



إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَنْ نَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ



*Verify! Our Word unto a thing when We intend it, is only that We say unto it; "Be!"; and it is.*

## Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

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### Al Nahl



#### Introduction and Summary

Chronologically this Surah, like the six which preceded it, belongs to the late Makkan period, except perhaps verse 110 and some of the verses that follow. But the chronology has no significance.

In subject matter it sums up, from a new point of view, the arguments on the great questions of Allah's dealings with man. His Self-revelation to man, and how the Messengers and the Message are writ large in every phase of Allah's Creation and the life of Man. The new point of view is that Nature points to Nature's God.

**Summery-** Everything in Creation proclaims the glory of Allah. To man is given dominion over Nature, that man may recognise Allah's Unity and Allah's Truth (16:1-25, and C. 123).

Man should never lose sight of his goal, which is the good, or dispute with the great Teachers, who are sent to all Peoples, to bring about Unity: all creatures serve Allah (16:26-50, and C. 124).

Allah's favours and man's ingratitude recounted. His Signs in the rain-bearing clouds, the cattle that give milk, the bee that produces honey, the wonderful relations of family and social life, and the refinements and comforts of civilisation (16:51-83, and C. 125).

The Messengers of Truth will bear witness against those who reject the Truth. Allah will judge us according to our faith and deeds (16:84-100, and C. 126).

The Quran is true: it guides and gives glad tidings. Believe, and make the most of life in all things good and lawful. Follow the example of Abraham; be true in Faith and righteousness, and do good (16:101-128, and C. 127).

### **C.123 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

**(16:1-25)**

*Allah's Command must inevitably  
Come to pass. But all His Creation  
Proclaims His glory, and leads to His Truth.  
In all things has He furnished man  
With favours innumerable.  
To lead and guide him and bring him  
To Himself. Why then does man  
Refuse the Truth, except for arrogance?  
Why does he run after false gods,  
Thus acting against his own lights  
And misleading others less blest in knowledge?*

# بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أتى أمرُ اللهِ فلا تستعجلوه...!

1. (Inevitable) cometh (to pass) the Command of Allah: seek ye not then to hasten it:

**C2019.** This is an answer to the taunt of the Pagans, who said; "If there is a god, the One True God, as you say, with unified control, why does He not punish the wrong- doers at once?"

The answer is;

"The decree of Allah will inevitably come to pass; it will come soon enough; when it comes, you will wish it were delayed; how foolish of you to wish even to cut off your last hope of forgiveness?"

... سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (١)

glory to Him,

and far is He above having the partners they ascribe unto Him!

يُنزِّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ...

2. He doth send down His angels with inspiration of His Command, to such of His servants as He pleaseth, (saying):

... أَنْ أَنْذِرُوا أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاتَّقُونِ (٢)

"Warn (Man) that there is no god but I:

so do your duty unto Me."

**C2020.** The Pagans, with their multiplicity of gods and goddesses, good and evil, could play one off against another. That is mere mockery of religion. With such conceptions, man cannot understand the Unity of Design in the Universe nor realise the Power and Glory of the One True God, to Whom alone worship and service are due.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ...

3. He has created the heavens and the earth for just ends:

**C2021.** Not for sport, or fortuitously and without Design.

Cf. 15:85.

Surely the Unity of Design in Creation also proves the Unity of Allah their Creator.

... تَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٣)

far is He above having the partners they ascribe to Him!

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْقَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ (٤)

4. He has created man from a sperm drop;  
and behold this same (man) becomes an open disputer!

**C2022.** Man's physical origin is lowly. Yet do men go back to material things, and neglect or dispute about the highest things in Life.

وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ ...

5. And cattle He has created for you (men):

**C2023.** Why will you go back to material things, considering that material things are made subservient to your use and enjoyment in various ways as suggested in the clauses that follow.

... فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ ...

from them ye derive warmth, and numerous benefits,

**C2024.** From wool, and hair, and skins, and milk.

Camel's hair makes warm robes and blankets; and certain kinds of goats yield hair which makes similar fabrics.

Sheep yield wool, and Ilamas alpaca for similar uses. The skins and furs of many animals yield warm raiment or make warm rugs or bedding.

The females of many of these animals yield good warm milk, a nourishing and wholesome diet. Then the flesh of many of these animals is good to eat.

There are other uses, which the animals serve, and which are referred to later.

... وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٥)

and of their (meat) ye eat.

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ (٦)

6. And ye have a sense of pride and beauty in them as ye drive them home in the evening, and as ye lead them forth to pasture in the morning.

**C2025.** The good man is proud of his cattle and is good to them. As they go to, and return from, pasture, morning and evening, he has a sense of his power and wealth and their beauty and docility.

Will not man turn from these material facts to the great spiritual truths and purpose behind them?

وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بِالْغَيْهِ إِلَّا أُنْفُسٌ...

7. And they carry your heavy loads to lands that ye could not (otherwise) reach except with souls distressed:

**C2026.** The cattle and animals also carry loads, and thus make inter-communication between different lands easy. But for them there would have been many difficulties, not only physical, but psychological.

Weary men carrying loads are in no mood for social and spiritual intercourse. This intercourse is made possible by the kindness and mercy of Allah.

... إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَوْوْفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٧)

for your Lord is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful.

وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً...

8. And (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show;

**C2027.** Horse, mules, and donkeys as well as other animals may be beasts of burden, but they may also be pedigree animals bred for beauty and for all those more refined uses, such as processions, in which grace and elegance is the predominant feature.

... وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٨)

and He has created (other) things of what ye have no knowledge.

**C2028.** If we examine the history of transport, there have been vast changes through the ages, from rude pack animals to fine equipages, and then through mechanical contrivances, such means of transport as elegant coaches, tramways and railways, useful motor lorries and Rolls-Royce cars, and air-ships and aeroplanes of all descriptions.

At any given point of time, many of these were yet unknown to man. Nor can we suppose the limit to have been reached now or that it will ever be reached at any future time.

Through the mind and ingenuity of man it is Allah that creates new things hitherto unknown to man.

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيلِ وَمِنْهَا جَائِرٌ...

9. And unto Allah leads straight the Way, but there are ways that turn aside:

**C2029.** Through material things "the Way" does always lead to Allah. But some minds are so obsessed with material things that they miss the pointers to the spiritual.

Allah could have forced all to the true Way, but in His Will and Plan is the training of man's will, and that is done by the Signs in nature and Revelation.

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٩)

if Allah had willed, He could have guided all of you.

## Section 2

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً...

10. It is He Who sends down rain from the sky:

... لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ (١٠)

from it ye drink, and out of it (grows) the vegetation on which ye feed your cattle.

يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ...

11. With it He produces for you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes, and every kind of fruit:

... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (١١)

verily in this is a Sign for those who give thought.

**C2030.** The least thought and study of nature will show you Allah's wise and benign Providence in making the processes of nature subserve man's use and refined life.

A higher degree of intelligence and study is required ("men who are wise") to understand Allah's Signs to man in the processes connected with the heavenly bodies (verse 12).

And a still higher spiritual understanding ("men who celebrate His praises" with gratitude) to realise the marvelous gradations, colours, and nuances in the creatures on this little globe of ours (verse 13), Reason this out carefully.

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ...

12. He has made subject to you the Night and the Day;  
the Sun and the Moon;

**C2031.** The Night and the Day are caused by astronomical rotations.

What is important for man to note is how Allah has given intelligence to man to make use of this alternation for work and rest;

how man can, as soon as he rises from the primitive stage, get over their inequalities by artificial illuminants, such as vegetable or mineral oils, coal, gas, or electricity, which ultimately are derived from the stored-up energy of the sun;

how the sun's heat can be tempered by various artificial means and can be stored up for use by man as required, how man can be independent of the tides caused by the moon and the sun, which formerly controlled navigation,

but which no longer stand in man's way, with his artificial harbours and great sea-going ships, how navigation was formerly subject to direct observation of the Polar Star and other stars, but how the magnetic needle and charts have now completely altered the position, and man can calculate and to a certain extent control magnetic variations, etc.

In such ways the sun, the moon, and the stars themselves become useful servants to him, all by Allah's gift and His Command, without which there would have been no laws governing them and no intelligence to make use of them.

... وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ ...

and the Stars are in subjection by His Command:

... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (١٢)

verily in this are Signs for men who are wise.

وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ ...

13. And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colors (and qualities):

**C2032.** Whose heart has not been moved by the glorious gradation of colours in the sunset clouds?

The gradations are infinite, and it is only the eye of an artist that can express their collective beauty. They are but a type of the infinite variety and gradation of qualities in the spiritual sphere even in the little space of our own globe.

The big things that can be measured and defined have been spoken of before. Here we have mention of the subtle nuances in the spiritual world which can only be perceived by men who are so high in spiritual insight that their only reaction is to "celebrate the praises of Allah" in gratitude for His infinite Mercies.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ (١٣)

verily in this is a Sign for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (in gratitude).



**C2033.** Read again n. 2030 above, and see how subtly we are led up from the perception of the big to the perception of the subtle and delicate colours and qualities in the spiritual world.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ ...

14. It is He Who has made the sea subject,

**C2034.** We have gone up in a climax of material things from the big to the subtle in the sky and the earth. Here we have another climax as regard the things of the sea.

We get the delicate flesh of fishes and marine creatures of all kinds; we get the treasures of the deep; pearls, coral, amber, and things of that kind; and we have the stately ships ploughing the waves, for maritime commerce and intercourse, for unifying mankind, and for realising the spiritual bounty of Allah which can best be expressed by the boundless ocean.

... لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا ...

that ye may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender,

**C2035.** Connoisseurs know the delicate flavours of sea fish, such as the pomfret of the Indian Ocean, the herring of the North Atlantic, the mullet of Marseilles, and many another kind. Tart, translated "fresh and tender," also refers to the soft moist nature of fresh fish.

It is another wonder of Allah that salt water should produce flesh or such fresh, tender, and delicate flavour.

... وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا ...

and that ye may extract therefrom ornaments to wear;

**C2036.** Diving for pearls-in both the primitive and the more advanced form-is another instance of man's power over apparently inaccessible depths of the sea.

... وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاجِرَ فِيهِ ...

and thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves,

... وَلْيَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٤)

that ye may seek (thus) of the bounty of Allah and that ye may be grateful.

**C2037.** After the material benefits which we get from the sea, we are asked to consider things of higher import to the spirit of man.

There is the beautiful ship which stands as the symbol of international commerce and intercourse, things that may be of material benefit, but which have a higher aspect in unifying man and making his civilisation more universal. These are first steps in seeking of the "bounty of Allah" through the sea.

But there are higher aspects. Navigation and international intercourse increase knowledge, which in its higher aspects should clean the mind and make it fitter to approach Allah. The salt water, which covers nearly 72 percent, of the surface of the Globe, is itself a purifying and sanitary agent, and is a good symbol of the higher bounties of Allah, which are as boundless as the Ocean.

وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَن تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ...

15. And He has set up on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you;

**C2038.** Cf. 13:3 and 15:19.

Here and elsewhere the earth is spoken of as a spacious carpet beneath our feet and the hills as a steadying agent to keep the carpet from rolling or shaking about.

In 78:7 they are spoken of as pegs or stakes. (R).

... وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (١٥)

and rivers and roads; that ye may guide yourselves,

**C2039.** In this passage (16:15-16) we have the metaphor of the fixed mountains further allegorized.

In these verses the key-words are indicated by the symbols for man's Guidance (**tahtadun**).

- First, the physical symbols are indicated; the mountains that stand firm and do not change from

day to day in the landscape, unlike shifting sand-dunes, or the coast line of the sea, or rivers and streams, which frequently change their courses, then we have rivers and roads, which are more precise and therefore more useful, though less permanent;

- then we have 'alamat (sign-posts), any kinds of signs erected by man, like direction posts, light-houses or beacons, or provided in nature, as tall trees, etc.;
- and finally, we have the pole-star, and now the magnetic needle, with its variations marked on navigation charts.

All these are symbols for the higher Guidance which Allah provides for the spirit of man. See next note.

وَعَلَامَاتٍ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ (١٦)

16. And marks and signposts; and by the stars (men) guide themselves.

**C2040.** See [last note](#).

Let us examine the completed allegory. As there are beacons, landmarks and signs to show the way to men on the earth, so in the spiritual world. And it is ultimately Allah Who provides them, and this is His crowning Mercy.

Like the mountains there are spiritual Landmarks in the missions of the Great Prophets: they should guide us, or teach us, to guide ourselves, and not shake hither and thither like a ship without a rudder or people without Faith.

As rivers and streams mark out their channels, smoothing out levels so we have wholesome Laws and Customs established, to help us in our lives.

Then we have the examples of Great Men as further sign-posts: "Lives of great men all remind us, We can make our lives sublime."

In long-distance travel, the pole-star and the magnetic needle are our guides; so in our long-distance journey to the other world, we have ultimately to look to heavenly guidance or its reflection in Allah's Revelation.

أَفَمَنْ يَخْلُقُ كَمَنْ لَا يَخْلُقُ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ (١٧)

17. Is then He Who creates like one that creates not?

Will ye not receive admonition?

**C2041.** The supreme majesty of Allah have been set out in His favours of all kinds, it will be seen at once that the worship of any other than Allah is meaningless and ridiculous.

Shall we not take the hint and understand?

وَأِنْ تَعَدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا...

18. If ye would count up the favors of Allah, never would ye be able to number them:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١٨)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

**C2042.** Of all Allah's favours innumerable, His Mercy and Forgiveness in the spiritual plane is the greatest, and of eternal value to us in our future Lives.

وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ (١٩)

19. And Allah doth know what ye conceal, and what ye reveal.

وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ (٢٠)

20. Those whom they invoke besides Allah create nothing and are themselves created.

**C2043.** Allah is the only Creator and the Ultimate Reality. Everything else is created by Him, and reflects His glory. How foolish then to worship any other than Allah!

أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَاءٍ...

21. (They are things) dead, lifeless:

... وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ (٢١)

nor do they know when they will be raised up.

**C2044.** Idols are dead wood or stone. If men worship stars, or heroes, or prophets, or great men, they too have no life except that which was given by Allah.

In themselves, they are lifeless. If they worship figments of the imagination, they are reflections in a double degree, and have no life in themselves.

All these things will be raised up on the Last Day, in order that false worshippers may be confronted with them. But they themselves cannot tell when that Day will be.

### Section 3

إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ...

22. Your Allah is One Allah:

... قَالِذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مُنْكَرَةٌ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٢٢)

as to those who believe not in the Hereafter, their hearts refuse to know and they are arrogant.

**C2045.** Everything points to Allah, the One True Eternal God. If so, there is a Hereafter, for He has declared it.

In so far as people do not believe this, the fault is in their Will; they do not wish to believe, and the motive behind is arrogance, the sin which brought about the fall of Iblis: 2:34. (R).

لَا جَرَمَ أَنْ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ...

23. Undoubtedly Allah doth know what they conceal, and what they reveal:

**C2046.** Cf. 16:19, where the same words refer to man generally.

Whether he conceals or reveals what is in his heart, Allah knows it, and as Allah is Oft-Forgiving. Most Merciful, His grace is available as His highest favour if man will take it.

Here the reference is to those who "refuse to know", who reject Allah's guidance out of arrogance. Allah "**loveth not the arrogant**". Such men deprive themselves of Allah's grace.

... إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ (٢٣)

verily He loveth not the arrogant.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ مَآذَا أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ...

24. When it is said to them, "What is it that your Lord has revealed?"

**C2047.** When the arrogant Unbelievers are referred to some definite argument or illustration from Scripture, they dismiss it contemptuously with the remark. "**Tales of the ancients!**"

In this, they are not only playing with their own conscience, but misleading others, with perhaps less knowledge than themselves.

... قَالُوا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٢٤)

They say, "Tales of the ancients!"

لِيَحْمِلُوا أَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

25. Let them bear, on the Day of Judgment, their own burdens in full,

... وَمِنْ أَوْزَارِ الَّذِينَ يُضِلُّوهُمْ بَعِيرٍ عِلْمٍ...

and also (something) of the burdens of those without knowledge, whom they misled.

**C2048.** Their responsibility or crime is twofold:

- that they rejected Allah's Message, and
- that they misled others.

Their Penalty will also be double.

In 6:164, we are told that "no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another".

This is against the doctrine of vicarious atonement. Every man is responsible for his own sins; but the sin of misleading others is a sin of the misleader himself, and he must suffer the penalty for that also, without relieving those misled, of their responsibility.

... أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَزُرُونَ (٢٥)

Alas, how grievous the burdens they will bear!

## C.124 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(16:26-50)

*In all ages wicked men tried to plot  
Against Allah's Way, but they never  
Succeeded, and were covered with shame  
In ways unexpected. The righteous  
See good in Allah's Word, and their goal  
Is the Good. Great Teachers were sent  
To all nations, to warn against Evil  
And guide to the Right. The penalty  
For evil comes in many unexpected  
Ways, for Evil is against Nature.  
And all Nature proclaims Allah's Glory  
And humbly serves Him, the Lord Supreme.*

### Section 4

قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ...

26. Those before them did also plot (against Allah's Way):

... فَأَتَى اللَّهُ بُنْيَانَهُمْ مِنَ الْقَوَاعِدِ...

but Allah took their structures from their foundations,

... فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ...

and the roof fell down on them from above;

... وَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٢٦)

and the Wrath seized them from directions they did not perceive.

**C2049.** Evil will always devise plots against the Prophets of Allah. So was it with Al-Mustafa, and so was it with the Prophets before him. But the imposing structures which the ungodly build up (metaphorically) collapse at

the Command of Allah, and they are often punished from quarters from which they least expected punishment.

For example, the Quraish were confident in their numbers, their organizations, and their superior equipment. But on the field of Badr they collapsed where they expected victory.

ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُخْزِيهِمْ...

27. Then, on the Day of Judgment, He will cover them with shame,

... وَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تُشَاقِقُونَ فِيهِمْ...

and say: "Where are My 'partners' concerning whom ye used to dispute (with the godly)?"

... قَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ ...

Those endued with knowledge will say:

**C2050.** The worshippers of false gods (ungodly, the Unbelievers) will be unable to reply when brought before the Judgment Seat.

The comment of those "**endued with knowledge**" -the Prophets and Teachers whom they had rejected- will be by way of indictment and explanation of the position of those before the Judgment Seat.

... إِنَّ الْخِزْيَ الْيَوْمَ وَالسُّوءَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٢٧)

"This Day, indeed, are the Unbelievers covered with Shame and Misery -

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَقَّاهُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنفُسِهِمْ...

28. "(Namely) those whose lives the angels take in a state of wrongdoing to their own souls.

**C2051.** That is, those who died in a state of *Kufr*, or rebellion against Allah, which was really wrong-doing against their own souls.

... فَأَقْبَرُوا السَّلَامَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ مِنْ سُوءٍ...

Then would they offer submission (with the pretence), 'We did no evil (knowingly).'"



**C2052.** The excuse is a mere pretence. At first they were too dazed to reply. When they reply, they cannot deny the facts, but resort to the sinner's excuse of saying that they sinned through ignorance, and that their motives were not wrong.

Such a plea raises a question of hidden thoughts which are difficult to appraise before a human tribunal. But here they are before their Divine Author, Who knows every secret of their souls, and before Whom no false plea can be of any value. So they are condemned.

... بَلَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٨)

(The angels will reply),

"Nay, but verily Allah knoweth all that ye did;

فَادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

29. "So enter the gates of Hell, to dwell therein.

... فَلَيْسَ مَثْوًى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٢٩)

Thus evil indeed is the abode of the arrogant."

وَقِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَا أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ...

30. To the righteous (when) it is said, "What is it that your Lord has revealed?"

**C2053.** The contrast and parallelism is with 16:24, where the ungodly in their levity and their deliberate rejection of guidance find no profit from Allah's Revelation.

... قَالُوا خَيْرًا...

they say, "All that is good."

... لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ...

To those who do good, there is good in this world,

... وَلِدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ...

and the Home of the Hereafter is even better.

**C2054.** Unlike the ungodly, the good find good everywhere, -in this world and in the Hereafter; because they understand and are in accord with the truths around them.

... وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٣٠)

And excellent indeed is the Home of the righteous --

جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ...

31. Gardens of Eternity which they will enter:

beneath them flow (pleasant) rivers:

... لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ...

they will have therein all that they wish:

... كَذَلِكَ يَجْزِي اللَّهُ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٣١)

thus doth Allah reward the righteous --

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ...

32. (Namely) those whose lives the angels take in a state of purity,

**C2055.** In a state of purity: from the evils of this world, from want of faith and want of grace. Purity from such evil is the mark of true Islam, and those who die in such purity will be received into Felicity with a salutation of Peace.

... يَقُولُونَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٣٢)

saying (to them),

"Peace be on you; enter ye the Garden, because of the good which ye did (in the world)."

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرٌ رَبِّكَ...

33. Do the (ungodly) wait until the angels come to them, or there comes the Command of thy Lord (for their doom)?

**C2056.** That is, until death comes to them, or some Punishment in this life, itself, which precludes them from repentance, and the Mercy of Allah.

... كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ...

So did those who went before them.

... وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (۳۳)

But Allah wronged them not:

nay, they wronged their own souls.

فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (۳۴)

34. But the evil results of their deeds overtook them, and that very (Wrath) at which they had scoffed hemmed them in.

## Section 5

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ...

35. The worshippers of false gods say:

"If Allah had so willed, we should not have worshipped aught but Him --

... نَحْنُ وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا ...

neither we nor our fathers --

**C2057.** The old-old argument: if Allah is All-Powerful, why did He not force all persons to His Will?

This ignores the limited Free-will granted to man, which is the whole basis of Ethics. Allah gives man every opportunity of knowing and understanding things, but He does not force him, for that would be against the whole Plan on which our present Life is constituted.

... وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ...

nor should we have prescribed prohibitions other than His."

**C2058.** The Pagan Arabs prescribed various arbitrary prohibitions in the matter of meat; see 6:143-145.

These, of course, are not recognised by Islam, which also removed some of the restrictions of the Jewish Law; 6:146. The general meaning, however, is far wider.

Men erect their own taboos and prohibitions, barriers and restrictions, and ascribe them to Religion. This is wrong, and more consonant with Pagan practice than with Islam.

... كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ...

So did those who went before them.

... فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ (٣٥)

But what is the mission of Messengers but to preach the Clear Message?

**C2059. Clear Message: Mubin:** in three senses;

- a Message clear and unambiguous;
- one that makes all things clear to those who try to understand, because it accords with their own nature as created by Allah;
- one preached openly and to everyone.

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ...

36. For We assuredly sent amongst every People a Messenger, (with the Command),

"Serve Allah and eschew Evil":

**C2060.** Even though Allah's Signs are everywhere in Nature and in men's own conscience, yet in addition Allah has sent human Messengers to every People to call their attention to the Good and turn them from Evil.

So they cannot pretend that Allah has abandoned them or that He does not care what they do. His divine Grace always invites their will to choose the right.

... فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ ...

of the people were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom Error became inevitably (established).

**C2061.** While some people accept the guidance of the divine Grace, others so surrender themselves to Evil that it must necessarily follow that Evil obtains a grip over them. They have only to travel through Time or Space to

see the end of those who abandoned their lights and surrendered to Evil and Error.

For **haqqat** and the meaning of haqq in this connection cf. 15:64.

... فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ (٣٦)

So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth).

إِنْ تَحْرَصْ عَلَىٰ هِدَايِهِمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ يُضِلُّ...

37. If thou art anxious for their guidance, yet Allah guideth not such as He leaves to stray,

**C2062.** When once Allah's Grace is rejected by any one, such a person loses all help and guidance. Such persons are then outside Allah's Grace, and therefore they are outside guidance.

... وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ (٣٧)

and there is none to help them.

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ ...

38. They swear their strongest oaths by Allah,

**C2063.** The strongest oath of the Pagan Arabs would be by the Supreme Allah; less strong oaths would be by their subordinate deities, or their ancestors, or other things they valued or held sacred.

... لَا يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَن يَمُوتُ ...

that Allah will not raise up those who die:

**C2064.** The usual Pagan creed is:

'If there is a God, it does not follow that He will raise us up; why should He?'

The answer is twofold:

- Allah has promised it, and Allah's promise is true;
- He must finally manifest the Truth to them, convict them of their falsehood, and enforce their personal responsibility ([16:39](#)).

... بَلَىٰ وَعَدًّا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٨)

Nay, but it is a promise (binding) on Him in truth:  
but most among mankind realize it not.

لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي يُخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ...

39. (They must be raised up), in order that He may manifest to them the truth of that wherein they differ,

... وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَاذِبِينَ (٣٩)

and that the rejecters of Truth may realize that they had indeed (surrendered to) Falsehood.

**C2065.** See the [last note](#).

إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَنْ نَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (٤٠)

40. For to anything which We have willed, We but say the Word, "Be," and it is.

**C2066.** Allah's "**Word**" is in itself the Deed, Allah's Promise is in itself the Truth. There is no interposition of Time or Condition between His Will and its consequences, for He is the Ultimate Reality.

He is independent of the proximate or material causes, for He Himself creates them and establishes their Laws as He pleases.

## Section 6

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا ...

41. To those who leave their homes in the Cause of Allah, after suffering oppression --

**C2067.** There is no merit in suffering exile (Hijrah) in itself. To have any merit, it must be;

- in the cause of Allah, and
- after such an oppression as forces the sufferer to choose between Allah and man.

When these conditions are fulfilled, the exiles are entitled to the highest honour, as having made a great sacrifice in the cause of Allah.

Such were the early Muslim exiles to Abyssinia; such were the later exiles to Madinah before the Prophet himself left his home in Makkah and went to Madinah; and such were the exiles who went with the Prophet or followed him.

At all these stages, his approval or advice was always obtained, either specifically or generally.

... لَنُبَوِّئَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ...

We will assuredly give a goodly home in this world:

... وَلَلْآخِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤١)

but truly the reward of the Hereafter will be greater, if they only realize (this)!

الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٤٢)

42. (They are) those who persevere in patience, and put their trust on their Lord.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رَجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ ...

43. And before thee also the Messengers We sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration:

**C2068.** Allah's prophets were always men, not angels; and their distinction was the inspiration they received.

... فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٤٣)

if ye realize this not, ask of those who possess the Message.

**C2069.** If the Pagan Arabs, who were ignorant of religious and other history, wondered how a man from among themselves could receive inspiration and bring a Message from Allah, let them ask the Jews, who had also received Allah's Message earlier through Moses, whether Moses was a man, or an angel, or a god. They would learn that Moses was a man like themselves, but inspired by Allah.

**"Those who possess the Message"** may also mean any men of Wisdom, who were qualified to have an opinion in such matters.

بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ...

44. (We sent them) with Clear Signs and Scriptures;

**C2070.** As the People of the Book had received "Clear Signs" and inspired Books before, so also Allah's Message came to the Prophet Muhammad through the Quran, which superseded the earlier revelations, already corrupted in the hands of their followers. (R).

... وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ...

and We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou mayest explain clearly to men what is sent for them,

... وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٤٤)

and that they may give thought.

أَقَامِنَ الَّذِينَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ...

45. Do then those who devise evil (plots) feel secure

... أَنْ يَخْسِفَ اللَّهُ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ...

that Allah will not cause the earth to swallow them up,

... أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٤٥)

or that the Wrath will not seize them from directions they little perceive? --

**C2071.** Cf. [16:26](#).

The wicked plot against Prophets of Allah in secret, forgetting that every hidden thought of theirs is known to Allah, and that for every thought and action of theirs they will have to account to Allah.

And Allah's punishment can seize them in various ways. Four are enumerated here.

1. They may be swallowed up in the earth like Qarun, whose story is told in 28:76-81.



He was swallowed up in the earth while he was arrogantly exulting on the score of his wealth.

2. It may be that, like Haman, the prime minister of Pharaoh, they are plotting against Allah, when they are themselves overwhelmed by some dreadful calamity; 40:36-38, 29:39-40.

The case of Pharaoh is also in point. He was drowned while he was arrogantly hoping to frustrate Allah's plans for Israel-, 10:90-92.

For 3 and 4 see the next two notes. (R).

أَوْ يَأْخُذُهُمْ فِي تَقْلِبِهِمْ...

46. Or that He may not call them to account in the midst of their goings to and fro,

### **C2072.**

3. Or the punishment may come to people away from their homes and humble them in their pride. It so happened to Abu Jahl, who came exulting in his pride to the Battle of Badr (A.H. 2).

His army was three times the size of the Muslim army from Madinah. But it suffered a crushing defeat, and he himself was ignominiously slain.

... فَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٤٦)

without a chance of their frustrating Him? --

أَوْ يَأْخُذُهُمْ عَلَى تَخَوُّفٍ...

47. Or that He may not call them to account by a process of slow wastage --

### **C2073.**

4. Or, as often happens, the punishment comes slowly and imperceptibly, the power of the enemies of Allah being wasted gradually, until it is extinguished.

This happened to the Makkans during the eight years of the Prophet's exile. The conquest of Makkah was bloodless, because the power of the enemy had gradually vanished. The Prophet was thus able to

show the unexampled generosity and clemency which he showed on that occasion, for two of Allah's attributes are expressed in the titles "**Full of kindness**" (**Ra'uf**) and "**Full of mercy**" (**Rahim**).

... فَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرْؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ (٤٧)

for thy Lord is indeed full of kindness and mercy.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ...

48. Do they not look at Allah's creation, (even) among (inanimate) things --

**C2074.** 1 take "**things**" here to be inanimate things, for the next verse speaks of living, "moving creatures" and angels.

By a metaphor even such inanimate things are spoken of as recognising Allah and humbly worshipping Him. Even their shadows turn round from right and left according to the light from above, and they humbly prostrate themselves on the ground to celebrate the praises of Allah.

... يَتَفَيَّأُ ظِلَّالُهُ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَائِلِ سُجَّدًا لِلَّهِ...

how their (very) shadows turn round, from the right and the left, prostrating themselves to Allah,

The "**shadow**" suggest how all things in this life are mere shadows of the true Reality in heaven, and they should turn and move in accordance with the divine light, as the shadows of trees and buildings move in one direction or another, and lengthen or shorten according to the light from heaven.

... وَهُمْ دَاخِرُونَ (٤٨)

and that in the humblest manner?

وَاللَّهُ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ...

49. And to Allah doth obeisance all that is in the heavens and on earth, whether moving (living) creatures or the angels:

**C2075. Moving creatures**, i.e., living creatures,

**"All that is in the heavens or earth,"** includes every created thing. And created things are mentioned in three classes:

1. inanimate things,
2. ordinary living things, and
3. angels.

Even the highest angels are not **arrogant**; they bow down and serve their Lord, and so does all Creation.

... وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٤٩)

for none are arrogant (before their Lord).

يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ (٥٠)

50. They all revere their Lord, high above them,  
and they do all that they are commanded.

**C2076.** Allah is so high above the highest of His creatures, that they all look up to him in awe and reverence. And they joyfully do their duty in serving Him.

This is the meaning of the "fear of the Lord."

### **C.125 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

**(16:51-83)**

*There is but One God, He Who gives  
All blessings to man and other creatures.  
His greatest gift is that He reveals  
Himself. But in many tangible ways  
He cares for man and provides for his growth  
And sustenance. In rain, in milk,  
In fruits and honey, and in Nature and the life  
Of man, with his opportunities*

*Of social, moral, and spiritual growth,  
Are Signs for those who understand.  
Why then does man show ingratitude  
By going after false gods and forgetting Allah?*

## Section 7

وَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا إِلَهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ...

51. Allah has said:

"Take not (for worship) two gods:

**C2077.** The ancient Persians believed in two powers in the Universe, one good and the other evil.

The Pagan Arabs also had pairs of deities: e.g., Jibr (Sorcery) and Tagat (Evil), referred to in 4:51, n. 573, or the idols on Safa and Marwa referred to in n. 160 to 2:158: their names were Isaf and Nayla.

... إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ...

for He is just One Allah:

... فَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونَ (٥١)

then fear Me (and Me alone)."

... وَلَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّينُ وَاصِبًا...

52. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and on earth, and to Him is duty due always:

... أَفَعَيَّرَ اللَّهُ تَتَفُونَ (٥٢)

then will ye fear other than Allah?

**C2078.** The Pagans might have a glimmering of the One True God, but they had also a haunting fear of malevolent Powers of Evil. They are told that such fears are groundless. Evil has no power over those who trust in Allah: 15:42.

The only fear they should have is that of the Wrath of Allah. To the righteous all good things come from Allah, and they have no fear in their hearts.

وَمَا بِكُمْ مِّنْ نُّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ...

53. And ye have no good thing but is from Allah:

... ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْأُرُونَ (٥٣)

and moreover, when ye are touched by distress, unto Him ye cry with groans;

**C2079.** Which shows that the natural tendency of man is to seek Allah, the only Power which can truly relieve distress.

ثُمَّ إِذَا كُشِفَ الضُّرُّ عَنْكُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْكُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ (٥٤)

54. Yet, when He removes the distress from you, behold! some of you turn to other gods to join with their Lord --

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ...

55. (As if) to show their ingratitude for the favors We have bestowed on them!

... فَتَمَتَّعُوا فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٥٥)

Then enjoy (your brief day); but soon will ye know (your folly)!

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ...

56. And they (even) assign, to things they do not know,

**C2080.** Idols and fictitious gods are certainly things of which they have no knowledge, idols being lifeless things of whose life or doings no knowledge is possible, and fictitious gods being but figments of their imagination.

... نَصِيبًا مِّمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ...

a portion out of that which we have bestowed for their sustenance!

**C2081.** Cf. 6:136-140, 142-144, and 5:103.

The Pagans, in assigning and dedicating some of their children, or some of their cattle, or some of the produce

of their fields, to their false gods as sharers with the true Supreme God, made themselves doubly ridiculous;

- first, because every good thing that they valued was given to them by Allah, and how could they patronizingly assign to Him a share of His own gifts?
- and secondly, because they brought in other gods as sharers, who had no existence whatever!

Besides, the cattle and produce was given for their physical sustenance and the children for their social and spiritual sustenance, and how can they, poor creatures, give sustenance to Allah?

... تَاللّٰهِ لِنُسَالَيْنَ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَفْتُرُونَ (٥٦)

By Allah, ye shall certainly be called to account for your false inventions.

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلّٰهِ الْبَنَاتِ ...

57. And they assign daughters for Allah!

**C2082.** Some of the Pagan Arabs called angels the daughters of Allah. In their own life they hated to have daughters, as explained in the next two verses.

They practised female infanticide. In their state of perpetual war sons were a source of strength to them; daughters only made them subject to humiliating raids!

... سُبْحَانَهُ ...

Glory be to Him!

... وَلَهُمْ مَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (٥٧)

and for themselves (sons, the issue) the desire!

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُمْ بِالْأُنثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ (٥٨)

58. When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief!

يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِن سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ ...

59. With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he has had!

**C2083.** "It", in this and the following clause, refers grammatically to the "news" (ma bushshira bihi).

In meaning it refers to the "female child" - by the figure of speech known as metonymy.

... أَيْمُسِكُهُ عَلَى هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ...

Shall he retain it on (sufferance and) contempt, or bury it in the dust?

**C2084.** Cf. 81:8-9.

The practice of female infanticide is condemned in scathing terms. Female children used to be buried alive by the Pagan Arabs.

... أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (٥٩)

Ah! what an evil (choice) they decide on!

**C2085.** It was an evil choice to decide on. Either alternative -to keep the poor girl as a thing of sufferance and contempt, bringing disgrace on the family, or to get rid of it by burying it alive- was cruel and indefensible.

## Section 8

لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوِّءِ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَى...

60. To those who believe not in the Hereafter, applies the similitude of evil:

to Allah applies the highest similitude:

**C2086.** The word **mathal** ordinarily denotes a similitude, but in the context of the present verse, especially with reference to Allah, it signifies His sublime attributes rather than a similitude. Cf. 30:27. [Eds.]

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٦٠)

for He is the Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ...

61. If Allah were to punish men for their wrongdoing, He would not leave, on the (earth), a single living creature:

... وَلَكِنْ يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ...

but He gives them respite for a stated term:

... فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ (٦١)

when their term expires, they would not be able to delay (the punishment) for a single hour, just as they would not be able to anticipate it (for a single hour).

**C2087.** Allah's decree works without fail. If He were to punish for every wrong or shortcoming, not a single living creature on earth would escape punishment. But in His infinite mercy and forgiveness, He gives respite: He provides time for repentance.

If the repentance is forthcoming. Allah's Mercy is forthcoming without fail, if not, the punishment comes inevitably on the expiry of the Term.

The sinner cannot anticipate it by an insolent challenge, nor can he delay it when the time arrives. Let him not think that the respite given him may mean that he can do what he likes, and that he can escape scot-free from the consequences.

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ مَا يَكْرَهُونَ...

62. They attribute to Allah what they hate (for themselves),

**C2088.** See above, 16:57-58 and notes.

... وَتَصِفُ أَلْسِنُهُمُ الْكُذِبَ أَنَّ لَهُمُ الْحُسْنَىٰ...

and their tongues assert the falsehood that all good things are for themselves:

**C2089.** The philosophy of Pleasure (Hedonism) assumes that worldly enjoyment is good in itself and that there is nothing beyond. But it can be shown, even on its own ground, that every act has its inevitable consequences.

No Good can spring out of Evil. For falsehood and wrong the agony of the Fire is waiting, and the boastful votaries of Falsehood will be the first to fall into it.

... لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّ لَهُمُ النَّارَ وَأَنَّهُمْ مُّفْرَطُونَ (٦٢)

without doubt for them is the fire, and they will be the first to be hastened on into it!



تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ...

63. By Allah, We (also) sent (our prophets) to peoples before thee; but Satan made, (to the wicked), their own acts seem alluring:

... فَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٦٣)

he is also their patron today, but they shall have a most grievous Penalty.

**C2090.** In all ages and among all Peoples Allah sent His Messengers to teach the Truth and point the way to righteousness. But the allurements of Evil seemed always attractive, and many men preferred their own ways and the ways of their ancestors to the more difficult path of rectitude.

This happened again in the time of Al-Mustafa, and will always happen as long as men succumb to Evil.

وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ...

64. And We sent down the Book to thee for the express purpose, that thou shouldst make clear to them those things in which they differ,

**C2091.** But the path of duty before Allah's Messenger is clear. He is sent with the Revelation (the Quran) for three express purposes;

1. that he should bring about unity among the jarring sects, for the Gospel of Unity, while preaching the One True God, leads also to the unity of mankind;
2. that the revelation should be a guide to right conduct; and
3. that it should show the path of repentance and Salvation, and thus be the highest mercy to erring sinners.

... وَهَدَىٰ وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٦٤)

and that it should be a guide and a mercy to those who believe.

وَاللَّهُ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

65. And Allah sends down rain from the skies, and gives therewith life to the earth after its death:

... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ (٦٥)

verily in this is a Sign for those who listen.

**C2092.** When the earth with all its vegetation is well-nigh dead, parched and shriveled up, a vivifying shower of rain from above gives it new life.

This natural phenomenon is a sign of Allah's infinite power, especially of His power to resurrect the dead, and thereafter muster them for judgment. [Eds.]

## Section 9

وَأِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً...

66. And verily in cattle (too) will ye find an instructive Sign.

**C2093.** The spiritual sustenance which Allah gives is typified by the wonderful ways of sustenance in the physical world, which figure forth Allah's providence and loving care for His creation. And the wonderful transformations in the physical world, which all tend to the benefit of man, are also Signs of His supreme wisdom.

In the previous verse rain was mentioned, which gives new life to dead nature. In this and the following two verses our attention is drawn to milk, the products of the date and the vine, and honey.

... نُسْفِيكُمْ مِّمَّا فِي بُطُونِهِ ...

From what is within their bodies,

**C2094. Their;** in the Arabic, it is "its", in the singular number, for two reasons:

- cattle is the generic plural, and may be treated as a singular noun;
- the instructive Sign is in cattle collectively, but the milk is the product of each single individual.

... مِنْ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَدَمٍ لَبْنَا خَالِصًا...

between excretions and blood, We produce, for your drink, milk, pure

**C2095. Milk** is a secretion in the female body, like other secretions, but more specialized.

Is it not wonderful that the same food, eaten by males and females, produces in the latter, when they have young, the wholesome and complete food, known as milk?

Then, when cattle are tamed and specially bred for milk, the supply of milk is vastly greater than is necessary for their young and lasts for a longer time than during the period they give suck to their young.

And it is a wholesome and agreeable diet for man. It is pure, as typified by its whiteness. Yet it is a secretion like other secretions, between the excretions which the body rejects as worthless and the precious blood-stream which circulates within the body and is the symbol of life itself to the animal which produces it.

... سَائِعًا لِلشَّارِبِينَ (٦٦)

and agreeable to those who drink it.

وَمِنْ ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا...

67. And from the fruit of the date-palm and the vine, ye get out wholesome drink and food:

**C2096.** There are wholesome drinks and foods that can be got out of the date-palm and the vine: e.g., non-alcoholic drinks from the date and the grape, vinegar, date-sugar, grape-sugar, and dates and grapes themselves for eating.

If **sakar** is taken in the sense of fermented wine, it would refer to the time before intoxicants were prohibited, for this is a Makkan Surah and the prohibition came in Madinah. In such a case it would imply a subtle disapproval of the use of intoxicants and mark the first of a series of steps that in time culminated in total prohibition. (R).

... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (٦٧)

behold, in this also is a Sign for those who are wise.

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ...

68. And thy Lord taught the Bee to build its cells in hills, on trees,

**C2097. Auha:** wahyan ordinarily means inspiration, the Message put into the mind or heart by Allah.

Here the Bee's instinct is referred to Allah's teaching, which it undoubtedly is. In 99:5, it is applied to the earth; we shall discuss the precise meaning when we come to that passage.

The honey-comb, itself, with its hexagonal cells, geometrically perfect, is a wonderful structure, and is well called **buyut**, homes. And the way the bee finds out inaccessible places, in the hills, in the trees, and even among the habitations of men, is one of the marvels of Allah's working in His Creation.

... وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ (٦٨)

and in (men's) habitations;

ثُمَّ كُلِّي مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ...

69. Then to eat of all the produce (of the earth),

**C2098.** The bee assimilates the juice of various kinds of flowers and fruit, and forms within its body the honey which it stores in its cells of wax.

The different kinds of food from which it makes its honey give different colours to the honey, e.g., it is dark-brown, light-brown, yellow, white, and so on. The taste and flavour also varies, as in the case of heather honey, the honey formed from scented flowers, and so on. As food it is sweet and wholesome, and it is used in medicine.

Note that while the instinctive individual acts are described in the singular number, the produce of "their bodies" is described in the plural, as the result of their collective effort.

... فَاسْأَلْكَ سُبُلَ رَبِّكَ ذُلًّا ...

and find with skill the spacious paths of its Lord:

**C2099. Zululan:** two meanings are possible;

- ways easy and spacious, referring to the unerring way in which bees find their way from long distances to their combs; and
- the idea of humility and obedience in them.

From both we can derive a metaphorical and spiritual meaning.

... يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ ...

there issues from within their bodies a drink of varying colors, wherein is healing for men:

... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٦٩)

verily in this is a Sign for those who give thought.

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْوَقَاكُمْ...

70. It is Allah who creates you and takes your souls at death;

... وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْدَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ لَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا...

and of you there are some who are sent back to a feeble age, so that they know nothing after having known (much):

**C2100.** Besides the mystery and beauty of the many processes going on in the working of Allah's Creation, there is the wonderful life of man himself on this earth;

- how he is created as a child;
- how he grows in intelligence and knowledge; and
- how his soul is taken back and his body suffers dissolution.
- In some cases he lives so long that he falls into a feeble old age like a second childhood; he forgets what he learnt and seems almost to go back in Time.

Is not all this wonderful, and evidence of the Knowledge and Power of Allah?

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ (٧٠)

for Allah is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.

**C2101.** Our attention having been called to the remarkable transformations in life and nature, by which the Knowledge and Power of Allah work out His beneficent Plan for His creatures, we are reminded that man at best is but a feeble creature, but for the grace of Allah, We then pass on in the next Section to the differences in the gifts which men themselves enjoy, distinguishing them into so many categories. How much greater is the difference between the created things and their Creator?

## Section 10

وَاللَّهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ...

71. Allah has bestowed His gifts of sustenance more freely on some of you than on others;

... فَمَا الَّذِينَ فَضَّلُوا بِرَادِّي رِزْقِهِمْ عَلَى مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيهِ

سَوَاءٌ...

those more favored are not going to throw back their gifts to those whom their right hands possess, so as to be equal in that respect.

... أَفَبِعَمَلِهِ اللَّهُ يَجْحَدُونَ (٧١)

Will they then deny the favors of Allah?

**C2102.** Even in the little differences in gifts, which men enjoy from Allah, men with superior gifts are not going to abandon them so as to be equal with men of inferior gifts, whom, perhaps, they hold in subjection. They will never deny their own superiority.

How then (as the argument is pursued in the two following verses), can they ignore the immense difference between the Creator and created things, and make the latter, in their thoughts, partners with Allah?

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ...

72. And Allah has made for you mates (and companions) of your own nature.

**C2103. Of your nature:** or of yourselves. Cf. 4:1 and n. 504,

Self, or Personality, or Soul, all imply a bundle of attributes, capacities, predilections, and dispositions, which we may sum up in the word *Nafs*, or nature.

Woman was made to be;

- a mate or companion for man;
- except for sex, of the same nature as man, and therefore, with the same moral and religious rights and duties; and
- she is not to be considered a source of all evil or sin, as the Christian monks characterized her but rather as a blessing, one of the favours (*Ni'mah*) of Allah.

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً ...

And made for you, out of them, sons and daughters and grandchildren,

**C2104. Hafadah:** - collective plural, grandchildren, and descendants.

The root *hafada* also implies obedient service and ministrations. Just as the sons (first mentioned) should be a source of strength, so daughters and grand children should serve and contribute to the happiness of fathers and grandparents, and are to be looked upon as further blessings.

... وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ ...

and provided for you sustenance of the best:

... أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ (٧٢)

will they then believe in vain things, and be ungrateful for Allah's favors?

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

73. And worship others than Allah,

... مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِّنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ شَيْئًا ...

such as have no power of providing them, for sustenance, with anything in heavens or earth,

**C2105. "Sustenance" (rizq)** in all this passage (16:65-74), as elsewhere, implies all that is n for man's life and growth, physical, mental, moral, and spiritual.

- Milk, fruit, and honey are examples of physical gifts, with a metaphorical reference to mental and moral health;
- family life is an example of moral and social and (ultimately) spiritual opportunities in the life of man; and
- in 16:65 is an example of rain in the physical world as a type of Allah's revelation in the spiritual world.

... وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ (٧٣) ...

and cannot possibly have such power?

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الْأَمْثَالَ...

74. Invent not similitudes for Allah:

**C2106.** Cf. 16:60 above, and n. 2086.

One instance of false similitudes is where Pagans say their gods are mere types of symbols, or where men pray to men as Intercessors.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٧٤) ...

for Allah knoweth, and ye know not.

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا...

75. Allah sets forth the Parable (of two men: one)

... عَبْدًا مَّمْلُوكًا لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ...

a slave under the dominion of another; he has no power of any sort;



**C2107.** The first parable is of two men, one of whom is a slave completely under the dominion of another, with no powers of any sort, and another a free man, who is gifted in every way, and is most generous in bestowing out of his opulent wealth (material as well as intangible), privately and publicly, without let or hindrance; for he is his own master and owes no account to any one.

- The first is like the imaginary gods which men set up, -whether powers of nature, which have no independent existence but are manifestations of Allah, or deified heroes or men, who can do nothing of their own authority but are subject to the Will and Power of Allah;
- the second describes in a faint way the position of Allah, the Self-Subsistent, to Whom belongs the dominion of all that is in heaven and earth, and Who bestows freely of His gifts on all His creatures.

... وَمَنْ رَزَقْنَاهُ مِمَّا رَزَقْنَا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ يَنْفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا...

and (the other) a man on whom We have bestowed goodly favors from ourselves, and he spends thereof (freely), privately and publicly:

... هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ...

are the two equal? (By no means);

... الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٧٥)

praise be to Allah.

But most of them understand not.

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا...

76. Allah sets forth (another)

... رَجُلَيْنِ أَحَدُهُمَا أَبْكَمُ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ...

Parable of two men:

one of them dumb, with no power of any sort; a wearisome burden is he to his master;

... وَهُوَ كُلٌّ عَلَى مَوْلَاهُ أَيَّمَا يُوجِّهُهُ لَا يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ...

whichever way he directs him, he brings no good:

**C2108.** In the second Parable, one man is dumb;

he can explain nothing, and he can certainly do nothing; he is only a wearisome burden to his master, no matter what his master asks him to do; or perhaps he is really harmful instead of bringing any good; such are idols (literal and metaphorical) when taken as false gods.

The other man is in a position to command, and he commands what is just and righteous; not only his commands but his doings also are on the path of righteousness.

Such are the qualities of Allah.

... هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَمَنْ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَهُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (٧٦)

is such a man equal with one who commands justice, and is on a straight way?

**C2109.** The gist of the argument is that those who deviate from the worship of Allah commit twofold treason.

1. They do not recognise the immense difference between the Creator and created things, although, in their own little selfish lives, they are tenacious of any little differences there may be between themselves and other fellow-creatures not so gifted.
2. They are guilty of gross ingratitude in forgetting that the source of goodness and power is Allah, to Whom alone they owe all the gifts they enjoy in life.

## Section 11

وَلِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

77. To Allah belongeth the mystery of the heavens and the earth.

**C2110.** The key to all things-not only those which we see and understand, but those which we do not see or of which we have no idea-is with Allah, Whose knowledge and power are supreme.

... وَمَا أَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ إِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ أَوْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ ...

And the decision of the Hour (of Judgment) is as the twinkling of an eye, or even quicker:

**C2111.** Lures of this world and its fleeting pleasures often make man forget that the life hereafter is an imminent reality.

Many of those who claim to believe in the life to come act and behave as if it belonged to a distant future, and had no relevance to their present activities and mode of living. The Quran repeatedly reminds man that the Hour of Reckoning is not a distant possibility, but very close to man, and could come to pass any moment.

The wisest course for man, therefore, is to be always alert and watchful and steer clear of all forms of sin and impiety, for when the Promised Hour comes it will come all of a sudden and without any prior notice.

See also 10:45; 30:55, 45:35. [Eds]

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٧٧)

for Allah hath power over all things.

... وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِّنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا ...

78. It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing;

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ...

and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections:

**C2112.** Literally, 'hearts,' which are considered the centres of the affections, and in Arabic idiom, of intelligence also.

We should therefore give thanks to Allah, not to imaginary deities or powers or forces.

... لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٧٨)

that ye may give thanks (to Allah).

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ...

79. Do they not look at the birds,

... مُسَخَّرَاتٍ فِي جَوِّ السَّمَاءِ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا اللَّهُ...

held poised in the midst of (the air and) the sky?

Nothing holds them up but (the power of) Allah.

**C2113.** All the wonderful things in creation are due to the artistry, power, and wisdom of Allah. Such is the flight of birds in mid-air.

So also are the inventions and discoveries, due to man's intelligence, in the next verse; for man's intelligence is a gift direct from Allah.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٧٩)

Verily in this are Signs for those who believe.

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّن بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا...

80. It is Allah who made your habitations homes of rest and quiet for you;

**C2114.** Man's social, intellectual, and spiritual gifts make, of his permanent dwellings, homes of rest and quiet, of refinement and the purer affections, which are the types, in this earthly life, of the highest spiritual Good, the love of Allah.

The pure Home thus becomes the type of the highest spiritual Destiny of man. And these capacities in man are the gifts of Allah.

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّن جُلُودِ الْأَنْعَامِ بُيُوتًا تَسْتَخِفُّونَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ

إِقَامَتِكُمْ....

and made for you out of the skins of animals, (tents for) dwellings, which ye find so light (and handy) when ye travel and when ye stop (in your travels);

**C2115.** When man travels, he wants temporary dwellings, tents, which he can make of the skins of

animals, or of the fabrics of vegetable fibers, similar to the skins of animals.

These tents are easy to carry when moving, and easy to pitch during halts.

... وَمِنْ أَسْوَأِهَا وَأَوْبَارِهَا وَأَشْعَارِهَا أَثَا... ..

and out of their wool, and their soft fibers (between wool and hair), and their hair, rich stuff

**C2116. Suf**, wool, is what we get from sheep.

**Sha'r**, hair, is what we get from goats or similar animals, for weaving into fabrics.

**Wabar** is the soft camel's hair of which, also, fabrics are woven;

they may be considered intermediate between the other two; by extension and analogy the term may be applied to furs and such things, by way of illustration.

... وَمَتَاعًا إِلَى حِينٍ (٨٠)

and articles of convenience (to serve you) for a time.

**C2117.** All such articles of refined luxury, and useful articles of comfort and convenience only last for a while, but they must be considered as Allah's gifts.

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِمَّا خَلَقَ ظِلَالًا...

81. It is Allah who made, out of the things He created some things to give you shade;

**C2118.** For example, trees, gardens, the roofs of houses; also from another point of view, the fact that the sun's rays at various times and in various parts of the earth, come obliquely, thus causing shadow along with sunshine. In the hills there are caves and grottoes.

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ أَكْنَانًا...

of the hills He made some for your shelter;

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَائِيلَ تَقِيكُمْ الْحَرَّ وَسَرَائِيلَ تَقِيكُمْ بِأَسْكُمْ...

He made you garments to protect you from heat, and coats of mail to protect you from your (mutual) violence.

**C2119.** Our clothes protect us from heat and cold, just as our armour protects us from the hurt which we might otherwise receive in battle.

... كَذَلِكَ يُبِمُ نِعْمَتِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُونَ (٨١)

Thus does He complete his favors on you, that ye may bow to His will (in Islam).

**C2120.** All these blessings, which have both a physical and (by promoting the good of man) a spiritual purpose, should teach us to rally to Allah and tune our will with His Universal Will, which is another name for Islam.

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ (٨٢)

82. But if they turn away, thy duty is only to preach the clear message.

يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُونَهَا ...

83. They recognize the favors of Allah; then they deny them;

**C2121.** 'Arafa is distinguished from 'alima is implying a specific discernment (or recognition) of various qualities and uses.

All mankind recognised the value of the blessings they enjoy, but in forgetting or disobeying their Author, the wicked show gross ingratitude; for in practice they deny their obligation to Him for those blessings.

... وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ (٨٣)

and most of them are (creatures) ungrateful.

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا ...

84. One day We shall raise from all peoples a witness:

**C2122.** To each People is sent Allah's Messenger or Teacher, to point out the right way. There may be one, or there may be many. Such a Messenger (Rasul) will be a witness that Allah's Truth was preached to all peoples in express terms, in addition to the Signs of Allah

everywhere in nature. There will then be no room for excuses of any kind.

Those who rejected Allah after repeated warnings cannot reasonably ask for more respite, as they had every kind of respite during their life of probation; nor can they now take refuge behind Allah's Grace, which they had repeatedly rejected.

... ثُمَّ لَا يُؤْتِنُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ (٨٤)

then will no excuse be accepted from Unbelievers,  
nor will they receive any favors.

**C2122a.** That is, they will not be allowed to seek grace by repentance.

Cf. 30:57, 45:35. [Eds.]

### C.126 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(16:84-100)

*Allah's Prophets, if rejected, will be witnesses  
Against those who reject Allah's Truth!  
And all false gods will disappear.  
A life of justice and righteousness is enjoined  
By Allah, and the strictest fidelity, in intent  
And action. For Allah will judge us  
By our faith and deeds, and noo evil  
Shall have power over those who believe  
And put their trust in Allah their Lord*

### Section 12

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الْعَذَابَ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ ...

85. When the wrongdoers (actually) see the Penalty, then will it in no way be mitigated,

**C2123.** When the terrible Penalty is actually on them, it is too late for repentance and for asking for Mercy. Justice must take its course.

... وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ (٨٥)

nor will they then receive respite.

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا شُرَكَاءَهُمْ قَالُوا...

86. When those who gave partners to Allah will see their "partners," they will say:

... رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ شُرَكَائُنَا الَّذِينَ كُنَّا نَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِكَ...

"Our Lord! these are our 'partners,' those whom we used to invoke besides thee."

**C2124.** The worshippers of false gods will try to shift the responsibility from their own shoulders to that of the false gods.

They will suggest (though they will not have the courage for such a bare-faced lie) that they were misled by the false gods. But their lying suggestion will be contradicted and thrown back at them as explained in the next note.

... فَأَلْقُوا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلَ إِنَّا كَاذِبُونَ (٨٦)

But they will throw back their word at them (and say): "Indeed ye are liars!"

وَأَلْقُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ السَّلْمَ...

87. That day shall they (openly) show (their) submission to Allah;

**C2125.** In so far as the false gods were real things, such as deified men or forces of nature, they will openly disclaim them and then (as always) show their submission to Allah.

In so far as the false gods were the invention of the fancy of the idolaters, they will leave their worshippers in the lurch, for they will be shown as non-existent.

... وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (٨٧)

and all their inventions shall leave them in the lurch.



الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ زِدْنَاهُمْ عَذَابًا فَوْقَ الْعَذَابِ...

88. Those who reject Allah and hinder (men) from the path of Allah, for them will We add Penalty to Penalty;

... بِمَا كَانُوا يُفْسِدُونَ (٨٨)

for that they used to spread mischief.

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ...

89. One day We shall raise from all peoples a witness against them, from amongst themselves:

**C2126.** To the thought expressed in [16:84](#) above, is added another detail here.

Not only will there be witnesses from Peoples, but the witnesses will be men from amongst the Peoples themselves, men of their own kith and kin, who understood them and explained Allah's Message in their own language.

The Prophet Muhammad will be witness against all those who rejected the Message he brought.

For those who believe in him of (all races and peoples), the Book which he brought will be an explanation, a guide, a mercy and a Gospel. (R).

... وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَىٰ هَؤُلَاءِ...

and We shall bring thee as a witness against these (thy people):

... وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تَبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

and We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things,

... وَهَدَىٰ وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ (٨٩)

a guide a Mercy, and glad tidings to Muslims.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ...

90. Allah commands

- justice,
- the doing of good,
- and liberality to kith and kin,

... وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ...

and He forbids

- all shameful deeds,
- and injustice and rebellion:

... يَعْظُمُ لِعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٩٠)

He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition.

**C2127.** Justice is a comprehensive term, and may include all the virtues of cold philosophy. But religion asks for something warmer and more human, the doing of good deeds even where perhaps they are not strictly demanded by justice, such as returning good for ill, or obliging those who in worldly language "have no claim" on you; and of course a *fortiori* the fulfilling of the claims of those whose claims are recognised in social life.

Similarly the opposites are to be avoided; everything that is recognised as shameful, and everything that is really unjust, and any inward rebellion against Allah's Law or our own conscience in its most sensitive form.

## Section 13

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ...

91. Fulfil the Covenant of Allah when ye have entered into it,

... وَلَا تَنْفُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا...

and break not your oaths after ye have confirmed them;  
indeed ye have made Allah your surety;

**C2128.** The immediate reference may or may not be to the oath of fidelity to the Prophet taken at 'Aqaba fourteen months before the Hijrah and repeated a little later: see 5:7, and n. 705.

But the general meaning is much wider. And this may be viewed in two aspects;

- Every oath taken, or covenant made, is a Covenant before Allah, and should be faithfully observed. In this it approaches in meaning to 5:1.

- In particular, every Muslim makes, by the profession, of his Faith, a Covenant with Allah, and he confirms that Covenant every time he repeats that profession. He should therefore faithfully observe the duties taught to him by Islam.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٩١)

for Allah knoweth all that ye do.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنْكَاثًا...

92. And be not like a woman who breaks into untwisted strands they yarn which she has spun, after it has become strong.

**C2129.** The Covenant which binds us in the spiritual world makes us strong, like strands of fluffy cotton spun into a strong thread. It also gives us a sense of security against much evil in this world.

It costs a woman much labour and skill to spin good strong yarn. She would be foolish indeed, after she has spun such yarn, to untwist its constituent strands and break them into flimsy pieces.

... تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَالًا بَيْنَكُمْ...

Nor take your oaths to practice deception between yourselves,

**C2130. Nor:** I construe **tattakhithuna** with takunu in the previous clause.

... أَنْ تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَى مِنْ أُمَّةٍ...

lest one party should be more numerous than another:

**C2131.** Do not make your religion merely a game of making your own party numerically strong by alliances cemented by oaths, which you readily break when a more numerous party offers you its alliance.

The Quraish were addicted to this vice, and in international politics at the present day, this seems to be almost a standard of national self-respect and international skill.

Islam teaches nobler ethics for individuals and nations. A Covenant should be looked upon as a solemn thing, not

to be entered into except with the sincerest intention of carrying it out; and it is binding even if large numbers are ranged against it.

... إِنَّمَا يَبْلُوَكُمْ اللَّهُ بِهِ...

for Allah will test you by this;

... وَلِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٩٢)

and on the Day of Judgment He will certainly make clear to you (the truth of) that wherein ye disagree.

**C2132.** Disagreements need not necessarily cause conflict where the parties are sincere and honest and do not wish to take advantage of one another.

In such cases they do not go by numbers, groupings, and alliances, but by just conduct as in the sight of Allah. Honest differences will be removed when all things are made clear in the Hereafter.

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً...

93. If Allah so willed, He could make you all one people:

... وَلَكِنْ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ...

but He leaves straying whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases:

**C2133.** Cf. 14:4 and n. 1875.

Allah's Will and Plan, in allowing limited free-will to man, is, not to force man's will, but to give all guidance, and leave alone those who reject that guidance, in case they should repent and come back into Grace.

But in all cases, in so far as we are given the choice, we shall be called to account for all our actions. "Leaving to stray" does not mean that we can do what we please. Our personal responsibility remains.

... وَلَنُسْأَلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ نَعْمَلُونَ (٩٣)

but ye shall certainly be called to account for all your actions.

وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌ بَعْدَ ثُبُوتِهَا...

94. And take not your oaths, to practice deception between yourselves, with the result that someone's foot may slip after it was firmly planted;

**C2134.** In 16:92, above, the motive for false and fraudulent covenants was pointed out with reprobation. Now are pointed out the consequences, viz.,

- to others, if they had not been deceived, they might have walked firmly on the Path, but now they lose faith and perhaps commit like frauds for which you will be responsible;
- **to yourselves;** you have not only gone wrong yourselves; but have set others on the wrong path; and you deserve a double Penalty. Perhaps the "evil consequences" refer to this world, and the "Wrath" to the Hereafter.

... وَتَذُوقُوا السُّوءَ بِمَا صَدَدْتُمْ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

and ye may have to taste the evil (consequences) of having hindered (men) from the path of Allah,

... وَلَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٩٤)

and a mighty Wrath descend on you.

وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا...

95. Nor sell the Covenant of Allah for a miserable price:

**C2135.** Any possible gain that you can make by breaking your Covenant and thus breaking Allah's Law must necessarily be miserable; while your own benefit is far greater in obeying Allah's Will and doing right.

... إِنَّمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٩٥)

for with Allah is (a prize) far better for you, if ye only knew.

مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ...

96. What is with you must vanish: what is with Allah will endure.

... وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُم أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٩٦)

And We will certainly bestow, on those who patiently persevere, their reward according to the best of their actions.

**C2136.** What comparison can there possibly be between spiritual Good, which will endure for ever, and any temporal advantage which you may snatch in this world, which will fade and vanish in no time?

And then, Allah's generosity is unbounded. He rewards you, not according to your merits, but according to the very best of your actions.

مَنْ عَمَلٍ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْتَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً...

97. Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily, to him will We give a new life, a life that is good and pure,

**C2137.** Faith, if sincere, means right conduct. When these two confirm each other, Allah's grace transforms our life.

Instead of being troubled and worried, we have peace and contentment; instead of being assailed at every turn by false alarms and the assaults of evil, we enjoy calm and attain purity. The transformation is visible in this life itself, but the "reward" in terms of the Hereafter will be far beyond our deserts.

... وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٩٧)

and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.

**C2138.** The same ending as in the previous verse deepens the overall effect bringing home the message forcefully and beautifully.

The argument is completed and rounded off. (R).

فَإِذَا قُرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ (٩٨)

98. When thou dost read the Qur'an, seek Allah's protection from Satan the rejected one.

**C2139.** Evil has no authority or influence on those who put their trust in Allah. It is good to express that trust in outward actions, and a formal expression of it-as in the formula, "I seek Allah's protection from Evil"-helps us.

Reading or reciting the Quran should be understood both literally and figuratively as the symbol of the earnest desire of the soul to know and understand Allah's Will and act in accordance therewith.

Man is weak at best, and he should seek strength for his will in Allah's help and protection.

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٩٩)

99. No authority has he over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord.

إِنَّمَا سُلْطَانُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ (١٠٠)

100. His authority is over those only, who take him as patron and who join partners with Allah.

### **C.127 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

**(16:101-128)**

*Allah's Truth may come in stages, but it gives  
Strength, guidance, and glad tidings, and should  
Be held fast when once received. Be not  
Like those who get puffed up with pride  
In worldly good, and scorn the Truth.  
Enjoy the good things of life, but render  
Thanks to Allah and obey His Law.  
Be true in faith, and proclaim His Word  
With gentle, patient wisdom; for Allah  
Is with those who live in self-restraint  
A pure, good, and righteous Life.*

## Section 14

وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَّكَانَ آيَةٍ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُنَزَّلُ...

101. When We substitute one revelation for another, and Allah knows best what He reveals (in stages),

**C2140.** See 2:106, and n. 107.

The doctrine of progressive revelation from age to age and time to time does not mean that Allah's fundamental Law changes.

It is not fair to charge a Prophet of Allah with forgery because the Message as revealed to him is in a different form from that revealed before, when the core of the Truth is the same, for it comes from Allah.

... قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُفْتَنٌ...

they say, "Thou art but a forger":

... بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٠١)

but most of them understand not.

قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ...

102. Say,

the Holy Spirit has brought the revelation from thy Lord in truth,

**C2141.** The title of the Angel Gabriel, through whom the revelations came down.

... لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

in order to strengthen those who believe,

**C2142.** The People of the Book, if they had true faith, were themselves strengthened in their faith and cleared of their doubts and difficulties by the revelations brought by Al-Mustafa; and all whether People of the Book or not -who came within the fold of Islam, found the Quran a Guide and a Gospel, i.e., a substitute for the Mosaic Law and for the Christian Gospel, which had both been corrupted.



... وَهَدَىٰ وَبَشَّرَ لِمُسْلِمِينَ (١٠٢)

and as a guide and Glad Tidings to Muslims.

وَلَقَدْ نَعَلُمْ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ بَشَرٌ...

103. We know indeed that they say, "It is a man that teaches him."

... لِسَانُ الَّذِي يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمِيٌّ وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُبِينٌ (١٠٣)

The tongue of him they wickedly point to is notable foreign, while this is Arabic, pure and clear.

**C2143.** The wicked attribute to Prophets of Allah just such motives and springs of action as they themselves would be guilty of in such circumstances. The Pagans and those who were hostile to the revelation of Allah in Islam could not and cannot understand how such wonderful words could flow from the tongue of the Holy Prophet. They must need to postulate some human teacher.

Unfortunately for their postulate, any possible human teacher they could think of would be poor in Arabic speech if he had all the knowledge that the Quran reveals of previous revelations.

Apart from that, even the most eloquent Arab could not, and cannot, produce anything of the eloquence, width, and depth of Quranic teaching, as is evident from every verse of the Book. (R).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ...

104. Those who believe not in the Signs of Allah, Allah will not guide them,

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٠٤)

and theirs will be a grievous Penalty.

إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ...

105. It is those who believe not in the Signs of Allah, that forge falsehood:

... وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ (١٠٥)

it is they who lie!

**C2144.** It is clearly those who raise the cry of forgery that are guilty of falsehood, as there is not the least basis or even plausibility in their suggestion.

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ ...

106. Anyone who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters unbelief,

**C2145.** The exception refers to a case like that of 'Ammar, whose father Yasir and mother Sumayya, were subjected to unspeakable tortures for their belief in Islam, but never recanted. 'Ammar,

suffering under tortures himself and his mind acted on by the sufferings of his parents, uttered a word construed as recantation, though his heart never wavered and he came back at once to the Prophet, who consoled him for his pain and confirmed his faith. (R).

... إِلَّا مَنْ أَكْرَهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ ...

except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in faith,

... وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ ...

but such as open their breast to unbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah,

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٠٦)

and theirs will be a dreadful Penalty.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ ...

107. This because they love the life of this world better than the Hereafter:

... وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٠٧)

and Allah will not guide those who reject faith.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ...

108. Those are they whose hearts, ears, and eyes Allah has sealed up,

**C2146.** Cf. 2:7.

On account of their iniquities and their want of Faith their hearts and their senses become impervious to Allah's grace, and they run headlong to perdition.

... وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَافِلُونَ (١٠٨)

and they take no heed.

لَا جَرَمَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (١٠٩)

109. Without doubt, in the hereafter they will perish.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا فُتِنُوا...

110. But verily thy Lord to those who leave their homes after trials and persecutions

**C2147.** I take this verse to refer to such men as were originally with the Pagans but afterwards joined Islam, suffered hardships and exile, and fought and struggled in the Cause, with patience and constance. Their past would be blotted out and forgiven. Men like Khalid ibn Walid were numbered with the foremost heroes of Islam.

In that case this verse would be a Madinah verse, though the Surah as a whole is Makkan.

Perhaps it would be better to read, with some Commentators, **fatanu** in the active voice rather than **futinu** in the passive voice, and translate "after inflicting trials and persecutions (on Muslim)."

Notice the parallelism in construction between this verse and [verse 119 below](#).

... ثُمَّ جَاهِدُوا وَصَبَرُوا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١١٠)

and who thereafter strive and fight for the faith and patiently persevere, thy Lord, after all this, is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

## Section 15

يَوْمَ تَأْتِي كُلُّ نَفْسٍ نُجَادِلُ عَنْ نَفْسِهَا...

111. One day every soul will come up struggling for itself,

**C2148.** When the Reckoning comes, each soul will stand on its own personal responsibility. No one else can help it. Full justice will be done, and all the seeming inequalities of this world will be redressed.

... وَتُؤْتَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهَمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (١١١)

and every soul will be recompensed (fully) for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with.

وَصَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا...

112. Allah sets forth a parable:

... قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ آمِنَةً مُطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ...

a city enjoying security and quiet, abundantly supplied with sustenance from every place:

**C2149.** The reference may be to any of the cities or populations in ancient or modern times, which were favoured with security and other blessings from Allah, but which rebelled from Allah's Law and tasted the inevitable penalty, even in the midst of their iniquities.

Some Commentators see here a reference to the city of Makkah under Pagan control.

See next note.

... فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعَمِ اللَّهِ...

yet was it ungrateful for the favors of Allah:

... فَأَذَاقَهَا اللَّهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ (١١٢)

so Allah made it taste of hunger and terror (in extremes) (closing in on it) like a garment (from every side), because of the (evil) which (its people) wrought.

**C2150.** There is a double metaphor:

- the tasting of hunger and terror after the abundant supplies and the full security which it had enjoyed; and
- the complete enfolding of the City as with a garment, by these two scourges, hunger and a state of subjective alarm.

If the reference is to Makkah shortly before its fall to the Muslims, the "hunger" was the seven years' severe famine which afflicted it, and the alarm was the constant fear in the minds of the Pagans that their day was done. Peace and prosperity were restored after the re-entry of the Prophet.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (١١٣)

113. And there came to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they falsely rejected him;  
so the wrath seized them even in the midst of their iniquities.

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا...

114. So eat of the sustenance which Allah has provided for you, lawful and good;

... وَأَشْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ (١١٤)

and be grateful for the favors of Allah, if it is He whom ye serve.

**C2151.** Ingratitude for Allah's sustenance (in the literal and figurative senses) may be shown in various ways, e.g.

- by forgetting or refusing to acknowledge the true source of the bounty, viz., Allah,
- by misusing or misapplying the bounty, as by committing excesses in things lawful, or refusing to share them with others of Allah's creatures when the need arises, or
- by falsely ascribing to Allah any prohibitions we may set up for ourselves for special reasons or because Of OUT special idiosyncrasies.

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

115. He has only forbidden you

**C2152.** Cf. 2:173 and notes, 5:3-4, and 6:121 and 138-146.

... الْمَيْتَةَ وَالْدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخَنزِيرِ وَمَا أَهْلٌ لِعَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ...

- dead meat,
- and blood,
- and the flesh of swine,
- and any (food) over which the name of other than Allah has been invoked.

... فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١١٥)

But if one is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, then Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ ...

116. But say not, for any false thing that your tongues may put forth,

**C2153.** Men are apt to create taboos for themselves, out of superstition, and often for selfish ends, and enforce them in the name of religion. Nothing can be more reprehensible.

... هَذَا حَلَالٌ وَهَذَا حَرَامٌ...

"This is lawful, and this is forbidden,"

... لَتَقْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ...

so as to ascribe false things to Allah.

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ (١١٦)

For those who ascribe false things to Allah, will never prosper.

مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١١٧)

117. (In such falsehood) is but a paltry profit; but they will have a most grievous Penalty.

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا مَا قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ...

118. To the Jews We prohibited such things as We have mentioned to thee before:

**C2154.** See 6:146 and notes.

The further prohibitions to them were a punishment for their hardness of hearts, and not a favour.

... وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (١١٨)

We did them no wrong, but they were used to doing wrong to themselves.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا...

119. But verily thy Lord, to those who do wrong in ignorance, but who thereafter repent and make amends,

... إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١١٩)

thy Lord, after all this, is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

**C2155.** See above, 16:110 and n. 2147.

The parallelism in construction confirms the suggestion of the alternative reading which is made in that note.

The similarity of expressions also rounds off the argument, as by a refrain in poetry.

What follows now in this Surah is an exhortation to right conduct.

## Section 16

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا...

120. Abraham was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true in faith,

**C2156. Ummah:** a model, pattern, example for imitation;

but the idea that he was an Ummah in himself, standing alone against his world, should not be lost sight of.

See next note.

... وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٢٠)

and he joined not gods with Allah:

**C2157.** The Gospel of Unity has been the corner-stone of spiritual Truth for all time. In this respect Abraham is the model and fountain-head for the world of western Asia and its spiritual descendants all over the world.

Abraham was among a people (the Chaldeans) who worshipped stars and had forsaken the Gospel of Unity. He was among them but not of them. He suffered persecution, and left his home and his people, and settled in the land of Canaan.

شَاكِرًا لِّأَنْعُمِهِ...

121. He showed his gratitude for the favors of Allah,

... اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (١٢١)

Who chose him, and guided him to a straight way.

وَأَتَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً...

122. And We gave him good in this world,

... وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٢٢)

and he will be, in the Hereafter, in the ranks of the righteous.

**C2158.** Cf. 2:130.

ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنْ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا...

123. So We have taught thee the inspired (message),

"Follow the ways of Abraham the true in faith,

... وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٢٣)

and he joined not gods with Allah."



إِنَّمَا جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اِخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ...

124. The Sabbath was only made (strict) to those who disagreed (as to its observance);

**C2159.** If Abraham's Way was the right way, the Jews were ready with the taunt, "Why don't you then observe the Sabbath?"

The answer is twofold.

1. The Sabbath has nothing to do with Abraham. It was instituted with the Law of Moses because of Israel's hardness of heart (2:74); for they constantly disputed with their Prophet Moses (2:108), and there were constantly among them afterwards men who broke the Sabbath (2:65, and n. 79).
2. Which was the true Sabbath Day?

The Jews observe Saturday.

The Christians, who include the Old Testament in their inspired Scripture, observe Sunday, and a sect among them (the Seventh Day Adventists) disagree, and observe Saturday. So there is disagreement among the People of the Book. Let them dispute among themselves. Their dispute will not be settled till the Day of Judgment.

Meanwhile, Muslims are emancipated from such stringent restrictions. For them there is certainly the Day of United Prayer on Friday, but it is in no sense like the Jewish or the Scotch Sabbath!

... وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (١٢٤)

but Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment as to their differences.

**C2160.** Cf. 2:113.

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ...

125. Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching;

... وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِأَلْسِنَةٍ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ...

and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious:

**C2161.** In this wonderful passage are laid down principles of religious preaching, which are good for all time.

But where are the Teachers with such qualifications?

We must invite all to the Way of Allah, and expound His Universal Will; we must do it with wisdom and discretion, meeting people on their own ground and convincing them with illustrations from their own knowledge and experience, which may be very narrow, or very wide.

Our preaching must be, not dogmatic, not self-regarding, not offensive, but gentle, considerate, and such as would attract their attention. Our manner and our arguments should not be acrimonious, but modeled on the most courteous and the most gracious example, so that the hearer may say to himself,

"This man is not dealing merely with dialectics; he is not trying to get a rise out of me; he is sincerely expounding the faith that is in him, and his motive is the love of man and the love of Allah."

... إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ

بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ (١٢٥)

for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.

**C2162.** It may be that the Preacher sometimes says to himself,

"What is the use of teaching these people?

they have made up their minds, or they are obstinate; or they are only trying to catch me out,"

Let him not yield to such a thought. Who knows how the seed of the Word of Allah may germinate in people's minds? It is not for man to look for results. Man's inner thoughts are known best to Allah.

وَأِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ...

126. And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out:

... وَلَنْ صَبْرَتْمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ (١٢٦)

but if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient.

**C2163.** In the context this passage refers to controversies and discussions, but the words are wide enough to cover all human struggles, disputes, and fights.

In strictest equity you are not entitled to give a worse blow than is given to you. Lest you should think that such patience only gives an advantage to the adversary, you are told that the contrary is the case, the advantage is with the patient, the self-possessed, those who do not lose their temper or forget their own principles of conduct.

وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ...

127. And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from Allah;

**C2164.** In the previous verse are laid down the principles of conduct in controversy for all Muslims;

'if you catch them out, you are not entitled to strike a heavier blow than you received, but it is better to restrain yourself and be patient.'

There patience was recommended.

In this verse a command is directly addressed to the Prophet. 'Do thou be patient.'

It is a command: his standard as the Great Teacher is much higher; and he carried out in his life.

His patience and self-restraint were under circumstances of extraordinary provocation. In his human wisdom it may sometimes have seemed questionable whether forbearance and self-restraint might not be human weaknesses; he had to defend his people as well as himself against the enemy's persecutions.

He is told here that he need not entertain any such fears. Patience (with constancy) in those circumstances was in accordance with Allah's own command.

Nor was he to grieve if they rejected Allah's Message-, the Prophet had done his duty when he boldly and openly proclaimed it.

Nor was his heart to be troubled if they hatched secret plots against himself and his people, Allah would protect them.

... وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ (١٢٧)

nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ (١٢٨)

128. For Allah is with those

- who restrain themselves,
- and those who do good.

**C2165.** And the Surah ends with the highest consolation which the righteous can receive; the assurance that Allah is with them. A double qualification is indicated for so high an honour,

- that they should not yield to human passion or anger or impatience, and
- that they should go on with constancy doing good all around them. To attain to the Presence of Allah in the sense of "I am with you" is the culmination of the righteous man's aspiration.



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