

C363. Right; haqq has many shades of meaning;

1. right, in the sense of having a right to something;
2. right, in the sense of straight conduct, as opposed to wrong;
3. truth;
4. justice.

All these shades are implied here.

...وَيَقْتُلُونَ الَّذِينَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْقِسْطِ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢١)

and slay those who teach just dealing with mankind, announce to them a grievous penalty.

C364. Examples of the Prophets slain were:

- "the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar": Matt. 23:35.

Cf. 2:61. n. 75.

- Again, John the Baptist (Yahya, noble, chaste, a prophet, of the goodly company of the righteous. 3:39), was bound, imprisoned, and beheaded, and his head presented to a dancing harlot: Matt. 14:1-11.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...

22. They are those whose works will bear no fruit in this world and in the Hereafter,

C365. Cf. 2:217.

...وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نَّاصِرِينَ (٢٢)

nor will they have anyone to help.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيحًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ...

23. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who have been given a portion of the Book?

C366. A portion of the Book: I conceive that Allah's revelation as a whole throughout the ages is "The Book".

The Law of Moses, and the Gospel of Jesus were portions of the Book. The Quran completes the revelation and is par excellence the Book of Allah.

...يُدْعُونَ إِلَى كِتَابِ اللَّهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَهُمْ
مُعْرِضُونَ (٢٣)

They are invited to the Book of Allah, to settle their dispute, but a party of them turn back and decline (the arbitration).

C367. The Commentators mention a particular incident when a dispute was submitted by the Jews for arbitration to the Holy Prophet. He appealed to the authority of their own books, but they tried to conceal and prevaricate.

The general lesson is that the People of the Book should have been the first to welcome in Muhammad the living exponent of the Message of Allah as a whole, and some of them did so: but others turned away from guilty arrogance, relying on corrupted texts and doctrines forged out of their own fancies, though they were not conformable to reason and good sense.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَنْ نَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ...

24. This because they say: "The fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days;"

C368. Cf. 2:80.

...وَعَرَّهْمُ فِي دِينِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (٢٤)

for their forgeries deceive them as to their own religion.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جَمَعْنَاهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ...

25. But how (will they fare) when We gather them together against a day about which there is no doubt,

...وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٢٥)

and each soul will be paid out just what it has earned, without (favor or injustice)?

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ...

26. Say: "O Allah! Lord of Power (and Rule),

...تُوْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ...

thou givest Power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off power from whom Thou pleasest,

...وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ...

thou enduest with honor whom thou pleasest, and thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest;

...بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ...

in Thy hand is all Good.

C369. Another glorious passage, full of meaning. The governing phrase in it all is: "In Thy hand is all Good."

What is the standard by which we may judge Good?

It is Allah's Will. Therefore when we submit to Allah's Will, and real Islam illuminates us, we see the highest Good.

There has been and is much controversy as to what is the Highest Good.

To the Muslim there is no difficulty: it is the Will of Allah. He must ever strive to learn and understand that Will. But once in that fortress, he is secure. He is not troubled with the nature of Evil.

... إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٦)

Verily, over all things thou hast power.

تُؤَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُؤَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ...

27. "Thou causeth the Night to gain on the Day, and Thou causeth the Day to gain on the Night;

C370. True in many senses.

In every twenty-four hours, night merges into day, and day into night, and there is no clear boundary between them.

In every solar year, the night gains on the day after the summer solstice, and the day gains on the night after the winter solstice.

But further, if light and darkness are viewed as symbols of;

- a. knowledge and ignorance,
- b. happiness and misery,
- c. spiritual insight and spiritual blindness,

Allah's Plan or Will works here too as in the physical world, and in His hand is all Good.

...وَأُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَأُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ...

Thou bringest the Living out of the Dead, and thou bringest the Dead out of the Living;

C371. We can interpret Dead and Living in even more senses than Day and Night: death physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual.

Life and Death may also apply to collective, group, or national life. And who has ever solved the mystery of Life? But Faith refers it to Allah's Will and Plan.

...وَوَرَزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٢٧)

and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest without measure."

C372. Again true in all the senses suggested in the two previous notes. The only Eternal Reality is Allah. All else has its basis and sustenance in Him. Lest our little minds create fear out of "nicely calculated less or more", we are told at once that Allah's bounty is without measure or account.

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

28. Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers;

...وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً ...

if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah; except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourselves from them.

C373. If Faith is a fundamental matter in our lives our associations and friendships will naturally be with those who share our Faith.

"Evil communications corrupt good manners": and evil company may corrupt Faith.

In our ordinary every-day affairs of business, we are asked to seek the help of Believers rather than Unbelievers. Only in this way can our community be strong in organisation and unity. But where there is no question of preference, or where in self-defence we have to take the assistance of those not belonging to our Faith, that is permissible.

In any case we must not weaken our Brotherhood: we must try to make it stronger if possible.

...وَيَحذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ (٢٨)

But Allah cautions you (to remember) Himself, for the final goal is to Allah.

قُلْ إِنْ تُخْفُوا مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ أَوْ تُبْدُوهُ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ...

29. Say:

"Whether ye hide what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah knows it all.

...وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

He knows what is in the heavens, and what is on earth.

...وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٩)

And Allah has power over all things."

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا...

30. "On the day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done,

...وَمَا عَمِلْتَ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا...

and all the evil it has done, it will wish there were a great distance between it and its evil.

وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَاللَّهُ رَؤُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (٣٠)

But Allah cautions you (to remember) Himself.

And Allah is full of kindness to those that serve Him."

C.56 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:31-63)

*Allah's truth is continuous, and His Prophets
From Adam, through Noah and Abraham,
Down to the last of the Prophets, Muhammad,
From one brotherhood. Of the progeny
Of 'Imran, father of Moses and Aaron,
Sprang a woman, who devoted
Her unborn offspring to Allah.
The child was Mary the mother of Jesus,
Her cousin was the wife of the priest
Zakariya, who took charge of Mary.
To Zakariya, in his old age, was born
A son Yahya, amid prodigies;
Yahya was the herald of Jesus
The son of Mary, and was known
As John the Baptist. Jesus was of virgin birth,
And performed many miracles.
But those to whom he came as Prophet
Rejected him, and plotted for his death.
Their plots failed, for Allah's Plan
Is above man's plots. So will it be
With Islam, the Truth from all eternity.*

Section 4

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ...

31. Say:

"If ye do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you, and forgive you your sins,

...وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٣١)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ ...

32. Say: "Obey Allah and His Messenger;"

...فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ (٣٢)

but if they turn back, Allah loveth not those who reject Faith.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٣)

33. Allah did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham and the family of Imran above all people.

ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِنْ بَعْضٍ ...

34. Offspring, one of the other;

C374. The Prophets in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim dispensation form one family literally. But the argument is wider. All men of God form spiritually one family. If you love and obey Allah, love and obey His Messenger; your love, obedience and discipline will be the test of your Faith.

... وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٣٤)

and Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَةُ عِمْرَانَ ...

35. Behold! a woman of Imran said:

C375. Now we begin the story of Jesus.

As a prelude we have the birth of Mary and the parallel story of John the Baptist, Yahya the son of Zakariya.

Yahya's mother Elisabeth was a cousin of Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:36), and therefore John and Jesus were cousins by blood, and there was a spiritual cousinhood in their birth and career.

Elisabeth was of the daughters of Aaron (Luke 1:5), of a priestly family which went back to Aaron the brother of Moses and son of Imran. Her husband Zakariya was actually a priest, and her cousin Mary was presumably also of a priestly family.

By tradition Mary's mother was called Hannah (in Latin, Anna, and in English, Anne), and her father was called Imran. Hannah is therefore both a descendant of the priestly house of Imran and the wife of Imran,—"a woman of Imran" in a double sense,

... رَبِّ إِنِّي نَدَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي ...

"O my Lord!

I do dedicate unto thee what is in my womb for Thy special service, so accept this of me,

C376. Muharrar: freed from all worldly affairs and specially dedicated to Allah's service.

She expected a son, who was to be a special devotee, a miraculous son of the old age of his parents, but Allah gave her instead a daughter. But that daughter was Mary the mother of Jesus, the chosen one among the women: 3:42.

... إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٣٥)

for Thou hearest and knowest all things."

فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ ...

36. When she was delivered, she said: "O my Lord! behold! I am delivered of a female child!"

... وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ ...

And Allah knew best what she brought forth --

C377. The mother of Mary expected a male child. Was she disappointed that it was a female child?

No, for she had Faith, and she knew that Allah's Plan was better than any wishes of hers.

Mary was no ordinary girl: only Allah knew what it was that her mother brought forth.

... وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنثَى...

"And nowise is the male like the female.

C378. The female child could not be devoted to Temple service under the Mosaic law, as she intended. But she was marked out for a special destiny as a miracle-child, to be the mother of the miracle-child Jesus.

She was content to seek Allah's protection for her against all evil. There is a certain sense of pride in the girl on the part of the mother.

...وَأِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَدُرِّبْتُهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ (٣٦)

I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from the Evil One, the Rejected."

فَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا...

37. Right graciously did her Lord accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty; to the care of Zakariya was she assigned.

...كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا...

Every time that he entered (her) chamber to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance.

...قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّى لَكَ هَذَا...

He said: "O Mary! whence (comes) this to you?"

...قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ...

She said: "From Allah:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٣٧)

for Allah provides sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure."

C379. Mary grew under Allah's special protection. Her sustenance, under which we may include both her physical needs and her spiritual food, came from Allah, and her growth was indeed a "goodly growth" which I have tried to express in the Text by the words "purity and beauty".

Some apocryphal Christian writings say that she was brought up in the Temple to the age of twelve like a dove, and that she was fed by angels.

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ ...

38. There did Zakariya pray to his Lord,

... قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ...

saying: "O my Lord! grant unto me from Thee a progeny that is pure;

...إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ (٣٨)

for Thou art He that heareth prayer!"

C380. The birth of Mary, the mother of Jesus, of John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus, and of Jesus, the prophet of Israel, whom Israel rejected, occurred in that order chronologically, and are told in that order.

They are all inter-connected. Zakariya prayed for no ordinary son. He and his wife were past the age of parenthood. Seeing the growth of Mary, he prayed for some child from Allah,- "from Thee, a progeny that is pure".

To his surprise, he is given a son in the flesh, ushered in by a special Sign. (R)

فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي فِي الْمِحْرَابِ ...

39. While he was standing in prayer in the chamber, the angels called unto him:

... أَنْ اللَّهُ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيَى ...

"Allah doth give thee glad tidings of Yahya,

...مُصَدِّقًا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ...

witnessing the truth of a Word from Allah,

C381. Notice: "a Word from Allah", not "the Word of Allah", the epithet that mystical Christianity uses for Jesus.

As stated in [3:59 below](#), Jesus was created by a miracle, by Allah's word "Be", and he was.

... وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا وَنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٣٩)

and (be besides) noble, chaste, and a Prophet, of the (goodly) company of the righteous."

قَالَ رَبِّ أُنَىٰ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِي الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَأَتِي عَاقِرٌ...

40. He said: "O my Lord! how shall I have a son, seeing I am very old, and my wife is barren?"

... قَالَ كَذَلِكَ ...

"Thus," was the answer,

... اللَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ (٤٠)

"doth Allah accomplish what He willeth."

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِّي آيَةً...

41. He said: "O my Lord! give me a sign!"

... قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ إِلَّا رَمْرًا...

"Thy Sign," was the answer, "shall be that thou shalt speak to no man for three days but with signals.

... وَادْكُرْ رَبَّكَ كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَارِ (٤١)

Then celebrate the praises of thy Lord again and again, and glorify Him in the evening and in the morning."

Section 5

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ...

42. Behold! the angels said:

"O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee;

...وَأَصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٢)

chosen thee above the women of all nations.

C382. Mary the mother of Jesus was unique, in that she gave birth to a son by a special miracle, without the intervention of the customary physical means. This of course does not mean that she was more than human, any more than that her son was more than human. She had as much need to pray to Allah as anyone else.

The Christian dogma, in all sects except the Unitarian, holds that Jesus was God and the son of God.

The worship of Mary became the practice in the Roman Catholic Church, which calls Mary the Mother of God. This seems to have been endorsed by the Council of Ephesus in 431, in the century before Muhammad was born to sweep way the corruptions of the Church of Christ.

For '**alamin** as meaning all nations, see [3:96](#), [n. 423](#).

يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَأَسْجُدِي وَأَرْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ (٤٣)

43. "O Mary! worship thy Lord devoutly; prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down."

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ ...

44. This is part of the tidings of the things unseen, which We reveal unto thee (O Prophet!) by inspiration;

C383. Things unseen: belong to a realm beyond the reach of human perception and therefore it would be unseemly to dispute or speculate about them. (R)

...وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُتْلُونَ أَقْلَامَهُمْ ...

thou wast not with them when they cast lots with arrows,

C384. Literally, reeds: **aqalam**.

For the Arab custom of casting lots with arrows, see [2:219](#), [n. 241](#).

... أَيُّهُمْ يَحْمِلُ مَرْيَمَ ...

as to which of them should be charged with the care of Mary;

...وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٤٤)

nor wast thou with them when they disputed (the point).

C385. Christian apocryphal writings mention the contention between the priests as to the honor of taking charge of Mary, and how it was decided by means of rods or reeds in favour of Zakariya.

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ...

45. Behold! the angels said

"O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him:

...اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ...

his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary,

C386. Christ: Greek, Christos=anointed: kings and priests were anointed to symbolize consecration to their office.

The Hebrew and Arabic form is Masih.

... وَحِيَّهَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (٤٥)

held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah.

C387. Nearest to Allah: Muqarrabin. Cf. 56:11.

... وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا ...

46. "He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity,

C388. The ministry of Jesus lasted only about three years, from 30 to 33 years of his age, when in the eyes of his enemies he was crucified.

But the Gospel of Luke (2:46) describes him as disputing with the doctors in the Temple at the age of 12, and even earlier, as a child, he was "strong in spirit, filled with wisdom" (Luke 2:40).

Some apocryphal Gospels describe him as preaching from infancy.

... وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٤٦)

and he shall be (of the company) of the righteous."

قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ...

47. She said: "O my Lord! how shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?"

C389. She was addressed by angels, who gave her Allah's message.

In reply she speaks as to Allah. In reply, apparently an angel gives Allah's message.

... قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ...

He said: "Even so: Allah createth what He willeth;

... إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (٤٧)

when He hath decreed a plan, He but saith to it 'Be',
and it is!

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ (٤٨)

48. "And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel.

وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ...

49. "And (appoint him) a Messenger to the Children of Israel, (with this message):

... أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بَآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ...

I have come to you, with a sign from your Lord,

... أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird,
and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's leave;

C390. This miracle of the clay birds is found in some of the apocryphal Gospels; those of curing the blind and the lepers and raising the dead are in the canonical Gospels.

The original Gospel (see [3:48](#)) was not the various stories written afterwards by disciples, but the real Message taught direct by Jesus.

...وَأُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَةَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

and I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by Allah's leave;

...وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ...

and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses.

C391. This clause refers generally to a prophetic knowledge of what is not known to other people.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٤٩)

Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe.

وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلِأَحِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ..

50. "(I have come to you), to attest the Law which was before me, and to make lawful to you part of what was (before) forbidden to you;

...وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا...

I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So fear Allah, and obey me.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ (٥١)

51. "It is Allah who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him.

This is a way that is straight."

فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَىٰ مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ ...

52. When Jesus found unbelief on their part he said:

"Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?"

...قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ...

Said the Disciples: "We are Allah's helpers,

...أَمَّا بِاللَّهِ وَآشْهَدُ بِأَنَا مُسْلِمُونَ (٥٢)

we believe in Allah, and do thou bear witness that we are Muslims.

C394. Read this with 4:157, where it is said that "whereas they slew him not nor they crucified him but it was made dubious unto them.

The guilt of the Jews remained, but Jesus was eventually taken up to Allah.

... وَمُطَهَّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ...

and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme;

C395. Jesus was charged by the Jews with blasphemy as claiming to be Allah or the son of Allah.

The Christians (except a few early sects which were annihilated by persecution, and the modern sect of Unitarians), adopted the substance of the claim, and made it the cornerstone of their faith.

Allah clears Jesus of such a charge or claim.

... وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ...

I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject Faith, to the Day of Resurrection;

C396. Those who follow thee refers to both Muslims (insofar as they truly follow the basic teachings of Jesus) and Christians (who claim to follow him). [Eds].

... ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٥٥)

then shall ye all return unto Me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute.

C397. All the controversies about dogma and faith will disappear when we appear before Allah.

He will judge not by what we profess but by what we are.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَأَعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...

56. "As to those who reject faith, I will punish them with terrible agony in this world and in the Hereafter,

... وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ (٥٦)

nor will they have anyone to help.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ ...

57. "As to those who believe and work righteousness, Allah will pay them (in full) their reward;

...وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥٧)

but Allah loveth not those who do wrong.

ذَلِكَ نَتْلُوهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ (٥٨)

58. "This is what We rehearse unto thee of the Signs and the Message of Wisdom."

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ ...

59. This similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam:

C398. After a description of the high position which Jesus occupies as a prophet, we have a repudiation of the dogma that he was Allah, or the son of Allah, or anything more than a man.

If it is said that he was born without a human father, Adam was also so born. Indeed Adam was born without either a human father or mother. As far as our physical bodies are concerned they are mere dust.

In Allah's sight Jesus was as dust just as Adam was or humanity is. The greatness of Jesus arose from the divine command "Be": for after that he was-more than dust - a great Prophet and teacher.

...خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (٥٩)

He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be", and he was.

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ (٦٠)

60. The truth (comes) from Allah alone; so be not of those who doubt.

C399. The truth does not necessarily come from priests, or from the superstitions of whole peoples. It comes from Allah, and where there is a direct revelation, there is no room for doubt.

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ...

61. If anyone disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge hath come to thee,

... قُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ...

say:

"Come! let us gather together, our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves:

...ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ (٦١)

then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie!"

C400. In the year of Deputations, 10th of the Hijrah, came a Christian embassy from Najran (towards Yemen, about 150 miles north of Sanaa). They were much impressed on hearing this passage of the Quran explaining the true position of Christ, and they entered into tributary relations with the new Muslim State. But ingrained habits and customs prevented them from accepting Islam as a body.

The Holy Prophet, firm in his faith, proposed a *Mubalahah*, i.e., a solemn meeting, in which both sides should summon not only their men, but their women and children, earnestly pray to Allah, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who should lie. Those who had a pure and sincere faith would not hesitate.

The Christians declined, and they were dismissed in a spirit of tolerance with a promise of protection from the State in return for tribute.

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ ...

62. This is the true account:

C401. We are now in a position of deal with the questions which we left over at 2:87. Jesus is no more than a man.

It is against reason and revelation to call him Allah or the son of Allah. He is called the son of Mary to emphasize this. He had no human father, as his birth

was miraculous. But it is not this which raise him to his high position as a prophet, but because Allah called him to his office.

The praise is due to Allah, Who by His word gave him spiritual strength-"strengthened him with the Holy spirit. The miracles which surround his story relate not only to the "Clear Signs" which he brought.

It was those who misunderstood him who obscured his clear Signs and surrounded him with mysteries of their own invention. (R).

... وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ...

there is no god except Allah;

... وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٦٢)

and Allah -- He is indeed the Exalted in Power, the Wise.

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ (٦٣)

63. But if they turn back, Allah hath full knowledge of those who do mischief.

C.57 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:64-120)

*Islam doth invite all people
To the Truth; there is no cause
For dissembling or disputing
False are the people who corrupt
Allah's truth, or hinder men
From coming to Allah. Let the Muslims
Hold together in unity and discipline,
Knowing that they have a mission
Of righteousness for humanity
No harm can come to them.*

*Though there are good men and true
In other Faiths, Muslims must
Be true to their own Brotherhood.
They should seek help and friendship
From their own, and stand firm
In constancy and patient perseverance.*

Section 7

فُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ...

64. Say:

"O People of the Book!

come to common terms as between us and you:

...أَلَا نَعْبُدُ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ...

that we worship none but Allah;

that we associate no partners with Him;

that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah."

C402. In the abstract the People of the Book would agree to all three propositions. In practice they fail.

Apart from doctrinal lapses from the unity of the One True God, there is the question of a consecrated Priesthood (among the Jews it was hereditary also), as if a mere human being-Cohen, or Pope, or Priest, or Brahman, could claim superiority apart from his learning and the purity of his life, or could stand between man and Allah in some special sense.

The same remarks apply to the worship of saints. They may be pure and sincere, but no one can protect us or claim Lordship over us except Allah.

For **Rabb**, see note 20 to 1:2.

Abraham was a true Prophet of Allah, but he could not be called a Jew or a Christian as he lived long before the Law of Moses or the Gospel of Jesus was revealed.

...فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَعُولُوا ائْتَهُدُوا بِأَنَا مُسْلِمُونَ (٦٤)

If then they turn back, say:

"Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's will)."

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ ...

65. Ye People of the Book! why dispute ye about Abraham,

...وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٥)

when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him?

Have ye no understanding?

هَآأَنْتُمْ هُوَآءَ حَآجَجْتُمْ فِيمَآ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ...

66. Ah! ye are those who fell to disputing (even) in matters of which ye had some knowledge!

C403. The number of sects among the Jews and Christians shows that they wrangled and disputed even about some of the matters of their own religion, of which they should have had some knowledge. But when they talk of Father Abraham, they are entirely out of court, as he lived before their peculiar systems were evolved.

... فَلِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِيمَآ لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ...

but why dispute ye in matters of which ye have no knowledge?

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٦٦)

It is Allah Who knows, and ye who know not!

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا ...

67. Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian, but he was true in faith, and bowed his will to Allah's (which is Islam),

...وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٦٧)

and he joined not gods with Allah.

C404. Cf. 2:135 and the whole argument in that passage.

إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

68. Without doubt, among men the nearest of kin to Abraham are those who follow him, as are also this Prophet and those who believe;

...وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٦٨)

and Allah is the Protector of those who have faith.

وَدَّتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يُضِلُّوكُمْ ...

69. It is the wish of a section of the People of the Book to lead you astray.

...وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٦٩)

But they shall lead astray (not you), but themselves and they do not perceive!

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ (٧٠)

70. Ye People of the Book!

why reject ye the Signs of Allah, of which ye are (yourselves) witnesses?

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٧١)

71. Ye People of the Book!

why do ye clothe truth with falsehood, and conceal the truth, while ye have knowledge?

C405. There are many ways of preventing the access of people to the truth. One is to temper with it, or trick it out in colours of falsehood: half-truths are often more dangerous than obvious falsehoods. Another is to conceal it altogether.

Those who are jealous of a prophet of Allah, whom they actually see before them, do not allow his credentials or virtues to be known, or vilify him, or conceal facts which would attract people to him.

When people do this of set purpose, against their own light ("of which ye are yourselves witnesses"), they are descending to the lowest depths of degradation, and they are doing more harm to themselves than to anyone else. (R).

Section 8

وَقَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ...

72. A section of the People of the Book say:

...آمِنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَجَهَ النَّهَارَ وَكَفَرُوا آخِرَهُ ...

"Believe in the morning what is revealed to the believers, but reject it at the end of the day;

C406. Wajh here has the sense of "beginning", early part.

The cynics who plotted against Islam actually asked their accomplices to join the believers and then repudiate them.

...لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٧٢)

perchance they may (themselves) turn back.

وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا لِمَنْ تَبِعَ دِينَكُمْ ...

73. "And believe no one unless he follows your religion."

...قُلْ إِنَّ الْهُدَىٰ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُؤْتَىٰ أَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَا أُوتِيْتُمْ ...

Say:

"True guidance is the guidance of Allah; (fear ye) lest a revelation be sent to someone (else) like unto that which was sent unto you.

C407. The two clauses following have been variously construed, and some translations leave the sense ambiguous.

I have construed the conjunction "**an**" to mean "lest", as it undoubtedly does in 7:172. 'an taqulu', etc.

... أَوْ يُحَاجُّوكُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ...

Or that those (receiving such revelation) should engage you in argument before your Lord."

C408. Cf. 2:76.

The People of the Book were doubly annoyed at the Muslims:

- that they should (being outside their ranks) receive Allah's revelations, and
- that having received such revelations, they should be able to convict them out of their own scriptures before their Lord!

... قُلْ إِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ...

Say: "All bounties are in the hand of Allah: He granteth them to whom He pleaseth;

... وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٧٣)

and Allah careth for all, and He knoweth all things."

يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٧٤)

74. For His Mercy He specially chooseth whom He pleaseth:
for Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded.

... وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنَهُ بِقِنطَارٍ يُؤَدِّهِ إِلَيْكَ...

75. Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back;

C409. Hoard of gold: qintar: a talent of 1,200 ounces of gold. See 3:14. n. 354. (R).

... وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنَهُ بِدِينَارٍ لَأَ يُؤَدِّهِ إِلَيْكَ إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَائِمًا...

others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless thou constantly stoodest demanding,

C410. Silver coin: dinar. In the later Roman Empire, the denarius was a small silver coin. It must have been current in Syria and the markets of Arabia in the time of the Prophet.

It was the coin whose name is translated in the English Bible by the word penny. Matt. 22:19: hence the abbreviation of penny is d (= denarius).

The later Arabian coin dinar coined by the Umayyad, was a gold coin after the pattern of the Byzantine (Roman) denarius aureus and weighed about 66349 grains troy.

...ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ سَبِيلٌ...

because, they say, "There is no call on us (to keep faith) with these ignorant (pagans)."

C411. Every race imbued with race arrogance resorts to this kind of moral or religious subterfuge. Even if its members are usually honest or just among themselves, they are contemptuous of those outside their circle, and cheat and deceive them without any qualms of conscience.

This is a "lie against Allah."

...وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكُذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (٧٥)

But they tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it.

بَلَى مَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقَى فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٧٦)

76. Nay. Those that keep their plighted faith and act aright, verily Allah loves those who act aright.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَأَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ...

77. As for those who sell the faith they owe to Allah and their own plighted word for a small price,

C412. All our duties to our fellow creatures are referred to the service and faith we owe to Allah. But in the matter of truth an appeal is made to our self-respect as responsible beings: is it becoming that we should be false to our own word, to ourselves?

And then we are reminded that the utmost we can gain by falsifying Allah's word or being untrue to ourselves is but a miserable price. We get at best something very paltry as the price for selling our very souls.

... أُولَئِكَ لَا خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ...

they shall have no portion in the hereafter:

...وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ ...

nor will Allah (deign to) speak to them or look at them on the Day of Judgment, nor will He cleanse them (of sin);

C413. Even on sinners -ordinary sinners- Allah will look with compassion and mercy: He will speak words of kindness and cleanse them of their sins.

But those who are in active rebellion against Allah and sin against their own light, -what mercy can they expect?

...وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٧٧)

they shall have a grievous penalty.

وَأِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلُؤُونَ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ ...

78. There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues; (as they read) you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book;

...وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ...

and they say, "That is from Allah,"

but it is not from Allah:

...وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكُذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (٧٨)

it is they who tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it!

...مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ...

79. It is not (possible) that a man, to whom is given the Book, and Wisdom, and the prophetic office,

...تُمْ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ...

should say to people: "Be ye my worshippers rather than Allah's;

C414. It is not in reason or in the nature of things that Allah's messenger should preach against Allah.

Jesus came to preach and convey the true message of Allah. (R).

...وَلَكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّانِيِّينَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ (٧٩)

on the contrary (he would say): "Be ye worshippers of Him Who is truly the Cherisher of all, for ye have taught the Book and ye have studied it earnestly."

وَلَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ أَرْبَابًا...

80. Nor would he instruct you to take angels and prophets for Lords and Patrons.

C415. Jesus was a prophet, and the Holy Spirit "with which he was strengthened" was the Angel who brought the revelations to him.

...أَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْكَفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ (٨٠)

What! would he bid you to unbelief after ye have bowed your will (to Allah in Islam)?

Section 9

وَأِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ ...

81. Behold! Allah took the Covenant of the Prophets, saying:

C416. Cf. 2:63. n. 78.

The argument is:

You (People of the Book) are bound by your own oaths, sworn solemnly in the presence of your own Prophets. In the Old Testament as it now exists, Muhammad is foretold in Deut. 18:18: and the rise of the Arab nation in Isaiah. 42:11. for Kedar was a son of Ismail and the name is used for the Arab nation: in the New Testament as it now exists.

Muhammad is foretold in the Gospel of St. John. 14:16, 15:26, and 16:7:

the future Comforter cannot be the Holy Spirit as understood by Christians, because the Holy Spirit already was present, helping and guiding Jesus.

The Greek word translated "Comforter" is "Paracletos", which is an easy corruption from "Pericyltos", which is almost a literal translation of "Muhammad" or "Ahmad": see 61:6.

Further, there were other Gospels that have perished, but of which traces still remain, which were even more specific in their reference to Muhammad; e.g., the Gospel of St. Barnabas, of which an Italian translation is extant in the State Library at Vienna. It was edited in 1907 with an English translation by Mr. Lonsdale and Laura Ragg.

.... لَمَّا آتَيْتُكُمْ مِّنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ...

"I give you a Book and Wisdom;

...ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لِيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ وَلِيَنْصُرُنَّهُ...

then comes to you a Messenger confirming what is with you; do ye believe him and render him help."

...قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي...

Allah said: "Do ye agree, and take this My Covenant as binding on you?"

...قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا...

They said: "We agree."

...قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٨١)

He said: "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses."

فَمَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٨٢)

82. If any turn back after this, they are perverted transgressors.

أَفَعَبَّرَ دِينَ اللَّهِ يَبْعُونَ...

83. Do they seek for other than the Religion of Allah?

...وَلَهُ أَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا ...

While all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling, bowed to His Will (accepted Islam),

C417. Allah's Truth is manifest, and all that is good and true and sane and normal accepts it with joy.

But even where there is "disease in the heart" (2:10), or judgment is obscured by perversity, every creature must eventually see and acknowledge Allah and His power (2:167).

Cf. R. Bridges: "Testament of Beauty": iv. 1419-22:-

"For God's love is unescapable as nature's environment, which if a man ignore or think to thrust it off, he is the ill-natured fool that runneth blindly on death."

All Nature adores Allah, and Islam asks for nothing peculiar or sectarian; it but asks that we follow our nature and make our will conformable to Allah's Will as seen in Nature, history, and revelation.

Its message is universal.

... وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ (٨٣)

and to Him shall they all be brought back.

قُلْ أَمَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا...

84. Say: "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us

... وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ...

and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes,

... وَمَا أَوْتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ...

and in (Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord;

... لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (٨٤)

we make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam)."

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ...

85. If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him;

C418. The Muslim position is clear.

The Muslim does not claim to have a religion peculiar to himself. Islam is not a sect or an ethnic religion. In its view all Religion is one, for the Truth is one. It was the religion preached by all the earlier Prophets. It was the truth taught by all the inspired Books.

In essence it amounts to a consciousness of the Will and Plan of Allah and a joyful submission to that Will and Plan.

If any one wants a religion other than that, he is false to his own nature, as he is false to Allah's Will and Plan. Such a one cannot expect guidance, for he has deliberately renounced guidance.

...وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٨٥)

and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوا أَنَّ الرَّسُولَ حَقٌّ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ...

86. How shall Allah guide those who reject faith after they accepted it and bore witness that the Messenger was true and that clear signs had come unto them?

...وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٨٩)

But Allah guides not a people unjust.

أُولَئِكَ جزاؤهم أن علىهم لعنة الله والملائكة والناس أجمعين (٨٧)

87. Of such the reward is that on them (rests) the curse of Allah, of His angels, and of all mankind.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ العَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ (٨٨)

88. In that will they dwell; nor will their penalty be lightened, nor respite be their (lot).

C418a. Cf. 2:161-162.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٨٩)

89. Except for those that repent (even) after that, and make amends: for verily Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ ازْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَنْ نُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتَهُمْ ...

90. But those who reject faith after they accepted it, and then go on adding to their defiance of faith, never will their repentance be accepted;

...وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الضَّالُّونَ (٩٠)

for they are those who have (of set purpose) gone astray.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِلَّةٌ الْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ افْتَدَى بِهِ ...

91. As to those who reject faith, and die rejecting, never would be accepted from any such as much gold as the earth contains, though they should offer it for ransom.

...أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ (٩١)

For such is (in store) a penalty grievous, and they will find no helpers.

Section 10

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ...

92. By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love;

C419. The test of charity is:

- do you give something that you value greatly, something that you love?
- If you give your life in a Cause, that is the greatest gift you can give.
- If you give yourself, that is, your personal efforts, your talents, your skill, your learning, that comes next in degree.

- If you give your earnings, your property, your possessions, that is also a great gift; for many people love them even more than other things.

And there are less tangible things, such as position, reputation, the well-being of those we love, the regard of those who can help us, etc. It is unselfishness that Allah demands, and there is no act of unselfishness, however small or intangible, but is well within the knowledge of Allah.

...وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ (٩٢)

and whatever ye give, of a truth Allah knoweth it well.

كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حَلَالًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ...

93. All food was lawful to the children of Israel,

...إِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَائِيلُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَنْ تُنَزَّلَ التَّوْرَةُ ...

except what Israel made unlawful for itself, before the Law (of Moses) was revealed.

C420. The Arabs ate the flesh of the camel, which is lawful in Islam, but it was prohibited by the Jewish Law of Moses (Leviticus 11:4).

But that Law was very strict because of the "hardness of heart" of Israel, because of Israel's insolence and iniquity (6:146). Before it was promulgated Israel was free to choose its own food.

I take "Israel" here to stand for the people of Israel.

...فَلْ فَاتُوا بِالَّتَّوْرَةِ فَاتْلُوهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٩٣)

Say: "Bring ye the Law and study it, if ye be men of truth."

فَمَنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكُذِبَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٩٤)

94. If any, after this, invent a lie and attribute it to Allah, they are indeed unjust wrongdoers.

فَلْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ ...

95. Say: "Allah speaketh the truth:

... فَأَتَّبِعُوا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ...

follow the religion of Abraham, the sane in faith;

... وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٩٥)

he was not of the pagans."

C421. The greater freedom of Islam in the matter of the ceremonial law, compared with the Mosaic Law, is not a reproach but a recommendation.

We go back to an older source than Judaism, -the institutions of Abraham. By common consent his Faith was sound, and he was certainly not a Pagan, a term contemptuously applied to the Arabs by the Jews.

... إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ ...

96. The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakka

C422. Bakka: same as Makkah, perhaps an older name.

The foundation of the Ka'bah goes back to Abraham, but there are place associations in the sacred territories with the names of Adam and Eve. (R).

... مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (٩٦)

full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings:

C423. 'Alamin:

- all the worlds (1:2 and n.20),
- all kinds of beings;
- all nations (3:42):
- all creatures (3:97),

... فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ...

97. In it are signs manifest; (for example), the Station of Abraham;

C424. Station of Abraham: see 2:125 and n. 125.

... وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ آمِنًا ...

whoever enters it attains security;

C425. See reference in last note.

...وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ اِلَيْهِ سَبِيْلًا ...

pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah, those who can afford the journey;

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِيْنَ (٩٧)

but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of his creatures.

فُلْ يَا اَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِآيَاتِ اللّٰهِ...

98. Say: "O People of the Book! why reject ye the signs of Allah,

...وَاللّٰهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلٰى مَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ (٩٨)

when Allah is Himself witness to all ye do?

فُلْ يَا اَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَصُدُّوْنَ عَنِ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اَمَنَ تَبِعُوْنَهَا عَوْجًا
وَاَنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءٌ ...

99. Say: "O ye People of the Book!

why obstruct ye those who believe, from the path of Allah, seeking to make it crooked, while ye were yourselves witnesses (to Allah's Covenant)?

C426. Cf. [3:81](#).

...وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ (٩٩)

But Allah is not unmindful of all that ye do."

يَا اَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ...

100. O ye who believe!

... اِنْ تُطِيعُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰوْتُوْا الْكِتَابَ يَرُدُّوْكُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ (١٠٠)

if ye listen to a faction among the People of the Book, they would (indeed) render you apostates after ye have believed!

وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ وَاَنْتُمْ تُنٰثِلُوْنَ عَلٰيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللّٰهِ وَفِيْكُمْ رَسُوْلُهُ ...

101. And how would ye deny faith while unto you are rehearsed the Signs of Allah, and among you lives the Messenger?

...وَمَنْ يَعْصِمْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ اِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ (١٠١)

Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown a way that is straight.

Section 11

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ...

102. O ye who believe!

fear Allah as He should be feared,

C427. Fear is of many kinds:

1. the abject fear of the coward;
2. the fear of a child or an inexperienced person in the face of an unknown danger;
3. the fear of a reasonable man who wishes to avoid harm to himself or to people whom he wishes to protect;
4. the reverence which is akin to love, for it fears to do anything which is not pleasing to the object of love.

The first is unworthy of man; the second is necessary for one immature; the third is a manly precaution against evil as long as it is unconquered; and the fourth is the seed-bed of righteousness.

Those mature in faith cultivate the fourth: at earlier stages, the third or the second may be necessary; they are fear, but not the fear of Allah.

The first is a feeling of which anyone should be ashamed.

...وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ (١٠٢)

and die not except in a state of Islam.

C428. Our whole being should be permeated with Islam: it is not a mere veneer or outward show.

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا...

103. And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves;

C429. The simile is that of people struggling in deep water, to whom a benevolent Providence stretches out a strong and unbreakable rope of rescue.

If all hold fast to it together, their mutual support adds to the chance of their safety.

...وَأَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءَ...

and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you;

...فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا...

for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace, ye became brethren;

C430. Yathrib was torn with civil and tribal feuds and dissensions before the Messenger of Allah set his feet on its soil. After that, it became the City of the Prophet, Madinah, and unmatched Brotherhood, and the pivot of Islam.

This poor quarrelsome world is a larger Yathrib: can we establish the sacred feet on its soil, and make it a new and larger Madinah?

...وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا...

and ye were on the brink of the pit of fire, and He saved you from it.

...كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (١٠٣)

Thus doth Allah make his signs clear to you: that ye may be guided.

وَلَتَكُنَّ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ....

104. Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong;

...وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (١٠٤)

they are the ones to attain felicity.

C431. Muflih, aflaha, falah: the root idea is;

- attainment of desires;
- happiness, in this world and the next;
- success;

- prosperity;
- freedom from anxiety, care, or a disturbed state of mind;

the opposite of 'azab in the next verse, which includes:

- failure;
- misery;
- punishment or penalty;
- agony or anguish.

The ideal Muslim community is happy, untroubled by conflicts or doubts, sure of itself, strong, united, and prosperous: because it invites to all that is good; enjoins the right; and forbids the wrong, -a master- stroke of description in three clauses.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ...

105. Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving clear signs;

...وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٠٥)

for them is a dreadful penalty.

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ...

106. On the day when some faces will be (lit up with) white, and some faces will be (in the gloom of) black;

C432. The "face" (wajh) expresses our Personality, our inmost being.

White is the colour of Light; to become white is to be illumined with Light, which stands for felicity, the rays of the glorious light of Allah.

Black is the colour of darkness, sin, rebellion, misery; removal from the grace and light of Allah.

These are the Signs of heaven and hell. The standard of decision in all questions is the justice of Allah.

...فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكْفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ...

to those whose faces will be black, (will be said): "Did ye reject faith after accepting it?"

...فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (١٠٦)

Taste then the penalty for rejecting faith.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ...

107. But those whose faces will be (lit with) white, they will be in (the light of) Allah's Mercy;

... هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (١٠٧)

therein to dwell (for ever).

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِلْعَالَمِينَ (١٠٨)

108. These are the Signs of Allah: We rehearse them to thee in truth: and Allah means no injustice to any of His creatures.

... وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

109. To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth;

... وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ (١٠٩)

to Him do all questions go back (for decision).

C433. Cf. 2:210.

Section 12

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ...

110. Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind,

...تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ...

enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.

C434. The logical conclusion to a Universal Religion is a non-sectarian, non-racial, non-doctrinal, religion, which

Islam claims to be. For Islam is just submission to the Will of Allah. This implies

1. Faith,
2. doing right, being an example to others to do right, and having the power to see that the right prevails,
3. eschewing wrong, being an example to others to eschew wrong, and having the power to see that wrong and injustice are defeated. Islam therefore lives, not for itself, but for mankind.

The People of the Book, if only they had faith, would be Muslims, for they have been prepared for Islam. Unfortunately there is Unfaith, but it can never harm those who carry the banner of Faith and Right, which must always be victorious.

...وَلَوْ آمَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ...

If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them;

...مِنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (١١٠)

among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors.

لَنْ يَضُرُّوكُمْ إِلَّا أَذًى ...

111. They will do you no harm, barring a trifling annoyance;

... وَإِنْ يُفَاقِلُوكُمْ يُفَاقِلُوكُمْ الْأُدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصِرُونَ (١١١)

if they come out to fight you, they will show you their backs, and no help shall they get.

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَّةُ أَيْنَ مَا تَقَفُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ ...

112. Shame is pitched over them (like a tent) wherever they are found, except when under a covenant (of protection) from Allah and from men;

C435. Duribat: I think there is a simile from the pitching of a tent.

Ordinarily a man's tent is a place of tranquility and honour for him. The tent of the wicked wherever they are found is ignominy, shame, and humiliation. It is pity from Allah or from men that gives them protection when their pride has a fall.

Using the same simile of tent in another way, their home will be destitution and misery.

...وَيَأْوُوا بِغَضَبِ مَنْ لَدَى اللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ...

they draw on themselves wrath from Allah, and pitched over them is (the tent of) destitution.

...ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ...

This because they rejected the signs of Allah, and slew the Prophets in defiance of right;

C436. Cf. [3:21](#), n. 363.

...ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ (١١٢)

this because they rebelled and transgressed beyond bounds.

لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ ...

113. Not all of them are alike:

of the People of the book are a portion that stand (for the right);

...يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ (١١٣)

they rehearse the signs of Allah all night long, and then prostrate themselves in adoration.

C437. In Islam we respect sincere faith and true righteousness in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah.

This verse, according to Commentators, refers to those People of the Book who eventually embraced Islam. (R).

يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ...

114. They believe in Allah and the Last Day;

...وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ ...

they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they (hasten in emulation) in (all) good works;

...وَأُولَئِكَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١١٤)

they are in the ranks of the righteous.

وَمَا يَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَنْ يُكْفَرُوهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ (١١٥)

115. Of the good that they do, nothing will be rejected of them;
for Allah knoweth well those that do right.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ نُعْصِيَهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا...

116. Those who reject faith, neither their possessions nor their
(numerous) progeny will avail them aught against Allah;

...وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (١١٦)

they will be companions of the fire,
dwelling therein (for ever).

C438. Cf. [3:10](#).

مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ...

117. What they spend in the life of this (material) world may be
likened to a wind

...فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرَّتْ قَوْمٌ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتُهُ...

which brings a nipping frost: it strikes and destroys the harvest of
men who have wronged their own souls;

...وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (١١٧)

it is not Allah that hath wronged them, but they wrong
themselves.

C439. False "spending" may be either in false "charity"
or in having a "good time". For the man who resists
Allah's purpose, neither of them is any good.

The essence of charity is faith and love. Where these are
wanting, charity is no charity. Some baser motive is
there: ostentation, or even worse, getting a person into
the giver's power by a pretence of charity, something
that is connected with the life of this grasping, material
world.

What happens? You expect a good harvest. But "while you think, good easy man, full surely your greatness is a-ripening," there comes a nipping frost, and destroys all your hopes.

The **frost** is some calamity, or the fact that you are found out! Or perhaps it is "High blown pride," as in Shakespeare's Henry VIII. ii. 3.

In your despair you may blame blind Fate or you may blame Allah! Blind Fate does not exist, for there is Allah's Providence, which is just and good.

The harm or injustice has come, not from Allah, but from your own soul. You wronged your soul, and it suffered the frost. Your base motive brought you no good: it may have reduced you to poverty, shame, and disgrace.

All the brave show of the wicked in this life is but a wind charged with evil to themselves.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا بَطَانَةَ مَنْ دُونَكُمْ لَا يَأْلُوكُمْ خَبَالًا ...

118. O ye who believe!

take not into your intimacy those outside your ranks; they will not fail to corrupt you.

...وَدُّوا مَا عَنِتُّمْ قَدْ بَدَتِ الْبَغْضَاءُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ ...

They only desire your ruin: rank hatred has already appeared from their mouths;

...وَمَا تُخْفِي صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُ ...

what their hearts conceal is far worse.

...قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (١١٨)

We have made plain to you the Signs, if ye have wisdom.

هَآأَنْتُمْ أَوْلَاءُ تُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّونَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ كُلِّهِ ...

119. Ah! ye are those who love them, but they love you not, though ye believe in the whole of the Book.

C440. Islam gives you the complete revelation, "the whole of the Book," though partial revelations have come in all ages.

Cf. 3:23, and n. 366.

...وَإِذَا لَفُؤكُمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا ...

When they meet you, they say, "We believe;"

C441. Cf. 2:14.

... وَإِذَا خَلَوْا عَضُوا عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَنَامِلَ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ...

but when they are alone, they bite off the very tips of their fingers at you in their rage.

... قُلْ مُوتُوا بِغَيْظِكُمْ ...

Say: "Perish in your rage;

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (١١٩)

Allah knoweth well all the secrets of the heart."

إِنْ تَمَسَسْتُمْ حَسَنَةً تَسُوهُمْ وَإِنْ تُصِيبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا بِهَا ...

120. If aught that is good befalls you, it grieves them; but if some misfortune overtakes you, they rejoice at it.

...وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا ...

But if ye are constant and do right, not the least harm will their cunning do to you,

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ (١٢٠)

for Allah compasseth round about all that they do.

C.58 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:121-148)

*Allah's help comes to those who strive
With firmness, as it did at Badr,
Much can be learnt from the misfortunes*

*At Uhud. It is not for us
To question Allah's Plan, which is full
Of wisdom and mercy for all. Our duty
Is to stand firm and unswerving,
To obey, and in steadfast courage
To persevere, to retrieve our mistakes.
Not in grief and despair, but in firm hope
In Allah and in contempt of pain and death.*

Section 13

*وَأَذِّنْ لِلْقِتَالِ...
وَأَذِّنْ لِلْقِتَالِ...
وَأَذِّنْ لِلْقِتَالِ...*

121. Remember that morning thou didst leave the household (early) to post the faithful at their stations for battle:

C442. The battle of Uhud was a great testing time for the young Muslim community. Their mettle and the wisdom and strength of their Leader were shown in the battle of Badr (3:13 and [note](#)), in which the Makkan Pagans suffered a crushing defeat.

The Makkans were determined to wipe off their disgrace and to annihilate the Muslims in Madinah. To this end they collected a large force and marched to Madinah. They numbered some 3,000 fighting men under Abu Sufyan, and they were so confident of victory that their women-folk came with them, and showed the most shameful savagery after the battle.

To meet the threatened danger the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad Al- Mustafa, with his usual foresight, courage, and initiative, resolved to take his station at the foot of Mount Uhud, which dominates the city of Madinah some three miles to the north.

Early in the morning, on the 7th of Shawwal, A.H. 3 (January, 625), he made his dispositions for battle. Madinah winters are notoriously rigorous, but the warriors of Islam (700 to 1000 in number) were up

early. A torrent bed was to their south, and the passes in the hills at their back were filled with 50 archers to prevent the enemy attack from the rear. The enemy were set the task of attacking the walls of Madinah, with the Muslims at their rear. In the beginning the battle went well for the Muslims.

The enemy wavered, but the Muslim archers, in disobedience of their orders, left their posts to join in the pursuit and share in the booty. There was also treachery on the part of the 300 "Hypocrites" led by Abdullah ibn Ubai, who deserted.

The enemy took advantage of the opening left by the archers, and there was severe hand-to-hand fighting, in which numbers told in favour of the enemy. Many of the Companions and Helpers were killed. But there was no rout.

Among the Muslim martyrs was the gallant Hamza, a brother of the Prophet's father. The graves of the martyrs are still shown at Uhud.

The Messenger himself was wounded in his head and face, and one of his front teeth was broken. Had it not been for his firmness, courage, and coolness, all would have been lost. As it was, the prophet, in spite of his wound, and many of the wounded Muslims, inspired by his example, returned to the field next day, and Abu Sufyan and his Makkan army thought it most prudent to withdraw.

Madinah was saved, but a lesson in faith, constancy, firmness, and steadfastness was learnt by the Muslims. (R).

...وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٢١)

and Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

إِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّائِفَتَانِ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ تَفْشَلَا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا...

122. Remember two of your parties meditated cowardice; but Allah was their Protector,

C443. The two parties wavering in their minds were probably the Banu Salma Khazraji and the Banu Haritha, but they rallied under the Prophet's inspiration.

That incident shows that man may be weak, but if he allows his weak will to be governed by the example of men of God, he may yet retrieve his weakness.

... وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (١٢٢)

and in Allah should the faithful (ever) put their trust.

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ ...

123. Allah had helped you at Badr, when ye were a contemptible little force;

... فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُشْكُرُونَ (١٢٣)

then fear Allah; thus may ye show your gratitude.

C444. Gratitude to Allah is not to be measured by words. It should show itself in conduct and life.

If all the Muslims had learnt the true lesson from the victory at Badr, their archers would not have left the posts appointed for them, nor the two tribes mentioned in the last note ever wavered in their faith.

إِذْ تَقُولُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَلَنْ يَكْفِيَكُمْ أَنْ يُمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلَاثَةِ آلَافٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُنزَلِينَ (١٢٤)

124. Remember thou saidst to the faithful: is it not enough for you that Allah should help you with three thousand angels (specially) sent down?

C445. Read verse 124 with the following five verses, to get its full signification.

بَلَىٰ إِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُم مِّن فَوْرِهِمْ هَذَا...

125. "Yea -- if ye remain firm, and act aright, even if the enemy should rush here on you in hot haste,

... يُمِدُّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ آلَافٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِينَ (١٢٥)

your Lord would help you with five thousand angels making a terrific onslaught."

C446. Musawwim: this is the active voice of the verb, not to be confused with the passive voice in 3:14, which has a different signification.

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ لَكُمْ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُكُمْ بِهِ...

126. Allah made it but a message of hope for you; and an assurance to your hearts:

...وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (١٢٦)

(in any case) there is no help except from Allah the Exalted, the Wise.

C447. Whatever happens, whether there is a miracle or not, all help proceeds from Allah. Man should not be so arrogant as to suppose that his own resources will change the current of the world plan.

Allah helps those who show constancy, courage, and discipline, and use all the human means at their disposal, not those who fold their hands and have no faith. But Allah's help is determined on considerations exalted far above our petty human motive, and by perfect wisdoms, of which we can have only faint glimpses.

لِيَقْطَعَ طَرَفًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْ يَكْبِتَهُمْ ...

127. That he might cut off a fringe of the unbelievers or expose them to infamy,

C448. A fringe of the Unbelievers: an extremity, an end, either upper or lower.

Here it may mean that the chiefs of the Makkan Pagans, who had come to exterminate the Muslims with such confidence, went back frustrated in their purpose.

The shameless cruelty with which they and their women mutilated the Muslim corpses on the battle-field will stand recorded to their eternal infamy.

Perhaps it also exposed their real nature to some of those who fought for them. e.g., Khalid ibn Al-Walid, who not only accepted Islam afterwards, but became one of the most notable champions of Islam. He was with the

Muslims in the conquest of Makkah and later on, won distinguished honours in Syria and 'Iraq.

... فَيَقْلِبُوا خَائِبِينَ (١٢٧)

and they should then be turned back, frustrated of their purpose.

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ ...

128. Not for thee, (but for Allah), is the decision: whether He turn in mercy to them, or punish them;

... فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (١٢٨)

for they are indeed wrongdoers.

C449. Uhud is as much a sign-post for Islam as Badr. For us in these latter days it carries an ever greater lesson. Allah's help will come if we have faith, obedience, discipline, unity, and the spirit of acting in righteousness and justice. If we fail, His mercy is always open to us. But it is also open to our enemies, and those who seem to us His enemies.

His Plan may be to bring sinners to repentance, and to teach us righteousness and wisdom through those who seem in our eyes to be rebellious or even defiant. There may be good in them that He sees and we do not,-a humbling thought that must lead to our own self-examination and self-improvement.

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

129. To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth.

...يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٢٩)

He pleaseth and punisheth whom He pleaseth:
but Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 14

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُضَاعَفَةً ...

130. O ye who believe! devour not usury, doubled and multiplied;

C450. Cf. 2:275 and notes.

The last verse spoke of forgiveness, even to enemies. If such mercy is granted by Allah to erring sinners, how much more is it incumbent on us, poor sinners to refrain from oppressing our fellow-being in need, in matters of mere material and ephemeral wealth?

Usury is the opposite extreme of charity, unselfishness, striving, and giving of ourselves in the service of Allah and of our fellow-men.

...وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (١٣٠)

but fear Allah; that ye may (really) prosper.

C451. Real prosperity consists, not in greed, but in giving,

- the giving of ourselves and of our substance in the cause of Allah and Allah's truth and in the service of Allah's creatures.

وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ (١٣١)

131. Fear the fire, which is prepared for those who reject faith.

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (١٣٢)

132. And obey Allah and the Messenger; that ye may obtain mercy.

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ...

133. Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord,

... وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (١٣٣)

and for a garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous.

C452. The Fire ([3:131](#)) is, as always, contrasted with the Garden, -in other words, Hell contrasted with Heaven, we are told that its width alone is that of the

whole of the heavens and the earth,- all the creation we can imagine.

In other words our spiritual felicity covers not merely this or that part of our being, but all life and existence. Who can measure its width, or length, or depth? (R).

...الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاطِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ...

134. Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men;

C453. Another definition of the righteous (verses 134-35). So far from grasping material wealth, they give freely, of themselves and their substance, not only when they are well-off and it is easy for them to do so, but also when they are in difficulties, for other people may be in difficulties at the same time.

They do not get ruffled in adversity, or get angry when other people behave badly, or their own good plans fail. On the contrary they redouble their efforts. For the charity or good deeds all the more necessary in adversity. And they do not throw the blame on others. Even where such blame is due and correction is necessary, their own mind is free from a sense of grievance, for they forgive and cover other men's faults.

This as far as other people are concerned. But we may be ourselves at fault, and perhaps we brought some calamity on ourselves. The righteous man is not necessarily perfect. In such circumstances his behaviour is described in the next verse.

...وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٣٤)

for Allah loves those who do good.

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً ...

135. And those who, having done something to be ashamed of,

C454. The righteous man, when he finds he has fallen into sin or error, does not whine or despair, but asks for Allah's forgiveness, and his faith gives him hope. If he is sincere, that means that he abandons his wrong conduct and makes amends.

... أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ...

or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins,

C455. Sin is a sort of oppression of ourselves by ourselves. This follows from the doctrine of personal responsibility, as opposed to that of blind fate or of an angry God or gods lying in wait for revenge or injury on mankind.

... وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ...

and who can forgive sins except Allah?

...وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٣٥)

And are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done.

أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاءُ هُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ...

136. For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord,

...وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

and gardens with rivers flowing underneath, an eternal dwelling;

...وَيَنعَمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (١٣٦)

how excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)!

فَدَخَلْتُ مِنَ قِبَلِكُمْ مِّن سُنُنٍ ...

137. Many were the Ways of Life that have passed away before you:

C456. Cf. Tennyson (In Memoriam):

"Our little systems have their day. They have their day and cease to be: They are but broken lights of Thee, And Thou, O Lord! art more than they."

Only Allah's Truth will last, and it will gain the mastery in the end. If there is defeat, we must not be dejected, lose heart, or give up the struggle. Faith means hope, activity, striving steadfastly on to the goal.

... فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكذِّبِينَ (١٣٧)

travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected truth.

هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (١٣٨)

138. Here is a plain statement to men, a guidance and instruction to those who fear Allah!

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١٣٩)

139. So lose not heart, nor fall into despair:

for ye must gain mastery if ye are true in faith.

إِنْ يَمَسُّنَّكُمْ فَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ فَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهُ...

140. If a wound hath touched you, be sure a similar wound hath touched the others.

C457. These general considerations apply in particular to the disaster at Uhud.

1. In a fight for truth, if you are hurt, be sure the adversary has suffered hurt also, the more so as he has no faith to sustain him.
2. Success or failure in this world comes to all at varying times: we must not grumble, as we do not see the whole of Allah's Plan.
3. Men's true mettle is known in adversity as gold is assayed in fire;
Cf. also [3:154](#), [n. 467](#).
4. Martyrdom is in itself an honour and a privilege:
how glorious is the fame of Hamza the Martyr?
5. If there is any dross in us, it will be purified by resistance and struggle.
6. When evil is given rope a little, it works out its own destruction;

the orgies of cruelty indulged in by the Pagans after what they supposed to be their victory at Uhud filled up their cup of iniquity; it lost them the support and adherence of the best in their own ranks, and hastened the destruction of Paganism from Arabia.

Cf. [3:127](#) and [n. 448](#).

...وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns:

that Allah may know those that believe,

... وَيَتَّخِذُ مِنْكُمْ شُهَدَاءَ ...

and that He may take to Himself from your ranks martyr-witnesses (to Truth).

...وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٤٠)

And Allah loveth not those that do wrong.

وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَيَمْحَقَ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٤١)

141. Allah's object also is to purge those that are true in faith and to deprive of blessing those that resist faith.

C458. The **purge** or purification was in two senses.

1. It cleared out the Hypocrites from the ranks of the Muslim warriors.
2. The testing-time strengthened the faith of the weak and wavering: for suffering has its own mission in life.

The Prophet's example -wounded but staunch, and firmer than ever- put new life into the Community.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخِلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٤٢)

142. Did ye think that ye would enter heaven without Allah testing those of you who fought hard (in His cause) and remained steadfast?

C459. Cf. 2:214.

وَلَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَمَنَّوْنَ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَلْقَوْهُ ...

143. Ye did indeed wish for death before ye met him:

...فَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمْوَهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ (١٤٣)

now ye have seen him with your own eyes (and ye flinch!).

Section 15

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ...

144. Muhammad is no more than a Messenger: many were the Messengers that passed away before him.

C460. This verse primarily applies to the battle of Uhud, in the course of which a cry was raised that the Messenger was slain. He had indeed been severely wounded, but Talha, Abu Bakr, and Ali were at his side, and his own unexampled bravery saved the Muslim army from a rout.

This verse was recalled again by Abu Bakr when the Messenger actually died a natural death eight years later, to remind people that Allah, Whose Message he brought, lives for ever. And have need to remember this now and often for two reasons:

1. when we feel inclined to pay more than human honour to one who was the truest, the purest, and the greatest of men, and thus in a sense to compound for our forgetting the spirit of his teaching, and
2. when we feel depressed at the chances and changes of time, and forget that Allah lives and watches over us and over all His creatures now as in a history in the past and in the future.

...أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ ...

if he died or were slain, will ye then turn back on your heels?

...وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا...

If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah;

...وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ (١٤٤)

but Allah (on the other hand) will swiftly reward those who (serve him) with gratitude.

...وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كِتَابًا مُؤَجَّلًا...

145. Nor can a soul die except by Allah's leave, the term being fixed as by writing.

...وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا...

If any do desire a reward in this life, We shall give it to him; and if any do desire a reward in the hereafter, We shall give it to him.

C461. There is a slight touch of irony in this. As applied to the archers at Uhud, who deserted their post for the sake of plunder, they might have got some plunder, but they put themselves and the whole of their army into jeopardy. For a little worldly gain, they nearly lost their souls.

On the other hand, those who took the long view and fought with staunchness and discipline, their reward was swift and sure. If they died, they got the crown of martyrdom. If they lived, they were heroes honoured in this life and the next.

...وَسَنَجْزِي الشَّاكِرِينَ (١٤٥)

And swiftly shall We reward those that (serve Us with) gratitude.

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن نَّبِيٍّ قَاتَلَ مَعَهُ رَبِّيُونَ كَثِيرٌ...

146. How many of the Prophets fought (in Allah's way), and with them (fought) large bands of godly men?

...فَمَا وَهَنُوا لِمَا أَصَابَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوا وَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا...

But they never lost heart if they met with disaster in Allah's way, nor did they weaken (in will) nor give in.

...وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٤٦)

And Allah loves those who are firm and steadfast.

وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا...

147. All that they said was:

...رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا...

"Our Lord! forgive us our sins and anything we may have done that transgressed our duty;

...وَتَبَّتْ أقدامَنَا وَاَنْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٤٧)

establish our feet firmly, and help us against those that resist faith."

فَاتَّاهُمُ اللَّهُ تَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنَ تَوَابِ الْآخِرَةِ...

148. And Allah gave them a reward in this world, and the excellent reward of the Hereafter.

وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٤٨)

For Allah loveth those who do good.

C.59 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:149-180)

*Uhud showed how dangerous it was
To lend ear to enemy suggestions,
To disobey orders, dispute, lose courage,
Or seek selfish ends; some even followed
The evil course of turning back.
But great is Allah's mercy; where He helps,
No harm can come. Trust your Leader.
The Hypocrites, in withdrawing from battle,
Were really helping the Unbelievers,
But glorious were those who knew
No fear; those killed in the Cause of Allah
Yet live and thrive and do rejoice;
And never can those who fight against Faith
Hurt in the least the Cause of Allah.*

Section 16

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

149. O ye who believe!

... إِنْ تُطِيعُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَرْدُوكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ (١٤٩)

if ye obey the unbelievers, they will drive you back on your heels,
and ye will turn back (from faith) to your own loss.

بَلِ اللّٰهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ النَّاصِرِينَ (١٥٠)

150. Nay, Allah is your Protector, and He is the best of helpers.

سَنُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ بِمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا...

151. Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the unbelievers, for that they joined companions with Allah, for which He had sent no authority:

...وَمَا أَوْلَاهُمْ النَّارُ وَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الظَّالِمِينَ (١٥١)

their abode will be the fire; and evil is the home of the wrongdoers!

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَعَدَّهُ إِذْ تَحُسُّوهُم بِآيَاتِهِ...

152. Allah did indeed fulfil His promise to you when ye with His permission were about to annihilate your enemy,

...حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَرَاكُمْ مَا تُحِبُّونَ...

until ye flinched and fell to disputing about the order and disobeyed it after He brought you in sight (of the Booty) which ye covet.

C462. The order was: not to leave the post and strictly to maintain discipline. Uhud was in the beginning a victory for the Muslims. Many of the enemy were slain, and they were retiring when a part of the Muslims, against orders, ran in pursuit, attracted by the prospects of booty.

See [note to 3:121](#).

...مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ...

Among you are some that hanker after this world and some that desire the Hereafter.

...ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ...

Then did He divert you from your foes in order to test you, but He forgave you:

C463. The disobedience seemed at first pleasant: they were chasing the enemy, and there was the prospect of

booty. But when the gap was noticed by the enemy, they turned the flank round the hill and nearly overwhelmed the Muslims.

Had it not been for Allah's grace, and the firmness of their Prophet and his immediate Companions, they would have been finished.

...وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٥٢)

for Allah is full of grace to those who believe.

إِذْ تُصْعِدُونَ وَلَا تَلْوُونَ عَلَى أَحَدٍ وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ فِي أُخْرَاكُمْ ...

153. Behold! ye were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at anyone, and the Messenger in your rear was calling you back.

...فَأَتَابَكُمْ عُمَّاَ بَعْمٌ لَكَيْلًا تَحْزَنُوا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا مَا أَصَابَكُمْ ...

There did Allah give you one distress after another by way of requital, to teach you not to grieve for (the booty) that had escaped you and for (the ill) that had befallen you.

C464. It would seem that a party of horsemen led by the dashing Khalid ibn Walid came through the gap in the passes where the Muslim archers should have been, and in the confusion that arose, the retreating foe rallied and turned back on the Muslims.

From the low ground on the bank of the valley the Muslims retreated in their turn and tried to gain the hill. They had a double loss:

1. they were baulked of the booty they had run after, and
2. their own lives and the lives of their whole army were in danger, and many lives were actually lost from their ranks.

Their own lives being in danger, they had hardly time to grieve for the general calamity. But it steadied them, and some of them stood the test.

...وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٥٣)

For Allah is well aware of all that ye do.

ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّن بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمَنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَغْشَى طَائِفَةً مِّنكُمْ...

154. After (the excitement) of the distress, He sent down calm on a band of you overcome with slumber,

C465. After the first surprise, when the enemy turned on them, a great part of the Muslims did their best, and seeing their mettle, the enemy withdrew to his camp. There was a lull; the wounded had rest; those who had fought the hard fight were visited by kindly Sleep, sweet Nature's nurse. In contrast to them was the band of Hypocrites, whose behaviour is described in the next note.

...وَطَائِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ...

while another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, moved by wrong suspicions of Allah, suspicions due to ignorance.

...يَقُولُونَ هَل لَّنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِن شَيْءٍ...

They said: "What affair is this of ours?"

C466. The Hypocrites withdrew from the fighting. Apparently they had been among those who had been counseling the defence of Madinah within the walls instead of boldly coming out to meet the enemy.

Their distress was caused by their own mental state: the sleep of the just was denied them: and they continued to murmur of what might have been. Only fools do so: wise men face actualities.

...قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِم مَّا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ...

Say thou: "Indeed, this affair is wholly Allah's."

They hide in their minds what they dare not reveal to thee.

...يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَان لَّنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَّا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا...

They say (to themselves): "If we had had anything to do with this affair, we should not have been in the slaughter here."

...قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَرَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ...

Say: "Even if you had remained in your homes, those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death;"

...وَلِيَّبَيِّلِيَ اللّٰهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيْمَحِّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ...

but (all this was) that Allah might test what is in your breasts and purge what is in your hearts:

C467. That testing by Allah is not in order that it may add to His knowledge, for He knows all. It is in order to help us subjectively, to mould our will, and purge us of any grosser motives, that will be searched out by calamity.

If it is a hardened sinner, the test brings conviction out of his own self

Cf. also [3:140](#).

...وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ(١٥٤)

for Allah knoweth well the secrets of your hearts.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنْكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَفَى الْجَمْعَانَ إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ بِبَعْضِ
مَا كَسَبُوا...

155. Those of you who turned back on the day the two hosts met, it was Satan who caused them to fail, because of some (evil) they had done.

C468. It was the duty of all who were able to fight, to fight in the sacred cause at Uhud.

But a small section were timid; they were not quite as bad as those who railed against Allah, or those who thoughtlessly disobeyed orders. But they still failed in their duty.

It is our inner motives that Allah regards. These timorous people were forgiven by Allah. Perhaps they were given another chance: perhaps they rose to it and did their duty then.

...وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ(١٥٥)

But Allah has blotted out (their fault): for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

Section 17

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

156. O ye who believe!

... لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ إِذَا ضَرَبُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

be not like the unbelievers, who say of their brethren, when they are travelling through the earth or engaged in fighting:

... أَوْ كَانُوا غُزًى لَوْ كَانُوا عِنْدَنَا مَا مَاتُوا وَمَا قُتِلُوا ...

"If they had stayed with us, they would not have died, or been slain.

... لِيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ حَسْرَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ...

This that Allah may make it a cause of sighs and regrets in their hearts.

... وَاللَّهُ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (١٥٦)

It is Allah that gives life and death, and Allah sees well all that ye do.

C469. It is want of faith that makes people afraid

- of meeting death,
- of doing their duty when it involves danger, as in traveling in order to earn an honest living, or fighting in a sacred cause.

Such fear is part of the punishment for want of faith.

If you have faith, there is no fear in meeting death, for it brings you nearer to your goal, nor in meeting danger for a sufficient cause, because you know that the keys of life and death are in Allah's hands. Nothing can happen without Allah's Will.

If it is Allah's Will that you should die, your staying at home will not save you. If it is His Will that you should live, the danger you incur in a just cause brings you glory.

Supposing it is His Will that you should lose your life in the danger, there are three considerations that would make you eager to meet it:

1. dying in doing your duty is the best means of reaching Allah's Mercy;
2. the man of faith knows that he is not going to an unknown country of which he has no news; he is going nearer to Allah; and
3. he is being "brought together" unto Allah; i.e., he will meet all his dear ones in faith: instead of the separation which the souls without faith fear, he looks forward to a surer reunion than is possible in this life.

وَلَئِن قُتِلْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا
يَجْمَعُونَ (١٥٧)

157. And if ye are slain, or die, in the way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than all they could amass.

C470. Notice a beautiful little literary touch here.

At first sight you would expect the second person here ("you could amass"), to match the second person in the earlier clause. But remember that the second person in earlier clause refers to the man of faith, and the third person in the last line refers to the Unbelievers; as if it said:

"Of course you as a man of faith would not be for hoarding riches: your wealth, -duty and the mercy of Allah,- is far more precious than anything the Unbelievers can amass in their selfish lives. "

وَلَئِن مُّتُّمْ أَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لِإِلَى اللَّهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (١٥٨)

158. And if ye die, or are slain, Lo! it is unto Allah that ye are brought together.

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ...

159. It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them.

C471. The extremely gentle nature of Muhammad endeared him to all, and it is reckoned as one of the Mercies of Allah.

One of the Prophet's titles is "A Mercy to all Creation."

At no time was this gentleness, this mercy, this long-suffering with human weaknesses, more valuable than after a disaster like that at Uhud. It is a quality, which then, as always, bound and binds the souls of countless men to him.

...وَلَوْ كُنْتَ قَطًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ...

Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee;

...فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ...

so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them;

...وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ...

and consult them in affairs (of moment).

...فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ (١٥٩)

Then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in Allah.
For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him).

إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمُ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ...

160. If Allah helps you, none can overcome you:

...وَإِنْ يَخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ...

if He forsakes you, who is there, after that, that can help you?

...وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (١٦٠)

In Allah, then, let believers put their trust.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ...

161. No prophet could (ever) be false to his trust.

C472. Besides the gentleness of his nature, Al-Mustafa was known from his earliest life for his trustworthiness. Hence his title of Al-Amin. Unscrupulous people often read their own low motives into other men, and their accusation, which is meant to injure, fastens on the various virtues for which the man they attack is well known.

Some of the Hypocrites after Uhud raised some doubts about the division of the spoils, thinking to sow the seeds of poison in the hearts of the men who had deserted their posts in their craving for booty.

Those low suspicions were never believed in by any sensible people, and they have no interest for us now. But the general principles here declared are of eternal value.

1. Prophets of Allah do not act from unworthy motives.
2. Those who act from such motives are the lowest of creatures, and they will make no profit,
3. A prophet of Allah is not to be judged by the same standard as a greedy creature.
4. in Allah's eyes there are various grades of men, and we must try to understand and appreciate such grades.

If we trust our Leader, we shall not question his honesty without cause. If he is dishonest, he is not fit to be a leader. (R).

... وَمَنْ يَعْلَلْ يَأْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ...

If any person is so false, He shall, on the Day of Judgment, restore what he misappropriated;

...ثُمَّ تُؤْفَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (١٦١)

then shall every soul receive its due, whatever it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

أَفَمَنْ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ كَمَنْ بَاءَ بِسَخَطٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ ...

162. Is the man who follows the good pleasure of Allah like the man who draws on himself the wrath of Allah, and whose abode is in Hell?

... وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (١٦٢)

A woeful refuge!

هُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٦٣)

163. They are in varying grades in the sight of Allah;
and Allah sees well all that they do.

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ ...

164. Allah did confer a great favor on the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from among themselves,

C473. Cf. 2:151.

... يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ...

rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom,

...وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (١٦٤)

while, before that, they had been in manifest error.

أَوَلَمَّا أَصَابَكُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَدْ أَصَبْتُمْ مِثْلَيْهَا قُلْتُمْ أَنَّى هَذَا ...

165. What! when a single disaster smites you, although ye smote (your enemies) with one twice as great, do ye say?

"Whence is this?"

...قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ أَنفُسِكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٦٥)

Say (to them): "It is from yourselves:

for Allah hath power over all things."

C474. If Uhud was a reverse to the Muslims, they had inflicted a reverse twice as great on the Makkans at Badr.

This reverse was not without Allah's permission, for He wanted to test and purify the faith of those who followed Islam, and to show them that they must strive and do all in their power to deserve Allah's help.

If they disobeyed orders and neglected discipline, they must attribute the disaster to themselves and not to Allah.

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ النِّقْيِ الْجَمْعَانَ فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٦٦)

166. What ye suffered on the day the two armies met, was with the leave of Allah, in order that He might test the believers.

C475. Test: literally know.

See [n. 467 to 3:154](#).

وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا...

167. And the Hypocrites also.

C476. The testing of the Hypocrites was the searching out of their motives and exposing them to the sight of their brethren, who might otherwise have been taken in.

In the first place they gave counsels of caution: in their minds it was nothing but cowardice.

In the second place, what they wished was not the good of the community but its being placed in a contemptible position. When others were for self-sacrifice, they were for ease and fair words. Pretending to be Muslims, they were nearer to Unbelief.

Ironically they pretended to know nothing of fighting, and left their devout brethren to defend their faith and ideas. If that devout spirit did not appeal to them, they might at least have defended their city of Madinah when it was threatened, -defended their hearths and homes as good citizens.

...وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا قَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ ادْفَعُوا...

These were told: "Come, fight in the way of Allah, or (at least) drive (the foe from your city)."

...قَالُوا لَوْ نَعْلَمُ قِتَالًا لَاتَّبَعْنَاكُمْ ...

They say: "Had we known how to fight, we should certainly have followed you."

...هُمْ لِلْكَفْرِ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ ...

They were that day nearer to unbelief than to faith,

...يَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُونَ (١٦٧)

saying with their lips what was not in their hearts.

But Allah hath full knowledge of all they conceal.

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا...

168. (They are) the ones that say, (of their brethren slain), while they themselves sit (at ease):

"If only they had listened to us, they would not have been slain."

...قُلْ فَادْرَأُوا عَنْ أَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٦٨)

Say: "Avert death from your own selves, if ye speak the truth."

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ...

169. Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead.

... بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ (١٦٩)

Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord.

C477. A beautiful passage about the Martyrs in the cause of Truth.

They are not dead: they live, -and in a far higher and deeper sense than in the life they have left.

Even those who have no faith in the Hereafter honour those that die in their cause, with the crown of immortality in the minds and memories of generations unborn.

But in Faith we see a higher, truer, and less relative immortality. Perhaps "immortality" is not the right word in this connection, as it implies a continuation of this life. In their case, through the gateway of death, they enter, the true real Life, as opposed to its shadow here.

فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ...

170. They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah:

...وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (١٧٠)

and with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), the (martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve.

C478. The Martyrs not only rejoice at the bliss they have themselves attained. The dear ones left behind are in their thoughts: it is part of their glory that they have saved their dear ones from fear, sorrow, humiliation, and grief, in this life, even before they come to share in the glories of the Hereafter.

Note how the refrain: "on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve": comes in here with a new and appropriate meaning.

Besides other things, it means that the dear ones have no cause to grieve at the death of the Martyrs; rather have they cause to rejoice.

...يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ ...

171. They glory in the Grace and the Bounty from Allah,

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٧١)

and in the fact that Allah suffereth not the reward of the faithful to be lost (in the least).

Section 18

الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ...

172. Of those who answered the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after being wounded,

C479. After the confusion at Uhud, men rallied round the Prophet. He was wounded, and they were wounded, but they were all ready to fight again.

Abu Sufyan with his Makkans withdrew, but left a challenge with them to meet him and his army again at the fair of Badr Sughra next year. The challenge was accepted, and a picked band of Muslims under their

intrepid Leader kept the tryst, but the enemy did not come.

They returned, not only unharmed, but enriched by the trade at the fair, and (it may be presumed) strengthened by the accession of new adherents to their cause.

...لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقُوا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٧٢)

those who do right and refrain from wrong have a great reward.

...الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا...

173. Men said to them: "A great army is gathering against you": and frightened them: but it (only) increased their faith.

...وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ (١٧٣)

They said:

"For us Allah sufficeth, and He is the best disposer of affairs."

...فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ ...

174. And they returned with Grace and Bounty from Allah:

... لَمْ يَمَسَّسَهُمْ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ ...

no harm ever touched them; for they followed the good pleasure of Allah:

...وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٧٤)

and Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded.

...إِنَّمَا ذَلِكَ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ...

175. It is only the Evil One that suggests to you the fear of his votaries: be ye not afraid of them,

...وَخَافُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١٧٥)

but fear Me, if ye have faith.

...وَلَا يَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا...

176. Let not those grieve thee who rush headlong into unbelief: not the least harm will they do to Allah:

...يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حِزًّا فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٧٦)

Allah's plan is that He will give them no portion in the Hereafter, but a severe punishment.

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوْا الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ...

177. Those who purchase unbelief at the price of faith, not the least harm will they do to Allah,

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٧٧)

but they will have a grievous punishment.

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُؤْتِيهِمْ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ...

178. Let not the Unbelievers think that our respite to them is good for themselves:

... إِنَّمَا نُؤْتِيهِمْ لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا ...

We grant them respite that they may grow in their iniquity:

C480. That the cup of their iniquity may be full. The appetite for sin grows with what it feeds on. The natural result is that the sinner sinks deeper into sin.

If there is any freedom of will, this naturally follows, though Allah's Grace is always ready for the repentant. If the Grace is rejected, the increase of iniquity makes the nature of iniquity plainer to those who might otherwise be attracted by its glitter. The working of Allah's Law is therefore both just and merciful.

See also the next verse.

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (١٧٨)

but they will have a shameful punishment.

... مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ ...

179. Allah will not leave the believers in the state in which ye are now, until He separates what is evil from what is good.

C481. The testing of good men by calamities and evil men by leaving them in the enjoyment of good things is

part of the trials of Allah, in which some freedom of choice is left to man.

The psychological and subjective test is unending, and the separation is effected partly by the operation of the human wills, to which some freedom is allowed. But it must be effected, if only in the interests of the good.

... وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْهِرَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ ...

Nor will He disclose to you the secrets of the Unseen.

C482. Man in his weak state would be most miserable if he could see the secrets of the Future or the secrets of the Unseen. But things are revealed to him from time to time as may be expedient for him, by Messengers chosen for the purpose.

Our duty is to hold fast by faith and lead a good life.

... وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِنْ رُسُلِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ...

But He chooses of His Messengers (for the purpose) whom He pleases.

... فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ...

So believe in Allah and His Messengers:

... وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَلَكُمْ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٧٩)

and if ye believe and do right, ye have a reward without measure.

وَلَا يَحْسِبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا أَنَاءَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ...

180. And let not those who covetously withhold of the gifts which Allah hath given them of His Grace,

C483. The gifts are of all kinds:

- material gifts, such as wealth, property, strength of limbs, etc., or
- intangible gifts, such as influence, birth in a given set, intellect, skill, insight, etc., or
- spiritual gifts of the highest kind.

The spending of all these things (apart from what is necessary for ourselves) for those who need them, is charity, and purifies our own character.

The withholding of them (apart from our needs) is similarly greed and selfishness, and is strongly condemned.

...هُوَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ...

think that it is good for them:

...بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَهُمْ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخُلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

nay, it will be the worse for them: soon shall the things which they covetously withheld be tied to their necks like a twisted collar, on the Day of Judgment.

C484. By an apt metaphor the miser is told that his wealth or the other gifts which he hoarded will cling round his neck and do him no good. He will wish he could get rid of them, but he will not be able to do so.

According to the Biblical phrase in another connection they will hang like a millstone round his neck (Matt. 18:6).

The metaphor here is fuller. He hugged his wealth or his gifts about him. They will become like a heavy collar, the badge of slavery, round his neck. They will be tied tight and twisted, and they will give him pain and anguish instead of pleasure.

Cf. also 17:13.

...وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

To Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth;

C485. Another metaphor is now introduced. Material wealth or property is only called ours during our short life here.

So all gifts are ours in trust only; they ultimately revert to Allah, to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens or on earth. (R).

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (١٨٠)

and Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.

C.60 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:181-200)

*Regard, unmoved, the taunts of those
Who laugh at faith; nor let their falsehood
Nor their seeming prosperity, raise
Questions in your minds. All
Who can read the Signs of Allah in Nature
Know His wisdom, goodness, power
And justice. They know His promise
Is sure, and in humble prayer,
Wholly put their trust in Him.*

Section 19

لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَقِيرٌ وَنَحْنُ أَغْنِيَاءُ...

181. Allah hath heard the taunt of those who say: "Truly, Allah is indigent and we are rich!"

C486. In 2:245 we read: "Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful loan?"

In other places charity or spending in the way of Allah is metaphorically described as giving to Allah. The Holy Prophet often used that expression in appealing for funds to be spent in the way of Allah. The scoffers mocked and said:

"So Allah is indigent and we are rich!"

This blasphemy was of a piece with all their conduct in history, in slaying the Prophets and men of God.

... سَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَالُوا وَقَتْلُهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ...

We shall certainly record their word and (their act) of slaying the Prophets in defiance of right,

C487. For the expression "**slaying in defiance of right**," Cf. [3:21](#), and [3:112](#).

...وَتَقُولُ دُوفُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ (١٨١)

and We shall say: "Taste ye the penalty of the Scorching Fire!

ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ ...

182. "This is because of the (unrighteous deeds) which your hands sent on before ye:

C488. Cf. [2:95](#) and note.

... وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ (١٨٢)

for Allah never harms those who serve Him."

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عٰهَدَ إِلَيْنَا أَلَّا نُؤْمِنَ لِرَسُولٍ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَنَا بِقُرْبَانٍ تَأْكُلُهُ
النَّارُ...

183. They (also) said: "Allah took our promise not to believe in a messenger unless He showed us a sacrifice consumed by fire (from heaven)."

C489. Burn sacrifices figured in the Mosaic Law, and in the religious ceremonies long before Moses, but it is not true that the Mosaic Law laid down a fire from heavens on a burnt sacrifice as a test of the credentials of Prophets.

Even if it had been so, did the Jews obey the Prophets who showed this Sign? In Leviticus 9:23-24, we are told a burnt offering prepared by Moses and Aaron: "and there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat." Yet the people rebelled frequently against Moses.

Abel's offering (sacrifice) was probably a burnt offering: it was accepted by Allah, and he was killed by Cain out of jealousy: Gen. 4:3-8.

Mosaic sacrifices were no longer-needed by the people of Jesus or the people of Muhammad.

...فَلْ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّن قَبْلِي بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَبِالَّذِي قُلْتُمْ...

Say: "There came to you Messengers before me, with clear signs and even with what ye ask for:

...قَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوهُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٨٣)

why then did ye slay them, if ye speak the truth?"

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ جَاءُوا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ

الْمُنِيرِ (١٨٤)

184. Then if they reject thee, so were rejected Messengers before thee, who came with clear Signs, Books of dark prophecies, and the Book of enlightenment.

C490. The three things mentioned in the Text are:

1. Clear Signs (baiyinat);
2. zubar, and
3. kitab-il-Munir.

The signification of 1, I have explained in the note to [3:62](#), as far as they relate to Jesus.

In a more general sense, it means the clear evidence which Allah's dealings furnish about a Messenger of Allah having a true mission: e.g., Moses in relation to Pharaoh.

As to 2, the word Zubur has been translated as scriptures. It comes from the root Zabara which implies something hard. The commentators are not agreed, but the prophetic writings which seemed to contemporaries difficult to understand may well be meant here.

David's psalms (Zabur, 4:163) may also come under this description.

As to 3, there is no doubt about the literal meaning of the words, "the Book of Enlightenment". But what does it precisely refer to?

I take it to mean the fundamental guide to conduct,-the clear rules laid down in all Dispensations to help men to lead good lives. (R).

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ...

185. Every soul shall have a taste of death:

C491. The soul will not die; but the death of the body will give a taste of death to the soul when the soul

separates from the body. The soul will then know that this life was but a probation. And seeming inequalities will be adjusted finally on the Day of Judgment.

... وَإِنَّمَا تُؤْفَقُونَ أَجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ...

and only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense.

فَمَنْ زُحِرَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ...

Only he who is saved far from the fire and admitted to the garden will have attained the object (of life):

...وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْعُرُورِ (١٨٥)

for the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception.

C492. Cf. Longfellow's Psalm of Life:

"All this world's a fleeting show. For man's illusion given".

The only reality will be when we have attained our final goal.

لَتُبْلَوْنَ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ...

186. Ye shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in your personal selves;

C493. Not wealth and possessions only (or want of them), are the means of our trial. All our personal talents, knowledge, opportunities, and their opposites, - in fact everything that happens to us and makes up our personality is a means of our testing.

So is our Faith: we shall have to put up for it many insults from those who do not share it.

... وَلَتَسْمَعَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آوَتْهُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَذًى كَثِيرًا...

and ye shall certainly hear much that will grieve you, from those who received the Book before you and from those who worship many gods.

...وَإِن تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ (١٨٦)

But if ye persevere patiently, and guard against evil, then that will be a determining factor in all affairs.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ ...

187. And remember Allah took a Covenant from the People of the Book,

C494. Truth -Allah's Message- comes to any man or nation as a matter of sacred trust. It should be broadcast and published and taught and made clear to all within reach.

Privileged priesthood at once erects a barrier. But worse, -when such priesthood tampers with the truth, taking what suits it and ignoring the rest, it has sold Allah's gift for a miserable ephemeral profit; how miserable, it will learn when retributive justice comes.

... لِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ ...

o make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it;

... فَتَبَدُّوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ...

but they threw it away behind their **backs**, and purchased with it some miserable gain!

C495. Cf. 2:101.

... فَبَيْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ (١٨٧)

and vile was the bargain they made!

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا أَتَوْا وَيُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يُحْمَدُوا بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُوا ...

188. Think not that those who exult in what they have brought about, and love to be praised for what they have not done,

C496. A searching picture of the worldly wise!

They may cause mischief and misery to others, but gloat over any glory it may bring them!

They may trample down Allah's truths, and enthrone false standards of worship.

They may take credit for virtues they do not possess and seeming successes that come in spite of their despicable deceptions.

...فَلَا تَحْسَبِيَهُمْ بِمَقَارَةِ مَنْ الْعَذَابِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٨٨)

think not that they can escape the penalty.

For them is a penalty grievous indeed.

وَاللَّهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

189. To Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth;

... وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٨٩)

and Allah hath power over all things.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ...

190. Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day,

C497. See 2:164.

The two items mentioned here are just brief symbols recalling the six or seven mentioned in the other passage. And those too are but brief symbols and reminders of the glorious majesty of Allah and His goodness to man.

... لَايَاتٍ لِّلْوَليِ الْأَلْبَابِ (١٩٠)

there are indeed Signs for men of understanding.

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ ...

191. Men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides,

C498. That is, in all postures, which again is symbolical of all circumstances, personal, social, economic, historical and other.

... وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the thought):

... رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا ...

"Our Lord! not for naught hast thou created (all) this!

... سُبْحَانَكَ قَوْلًا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (١٩١)

Glory to thee! give us salvation from the penalty of the fire.

C499. It is the thought of Salvation that connects all these glories with man. Otherwise man would be a miserable, contemptible creature in these beauties and wonders of Nature. With his high destiny of Salvation he can be lifted even higher than these glories!

The Fire is a symbol of penalty. We pray for salvation from the penalty.

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ مَنْ تُدْخِلُ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ ...

192. "Our Lord! any whom thou dost admit to the fire, truly thou coverest with shame,

... وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ (١٩٢)

and never will wrongdoers find any helpers!

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا...

193. "Our Lord! we have heard the call of one calling (us) to faith, 'Believe ye in the Lord', and we have believed.

... رَبَّنَا فَاعْفُرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَقَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ (١٩٣)

Our Lord! forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to thyself our souls in the company of the righteous.

رَبَّنَا وَآتِنَا مَا وَعَدْتَنَا عَلَى رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

194. "Our Lord! grant us what Thou didst promise unto us through Thy Messengers, and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment:

...إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ (١٩٤)

for thou never breakest Thy promise."

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ...

195. And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them:

...أَلَيْ لَا أَضِيعُ عَمَلًا مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ دَكْرٍ أَوْ أَنْتَى بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ...

"Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: ye are members, one of another;

C500. In Islam the equal status of the sexes is not only recognised but insisted on. If sex distinction, which is a distinction in nature, does not count in spiritual matters, still less of course would count artificial distinctions, such as rank, wealth, position, race, colour, birth, etc,

...فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا
وَقُتِلُوا...

those who have left their homes, or been driven out therefrom, or suffered harm in My cause, or fought or been slain,

...لَاكْفَرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَا دَخَلَتْهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ...

verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing beneath;

... تَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ...

a reward from the presence of Allah,

C501. Here, and in [3:198 below](#), and in many places elsewhere, stress is laid on the fact that whatever gift, or bliss will come to the righteous, its chief merit will be that it proceeds from Allah Himself.

"Nearness to Allah" expresses it better than any other symbol.

...وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ التَّوَابِ (١٩٥)

and from His presence is the best of rewards."

لَا يَغُرَّتْكَ تَفَلُّبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي الْبِلَادِ (١٩٦)

196. Let not the strutting about of the unbelievers through the land deceive thee:

مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ ثُمَّ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ (١٩٧)

197. Little is it for enjoyment; their ultimate abode is Hell:
what an evil bed (to lie on)!

لكن الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ...

198. On the other hand, for those who fear their Lord, are gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, therein are they to dwell (for ever),

... نَزْلًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ...

a gift from the presence of Allah,

... وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِلْأَبْرَارِ (١٩٨)

and that which is in the presence of Allah is the best (bliss) for the righteous.

وَأَنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ ...

199. And there are, certainly, among the People of the Book, those who believe in Allah, in the revelation to you, and in the revelation to them,

... خَاشِعِينَ لِلَّهِ لَا يَشْتُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ تَمَتًّا قَلِيلًا ...

bowing in humility to Allah:

they will not sell the signs of Allah for a miserable gain!

... أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ...

for them is a reward with their Lord,

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (١٩٩)

and Allah is swift in account.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

200. O ye who believe!

... اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا ...

persevere in patience and constancy:

vie in such perseverance;

C502. The full meaning of **Sabr** is to be understood here, viz.: Patience, perseverance, constancy, self-restraint, refusing to be cowed down.

These virtues we are to exercise for ourselves and in relation to others; we are to set an example, so that others may vie with us, and we are to vie with them, lest we fall short; in this way we strengthen each other and bind our mutual relations closer, in our common service to Allah.

... وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٢٠٠)

strengthen each other;
and fear Allah; that ye may prosper.

C503. Prosperity (**falah**) here and in other passages is to be understood in a wide sense, including prosperity in our mundane affairs as well as in spiritual progress.

In both cases it implies happiness and the attainment of our wishes, purified by the love of Allah.



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