



يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ وَخَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ ضَعِيفًا



Allah doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): for man was created weak (in flesh).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

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Al Nisa'

النِّسَاءُ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah is closely connected chronologically with Surah 3. Its subject matter deals with the social problems which the Muslim community had to face immediately after Uhud. While the particular occasion made the necessity urgent, the principles laid down have permanently governed Muslim Law and social practice.

Broadly speaking, the Surah consists of two parts:

1. that dealing with women, orphans, inheritance, marriage, and family rights generally, and

2. that dealing with the recalcitrant in the larger family, the community at Madinah , viz., the Hypocrites and their accomplices.

Summary- It begins with an appeal to the solidarity of mankind, the rights of women and orphans, and the implications of family relationship, including an equitable distribution of property after death ([4:1-14](#) and [C. 61](#)).

While the decencies of family life should be enforced, women should be held in honour and their rights recognized, in marriage, property, and inheritance; and this principle of goodness be extended in all beings, great and small ([4:15-42](#), and [C. 62](#)).

The sections in Madinah, not yet in the Muslim community, should not go after false gods, but should accept the authority of the Prophet, and obey him. Then it will be their privilege to be admitted to a great and glorious Fellowship ([4:43-70](#), and [C. 63](#)).

The Believers should organize in self-defence against their enemies, and beware of the secret plots and mischiefs of the Hypocrites; how deserters should be treated ([4:71-91](#), and [C 64](#)).

Caution about the taking of life; recommendations for having places inimical on Islam; religious duties in the midst of war ([4:92-104](#), and [C. 65](#)).

Treachery and the lure of evil ([4:105-126](#), and [C. 66](#)).

Women and orphans to be justly dealt with; Faith must go with justice, sincerity, and moderation in speech ([4:127-152](#), and [CC. 67](#)).

Where People of the Book went wrong, with honourable exceptions ([4:153-176](#), and [C. 68](#)).

C.61 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:1-14)

*All mankind are one, and mutual rights
Must be respected; the sexes
Must honour, each the other;
Sacred are family relationships
That rise through marriage
And women bearing children;
Orphans need especial loving care;
In trust is held all property;
With duties well-defined;
And after death, due distribution
Should be made in equitable shares
To all whose affection, duty,
And trust shed light and joy
On this our life below.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ...

1. O mankind!

reverence your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person,

C504. Nafs may mean:

- soul;
- self;
- person, living person;
- will, good pleasure, as in [4:4 below](#).

... وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا ...

created, of like nature, his mate,

Minha: I follow the construction suggested by Imam Razi.

The particle **min** would then suggest here a species, a nature, a similarity.

The pronoun **ha** refers of course to **Nafs**. (R).

.. وَبَتَّ مِنْهُمَا رَجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ...

and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ ...

reverence Allah, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights),

C505. All our mutual rights and duties are referred to Allah. We are His creatures: His Will is the standard and measure of Allah; and our duties are measured by our conformity with His Will.

"Our wills are ours, to make them Thine," says Tennyson (In Memoriam).

Among ourselves (human beings) our mutual rights and duties arise out of Allah's Law, the sense of Right that is implanted in us by Him.

... وَالْأَرْحَامَ ...

and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you):

C506. Among the most wonderful mysteries of our nature is that of sex.

The unregenerate male is apt, in the pride of his physical strength, to forget the all-important part which the female plays in his very existence, and in all the social relationships that arise in our collective human lives.

The mother that bore us must ever have our reverence. The wife, through whom we enter parentage, must have our reverence.

Sex, which governs so much of our physical life, and has so much influence on our emotional and higher nature, deserves-not our fear, or our contempt, or our amused indulgence, but-our reverence in the highest sense of the term.

With this fitting introduction we enter on a discussion of women, orphans, and family relationships.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا (١)

for Allah ever watches over you.

وَأْتُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْخَيْبَتَ بِالطَّيِّبِ...

2. To orphans restore their property (when they reach their age), nor substitute (your) worthless things for (their) good ones;

... وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَمْوَالِكُمْ ...

and devour not their substance (by mixing it up) with your own.

C507. Justice to orphans is enjoined, and three things are particularly mentioned as temptations in the way of a guardian:

1. He must not postpone restoring all his ward's property when the time comes; subject to 4:5 below.
2. If there is a list of property, it is not enough that that list should be technically followed: the property restored must be of equal value to the property received:

the same principle applies where there is no list.

3. If property is managed together, or where perishable goods must necessarily be consumed, the strictest probity is necessary when the separation takes place, and this is insisted on.

See also 2:220 and n. C 244.

... إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا (٢)

For this is indeed a great sin.

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَنِّي
وَتِلْكَاتٍ وَرَبَاعٍ...

3. If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the **orphans**, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four;

C508. Notice the conditional clause about **orphans**, introducing the rules about marriage.

This reminds us of the immediate occasion of the promulgation of this verse. It was after Uhud, when the Muslim community was left with many orphans and widows and some captives of war. Their treatment was to be governed by principles of the greatest humanity and equity.

The occasion is past, but the principles remain. Marry the orphans if you are quite sure that you will in that way protect their interests and their property, with perfect justice to them and to your own dependants if you have any. If not, make other arrangements for the orphans.

... فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ...

but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess.

... ذَلِكَ أَذْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا (٣)

That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.

C509. The unrestricted number of wives of the "Times of Ignorance" was now strictly limited to a maximum of four, provided you could treat them with equality. (R).

وَأَتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً...

4. And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift;

... فَإِنْ طِئِنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَّرِيئًا (٤)

but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ ...

5. To those weak of understanding

C510. This applies to orphans, but the wording is perfectly general, and defines principles like those of Chancery in English Law and the Court of Wards in Indian Law.

Property has not only its rights but also its responsibilities. The owner may not do just what he likes absolutely; his right is limited by the good of his family of which he is a member, and if he is incapable of understanding it, his control should be removed.

This does not mean that he is harshly dealt with. On the contrary his interest must be protected, and he must be treated with special kindness because of his incapacity.

... أَمْوَالِكُمْ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَامًا ...

make not over your property, which Allah hath made a means of support for you,

C511. Your property: Ultimately all property belongs to Allah, and is intended for the support of his close relations.

It is held in trust by a particular individual. If he is incapable, he is put aside but gently and with kindness.

While his incapacity remains, the duties and responsibilities devolve on his guardian even more strictly than in the case of the original owner: for he may not take any of the profits for himself unless he is poor, and in that case his remuneration for his trouble must be on a scale that is no more than just and reasonable.

... وَأَرْزُقُوهُمْ فِيهَا وَاكْسُوهُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا (٥)

but feed and clothe them therewith, and speak to them words of kindness and justice.

وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ ...

6. Make trial of orphans until they reach the age of marriage;

C512. The age of marriage is the age when they reach their majority.

... فَإِنْ أَنْسَمْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ...

if then ye find sound judgment in them, release their property to them;

... وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَنْ يَكْبُرُوا ...

but consume it not wastefully, nor in haste against their growing up.

... وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ...

If the guardian is well-off, let him claim no remuneration, but if he is poor, let him have for himself what is just and reasonable.

... فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهَدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ...

When ye release their property to them, take witnesses in their presence:

... وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا (٦)

but all-sufficient is Allah in taking account.

C513. It is good to take human witnesses when you faithfully discharge your trust; but remember that, however fully you satisfy your fellow-men when you give your account to them, there is a stricter account due from you to Allah.

If you are righteous in Allah's eyes, you must follow these stricter standards.

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ
الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ...

7. From what is left by parents and those nearest **related** there is a share for men and a share for women,

C514. I have resisted the temptation to translate "next to kin," as this phrase has a technical meaning in Indian Law, referring to certain kinds of heirs, whereas here the people meant are those whose inheritance is to be divided. The shares are specified.

Here the general principles are laid down that females inherit as well as males. and that relatives who have no legal shares, orphans. and indigent people are not to be treated harshly, if present at the division. (R).

... مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا (٧)

whether the property be small or large, a determinate share.

وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُو الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينُ فَارْزُقُوهُمْ مِنْهُ ...

8. But if at the time of division other relatives, of orphans, or poor, are present, feed them out of the (property),

... وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا (٨)

and speak to them words of kindness and justice.

وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَافًا خَافُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ...

9. Let those (disposing of an estate) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own if they had left a helpless family behind:

... فَلْيَنْفُوا اللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا (٩)

let them fear Allah, and speak words of appropriate (comfort).

C515. It is a touching argument addressed to those who have to divide an estate.

'How anxious would you be if you had left a helpless family behind?'

If others do so, help and be kind.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا ...

10. Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat up a fire into their own bodies:

... وَسَيَصْلُونَ سَعِيرًا (١٠)

they will soon be enduring a blazing fire!

Section 2

يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثِيَّيْنِ ...

11. Allah (thus) directs you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females:

C516. The principles of inheritance law are laid down in broad outline in the Quran; the precise details have been worked out on the basis of the Prophet's practice and that of his Companions, and by interpretation and analogy.

Muslim jurists have collected a vast amount of learning on this subject, and this body of law is enough by itself to form the subject of life-long study. Here we shall deal only with the broad principles to be gathered from the Text, as interpreted by the Jurists.

1. The power of testamentary disposition extends over only one-third of the Property; the remaining two-thirds are distributed among heirs as laid down.
2. All distribution takes place after the legacies and debts (including funeral expenses) have first been paid.
3. Legacies cannot be left to any of the heirs included in the scheme of distribution; or
it will amount to upsetting the shares and undue preference of one heir to another.
4. Generally, but not always, the male takes a share double that of a female in his own category.

... فَإِنْ كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا

النَّصْفُ ...

if only daughters, two or **more**, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half.

C517. At first sight, the Arabic words seem to mean: "if more than two daughters." But the alternative in the

next clause is: "if only one daughter." Logically, therefore, the first clause must mean:

"if daughters, two or more."

This is the general interpretation, and is confirmed by the supplementary provision in [4:176](#) at the end of the Surah, which should be read along with this.

... وَلَا بَوِيهٍ لِّكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ إِنْ كَانَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ ...

For parents, a sixth share of the inheritance to each, if the deceased left children;

... فَإِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَوَرَّثَهُ أَبَوَاهُ فَلِأُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ ...

if no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third;

... فَإِنْ كَانَ لَهُ إِخْوَةٌ فَلِأُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِي بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ...

if the deceased left brothers (or sisters), the mother has a sixth. (The distribution in all cases is) after the payment of legacies and debts.

... أَبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ لَا تَدْرُونَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعًا ...

Ye know not whether your parents or your children are nearest to you in benefit.

... فَرِيضَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ اللَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١١)

These are settled portions ordained by Allah and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

C518. The verse deals with the portions allotted to

- children, and
- parents.

The next verse deals with the portions allotted to

- husband or wife of the deceased, and
- collaterals.

The children's shares are fixed, but their amount will depend upon what goes to the parents.

- If both parents are living, and there are also children, both father and mother take a sixth each:
- if only one parent is living, he or she takes his or her sixth; and the rest goes to the children.
- If the parents are living, and there is no child or other heir, the mother gets a third (and the father the remaining two-thirds);
- if there are no children, but there are brothers or sisters (this is interpreted strictly in the plural), the mother has a sixth, and the father apparently the residue, as the father excludes collaterals.

This is far from being an exhaustive statement, but it establishes the proposition that children and parents have always some share if they survive, but their shares are affected by the existence and number of the heirs in these categories.

وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِن لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ...

12. In what your wives leave, your share is a half, if they leave no child;

... فَإِن كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمْ الرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَكَنَّ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ

يُوصِينَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ...

but if they leave a child, ye get a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts.

C519. The husband takes a half of his deceased wife's property if she leaves no child, the rest going to residuaries; if she leaves a child, the husband gets only a fourth.

Following the rule that the female share is generally half the male share, the widow gets a fourth of her deceased husband's property, if he leaves no children, and an eighth if he leaves children.

If there are more widows than one, their collective share is a fourth or an eighth as the case may be; inter se they divide equally.

... وَلَهُنَّ الرَّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَكَتُمْ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ ...

In what ye leave, their share is a fourth, if ye leave no child;

... فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ الثَّمَنُ مِمَّا تَرَكَتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةِ تَوْصُونَ بِهَا
أَوْ دَيْنٍ...

but if ye leave a child, they get an eighth; after payment of legacies and debts.

... وَإِنْ كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُورَثُ كَلَالَةً أَوْ امْرَأَةٌ ...

If the man or woman whose inheritance is in question, has left neither ascendants nor **descendants**,

C520. The word in Arabic is **kalalah**, which is so construed usually. But it was nowhere defined authoritatively in the lifetime of the Messenger.

This was one of the three terms about which Hadhrat Umar wished that the Messenger had defined them in his lifetime, the other two being the share of grandfather, and **riba** (usury).

On the accepted definition, we are concerned with the inheritance of a person who has left no descendant or ascendant (however distant), but only collaterals, with or without a widow or widower. If there is a widow or widower surviving, she or he takes the share as already defined, before the collaterals come in.

... وَلَهُ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتٌ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ ...

but has left a brother or a sister, each one of the two gets a sixth;

C521. A "**brother or sister**" is here interpreted to mean a uterine brother or sister, i.e., a brother or sister by the same mother but not by the same father, as the case of full brothers and sisters or brothers and sisters by the same father but different mothers is understood to be dealt with later, in the last verse of this Surah.

The uterine brother or sister, if only one survives, takes a sixth; if more than one survive, they take a third collectively, and divide among themselves; this on the supposition that there are no descendants or ascendants, however remote.

There may, however, be a widow or widower surviving: she or he takes her or his share, as already specified. The shares of collaterals generally are calculated on a complicated system which cannot be described in a brief note.

For these, and the rules about Residuarities ('Asaba) reference should be made to special legal treatises.

... فَإِنْ كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَاءَ فِي الثُّلُثِ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةِ يُوصَىٰ
بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ غَيْرِ مُضَارٍّ...

but if more than two, they share in a third; after payment of legacies and debts; so that no loss is caused (to anyone).

C522. Debts (in which funeral expenses take first rank) and legacies are the first charge on the estate of a deceased person, before distribution takes place.

But equity and fair dealing should be observed in all matters, so that no one's interests are prejudiced. Thus funeral expenses should be reasonable; debts must be genuine and not reckless debts; and the shares must be calculated with fairness.

... وَصِيَّةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ (١٢)

Thus is it ordained by Allah, and Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ...

13. Those are limits set by Allah:

... وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

those who obey Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath, to abide therein (for ever)

... وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١٣)

and that will be the Supreme achievement.

C522a. Cf. 44:57, n. 4733. (R).

وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ نَارًا...

14. But those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and transgress His limits will be admitted to a fire,

... خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَلَهُ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ (١٤)

to abide therein: and they shall have a humiliating punishment.

C.62 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:15-42)

*What can be a holier cement to Society
Than that women should be chaste and pure.
And crimes against sex rooted out?
Let decency, kindness, and justice
Prevail in all sex relationship;
Let marriage be cherished and carefully guarded;
Women's rights secured; family jars
Adjusted; and all life lived
In faith, charity, and kindness sincere
To all our fellow-creatures.*

Section 3

وَاللَّاتِي يَأْتِينَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نَسَائِكُمْ ...

15. If any of your women are guilty of **lewdness**,

C523. Most commentators understand this to refer to adultery or fornication; in that case they consider that the punishment was altered by the later verse, 24:2. But I think it refers to unnatural crime between women, analogous to unnatural crime between men in 4:16 below; because,

1. no punishment is specified here for the man, as would be the case where a man was involved in the crime;
2. the word, al *laati*, the purely feminine plural of al *lati*, is used for the parties to the crime;
3. the punishment is indefinite; see the next note but one.

... فَاسْتَشْهِدُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنْكُمْ...

take the evidence of four (reliable) witnesses from amongst you against them;

C524. To protect the honor of women, stricter evidence is required, i.e., the evidence of four instead of the usual two witnesses.

It is the same for adultery (see 24:4.).

... فَإِن شَهِدُوا فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوتِ حَتَّىٰ يَتَوَقَّأَهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ ...

and if they testify, confine them to houses until death do claim them,

... أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا (١٥)

or Allah ordain for them some (other) way.

C525. Keep them in prison until some definite order is received. Those who take the crime to be adultery or fornication construe this definite order ("some other way") to mean some definite pronouncement by the Prophet under inspiration; this was the punishment of flogging under 24:2. for fornication, and stoning to death under the Prophet's directives for adultery.

If we understand the crime to be unnatural crime, we might presume, in the absence of any definite order ("some other way") that the punishment would be similar to that for men in the next verse. The Prophet's Sunnah has prescribed capital punishment although the exact method is left indefinite. (R).

وَاللَّذَانِ يَأْتِيَانِيهَا مِنْكُمْ فَأَدُوهُمَا فَإِن تَابَا ...

16. If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both.

... وَأَصْلَحًا فَأَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُمْ...

If they repent and amend, leave them alone;

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا (١٦)

for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ ...

17. Allah accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterwards;

... فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

to them will Allah turn in mercy;

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١٧)

for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ...

18. Of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil,

C526. Note the fine touch.

A sin may be fashionable, and people may sin together without compunction. When one of them is faced with Death, he repents, but that sort of repentance is no good.

... حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْآنَ ...

until death faces one of them, and he says, "Now have I repented indeed;"

... وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ ...

nor of those who die rejecting faith: .

... أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٨)

for them have We prepared a punishment most grievous.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرِهًا...

19. O ye who believe! ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will.

C527. Among many nations, including Arabs in the Days of Ignorance, a step-son or brother took possession of a dead man's widow or widows along with his goods and chattels. This shameful custom is forbidden.

See also [4:22](#) below.

... وَلَا تَعْضَلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوا بِبَعْضِ مَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ

بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ ...

Nor should ye treat them with harshness, that ye may take away part of the dower ye have given them, except where they have been guilty of open lewdness;

C528. Another trick, to detract from the freedom of married women was to treat them badly and force them to sue for a *Khul'a* divorce (see 2:229, n. 258) or

its equivalent in pre-Islamic custom, when the dower could be claimed back. This is also forbidden. Or

the harshness may be exercised in another way: a divorced woman may be prevented by those who have control of her, from remarrying unless she remits her dower.

All kinds of harshness are forbidden.

... وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ...

on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity.

... فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا

كَثِيرًا (١٩)

If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good.

وَأِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَآتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قِنطَارًا فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا ...

20. But if ye decide to take one wife in place of another, even if ye had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, take not the least bit of it back:

C529. Treasure: Qintar; a Talent of gold:

see 3:14, first note.

... أَنَأْخُذُونَهُ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا (٢٠)

would ye take it by slander and a manifest wrong?

وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا (٢١)

21. And how could ye take it when ye have gone in unto each other, and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ آبَاؤُكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ...

22. And marry not women whom your fathers married, except what is past:

... إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَمَقْتًا وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا (٢٢)

it was shameful and odious, an abominable custom indeed.

C530. See above: [4:19](#), [n. 527](#).

Section 4

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

23. Prohibited to you (for marriage) are:

C531. This Table of Prohibited Degrees agrees in the main with what is usually accepted among all nations, except in minor details. It begins in the last verse (with father's widows or divorcees).

The scheme is drawn up on the assumption that the person who proposes to marry is a man: if it is a woman,

the same scheme will apply, mutatis mutandis: it will read: "your fathers, sons, brothers," etc.; or

you can always read it from the husband's view of relationship, as there must always be a husband in a marriage.

... أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ وَبَنَاتِكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتِكُمْ ...

your mother, daughters, sisters,

C532.

"Mother" includes grandmother (through the father or mother), great grandmother, etc.;

"daughter" includes grand-daughter (through son or daughter), great grand daughter, etc.;

"sister," includes full-sister and half-sister.

"Father's sister" includes grandfather's sister, etc., and

"mother's sister" includes grandmother's sister, etc.

... وَعَمَّاتِكُمْ وَخَالَاتِكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخْتِ ...

father's sisters, mother's sisters; brother's daughters, sister's daughters,

... وَأُمَّهَاتِكُمُ اللَّاتِي أَرْضَعَنَّكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتِكُمْ مِّنَ الرِّضَاعَةِ ...

foster-mothers (who gave you suck), foster-sisters;

C533. "Fosterage" or milk-relationships play an important part in Muslim Law, and count like blood-relationships:

it would therefore seem that not only foster-mothers and foster-sisters, but foster-mother's sister, etc., all come within the prohibited degrees.

... وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ وَرَبَائِبِكُمُ اللَّاتِي فِي حُجُورِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَائِكُمُ اللَّاتِي

دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ ...

your wives' mothers; your step-daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives to whom ye have gone in,

C534. It is generally held that "under your guardianship" is a description, not a condition. (R).

... فَإِن لَّمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ...

no prohibition if ye have not gone in; (those who have been)

... وَحَلَائِلُ أَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ ...

wives of your sons proceeding from your loins;

C535. "Sons" includes grandsons, but excludes adopted sons, or persons treated as such of the words "proceeding from your loins."

... وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ...

and two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time, except for what is past;

C536. The bar against two sisters in marriage together applies to aunt and niece together, but not to deceased wife's sister after the wife dies.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (٢٣)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ...

24. Also (prohibited are) women already married, except those whom your right hands possess.

C537. Whom your right hands possess: i.e., captives in a Jihad. (R).

... كِتَابَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

Thus hath Allah ordained (prohibitions) against you:

... وَأَحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَا وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ

مُسَافِحِينَ ...

except for these, all others are lawful, provided ye seek (them in marriage) with gifts from your property, desiring chastity, not lust.

C538. After defining the prohibited degrees, the verse proceeds to say that women other than those specified may be sought in marriage, but even so, not from motives of lust, but in order to promote chastity between the sexes.

Marriage in the original Arabic is here described by a word which suggests a fortress (*hisn*): marriage is, therefore, the fortress of chastity.

... فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً ...

Seeing that ye derive benefit from them, give them their dowers (at least) as prescribed;

C539. As the woman in marriage surrenders her person, so the man also must surrender. at least some of his property according to his means. And this gives rise to the law of Dower.

A minimum dower is prescribed, but it is not necessary to stick to the minimum, and in the new relationship created, the parties are recommended to act towards each other with the greatest confidence and liberality.

... وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا تَرَضَيْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيضَةِ ...

but if after a dower is prescribed, ye agree mutually (to vary it), there is no blame on you,

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٢٤)

and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلاً أَنْ يَنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ...

25. If any of you have not the means wherewith to wed free believing women,

... فَمِنْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فِتْيَانِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ...

they may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands possess:

C540. That is, captives taken in a Jihad:

If you seek such a person in marriage, do it from no base motives. Safeguard your faith, and see that she too does believe.

In that case, after all, she is of the human brotherhood, and her condition is accidental and redeemable.

If the slave bore a child to her master, she would become free. (R).

... وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِكُمْ...

and Allah hath full knowledge about your faith.

... بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ فَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّنْ مَا قَالْتُمْ فَسَأَلْنَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَانُوا مُشْكِكِينَ...

Ye are one from another: wed them with the leave of their owners,

... وَأَنْتُمْ أَجُورُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحَاتٍ وَلَا

مُتَّخِذَاتِ أَخْدَانٍ...

and give them their dowers, according to what is reasonable: they should be chaste, not lustful, nor taking paramours:

... فَإِذَا أُحْصِنَ فَإِنَّهُنَّ يَفَاحِشَةٌ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى

الْمُحْصَنَاتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ...

when they are taken in wedlock, if they fall into shame, their punishment is half that for free women.

... ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ وَأَنْ تَصْبِرُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ...

This (permission) is for those among you who fear sin; but it is better for you that ye practice self-restraint:

... وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢٥)

and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 5

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنْنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ...

26. Allah doth wish to make clear to you and to show you the ordinances of those before you;

... وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

and (He doth wish to) turn to you (in Mercy):

... وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٦)

and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

27. Allah doth wish to turn to you,

... وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ أَنْ تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا عَظِيمًا (٢٧)

but the wish of those who follow their lusts is that ye should turn away (from Him), far, far away.

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ وَخُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا (٢٨)

28. Allah doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): for man was created weak (in flesh).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

29. O ye who believe!

... لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَن

تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ ...

eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: but let there be amongst you traffic and trade by mutual goodwill:

C541. Let me paraphrase this verse, for there is profound meaning in it.

1. All your property you hold in trust, whether it is in your name, or belongs to the community, or to

people over whom you have control. To waste is wrong.

2. In 2:188 the same phrase occurred, to caution us against greed.

Here it occurs, to encourage us to increase property by economic use (traffic and trade), recalling Christ's parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30), where the servants who had increased their master's wealth were promoted and the servant who had hoarded was cast into darkness.

3. We are warned that our waste may mean our own destruction ("nor kill or destroy yourselves").

But there is a more general meaning also:

we must be careful of our own and other people's lives. We must commit no violence.

This is the opposite of "trade and traffic by mutual good-will."

4. Our violence to our own brethren is particularly preposterous, seeing that Allah has loved and showered His mercies on us and all His creatures.

... وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا (٢٩)

nor kill (or destroy) yourselves:

for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful.

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِ نَارًا...

30. If any do that in rancor and injustice, soon shall We cast them into the fire:

... وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا (٣٠)

and easy it is for Allah.

إِنْ تَجِدُوا كِبَائِرَ مَا نُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكْفَرُ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ...

31. If ye (but) eschew the most heinous of the things which ye are forbidden to do, We shall expel out of you all the evil in you,

... وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مَدْخَلًا كَرِيمًا (٣١)

and admit you to a Gate of great honor.

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ...

32. And in no wise covet those things in which Allah hath bestowed his gifts more freely on some of you than on others:

C542. Men and women have gifts from Allah -some greater than others. They seem unequal. but we are assured that Allah has allotted them by a scheme by which people receive what they earn.

If this does not appear clear in our sight, let us remember that we have no full knowledge but Allah has. We must not be jealous if other people have more than we have-in wealth or position or strength or honour or talent or happiness.

Probably things are equalized in the aggregate or in the long run, or equated to needs and merits on a scale which we cannot appraise. If we want more, instead of being jealous or covetous, we should pray to Allah and place before Him our needs. Though He knows all, and has no need of our prayer, our prayer may reveal to ourselves our shortcomings and enable us to deserve more of Allah's bounty or make ourselves fit for it.

... لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَتَبْتُمْ وَأَلِّسَاءَ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَتَبْتُمْ...

to men is allotted what they earn,

and to women what they earn:

... وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ...

but ask Allah of His bounty:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٣٢)

for Allah hath full knowledge of all things.

وَلِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مَوَالِي مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ...

33. To (benefit) everyone, We have appointed sharers and heirs to property left by parents and relatives.

C543. Mawali, plural of *Maula*; from the root *wala*, to be near in place or relationship, to follow, *Maula* may therefore mean:

1. nearly related,
2. heir,
3. sharer or partner;
these three meanings are implied here;
4. neighbour, or friend, or protector, or client (44:41);
5. lord or master (16:76).

... وَالَّذِينَ عَقَدْتَ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَأَوْهْمُ تَصِيْبِهِمْ ...

To those also, to whom your right hand was pledged, give their due portion:

C544. When the emigration took place from Makkah to Madinah, bonds and links of brotherhood were established between the Emigrants and the Helpers, and they shared in each other's inheritance.

Later, when the Community was solidly established, and relations with those left behind in Makkah were resumed, the rights of blood-relations in Makkah, and the Helper-brethren in Madinah were both safeguarded. This is the particular meaning.

The more general meaning is similar; respect your ties of blood, of neighbourhood, and of friendly compacts and understandings, Be just to all.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا (٣٣)

for truly Allah is Witness to all things.

Section 6

الرَّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ ...

34. Men are the protectors and maintainers of women,

C545. Qawwam:

- one who stands firm in another's business, protects his interests, and looks after his affairs- or

- it may be, standing firm in his own business, managing affairs, with a steady purpose.

Cf. [4:135](#).

... بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ...

because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means.

... فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ...

Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard.

C546. Or the sentence may be rendered:

"and protect (the husband's interests) in his absence, as Allah has protected them."

If we take the rendering as in the text, the meaning is:

the good wife is obedient and harmonious in her husband's presence, and in his absence guards his reputation and property and her own virtue, as ordained by Allah.

If we take the rendering as in the note, we reach the same result in a different way:

- the good wife, in her husband's absence, remembering how Allah has given her a sheltered position, does everything to justify that position by guarding her own virtue and his reputation and property.

... وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ ...

As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first),

C547. In case of family jars four steps are mentioned, to be taken in that order:

1. perhaps verbal advice or admonition may be sufficient;
2. if not, sex relations may be suspended;
3. if this is not sufficient, some slight physical correction may be administered:

but Imam Shafi'i considers this inadvisable, though permissible, and all authorities are unanimous in deprecating any sort of cruelty, even of the nagging kind, as mentioned in the next clause;

4. if all this fails, a family council is recommended in [4:35 below](#).

... وَأَهْجُرُوهُمْ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَأَضْرِبُوهُمْ ...

(next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly);

... فَإِنْ أَطَعْتَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلاً ...

but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance):

C548. Temper, nagging, sarcasm, speaking at each other in other people's presence, reverting to past faults which should be forgiven and forgotten,-all this is forbidden. And the reason given is characteristic of Islam.

You must live all your life as in the presence of Allah, Who is high above us, but Who watches over us.

How petty and contemptible will our little squabbles appear in His presence!

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا (٣٤)

for Allah is Most High, Great (above you all).

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ...

35. If ye fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers;

C549. An excellent plan for settling family disputes, without too much publicity or mud-throwing, or resort to the chicaneries of the law.

The Latin countries recognise this plan in their legal systems. It is a pity that Muslims do not resort to it universally, as they should.

The arbiters from each family would know the idiosyncrasies of both parties, and would be able, with Allah's help to effect a real reconciliation.

... وَحَكْمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِن يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا ...

if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا (٣٥)

for Allah hath full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things.

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا ...

36. Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him:

C550. The essence of Islam is to serve Allah and do good to your fellow-creatures. This is wider and more comprehensive than "Love God and love your neighbour".

For it includes duties to animals as our fellow-creatures, and emphasises practical service rather than sentiment.

... وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْجَارِ

ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ ...

and do good to;

- parents,
- kinsfolk,
- orphans,
- those in need,
- neighbors who are near,

C551. Neighbors who are near: that is, in local situation as well as intimate relationships, just as neighbors who are strangers includes those whom we do not know or who live away from us or in a different sphere altogether.

... وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ...

neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet),

C552. The Companion by your side may be your intimate friends and associates, just as the way-farer you meet may be a casual acquaintance on your travels.

This last is much wider than the "stranger within your gate."

... وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ...

and what your right hands possess:

C553. What your right hands possess: For the meaning of the phrase see n. 537 above. (R).

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا (٣٦)

for Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious;

C554. Real deeds of service and kindness proceed, not from showing off or from a superior sort of condescension (cf. "White Man's Burden"), but from a frank recognition of our own humility and the real claims, before Allah, of all our fellow-creatures.

For in our mutual needs we are equal before Allah, or perhaps the best of us (as the world sees us) may be worse than the worst of us (from the same point of view).

الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ

فَضْلِهِ...

37. (Nor) those who are niggardly or enjoin niggardliness on others, or hide the bounties which Allah hath bestowed on them;

C555. Arrogance is one reason why our deeds of love and kindness do not thrive.

Another is niggardliness or selfishness.

Allah does not love either the one or the other, for they both proceed from want of love of Allah, or faith in Allah.

Niggardly is the worldly wise man who not only refuses to spend himself in service, but by example and precept prevents others from doing so, as otherwise he would be made odious by comparison, before his fellow-creatures.

So he either makes a virtue of his caution, or hides the gifts which have been given him-wealth, position, talent, etc.

... وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيبًا (٣٧)

for We have prepared, for those who resist faith, a punishment that steeps them in contempt.

C556. Note how the punishment fits the crime.

The niggard holds other people in contempt, and in doing so, becomes himself contemptible.

وَالَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ...

38. (Nor) those who spend of their substance, to be seen of men, but have no faith in Allah and the Last Day:

C557. A fault opposed to niggardliness, and equally opposed to true Charity, is to spend lavishly to be seen of men.

It is mere hypocrisy: there is no love in it, either for Allah or for man.

... وَمَنْ يَكُنِ الشَّيْطَانُ لَهُ قَرِينًا فَسَاءَ قَرِينًا (٣٨)

if any take the Evil One for their intimate, what a dreadful intimate he is!

وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ...

39. And what burden were it on them if they had faith in Allah and in the Last Day,

... وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ ...

and they spent out of what Allah hath given them for sustenance?

C558. Sustenance: physical, intellectual, spiritual-everything pertaining to life and growth.

Our being is from Allah, and we must therefore spend ourselves freely for Allah.

How can it be a burden?

It is merely a response to the demand of our own healthy nature.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِهِمْ عَلِيمًا (٣٩)

for Allah hath full knowledge of them.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ وَإِن تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُضَاعِفْهَا...

40. Allah is never unjust in the least degree: if there is any good (done),

He doubleth it,

... وَيُؤْتِ مِنْ لَدُنْهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٤٠)

and giveth from His own presence a great reward.

C559. Any little good of our own comes from the purity of our heart. Its results in the world are doubled and multiplied by Allah's grace and mercy; but an even greater reward comes from Him: His good pleasure, which brings us nearer to Him

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ...

41. How then if We brought from each people a witness,

... وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا (٤١)

and We brought thee as a witness against these people!

C560. Each Prophet and Leader is a witness for his People and his contemporaries-for those who accept Allah, and against those who reject Him.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَصَوُا الرَّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّى بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ...

42. On that day those who reject faith and disobey the Messenger will wish that the earth were made one with them:

C561. Those who reject Allah's message will wish, when their eyes are opened, that they were reduced to dust, for existence itself will be agony to them.

They might like to hide in the dust, but nothing is hidden from Allah. All their past will stand out clear before Him.

... وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللَّهَ حَدِيثًا (٤٢)

but never will they hide a single fact from Allah!

C.63 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:43-70)

*By clean and pure, and seek not occasions
For quibbles, nor go after sorcery
Or false gods. Be faithful
In your trusts, learn obedience,
And settle your quarrels under the guidance
Of Allah's Messenger. Every keep away
From hypocrisy and every kind of falsehood.
Then will you be admitted to a glorious Fellowship
With the highest and noblest in the spiritual world.*

Section 7

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا
مَا تَقُولُونَ...

43. O ye who believe! approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say,

C562. The reference is either to a state of intoxication or to a dazed state of mind on account of drowsiness or some other cause. Or perhaps both are implied.

Before the prohibition of intoxicants altogether was promulgated, it was at least unbecoming that people should come to prayers in such a state. For prayers it is

only right that we should collect our whole minds and approach Allah in a spirit of reverence.

“Prayers” (Salah) here may mean “a place of prayer,” a Mosque:

the resulting meaning would be the same

... وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّى تَغْتَسِلُوا ...

nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (except when traveling on the road), until after washing your whole body

... وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرَضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ

لَأَمْسَأْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ ...

- if ye are ill, or
- on a journey, or
- one of you cometh from offices of nature, or
- ye have been in contact with women,

... فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ ...

and ye find no water,

then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands.

C563. The strictest cleanliness and purity of mind and body are required, especially at the time of prayer.

But there are circumstances when water for ablutions is not easily obtainable, especially in the dry conditions of Arabia, and then washing with dry sand or clean earth is recommended. Four such circumstances are mentioned: the

- two last when washing is specially required;
- the two first when washing may be necessary, but it may not be easy to get water.

For a man, when he is ill, cannot walk out far to get water, and a man on a journey has no full control over his supplies.

In all four cases, where water cannot be got, cleaning with dry sand or dry earth is recommended. This is called **Tayammum**.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا (٤٣)

For Allah doth blot out sins and forgive again and again.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يَشْتُرُونَ الضَّلَالََةَ...

44. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who were given a portion of the Book? They traffic in error,

C564. Cf. 3:23 and n. 366.

... وَيُرِيدُونَ أَن تَضِلُّوا السَّبِيلَ (٤٤)

and wish that ye should lose the right path.

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِأَعْدَائِكُمْ ...

45. But Allah hath full knowledge of your enemies:

... وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ نَصِيرًا (٤٥)

Allah is enough for a Protector, and Allah is enough for a Helper.

مِّنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ...

46. Of the Jews there are those who displace words from their (right) places, and say:

... سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا ...

"We hear and we **disobey**;" and

... وَأَسْمَعُ غَيْرَ مُسْمَعٍ...

"Hear what is not heard":

C565. See 2:93, n. 98.

A trick of the Jews was to twist words and expressions, so as to ridicule the most solemn teachings of Faith. Where they should have said, "We hear and we obey,"

they said aloud, "We hear," and whispered. "We disobey."

Where they should have said respectfully. "We hear," they added in a whisper, "May you not hear," by way of ridicule.

Where they claimed the attention of the Prophet, they used an ambiguous word apparently harmless, but in their intention disrespectful. (R).

... وَرَاعِنَا لِيَّا بِالسِّنِّتِهِمْ وَطَعْنَا فِي الدِّينِ ...

and "Ra'ina;" with a twist of their tongues and a slander to faith.

C566. See [2:104](#), [n. 106](#).

"**Raina**" if used respectfully in the Arabic way, would have meant

"Please attend to us."

With a twist of their tongue, they suggested an insulting meaning, such as

"O thou that takest us to pasture!" or

in Hebrew. "Our bad one!"

... وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأَسْمَعُ وَانظُرْنَا ...

If only they had said:

"We hear and we obey;" and "Do hear;" and "Do look at us":

... لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَأَقْوَمَ...

it would have been better for them, and more proper;

... وَلَكِنْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ ...

but Allah hath cursed them, for their unbelief;

... فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (٤٦)

and but few of them will believe.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ ...

47. O ye People of the Book!

... آمِنُوا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ ...

believe in what We have (now) revealed, confirming what was (already) with you,

... مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَطْمِسَ وُجُوهًا فَنَرُدُّهَا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهَا ...

before We change the face and fame of some (of you) beyond all recognition, and turn them hindwards,

C567. Literally, "before We obliterate some features (or faces) and turn them front to back (or back to front)": an Arabic idiom, which must be translated freely to yield its proper meaning in English.

The face is the chief expression of a man's own real essence; it is also the index of his fame and estimation. The People of the Book had been specially favoured by Allah with revelations. If they proved themselves unworthy, they lost their "face".

Their eminence would, owing to their own conduct, be turned into degradation. Others would take their place.

The first shall be last and the last shall be first: Matt. 19:30.

... أَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّا أَصْحَابَ السَّبْتِ ...

or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers:

C568. Cf. 2:65 and n. 79.

... وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا (٤٧)

for the decision of Allah must be carried out.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ...

48. Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth;

... وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا (٤٨)

to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed.

C569. Just as in an earthly kingdom the worst crime is that of treason, as it cuts at the very existence of the State, so in the Divine Kingdom, the unforgivable sin is that of contumacious treason against Allah by putting up Allah's creatures in rivalry against Him. This is rebellion against the Creator.

It is what Plato would call the "lie in the soul."

But even here, if the rebellion is through ignorance, and is followed by sincere repentance and amendment, Allah's Mercy is always open (4:17).

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُزَكُّونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ...

49. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who claim sanctity for themselves?

C570. The sanctimonious or self-sanctified people are the farthest from sanctity or purity, which can only proceed from Allah. They cannot play with Allah's Truth and yet go on claiming to be guided and purified or justified by Allah.

Their falsehood in itself condemns them: no further proof is needed of their selfishness and evil.

... بَلِ اللَّهُ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ ...

Nay, but Allah doth sanctify whom He pleaseth

... وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ قَتِيلًا (٤٩)

but never will they fail to receive justice in the least little thing.

C571. Literally, the small skin in the groove of a date stone, a thing of no value; **fatila**.

انظُرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ...

50. Behold! how they invent a lie against Allah!

... وَكَفَىٰ بِهِ إِثْمًا مُّبِينًا (٥٠)

but that by itself is a manifest sin!

Section 8

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيحًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ ...

51. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who were given a portion of the Book?

C572. Cf. 3:23 and n. 366.

The phrase also occurs in [4:44](#).

... يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوتِ ...

They believe in sorcery and evil,

C573. The word I have translated **Sorcery** is **jibt**, which may mean divination, sorcery, magic, or any false object of belief or worship, such as an idol.

The word I have translated **Evil** (here and in 2:256) is **Taghut**, which means the evil one, the one who exceeds all bounds, Satan: or it may refer to some idol worshipped by the Pagan Arabs, with whom the Jews of Madinah were intriguing against the Holy Prophet.

The Jews had taken much to sorcery, magic, divination, and such superstitions.

... وَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَؤُلَاءِ أَهْدَى مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا سَبِيلًا (٥١)

and say to the unbelievers that they are better guided in the (right) way than the believers!

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ ...

52. They are (men) whom Allah hath cursed:

... وَمَنْ يَلْعَنَ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ نَجِدَ لَهُ نَصِيرًا (٥٢)

and those whom Allah hath cursed, thou wilt find, have no one to help.

C574. The Jews were then seeking the aid of the Makkan Pagans against Muhammad, but far from getting any help from them, they and the Pagans were both overthrown.

That was the immediate occasion, but the words have a perfectly general -a universal- meaning.

أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ ...

53. Have they a share in dominion or power?

... فَإِذَا لَا يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا (٥٣)

Behold, they give not a farthing to their fellow-men!

C575. The word I have translated farthing is **naqir**, the groove in a date stone, a thing of no value whatever.

Close-fistedness and envy are among the worst forms of selfishness, and appear specially incongruous in people of power, authority, or influence, from whom is expected generosity in giving and generosity in seeing other people's prosperity or happiness.

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ...

54. Or do they envy mankind for what Allah hath given them of His bounty?

... فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ مُلْكًا عَظِيمًا (٥٤)

But We had already given the people of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom.

C576. Such as the kingdoms of David and Solomon, for they had international fame.

فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ صَدَّ عَنْهُ ...

55. Some of them believed and some of them averted their faces from him:

... وَكَفَىٰ بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيرًا (٥٥)

and enough is hell for a burning fire.

C577. Envy is like the eternal fire, which is in itself a hell.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِمْ نَارًا ...

56. Those who reject Our Signs, We shall soon cast into the fire:

... كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَّلْنَاهُمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ ...

as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (٥٦)

for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ ...

57. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, We shall soon admit to gardens,

... تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ...

with rivers flowing beneath, their eternal home:

therein shall they have companions pure and holy:

C578. Cf. 2:25 and n. 44.

... وَنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيلًا (٥٧)

We shall admit them to shades, cool and ever deepening.

C579. The Garden is contrasted with the Fire: the shade is contrasted with the roasting, Evil grows with what it feeds on.

So goodness and felicity grow with their practice. The good may be alone to start with, but (unlike evil ones) they get Holy Companions.

Just as agony increases with what it suffers (typified by fresh skins growing as the old ones burns out), so felicity finds deeper and deeper meaning (typified by the shades in a garden, which grow deeper and cooler as you proceed into the interior).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا...

58. Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due;

... وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ...

and when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ...

verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you!

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا (٥٨)

for Allah is He who heareth and seeth all things.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

59. O ye who believe!

... أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ...

obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you.

C580. Uli al amr: those charged with authority or responsibility or decision, or the settlement of affairs.

All ultimate authority rests in Allah. Prophets of Allah derive their authority from Him.

As Islam makes no sharp division between sacred and secular affairs, it expects governments to be imbued with righteousness.

Likewise Islam expects Muslims to respect the authority of such government for otherwise there can be no order or discipline. (R).

... فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ ...

If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger,

... إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ...

if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day:

... ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا (٥٩)

that is best, and most suitable for final determination.

Section 9

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ مِنْ
قَبْلِكَ ...

60. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who declare that they believe in the revelations that have come to thee and to those before thee?

... يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّحَاكَمُوا إِلَى الطَّاغُوتِ وَقَدْ أُمِرُوا أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِهِ ...

Their (real) wish is to resort together for judgment (in their disputes) to the Evil One, though they were ordered to reject him.

... وَيُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُمْ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا (٦٠)

But Satan's wish is to lead them astray far away (from the Right).

C581. The immediate reference was to the Hypocrites (*Munafiqin*) of Madinah but the words are general, and the evil of hypocrisy has to be dealt with in all ages.

The type of these men is what is called Mr. Facing-both-ways in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress."

Such men declare that they are always with the Right, but calmly intrigue with Evil and Injustice, and even make Injustice their judge if their personal interests are served in that way.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ ...

61. When it is said to them: "Come to what Allah hath revealed, and to the Messenger":

... رَأَيْتَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْكَ صُدُودًا (٦١)

thou seest the Hypocrites avert their faces from thee in disgust.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ...

62. How then, when they are seized by misfortune, because of the deeds which their hands have sent forth?

... ثُمَّ جَاءُوكَ يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا إِحْسَانًا وَتَوْفِيقًا (٦٢)

Then they come to thee, swearing by Allah: "We meant no more than goodwill and conciliation!"

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ...

63. Those men, Allah knows what is in their hearts;

... فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعَظِّمْهُمْ وَقُلْ لَهُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا (٦٣)

so keep clear of them, but admonish them, and speak to them a word to reach their very souls.

C582. How should hypocrites be treated?

To take them into your confidence would of course be foolish. To wage unrelenting war against them may

destroy the hope of reforming them and purging them of their hypocrisy.

The Prophet of Allah keeps clear of their wiles, but at the same time, does not hesitate to show them the error of their ways, nor to put in a word in season, to penetrate their hearts and win them back to Allah.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

64. We sent not a Messenger, but to be obeyed, in accordance with the will of Allah.

... وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ

الرَّسُولُ ...

If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves, come unto thee and asked Allah's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them,

... لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا (٦٤)

they would have found Allah indeed Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ...

65. But no, by thy Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them,

... ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا (٦٥)

and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.

C583. The test of true Faith is not mere lip profession, but bringing all our doubts and disputes to the one in whom we profess faith.

Further, when a decision is given we are not only to accept it. but find in our inmost souls no difficulty and no resistance, but on the contrary a joyful acceptance springing from the conviction of our own faith.

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْ اقْتُلُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ أَوْ اقْرَبُوا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ...

66. If We had ordered them to sacrifice their lives or to leave their homes,

... مَا فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِنْهُمْ ...

very few of them would have done it:

C584. The highest in faith willingly sacrifice their lives, their homes. and all that they hold dearest, in the cause of Allah.

Those whose faith is not so strong are expected at least to do what a loyal member of any society does, submit his doubts and disputes to the head of the society and cheerfully accept his decision and submit to it,

The contrast is between the Hypocrites who will not even do this, and the really devoted men and women who would voluntarily sacrifice their lives.

... وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيثًا (٦٦)

but if they had done what they were (actually) told, it would have been best for them, and would have gone farthest to strengthen their (faith).

وَإِذَا لَأْتَيْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٦٧)

67. And We should then have given them from Our Presence a great reward.

وَلَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا (٦٨)

68. And We should have shown them the Straight Way.

C585. Four advantages of obedience to Allah are mentioned, in the order in which they will appeal to the beginner in faith:

1. his own benefit ("best for them");
2. strengthening of his faith, as he becomes more and more at home in the world of faith:
3. reward from Allah's own Presence, such intense conviction that no further arguments are needed:
4. the Straight Way, in which there is no doubt or difficulty whatever in our practical conduct.

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

69. All who obey Allah and the Messenger are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah,

... مِّنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصَّدِيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ ...

of the Prophets (who teach), the sincere (lovers of truth), the witnesses (who testify), and the righteous (who do good):

... وَحَسَنَ أَوْلِيكَ رَفِيقًا (٦٩)

ah! what a beautiful fellowship!

C586. A passage of the deepest devotional meaning. Even the humblest man who accepts Faith and does good becomes an accepted member of a great and beautiful company in the Hereafter. It is a company which lives perpetually in the sunshine of Allah's Grace. (This passage partly illustrates 1:5).

It is a glorious hierarchy, of which four grades are specified:

1. The highest is that of the Prophets or Apostles, who get plenary inspiration from Allah, and who teach mankind by example and precept. That rank in Islam is held by Muhammad Al-Mustafa.
2. The next are those whose badge is sincerity and truth: they love and support the truth with their person, their means, their influence, and all that is theirs.

That rank was held by the special Companions of Muhammad, among whom the type was that of Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq.

3. The next are the noble army of Witnesses, who testify to the truth.

The testimony may be by martyrdom, Or

it may be by the tongue of the true Preacher or

the pen of the devoted scholar, or

the life of the man devoted to service,

4. Lastly, there is the large company of Righteous people, the ordinary folk who do their ordinary business, but always in a righteous Way. They are the rank and file of the beautiful Fellowship, in which each has his place and yet all feel that they derive glory from the common association. (R).

ذَلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ عَلِيمًا (٧٠)

71. O ye who believe! take your precautions, and either go forth in parties or go forth all together.

C587. If a generous General gives the private soldier the privilege of sitting with his comrades and officers, high and low, in one common Brotherhood, people may perhaps wonder: how may this be?

If we are admitted to that Company, we want to know no more. It is enough to us that Allah knows our humility and our unworthiness, and with His full knowledge admits us to that glorious Fellowship!

C.64 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:71-91)

*Keep together in your noble Brotherhood;
Share its joys and sorrows; strive
And fight the good fight and never fear;
For this life is short, and the Hereafter
Eternal. Allow not yourselves to be drawn
Into unbelief and cowardice;
Maintain the Right, Protect yourselves
Against Hypocrites as Deserters,
But pursue them not unrelentingly.*

Section 10

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانفِرُوا تَبَاتٍ أَوْ انْفِرُوا جَمِيعًا (٧١)

71. O ye who believe! take your precautions, and either go forth in parties or go forth all together.

C588. No fight should be undertaken without due preparations and precautions. When these are taken, we must go boldly forward.

"Go forth" is therefore repeated for emphasis. But we must go forth in a collective spirit, and not in a selfish spirit-either in small parties or all together, as our Leader determines.

We must not tarry like the doubter in the next two verses.

وَإِنَّ مِنْكُمْ لَمَنْ لَيُبْتَئِنَنَّ ...

72. There are certainly among you men who would tarry behind:

C589. The doubter detaches himself in thought and action from the community. If the general body has a reverse, he blesses Allah that he was not among them, instead of being ashamed of himself for desertion.

If the general body wins a success, he does not rejoice for the common cause, but only regrets for himself that he was not there to share in the glory and the gains!

... فَإِنْ أَصَابَكُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا ...

if a misfortune befalls you. They say:

... قَدْ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيَّ إِذْ لَمْ أَكُنْ مَعَهُمْ شَهِيدًا (٧٢)

"Allah did favor us in that we were not present among them."

وَلَئِنْ أَصَابَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَيَقُولَنَّ كَأَنْ لَّمْ تَكُنْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُ مَوَدَّةٌ ...

73. But if good fortune comes to you from Allah, they would be sure to say, as if there had never been ties of affection between you and them,

... يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ فَأَفُوزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا (٧٣)

"Oh! I wish I had been with them; a fine thing should I then have made of it!"

C590. Just a selfish man's thought. Such men are far from being a source of strength to their community.

They are no use in a fight, and the next verse by implication discards them.

فَلْيُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَشْرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ ...

74. Let those fight in the Cause of Allah who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter,

C591. It is not every one, -least of all, poltroons and faint-hearted persons- who is fit to fight in the cause of Allah.

To do so is a privilege, and those who understand the privilege are prepared to sacrifice all their interests in this life, and this life itself; for they know that it is the sacrifice of something fleeting and of little value, for the sake of something everlasting, and of immense value. Whether (in appearance) they win or lose, in reality they win the prize for which they are fighting, -viz., honour and glory in the sight of Allah.

Note that the only alternatives here are Death or Victory! The true fighter knows no defeat.

... وَمَنْ يُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُقْتَلْ أَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٧٤)

to him who fighteth in the Cause of Allah, whether he is slain or gets victory, soon shall We give him a reward of great (value).

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ...

75. And why should ye not fight in the Cause of Allah

... وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانَ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ ...

and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children whose cry is:

C592. Mustadh'af: one reckoned weak, and therefore iii-treated and oppressed.

Cf. 4:98, and 7:150.

... رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا ...

"Our Lord! rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors;

... وَاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا ...

and raise for us from Thee one who will protect;

... وَاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا (٧٥)

and raise for us from Thee one who will help!"

C593. Even from the human point of view the cause of Allah is the cause of justice, the cause of the oppressed.

In the great persecution, before Makkah was won again, what sorrows, threats, tortures, and oppressions, were suffered by those whose faith was unshaken?

Muhammad's life and that of his adherents was threatened: they were mocked, assaulted, insulted and beaten; those within the power of the enemy were put into chains and cast into prison; others were boycotted, and shut out of trade, business, and social intercourse; they could not even buy the food they wanted, or perform their religious duties.

The persecution was redoubled for the believing slaves, women, and children after the Hijrah. Their cry for a protector, and helper from Allah was answered when Muhammad the Chosen One brought freedom and peace to Makkah again.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

76. Those who believe fight in the Cause of Allah,

... وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتِلُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ الشَّيْطَانِ ...

and those who reject faith fight in the cause of evil: so fight ye against the friends of Satan:

C594. Auliya plural of *wali*, friend, supporter, protector, patron;

from the same root as *maula*, for which see 4:33, n. 543.

... إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا (٧٦)

feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan.

Section 11

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ ...

77. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who were told to hold back their hands (form fight)

C595. Before the command for fighting was issued there were some who were impatient, and could scarcely be held back. They wanted fighting from human motives,- pugnacity, hatred against their enemies, the gaining of personal ends. Fighting from such motives is wrong at all times.

When the testing time came, and they had to fight, not for their own hand, but for a Sacred Cause, in which there was much suffering and little personal gain, the Hypocrites held back and were afraid.

... وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ...

but establish regular prayers and spend in regular charity?

... فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً ...

When (at length) the order for fighting was issued to them, behold! a section of them feared men as, or even more than, they should have feared Allah:

... وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ ...

they say: "Our Lord! why hast Thou ordered us to fight?"

... لَوْلَا أَحْرَتْنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ ...

Wouldst Thou not grant us respite to our (natural) term, near (enough)?"

C596. "Our natural term of life," they would say, "is short enough; why should we jeopardize it by fighting in which there is no personal gain?"

The answer is begun in this verse and continued in the next. Briefly, the answer is:

1. in any case the pleasures of this world are short; this life is fleeting; the first thing for a righteous man to do is to emancipate himself from its obsessions;
2. to do your duty is to do right; therefore turn your attention mainly to duty;
3. when duty calls for self-sacrifice, be sure that Allah's call is never unjust, and never such as to exceed your capacity; and
4. if you fear death, you will not by fear escape death; it will find you out wherever you are; why not face it boldly when duty calls?

... فَلْ مَتَاعِ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ ...

Say: "Short is the enjoyment of this world:

... وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا (٧٧)

the Hereafter is the best for those who do right: never will ye be dealt with unjustly in the very least!

أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكْكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشِيدَةٍ...

78. "Wherever ye are, death will find you out, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!"

... وَإِنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ...

If some good befalls them, they say, "This is from Allah,"

... وَإِنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ سَيَّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ...

but if evil, they say, "This is from thee"

... قُلْ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ...

(O Prophet). "Say: "All things are from Allah.

C597. The Hypocrites were inconsistent, and in this reflect unregenerate mankind.

If a disaster happens, due to their own folly, they blame somebody else; but if they are fortunate, they claim reflected credit by pretending that Heaven has favoured them because of their own superior merits.

The modern critic discards even this pretence, eliminates Heaven altogether, and claims all credit direct to himself, unless he brings in blind Chance, but that he does mostly to "explain" misfortune.

If we look to the ultimate Cause of all things, all things come from Allah. But if we look to the proximate cause of things, our own merit is so small, that we can hardly claim credit for good ourselves with any fairness.

In Allah's hand is all good: 3:26. On the other hand, the proximate cause of our evil is due to some wrong in our own inner selves; for never are we dealt with unjustly in the very least: 4:77.

... فَمَا لَهُمْ لَآ يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا (٧٨)

But what hath come to these people, that they fail to understand a single fact?

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ...

79. Whatever good, (O man!) happens to thee, is from Allah; but whatever evil happens to thee, is from thy (own) soul.

... وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا ...

And We have sent thee as a Messenger to (instruct) mankind:

C598. To blame a man of God for our misfortunes is doubly unjust. For he comes to save us from misfortune, and it is because we flout him or pay no heed to him, that our own rebellion, brings its own punishment.

If we realise this truth we shall be saved from two sins:

1. the sin of injustice to Allah's Messengers, who come for our good, and not for our harm:
2. the sin of not realising our own shortcomings or rebellion, and thus living in spiritual darkness.

If the Message is from Allah, that carries its own authority:

"enough is Allah for a witness."

... وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا (٧٩)

and enough is Allah for a witness.

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ ...

80. He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah:

... وَمَنْ تَوَلَّى فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا (٨٠)

but if any turn away, We have not sent thee to watch over their (evil deeds).

C599. The Messenger was sent to preach, guide, instruct, and show the Way, -not to drive people to good. That is not Allah's Plan, which trains the human Will.

The Messenger's duty is therefore to convey the Message of Allah, in all the ways of persuasion that are open to him.

If men perversely disobey that Message, they are not disobeying him but they are disobeying Allah. In the same way those who obey the Message are obeying Allah. They are not obliging the Messenger: they are merely doing their duty.

وَيَقُولُونَ طَاعَةٌ فَإِذَا بَرَزُوا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِي تَقُولُ ...

81. They have "Obedience" on their lips; but when they leave thee, a section of them meditate all night on things very different from what thou tellest them,

... وَاللَّهُ يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّنُونَ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ...

but Allah records their nightly (plots): so keep clear of them, and put thy trust in Allah;

... وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا (٨١)

and enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

C600. If we trust people who are not true, they are more likely to hinder than to help. But Allah is All-good as well as All-powerful, and all our affairs are best entrusted to His care. He is the best Guardian of all interests.

Therefore we should not trust the lip professions of Hypocrites, but trust in Allah. Nor should our confidence in Allah be shaken by any secret plots that enemies hatch against us. We should take all human precautions against them, but having done so, we should put our trust in Allah, Who knows the inner working of events better than any human mind can conceive.

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفُرْآنَ ...

82. Do they not consider the Qur'án (with care)?

... وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا (٨٢)

Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.

C601. The unity of the Quran is admittedly greater than that of any other sacred book. And yet how can we account for it except through the unity of Allah's purpose and design?

From a mere human point of view, we should have expected much discrepancy, because

- the Messenger who promulgated it was not a learned man or philosopher,
- it was promulgated at various times and in various circumstances, and
- it is addressed to all grades of mankind.

Yet, when properly understood, its various pieces fit together well even when arranged without any regard to chronological order. There was just the One Inspirer and the One Inspired.

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَدَّاعُوا بِهِ...

83. When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they divulge it.

... وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ ...

If they had only referred it to the Messenger, or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have tested it from them (direct).

... وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (٨٣)

Were it not for the Grace and Mercy of Allah unto you, all but a few of you would have fallen into the clutches of Satan.

C602. In times of war or public panic, thoughtless repetition of gossip is rightly restrained by all effective States. If false, such news may cause needless alarm: if true, it may frighten the, timid and cause some misgiving even to the bravest, because the counterpart of it -the preparations made to meet the danger- is not known.

Thoughtless news, true or false, may also encourage the enemy. The proper course is quietly to hand all news direct to those who are in a position to investigate it. They can then sift it and take suitable measures to checkmate the enemy.

Not to do so, but to deal with news either thoughtlessly or maliciously is to fall directly into the snares of evil.

فَقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ إِلَّا نَفْسَكَ وَحَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

84. Then fight in Allah's cause -- thou art held responsible only for thyself, and rouse the believers.

... عَسَى اللَّهُ أَن يَكْفِيَ بِأَسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

It may be that Allah will restrain the fury of the unbelievers:

... وَاللَّهُ أَشَدُّ بِأَسًا وَأَشَدُّ تَنْكِيلًا (٨٤)

for Allah is the strongest in might and in punishment.

C603. The courage of Muhammad was as notable as his wisdom, his gentleness, and his trust in Allah. Facing fearful odds, he often stood alone, and took the whole responsibility on himself. But his example and visible trust in Allah inspired and roused the Muslims, and also - speaking purely from a human point of view- restrained the fury of his enemies.

When we consider that he was Allah's inspired Messenger to carry out His Plan, we can see that nothing can resist that Plan. If the enemy happens to have strength, power, or resources, Allah's strength, power, and resources are infinitely greater. If the enemy is meditating punishment on the righteous for their righteousness. Allah's punishment for such wickedness will be infinitely greater and more effective.

مَنْ يَشْفَعُ شَفَاعَةَ حَسَنَةٍ يَكُنْ لَهُ نَصِيبٌ مِنْهَا...

85. Whoever recommends and helps a good cause becomes a partner therein:

... وَمَنْ يَشْفَعُ شَفَاعَةَ سَيِّئَةٍ يَكُنْ لَهُ كِفْلٌ مِنْهَا...

and whoever recommends and helps an evil cause, shares in its burden:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُقْبِلًا (٨٥)

and Allah hath power over all things.

C604. In this fleeting world's chances Allah's providence and justice may not always appear plain to our eyes. But we are asked to believe that if we help and support a good cause, we share in all its credit and in its eventual victory. And conversely, we cannot support a bad cause without sharing in all its evil consequences.

If appearances seem against this faith, let us not be deceived by appearances. For Allah has power over all things.

وَإِذَا حُيِّئْتُمْ بِهِ بِحَبِيبَةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا...

86. When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, (at least) of equal courtesy.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا (٨٦)

Allah takes careful account of all things.

C605. The necessary correlative to the command to fight in a good cause is the command to cultivate sweetness and cordiality in our manners at all times. For fighting is an exceptional necessity while the sweetness of daily human intercourse is a normal need.

Further, we give kindness and courtesy without asking, and return it if possible in even better terms than we received, or at least in equally courteous terms. For we are all creatures of One God, and shall be brought together before Him.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ...

87. Allah! there is no god but He:

... لِيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ...

of a surety He will gather you together against the Day of Judgment, about which there is no doubt.

... وَمَنْ أصدقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا (٨٧)

And whose word can be truer than Allah's?

Section 12

فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِتْنَةً ...

88. Why should ye be divided into two parties about the hypocrites?

C606. When the desertion of the Hypocrites at Uhud nearly caused a disaster to the Muslim cause there was great feeling among the Muslims of Madinah against them. One party wanted to put them to the sword: another to leave them alone.

The actual policy pursued avoided both extremes, and was determined by these verses. It was clear that they were a danger to the Muslim community if they were admitted into its counsels, and in any case they were a source of demoralization.

But while every caution was used, no extreme measures were taken against them. On the contrary, they were given a chance of making good. If they made a sacrifice for the cause ("flee from what is forbidden," see [next verse](#)), their conduct purged their previous cowardice, and their sincerity entitled them to be taken back.

But if they deserted the Muslim community again, they were treated as enemies, with the additional penalty of desertion which is enforced by all nations actually at war. Even so, a humane exception was made in the two cases specified in [4:90](#).

... وَاللَّهُ أَرْكَسَهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا ...

Allah hath upset them for their (evil) deeds.

... أَثْرِيُونَ أَنْ تَهْدُوا مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ ...

Would ye guide those whom Allah hath thrown out of the way?

... وَمَنْ يُضِلَّ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ سَبِيلًا (٨٨)

For those whom Allah hath thrown out of the way, never shalt thou find the way.

... وَدُّوا لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ كَمَا كَفَرُوا فَتَكُونُونَ سَوَاءً ...

89. They but wish that ye should reject faith, as they do, and thus be on the same footing (as they):

... فَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ حَتَّىٰ يَهَاجَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ...

but take not friends from their ranks until they flee in the way of Allah (from what is forbidden).

C607. Flee: the verbal form which the noun Hijrah is derived. Bukhari interprets this rightly as fleeing from all that is forbidden. This would include Hijrah in the technical sense of leaving a place in the practice of religion is not allowed.

But it is more general. In time of war, if a man is willing to submit to discipline and refrain from infringing orders issued, he has proved his fidelity and may be treated as a member of the community at war.

On the other hand if he by false pretences comes into the inner counsels merely to betray them, he may rightly be treated as a traitor or deserter and be punished for his treason or desertion; or

if he escapes, he can be treated as an enemy and is entitled to no mercy. He is worse than an enemy: he has claimed to be of you in order to spy on you, and been all the time helping the enemy.

... فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَحُذُّوهُمْ وَأَقْبَلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ...

But if they turn renegades, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them?

... وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (٨٩)

and (in any case) take no friends or helpers from their ranks.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ إِلَى قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ...

90. Except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty (of peace),

C608. Except: the exception refers to "seize them and slay them", the death penalty for repeated desertion.

Even after such desertion, exemption is granted in two cases.

- One is where the deserter took asylum with a tribe with whom there was a treaty of peace and amity.

Presumably such a tribe (even though outside the pale of Islam) might be trusted to keep the man from fighting against the forces of Islam -in the modern phrase, to disarm him and render him harmless.

- The second case for exemption is where the man from his own heart desires never to take up arms against Islam, though he does not wish to join the forces of Islam, to fight against a hostile tribe (perhaps his own) fighting against Islam.

But he must make a real approach, giving guarantees of his sincerity. In the modern phrase he would be "on parole".

But this provision is much milder than that in modern military codes, which grant the privilege only to enemy prisoners, not to those who have deserted from the army granting them parole.

The Hypocrites were in that position, but humanity as well as policy treated them with great leniency.

... أَوْ جَاؤُكُمْ حَصِرَتْ صُدُورُهُمْ أَنْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ أَوْ يُقَاتِلُوا قَوْمَهُمْ...

or those who approach you with hearts restraining them from fighting you as well as fighting their own people.

C609. Approach or come: refers not to the physical act coming, but to the mental attitude; the heart is mentioned for sincerity.

When they sincerely promise not to fight against you, do not pursue them. remember that if they had fought against you, your difficulties would have been increased. their neutrality itself may be a great advantage to you.

So long as you are satisfied that they are sincere and their acts support their declarations of peace with you, you should not consider yourself justified in pursuing them and warning against them.

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقَاتِلُوكُمْ...

If Allah had pleased, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you:

... فَإِنْ اعْتَزَلُوكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ وَالْقَوَا إِلَيْكُمْ السَّلَامَ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا (٩٠)

therefore if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (guarantees of) peace, then Allah hath opened no way for you (to war against them).

سَتَجِدُونَ آخَرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَأْمَنُوكُمْ وَيَأْمَنُوا قَوْمَهُمْ ...

91. Others you will find that wish to gain your confidence as well as that of their people:

كُلَّ مَا رُدُّوا إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُرْكَسُوا فِيهَا...

every time they are sent back to temptation, they succumb thereto:

C610. As opposed to the two classes of deserters to whom clemency may be shown, there is a class which is treacherous and dangerous and cannot be left alone.

They try to win your confidence, and are all the time in the confidence of the enemy. Every time they get a chance, they succumb to the temptation of double-dealing. The best way of dealing with them is to treat them as open enemies. Keep them not in your midst.

If they give you guarantees of peace and do not actually fight against you, well and good. If not, they are deserters actively fighting in the ranks of the enemy. They have openly given you proof, and you can fairly seize and slay them in war as deserters and enemies.

... فَإِنْ لَمْ يَعْتَزِلْوكُمْ وَيَلْفُوا إِلَيْكُمْ السَّلْمَ وَيَكْفُوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَحُدُّوهُمْ وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ
حَيْثُ تَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ...

if they withdraw not from you nor give you (guarantees) of peace besides restraining their hands, seize them and slay them. Wherever ye get them:

... وَأَوْلَانِكُمْ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا مُّبِينًا (٩١)

in their case We have provided you with a clear argument against them.

C.65 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:92-104)

*The lives of those who believe
Are sacred; if one is slain
By mistake, full compensation
Should be made. Nor should
A stranger, even in time of war,
Be treated as an enemy, without
The fullest investigation. Live not
In places hostile to Islam,*

*If ye are able to migrate-
And spacious is Allah's earth.
Devotion and prayer may be
Shortened in times of danger.
Take every precaution for safety,
But be bold and undaunted in fight.*

Section 13

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَنْ يَقتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطَأً...

92. Never should a believer kill a believer; but (if it so happens) by mistake, (compensation is due):

C611. Life is absolutely sacred in the Islamic Brotherhood. But mistakes will sometimes happen, as did happen in the melee at Uhud, when some Muslims were killed (being mistaken for the enemy) by Muslims. There was no guilty intention: therefore there was no murder. But all the same, the family of the deceased was entitled to compensation unless they freely remitted it, and in addition it was provided that the unfortunate man who made the mistake should free a believing slave.

Thus a deplorable mistake was made the occasion for winning the liberty of a slave who was a Believer, for Islam discountenances slavery.

The compensation could only be paid if the deceased belonged to a Muslim society or to some people at peace with the Muslim society.

Obviously it could not be paid if, though the deceased was a Believer, his people were at war with the Muslim society: even if his people could be reached, it is not fair to increase the resources of the enemy.

- If the deceased was himself an enemy at war, obviously the laws of war justify his being killed in warfare unless he surrendered.

- If the man who took life unintentionally has no means from which to free a believing slave or to give compensation, he must still by an act of strict self-denial (fasting for two whole months running) show that he is cognizant of the grave nature of the deed he has done and sincerely repentant.

I take this to apply to all three cases mentioned: that is, where a Believer killed a Believer unintentionally and the deceased

1. belonged to the same community as you, or
2. belonged to a community at war with you, or
3. belonged to a community in alliance with you.

... وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَاً فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ ...

if one (so) kills a believer, it is ordained that he should free a believing slave,

... وَدِيَّةً مُسَلَّمَةً إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَصَدَّقُوا ...

and pay compensation to the deceased's family, unless they remit it freely.

... فَإِنْ كَانَ مِنَ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ ...

If the deceased belonged to a people at war with you, and he was a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (is enough).

... وَإِنْ كَانَ مِنَ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ فَدِيَّةً مُسَلَّمَةً إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ وَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ ...

If he belonged to a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance, compensation should be paid to his family, and a believing slave be freed.

... فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ ...

For those who find this beyond their means, (is prescribed) a fast for two months running: by way of repentance to Allah:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٩٢)

for Allah hath all knowledge and all wisdom.

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا...

93. If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (for ever):

C612. What is mentioned here is the punishment in the Hereafter.

The legal consequences, enforceable by human society, are mentioned in 2:178, under the rules of Qisas.

That is, a life should be taken for a life destroyed, but this should be on a scale of equality: a single murder should not commit a whole tribe to a perpetual blood-feud, as in the days of ignorance. But if the heirs of the man slain accept reasonable compensation, this should be accepted, and the taking of a life for a life should be put a stop to. This course leads to the saving of life, and is commanded to men of understanding.

... وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا (٩٣)

and the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him,
and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا ...

94. O ye who believe! when ye go abroad in the Cause of Allah, investigate carefully,

C613. Go abroad: dharaba: to travel, to go for jihad, or for honest trade or other service, which if done with pure motives, counts as service in the cause of Allah.

The immediate occasion was in connection with jihad, but the words are general, and can be applied to similar circumstances.

In war (or in peace) we are apt to catch some worldly advantage by pluming ourselves on our superiority in Faith. In war perhaps we want to gain glory or booty by killing a supposed enemy. This is wrong.

The righteous man, if he is really out in Allah's service, has more abundant and richer gifts to think of in the spiritual world.

... وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ أَلْقَى إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا...

and say not to anyone who offers you a salutation: "Thou art none of a believer!"

... تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَغَانِمٌ كَثِيرَةٌ...

Coveting the perishable goods of this life: with Allah are profits and spoils abundant.

... كَذَلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا...

Even thus were ye yourselves before, till Allah conferred on you His favors: therefore carefully investigate,

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (٩٤)

for Allah is well aware of all that ye do.

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ ...

95. Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt,

... وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ...

and those who strive and fight in the Cause of Allah with their goods and their persons.

... فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً...

Allah hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home):

... وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَى ...

unto all (in faith) hath Allah promised good:

C614. Allah's goodness is promised to all people of Faith. But there are degrees among men and women of Faith.

- There are people with natural inertia: they do the minimum that is required of them, but no more.
- There are people who are weak in will: they are easily frightened.

- There are people who are so strong in will and so firm in faith that they are determined to conquer every obstacle, whether in their own physical or other infirmities or in the external world around them.

In a time of jihad, when people give their all, and even their lives, for the common cause, they must be accounted more glorious than those who sit at home, even though they have good will to the cause and carry out minor duties in aid.

The special reward of such self-sacrifice is special forgiveness and mercy, as proceeding from the direct approbation and love of Allah.

... وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٩٥)

but those who strive and fight hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward.

دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَرَحْمَةً...

96. Ranks specially bestowed by Him, and Forgiveness and Mercy.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٩٦)

For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 14

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَقَّاهُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ ...

97. When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say:

"In what (plight) were ye?"

C615. The immediate occasion for this passage was the question of migration (Hijrah) from places where Islam was being persecuted and suppressed.

Obviously the duty of Muslims was to leave such places, even if it involved forsaking their homes, and join and strengthen the Muslim community among whom they

could live in peace and with whom they could help in fighting the evils around them.

But the meaning is wider.

Islam does not say: "Resist not evil." On the contrary it requires a constant, unceasing struggle against evil. For such struggle it may be necessary to forsake home and unite and organize and join our brethren in assaulting and overthrowing the fortress of evil.

For the Muslim's duty is not only to enjoin good but to prohibit evil.

To make our assault we must be prepared to put ourselves in a position from which such assault would be possible, and Allah's earth is spacious enough for the purpose.

"Position" includes not only local position, but moral and material position. For example, we must shun evil company where we cannot put it down, but organize a position from which we can put it down.

... قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

They reply: "Weak and oppressed were we in the earth."

... قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا ...

They say: "Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (from evil)?"

... فَأُولَئِكَ مَاوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا (٩٧)

Such men will find their abode in Hell, what an evil refuge!

إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانَ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً وَلَا

يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلًا (٩٨)

98. Except those who are (really) weak and oppressed, men, women, and children who have no means in their power, nor (a guide-post) to direct their way.

C616. If through physical, mental, or moral incapacity, we are unable to fight the good fight, we must nevertheless guard ourselves from it.

Allah's gracious Mercy will recognise and forgive our weakness if it is real weakness, and not merely an excuse. (R).

فَأُولَئِكَ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ ...

99. For these, there is hope that Allah will forgive:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا (٩٩)

for Allah doth blot out (sins) and forgive again and again.

وَمَنْ يُهَاجِرْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُرَآغَمًا كَثِيرًا وَسِعَةً...

100. He who forsakes his home in the Cause of Allah, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious:

... وَمَنْ يَخْرُجْ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكُهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ...

should he die as a refugee from home for Allah and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with Allah:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (١٠٠)

and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 15

وإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ...

101. When ye travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if ye shorten your prayers,

C617. This Verse gives permission to shorten congregational prayers when people are on a journey: verses 102-104 deal with cases when they are in danger at war, in face of the enemy.

The shortening of prayers in both cases is further governed as to details by the practice of the Messenger and his Companions.

As to journeys, two questions arise:

1. what constitutes a journey for this purpose?

2. is the fear of an attack an essential condition for the shortening of the prayers?

As to 1, it is best to leave the matter to discretion, having regard to all the circumstances of the journey, as in the case of the journeys which excuse a fast: see 2:184, n. 190.

The text leaves it to discretion.

As to 2, the practice of the Prophet shows that danger is not an essential condition; it is merely mentioned as a possible incident. The Messenger usually shortened the prayers from four Rak'ahs to two Rak'ahs in Zuhr (midday prayer), 'Asr (afternoon prayer) and Isha (night prayer): the other two are in any case short,

Fajr (morning prayer) having two Rak'ahs and Maghrib (evening prayer) having three. (R).

... إِنَّ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يُفْتِنَكُمْ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ...

for fear the unbelievers may attack you:

... إِنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ كَانُوا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُبِينًا (١٠١)

for the unbelievers are unto you open enemies.

وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا
أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ...

102. When thou (O Messenger) art with them, and standest to lead them in prayer, let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee, taking their arms with them:

... فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى لَمْ يُصَلُّوا ...

when they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in the rear, and let the other party come up, which hath not yet prayed,

... فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ...

and let them pray with thee, taking all precautions, and bearing arms:

... وَدَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَيْلَةً وَاحِدَةً...

the unbelievers wish, if ye were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to assault you in a single rush,

C618. The congregational prayer in danger in face of the enemy rests on the principle that the congregation should be divided into two parties;

- one party prays while the other watches the enemy, and
- then the second party comes up to prayers while the first falls back to face the enemy;

either party does only one or two Rak'ahs, or about half the congregational prayer;

every precaution is taken to prevent a rush by the enemy; even while at prayers armour and arms need not be put off except when rain is likely to cause inconvenience to the wearer and damage to the arms, or when illness or fatigue causes the wearer's strength to fail.

Details can be varied according to circumstances, as was actually done by the Prophet at different times.

... وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ أَدَىٰ مِنْ مَطَرٍ أَوْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَنْ تَضَعُوا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ...

but there is no blame on you if ye put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because ye are ill;

... وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ...

but take (every) precaution for yourselves.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا (١٠٢)

For the unbelievers Allah hath prepared a humiliating punishment.

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتْ الصَّلَاةُ ...

103. When ye pass (congregational) prayers,

C619. Two interpretations are possible:

1. "when ye have finished congregational prayers", or
2. "when (on account of extreme danger) ye have to pass over congregational prayers altogether-even the shorter form indicated for times of danger."

I prefer the latter, as it accords better with the following sentences, which allows you to remember Allah individually in any posture possible during the danger. But when the danger is past, the full prayers should be offered at the stated times.

... فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ ...

celebrate Allah's praises, standing, sitting down, or lying down on your sides;

... فَإِذَا أَطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ ...

but when ye are free from danger, set up regular prayers:

... إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَىٰ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا (١٠٣)

for such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times.

وَلَا تَهِنُوا فِي ابْتِغَاءِ الْقَوْمِ ...

104. And slacken not in following up the enemy:

... إِنْ تَكُونُوا تَأْلَمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُونَ ...

if ye are suffering hardships, they are suffering similar hardships;

... وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ ...

but ye have hope from Allah, while they have none.

C620. Religion should be a source of strength and not of weakness in all our affairs.

If we have to struggle hard and suffer hardships, those without faith have to do the same, with this difference, that the man of Faith is full of hope in Allah, whereas the man without Faith has nothing to sustain him.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١٠٤)

And Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

C.66 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:105-126)

*Beware of treachery, that would use
The good and pious for its wicked
Ends; its plots will but recoil
On its own head. The righteous
Have no cause for secrecy, except
In doing good. 'Tis evil that
Misleads, deceives, and even dares
Deface fair Nature, as by Allah
Created. Shun all evil, and be firm
In righteousness and faith in Allah.*

Section 16

... إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ ...

105. We have sent down to thee the Book in truth, that thou mightest judge between men, as guided by Allah:

... وَلَا تَكُنْ لِلْخَائِنِينَ خَصِيمًا (١٠٥)

so be not (used) as an advocate by those who betray their trust.

C621. The Commentators explain this passage with reference to the case of Taima ibn Ubairaq, who was nominally a Muslim but really a Hypocrite, and given to all sorts of wicked deeds.

He was suspected of having stolen a set of armour, and when the trial was hot, he planted the stolen property into the house of a Jew, where it was found. The Jew denied the charge and accused Taima, but the sympathies of the Muslim community were with Taima on account of his nominal profession of Islam.

The case was brought to the Prophet, who acquitted the Jew according to the strict principle of justice, as "guided by Allah."

Attempts were made to prejudice him and deceive him into using his authority to favour Taima. When Taima realized that his punishment was imminent he fled and turned apostate. (R).

The general lesson is that the righteous man is faced with all sorts of subtle wiles; the wicked will try to appeal to his highest sympathies and most honourable motives to deceive him and use him as an instrument for defeating justice. He should be careful and cautious, and seek the help of Allah for protection against deception and for firmness in dealing the strictest justice without fear or favour.

To do otherwise is to betray a sacred trust; the trustee must defeat all attempts made to mislead him.

وَأَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (١٠٦)

106. But seek the forgiveness of Allah; for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ...

107. Contend not on behalf of such as betray their own souls:

C622. Own souls are a sort of trust with us. We have to guard them against all temptation. Those who surrender to crime or evil, betray that trust.

We are warned against being deceived into taking their part, induced either by plausible appearances, or by such incentives to partiality as that they belong to our own people or that some link connects them with us, whereas when we are out to do justice, we must not allow any irrelevant considerations to sway us.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيمًا (١٠٧)

for Allah loveth not one given to perfidy and crime.

يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ...

108. They may hide (their crimes) from men, but they cannot hide (them) from Allah,

... وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ يُبَيِّنُونَ مَا لَا يَرْضَى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ...

seeing that He is in their midst when they plot by night, in words that He cannot approve:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطًا (١٠٨)

and Allah doth compass round all that they do.

C623. The plots of sinners are known fully to Allah, and He can fully circumvent them if necessary, according to the fullness of His wisdom.

The word used is: **Compass them round.- Muhit:** not only does Allah know all about it, but He is all round it: if in His wisdom He allows it, it is not because He has not complete control over it, but because, having it as it were enclosed in a complete circle. He can use it to further His own Plan. Even out of evil He can bring good.

هَأَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ جَادَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

109. Ah! these are the sort of men on whose behalf ye may contend in this world;

... فَمَنْ يُجَادِلِ اللَّهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَمْ مَنْ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَيْلًا (١٠٩)

but who will contend with Allah on their behalf on the Day of Judgment, or who will carry their affairs through?

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا
رَحِيمًا (١١٠)

110. If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul, but afterwards seeks Allah's forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ إِثْمًا فَإِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ...

111. And if anyone earns sin, he earns it against his own soul:

C624. Kasaba: to earn, to gain, to work for something valuable, to lay up a provision for the future life.

We do a day's labour to earn our livelihood: so in a spiritual sense, whatever good or evil we do in this life, earns us good or evil in the life to come.

In verses 110-112 three cases are considered:

1. if we do ill and repent, Allah will forgive;
2. if we do ill and do not repent: thinking that we can hide it, we are wrong; nothing is hidden from Allah, and we shall suffer the full consequences in the life to come, for we can never evade our personal responsibility:
3. if we do ill, great or small, and impute it to another, our original responsibility for the ill remains, but we add to it something else; for we tie round our necks the guilt of falsehood, which converts even our minor fault into a great sin, and in any case brands us even in this life with shame and ignominy.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١١١)

for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ بَرِيئًا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا
وَإِثْمًا مُبِينًا (١١٢)

112. But if anyone earns a fault or a sin and throws it on to one that is innocent, He carries (on himself) (both) a falsehood and a flagrant sin.

Section 17

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَهَمَّتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ يُضِلُّوكَ...

113. But for the Grace of Allah to thee and His Mercy, a party of them would certainly have plotted to lead thee astray.

... وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّوكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ...

But (in fact) they will only lead their own souls astray, and to thee they can do no harm in the least.

... وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ...

For Allah hath sent down to thee the Book and wisdom and taught thee what thou knewest not (before);

... وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا (١١٣)

and great is the grace of Allah unto thee.

لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوَاهُمْ ...

114. In most of their secret talks there is no good:

... إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ...

but if one exhorts to a deed of charity or justice or conciliation between men, (secrecy is permissible):

C625. Usually secrecy is for evil ends, or from questionable motives, or because the person seeking secrecy is ashamed of himself and knows that if his acts or motives became known, he would make himself odious.

Islam therefore disapproves of secrecy, and loves and enjoins openness in all consultations and doings. But there are three things in which secrecy is permissible, and indeed laudable, provided the motive be purely unselfish, to earn "the good pleasure of Allah":

1. if you are doing a deed of charity or beneficence, whether in giving material things or in helping in moral, intellectual, or spiritual matters; here publicity may not be agreeable to the recipient of your beneficence, and you have to think of his feelings;
2. where an unpleasant act of justice or correction has to be done; this should be done, but there is no virtue in publishing it abroad and causing humiliation to some parties or adding to their humiliation by publicity;
3. where there is a delicate question of conciliating parties to a quarrel; they may be very touchy about publicity but quite amenable to the influence of a man acting in private.

... وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (١١٤)

to him who does this, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, We shall soon give a reward of the highest (value).

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

115. If anyone contends with the Messenger even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that becoming to men of faith,

... نُؤَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ

We shall leave him in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell,

.. وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا (١١٥)

what an evil refuge?

Section 18

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ...

116. Allah forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other **gods** with Him: but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this:

C626. Cf. 4:48 and n. 569.

Blasphemy in the spiritual kingdom is like treason in the political kingdom.

... وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا (١١٦)

one who joins other gods with Allah, hath strayed far, far away (from the right).

إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا إِنَاثًا ...

117. (The pagans), leaving Him, call but upon female deities:

C627. The unity, power, and goodness of Allah are so manifest in nature and in the human mind when it is in accord with the universal spirit, that only the most abject perversion can account for the sin of religious treason.

That sin arises from perverted ideas of sex or perverted ideas of self. The perversion of sex is to suppose that sex rules in religious matters. From it arise such horrible creations of the imagination as Kali, the blood-thirsty goddess of India, or Hecate, the goddess of revenge and hate in Greek mythology.

Even in beautiful forms like Saraswati (the goddess of learning) or Minerva (the virgin goddess of sport and arts), to say nothing of Venus (the goddess of carnal pleasures), the emphasis laid on sex destroys a right view of religious nature.

Perverted ideas of self are typified in the story of Satan, who was so puffed up with arrogance that he disobeyed Allah, and Allah cursed him.

Both these perversions, if allowed lodgment, completely ruin our religious nature and deface Allah's handiwork. Hence it is not merely an outer sin but one that corrupts us through and through.

... وَإِنْ يَدْعُونَ إِلَّا شَيْطَانًا مَّرِيدًا (١١٧)

they call but upon Satan the persistent rebel!

لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ ...

118. Allah did curse him,

... وَقَالَ لَأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا (١١٨)

but he said: "I will take of Thy servants a portion marked off.

C628. Satan obtained Allah's permission to tempt man, and this was implied in such free-will as was granted to man by Allah.

Satan's boast is that the portion of mankind seduced by him will be so corrupted in their nature that they will bear a sort of brand that will mark them off as his own; or that they will be like a portion assigned to himself.

وَأَضِلُّهُمْ وَلَا مَلِيَّةَ لَهُمْ ...

119. "I will mislead them, and I will create in them false desires;

C629. Satan's deceptions are with false desires, false superstitions, and false fears.

... وَلَا مَرَّتَهُمْ فَلَيُبْتِغْنَ آذَانَ الْأَنْعَامِ ...

I will order them to slit the ears of cattle,

C630. Slitting the ears of cattle is just one instance of the superstitions to which men become slaves when they run after false gods.

Astrology, magic, and vain beliefs in things that do not exist lead men away from Allah, the one true God. (R).

... وَلَا مَرَّتَهُمْ فَلَيُعَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ ...

and to deface the (fair) nature created by Allah."

C631. To deface the (fair) nature created by Allah; there is both a physical and a spiritual meaning.

We see many kinds of defacements practised on men and animals, against their true nature as created by Allah, partly on account of superstition, partly on account of selfishness.

Spiritually the case is even worse. How many natures are dwarfed or starved and turned from their original instincts by cruel superstitions or customs?

Allah created man pure: Satan defaces the image.

... وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرًا مُّبِينًا (١١٩)

Whoever, forsaking Allah, takes Satan for a friend, hath of a surety suffered a loss that is manifest.

يَعِدُّهُمْ وَيُمَتِّعُهُمْ ...

120. Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false desires;

... وَمَا يَعِدُّهُمْ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا عُرُورًا (١٢٠)

but Satan's promises are nothing but deception.

أُولَئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ عَنْهَا مَحِيصًا (١٢١)

121. They (his dupes) will have their dwelling in hell, and from it they will find no way of escape.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ...

122. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, We shall soon admit them to gardens,

... تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا...

with rivers flowing beneath, to dwell therein for ever.

... وَعَدَ اللَّهُ حَقًّا ...

Allah's promise is the truth,

... وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا (١٢٢)

and whose word can be truer than Allah's?

لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِيٍّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ...

123. Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (can prevail):

C632. Personal responsibility is again and again insisted on as the key-note of Islam. In this are implied faith and right conduct.

Faith is not an external thing: it begins with an act of will, but if true and sincere, it affects the whole being, and leads to right conduct.

In this it is distinguished from the kind of faith which promises salvation because some one else in whom you are asked to believe has borne away the sins of men, or the kind of faith which says that because you are born of a certain race ("Children of Abraham") or a certain caste, you are privileged, and your conduct will be judged by a different standard from that of other men.

Whatever you are, if you do evil, you must suffer the consequences, unless Allah's Mercy comes to your help.

... مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ...

whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly.

... وَلَا يَجِدُ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (١٢٣)

Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper.

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ...

124. If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female, and have faith,

... فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا (١٢٤)

they will enter heaven and not the least injustice will be done to them.

C633. Naqir: the groove in a date-stone, a thing of no value whatever.

Cf. [n. 575 to 4:53](#).

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ...

125. Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah,

... وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا...

does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith?

... وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا (١٢٥)

For Allah did take Abraham for a friend.

C634. Abraham is distinguished in Muslim theology with the title of "Friend of Allah".

This does not of course mean that he was anything more than a mortal. But his faith was pure and true, and his conduct was firm and righteous in all circumstances.

He was the fountainhead of the present monotheistic tradition, the Patriarch of the prophetic line, and is revered alike by Jews, Christians and Muslims. (R).

ولله ما في السموات وما في الأرض...

126. But to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا (١٢٦)

and He it is that encompasseth all things.

C635. Muhit: Cf. [4:108](#), and [n. 623](#).

C.67 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:127-152)

*Justice to women and orphans
Is part of religion and the fear
Of Allah. Stand out firmly
For justice to all, even against
Yourselves or your nearest of kin.
Remain firm in faith, and consort not
With evil or hypocrisy. Be true
In speech, and wound not others;
Nor distinguished between Teachers of Truth,
For Allah's Truth is one and should be believed.*

Section 19

وَيَسْتَفْتُونَكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ...

127. They ask thy instruction concerning the women.

... قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ...

Say: Allah doth instruct you about them:

and (remember) what hath been rehearsed unto you in the Book,

C636. Again and again is it impressed on the community of Islam to be just in their dealings with women, orphans, children, and all whose weakness requires special consideration.

The law about widows and orphans, inheritance, dower, and marriage had already been declared in [4:2-35](#) and further instructions are now given on a further reference.

It was not right that anyone should take advantage of their helpless position to deprive them of dower or of their portion in inheritance.

... فِي يَتَامَى النِّسَاءِ الَّاتِي لَا تُؤْتَوْنَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُونَ
أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ...

concerning the orphans of women to whom ye give not the portions prescribed, and yet whom ye desire to marry,

... وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الْوُلْدَانِ وَأَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلْيَتَامَى بِالْقِسْطِ ...

as also concerning the children who are weak and oppressed: that ye stand firm for justice to orphans.

C637. Cf. [4:75](#). [n. 592](#).

Both widows and orphans are to be helped because they are ordinarily weak, ill-treated, and oppressed.

In communities which base their civil rights on brute strength, the weaker go to the wall, and public opinion expects nothing else. In Nietzsche's philosophy of the Superman that doctrine is stressed strongly, and some of the militarist nations in our own time seem inclined to support this reversion to our primitive instincts. Even in modern democracies of the saner sort, we are often told that it is the fate of minorities to suffer; strength of numbers here becomes the passport to power and privilege.

Islam, while upholding sane manly views in general, enjoins the most solicitous care for the weak and oppressed in every way-in rights of property, in social rights, and in the right to opportunities of development.

Spiritual strength or weakness does not necessarily go with physical or numerical strength.

... وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِهِ عَلِيمًا (١٢٧)

There is not a good deed which ye do, but Allah is well-acquainted therewith.

وَإِنْ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا...

128. If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves;

... وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ ...

and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed.

C638. To protect the woman's economic interests, various rules are prescribed for dower in marriage. But the sanctity of marriage itself is greater than any economic interests.

Divorce is, of all things permitted, most hateful to Allah. Therefore if a breach between husband and wife can be prevented by some economic consideration, it is better to make that concession than to imperil the future of the wife, the children, and probably the husband also.

Such concessions are permissible, in view of the love of wealth ingrained in unregenerate man, but a recommendation is made that we should practice self-restraint, and do what we can to come to an amicable settlement without any economic sacrifice on the part of the woman.

... وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (١٢٨)

But if ye do good and practice self-restraint, Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ...

129. Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire:

... فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ...

but turn not away (from a woman) altogether so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air).

C639. In this material world there are two principle causes of division between man and wife,

- money and
- "the other woman" or "the other man".

Money was dealt with in the last verse. Here is the case of "the other woman". Legally more than one wife (up to four) are permissible on the condition that the man can be fair and just to all.

But this is a condition almost impossible to fulfil. If, in the hope that he might be able to fulfil it, a man puts himself in that impossible position, it is only right to insist that he should not discard one but at least fulfil all the outward duties that are incumbent on him in respect of her.

... وَإِنْ تُصَلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (١٢٩)

If ye come to a friendly understanding and practice self-restraint, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَأِنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللَّهُ كُلًّا مِّنْ سَعَتِهِ...

130. But if they disagree (and must part), Allah will provide abundance for all from His all-reaching bounty:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا (١٣٠)

for Allah is He that careth for all and is Wise.

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

131. To Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth.

C640. Notice the refrain: "**To Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth**": repeated three times, each time with a new application.

- In the first instance it follows the statement of Allah's universal providence and love.

If two persons, in spite of every sincere desire to love and comfort each other, fail to achieve that end, and have to separate, Allah's all-reaching bounty never fails, for He is the Lord of all things.

- In the second instance it is connected with Allah's Self-existence, Self-excellence, and independence of all creatures:

all His commands are for our good, and they are given to all His creatures, according to their capacities.

- In the third instance, it is connected with His universal power;

for He could destroy any individual or nation and create a new one without any loss to Himself; but He gives a chance to all again and again, and even rewards them beyond their own ambitions.

... وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ...

Verily We have directed the People of the Book before you, and you (O Muslims) to fear Allah.

... وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

But if ye deny Him, lo! unto Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth,

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَنِيًّا حَمِيدًا (١٣١)

and Allah is free of all wants, worthy of all praise.

C641. Allah's existence is absolute existence. It does not depend on any other person or any other thing. And it is worthy of all praise, for it is all-good and comprises every possible excellence.

It is necessary to stress this point in order to show that the moral law for man is not a mere matter of transcendental commands, but really rests on the essential needs of mankind itself. If therefore such schools of thought as Behaviorism proved their theories up to the hilt, they do not affect the position of Islam in the least.

The highest ethical standards are enjoined by Islam, not as dogmatic imperatives, but because they can be shown to follow from the needs of man's nature and the results of man's experience.

... وَاللَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

132. Yea, unto Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth,

... وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلاً (١٣٢)

and enough is Allah to carry through all affairs.

C642. This refers to the next verse.

He does not need us. but we need Him. Our hopes, our happiness, our success centre in Him; but He is Self-sufficient.

He has the power to supersede us, but His goodness is ever seeking to give us every chance in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

إِنْ يَشَاءُ يُدْهِبْكُمْ أَهْلَهَا النَّاسُ وَيَأْتِ بِآخَرِينَ...

133. If it were His will, He could destroy you, O mankind, and create another race:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ قَدِيرًا (١٣٣)

for He hath power this to do.

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...

134. If anyone desires a reward in this life, in Allah's (gift) is the reward (both) of this life and of the Hereafter:

C643. Man in this life can only see up to the horizon of this life. The highest rewards which his wishes or ambitions can conceive of are conceived in the terms of this life.

But Allah can give him not only these but something infinitely higher, the rewards of the Hereafter, which it did not even enter his heart to ask for or his imagination to conceive.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا (١٣٤)

for Allah is He that heareth and seeth (all things).

Section 20

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

135. O ye who believe!

... كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ
وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ...

stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin,

C644. Justice is Allah's attribute, and stand firm for justice is to be a witness to Allah, even if it is detrimental to our own interests (as we conceive them) or the interests of those who are near and dear to us.

According to the Latin saying, "Let justice be done though heaven should fall."

But Islamic justice is something higher than the formal justice of Roman Law or any other human law. It is even more penetrative than the subtler justice in the speculations of the Greek philosophers. It searches out the innermost motives, because we are to act as in the presence of Allah, to whom all things, acts, and motives are known.

إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا ...

and whether it be (against) rich or poor:

C645. Some people may be inclined to favour the rich, because they expect something from them. Some people may be inclined to favour the poor because they are generally helpless.

Partiality in either case is wrong. Be just, without fear of favour.

Both the rich and the poor are under Allah's protection as far as their legitimate interests are concerned, but they cannot expect to be favoured at the expense of others. And He can protect their interests far better than any man.

... فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ...

for Allah can best protect both.

... فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا ...

Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve,

... وَإِنْ تَلُوتُوا أَوْ نَعُرْضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (١٣٥)

and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ...

136. O ye who believe! believe in Allah and His Messenger,

... وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ...

and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger and the scripture which He sent to those before (him).

C646. If your belief is by habit or birth or the example of those you love or respect or admire, make that belief more specific and personal to yourself. We must not only have faith, but realise that faith in our inmost being.

The chief objects of our Faith are Allah. His Messenger, and His Revelations.

To all these we must give a home in our hearts. The angels we do not see and realise as we realise Allah, who is nearer to us than the vehicle of our life-blood, and the Day of Judgment is for our future experience, but we must not deny them, or we cut off a part of our religious view.

... وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ

ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا (١٣٦)

And who denieth Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgment, hath gone far, far astray.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أزدَادُوا كُفْرًا ...

137. Those who believe, then reject faith, then believe (again) and (again) reject faith, and go on increasing in unbelief,

... لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ سَبِيلًا (١٣٧)

Allah will not forgive them nor guide them on the way.

C647. Those who go on changing sides again and again can have no real Faith at any time. Their motives are mere worldly double-dealing. How can they expect Allah's grace or forgiveness?

Here is a clear warning against those who make their religion a mere matter of worldly convenience, True religion goes far deeper. It transforms the very nature of man. After that transformation it is as impossible for him to change as it is for light to become darkness.

بَشِّرِ الْمُنَافِقِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٣٨)

138. To the hypocrites give the glad tidings that there is for them (but) a grievous penalty.

الَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

139. Yea, to those who take for friends unbelievers rather than believers:

... أَيْبَتَعُونَ عِنْدَهُمْ الْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا (١٣٩)

is it honor they seek among them?

Nay, all honor is with Allah.

C648. If the motive is some advantage, some honour, - the fountain of all good is Allah.

How can it really be expected from those who deny Faith?

And if there is some show of worldly honour, what is it worth against the contempt they earn in the next world?

وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا

وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا...

140. Already has He sent you word in the Book, that when ye hear the signs of Allah held in defiance and ridicule,

C649. Cf. 6:68, an earlier and Makkan verse. Where we see or hear Truth held in light esteem, we ought to make

our protest and withdraw from such company, not out of arrogance, as if we thought ourselves superior to other people, but out of real humility, lest our own nature be corrupted in such society.

But it is possible that our protest or our sincere remonstrance may change the theme of discourse. In that case we have done good to those who were inclined to hold Truth in light esteem, for we have saved them for ridiculing Truth.

... فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا مِثْلُهُمْ ...

ye are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme:
if ye did, ye would be like them.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْكَافِرِينَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا (١٤٠)

For Allah will collect the Hypocrites and those who defy faith, all in hell.

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَكُمْ ...

141. (These are) the ones who wait and watch about you:

... فَإِن كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَكُن مَّعَكُمْ ...

if ye do gain a victory from Allah, they say: "Were we not with you?"

... وَإِن كَانَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نَصِيبٌ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَسْتَحِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَنَمْنَعُكُم مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ...

But if the unbelievers gain a success, they say (to them):

"Did we not gain an advantage over you, and did we not guard you from the believers?"

... قَالَلَهُ يُحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ...

But Allah will judge betwixt you on the Day of Judgment.

... وَلَن يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا (١٤١)

And never will Allah grant to the unbelievers a way (to triumph) over the believers.

C650. The methods and motives of Hypocrisy are thoroughly unmasked here.

It has no principles, but watches for an opportunity to turn any event to its own advantage. If battle is joined between two inconsistent principles, it has no belief in either, but watches the result.

There is unceasing fight between Good and Evil in this world. if the Good seems to win, the hypocrites range themselves on its side with unctuous words, taking a great part of the credit to themselves. Perhaps the balance tips the other way later, and they have to make their peace with Evil.

“Oh!” they say, we were in the ranks of your enemy before, on purpose to protect you when they were too strong for you!”

This may suit the ways of the world. but the duty of their account will come eventually. For the Good must ultimately triumph.

Section 21

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ ...

142. The Hypocrites, they think they are over-reaching Allah, but He will over-reach them:

... وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالٍ يُرَآؤُونَ النَّاسَ ...

when they stand up to prayer, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of men,

... وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (١٤٢)

but little do they hold Allah in remembrance.

مُذَبِّبِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ ...

143. (They are) distracted in mind even in the midst of it, being (sincerely) for neither one group nor for another.

... وَمَنْ يُضَلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا (١٤٣)

Whom Allah leaves straying, never wilt thou find for him the way.

C651. If we choose evil deliberately and double our guilt by fraud and deception, we do not deceive Allah, but we deceive ourselves. We deprive ourselves of the Grace of Allah, and are left straying away from the Path. In that condition who can guide us or show us the Way?

Our true and right instincts become blunted: our fraud makes us unstable in character; when our fellow-men find out our fraud, any advantages we may have gained by the fraud are lost; and we become truly distracted in mind.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

144. O ye who believe!

... لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

take not for friends unbelievers rather than believers:

... أَتُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا مُبِينًا (١٤٤)

do ye wish to offer Allah an open proof against yourselves?

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ ...

145. The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the fire:

... وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا (١٤٥)

no helper wilt thou find for them.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ لِلَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ

مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

146. Except for those who repent, mend (their life), hold fast to Allah, and purify their religion as in Allah's sight: if so they will be (numbered) with the believers.

C652. Even Hypocrites can obtain forgiveness, on four conditions:

1. sincere repentance, which purifies their mind;

2. amendment of their conduct, which purifies their outer life;
3. steadfastness and devotion to Allah, which strengthens their faith and protects them from the assaults of evil, and
4. sincerity in their religion, or their whole inner being, which brings them as full members into the goodly Fellowship of Faith.

... وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِي اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (١٤٦)

And soon will Allah grant to the believers a reward of immense value.

مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَدَابِكُمْ إِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَآمَنْتُمْ ...

147. What can Allah gain by your punishment, if ye are grateful and ye believe?

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا (١٤٧)

Nay, it is Allah that recogniseth (all good), and knoweth all things.

C653. There is no pleasure not advantage to Allah in punishing His own creatures, over whom He watches with loving care.

On the contrary He recognises any good -however little- which He finds in us, and delights to give us a reward beyond all measure. His recognition of us is compared by a bold metaphor to our gratitude to Him for His favours.

The epithet **Shakir** is applied to Allah, as here, in 2:158, and other passages.

In 16:121 it is applied to Abraham: "he showed his gratitude for the favours of Allah, Who chose him and guided him to a Straight Way."

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ...

148. Allah loveth not that evil should be noised abroad in public speech, except where injustice hath been done;

C654. We can make a public scandal of evil in many ways.

1. It may be idle sensation-mongering:

it often leads to more evil by imitation, as where criminal deeds are glorified in a cinema, or talked about shamelessly in a novel or drama.

2. It may be malicious gossip of a foolish, personal kind:

it does no good, but it hurts people's feelings.

3. it may be malevolent slander or libel:

it is intended deliberately to cause harm to people's reputation or injure them in other ways, and is rightly punishable under all laws.

4. It may be a public rebuke or correction or remonstrance, without malice.

1, 2 and 3 are absolutely forbidden.

4 may be by a person in authority; in which case the exception applies, for all wrong or injustice must be corrected openly, to prevent its recurrence. Or

4 may be a person not vested with authority, but acting either from motives of public spirit, or in order to help some one who has been wronged; here again the exception will apply. But if the motive is different, the exception does not apply.

4 would also include a public complaint by a person who has suffered a wrong; he has every right to seek public redress.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا (١٤٨)

for Allah is He who heareth and knoweth all things.

إِنْ تُبْدُوا خَيْرًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ أَوْ تَعْفُوا عَنْ سُوءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا قَدِيرًا (١٤٩)

149. Whether ye publish a good deed or conceal it or cover evil with pardon,

verily Allah doth blot out (sins) and hath power (in the judgment of values).

C655. Qadir: The root *qadara* not only implies power, ability, strength, but two other ideas which it is difficult

to convey in a single word, viz., the act and power of estimating the true value of a thing or persons, as in 6:91; and the act and power of regulating something so as to bring it into correspondence with something.

"Judgment of values" I think sums up these finer shades of meaning.

Allah forgives what is wrong and is able fully to appreciate and judge of the value of our good deeds whether we publish them or conceal them.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ...

150. Those who deny Allah and His Messengers,

... وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ...

and (those who) wish to separate Allah from His Messengers,

... وَيَقُولُونَ نُوْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ ...

saying: "We believe in some but reject others":

... وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا (١٥٠)

and (those who) wish to take a course midway.

C656. Unbelief takes various forms. Three are mentioned here:

- denial of Allah and His revelation to mankind through inspired men;
- a sort of nominal belief in Allah and His Prophets, but one which is partial, and mixed up with racial pride, which does not allow of the recognition of any Messengers beyond those of a particular race; and
- a nominal belief in universal revelation, but so hedged round with peculiar doctrines of exclusive salvation, that it practically approaches to a denial of Allah's universal love for all mankind and all Creation.

All three amount to Unbelief. for they really deny Allah's universal love and care.

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا (١٥١)

151. They are in truth (equally) unbelievers;

and We have prepared for unbelievers a humiliating punishment.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ أُولَئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيهِمْ
أُجُورَهُمْ...

152. To those who believe in Allah and His Messengers and make no distinction between any of the Messengers, We shall soon give their (due) rewards:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (١٥٢)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C.68 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:153-176)

*The People of the Book went wrong
The Jews in breaking their Covenant,
And slandering Mary and Jesus,
And in their usury and injustice;
And the Christians in raising
Jesus the Messengers to equality
Wit Allah. Allah's revelation
Is continued in Quran,
Which comes with manifest proof
And a clear light to those who understand.*

Section 22

يَسْأَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ...

153. The People of the Book ask thee to cause a book to descend to them from heaven:

... فَقَدْ سَأَلُوا مُوسَىٰ أَكْبَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَقَالُوا أَرَنَا اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً ...

indeed they asked Moses for an even greater (miracle), for they said:

"Show us Allah in public,"

C657. Cf. 2:55, for the thunder and lightning which affected those who were presumptuous enough to ask that they should see Allah face to face, and 2:51 and n. 66, for the worship of the golden calf.

The lesson is that it is presumptuous on the part of man to judge of spiritual things in terms of material things, or to ask to see Allah with their material eyes when Allah is above material forms and is independent of time and space.

... فَأَخَذْتُهُمُ الصَّاعِقَةَ بظلمهم...

but they were dazed for their presumption, with thunder and lightning.

... ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنْ ذَلِكَ...

Yet they worshipped the calf even after clear signs had come to them; even so We forgave them;

... وَأَتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ سُلْطَانًا مُّبِينًا (١٥٣)

and gave Moses manifest proofs of authority.

وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّورَ بِمِثْقَالِهِمْ ...

154. And for their Covenant We raised over them (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai);

C658. In this verse there is a recapitulation of three salient incidents of Jewish refractoriness already referred to in the second Surah: viz.,

1. the Covenant under the towering height of Sinai, 2:63:
2. their arrogance where they were commanded humility in entering a town, 2:58: and
3. their transgression of the Sabbath, 2:65.

... وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا ...

and (on another occasion) We said: "Enter the gate with humility;"

... وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوا فِي السَّبْتِ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا (١٥٤) ...

and (once again) We commanded them: "Transgress not in the matter of the Sabbath."

And We took from them a solemn Covenant.

فَمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بَعَيْرِ حَقٍّ ...

155. (They have incurred divine displeasure):

C659. In verses 155, 156, 157, 160 (latter half), and 161 with parenthetical clauses including those in verses 158-159, and 160 (first half), there is a catalogue of the iniquities of which the Jews were guilty, and for these iniquities we must understand some such words as:

"They are under divine displeasure."

Each clause of the indictment I have indicated by prefixing the word "that."

in that they broke their Covenant: that they rejected the Signs of Allah; that they slew the Messengers in defiance of right;

C660. Cf. 3:21, and notes 363 and 364.

... وَقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ...

that they said, "Our hearts are the wrappings (which preserve Allah's Word; we need no more);"

C661. Cf. 2:88, and n. 92, where the full meaning is explained.

Note the crescendo (heightening effect) in the argument. Their iniquities were:

1. that they broke their Covenant:
2. that they rejected Allah's guidance as conveyed in His signs;
3. that they killed Allah's Messengers and incurred a double guilt, viz., that of murder and that of a deliberate defiance of Allah's law; and

4. that they imagined themselves arrogantly self-sufficient, which means a blasphemous closing of their hearts for ever against the admission of Allah's grace.

Then begins another series of iniquities from a different point of view:

1. that they rejected Faith:
2. that they made false charges against a saintly woman like Mary, who. was chosen by Allah to be the mother of Jesus;
3. that they boasted of having killed Jesus when they were victims of their own self-hallucination:
4. that they hindered people from Allah's way: and
5. that by means of usury and fraud they oppressed their fellow-men.

... بَلْ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (١٥٥)

nay Allah hath set the seal on their hearts for their blasphemy, and little is it they believe.

وَبِكُفْرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَى مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيمًا (١٥٦)

156. That they rejected faith: that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge.

C662. The false charge against Mary was that she was unchaste.

Cf. 19:27-28.

Such a charge is bad enough to make against any woman, but to make it against Mary, the mother of Jesus, was to bring into ridicule Allah's power itself.

Islam is specially strong in guarding the reputation of women. Slanderers of women are bound to bring four witnesses in support of their accusations, and if they fail to produce four witnesses, they are to be flogged with eighty stripes and debarred from being competent witnesses: 24:4.

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ...

157. That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah;"

... وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ...

but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them,

C663. The end of the life of Jesus on earth is as much involved in mystery as his birth, and indeed the greater part of his private life, except the three main years of his ministry.

It is not profitable to discuss the many doubts and conjectures among the early Christian sects and among Muslim theologians. The Orthodox Christian Churches make it a cardinal point of their doctrine that his life was taken on the Cross, that he died and was buried, that on the third day he rose in the body with his wounds intact, and walked about and conversed, and ate with his disciples, and was afterwards taken up bodily to heaven. This is necessary for the theological doctrine of blood sacrifice and vicarious atonement for sins, which is rejected by Islam.

But some of the early Christian sects did not believe that Christ was killed on the Cross.

- The Basilidans believed that some one else was substituted for him.
- The Docetae held that Christ never had a real physical or natural body, but only an apparent or phantom body, and that his Crucifixion was only apparent, not real.
- The Marcionite Gospel (about A.D. 138) denied that Jesus was born, and merely said that he appeared in human form.

The Gospel of St. Barnabas supported the theory of substitution on the, Cross.

The Quranic teaching is that Christ was not crucified nor killed by the Jews, notwithstanding certain apparent

circumstances which produced that illusion in the minds of some of his enemies: that disputations, doubts, and conjectures on such matters are vain; and that he was taken up to Allah (see next verse and note).

... وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اِخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ...

and those who differ therein are full of doubts,

... مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا (١٥٧)

with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow for of a surety they killed him not.

بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (١٥٨)

158. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

C664. There is difference of opinion as to the exact interpretation of this verse. The words are:

The Jews did not kill Jesus, but Allah raised him up (*rafau*) to Himself.

One school holds that Jesus did not die the usual human death, but still lives in the body in heaven, which is the generally accepted Muslim view.

Another holds that he did die but not when he was supposed to be crucified, and that his being "raised up" unto Allah means that instead of being disgraced as a malefactor, as the Jews intended, he was on the contrary honoured by Allah as His Messenger:

see also next verse.

The same word *rafa'a* is used in association with honour in connection with Mustafa in 94:4. (R).

وَإِنَّ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ...

159. And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death;

C665. Before his death: Interpreters are not agreed as to the exact meaning.

Those who hold that Jesus did not die refer the pronoun "his" to Jesus. They say that Jesus is still living in the body and that he will appear just before the Final Day, after the coming of the Mahdi, when the world will be purified of sin and unbelief. There will be a final death before the final Resurrection, but all will have believed before that final death.

Others think that "his" is better referred, to "none of the People of the Book", and that the emphatic form "must believe" (*layu 'minanna*) denotes more a question of duty than of fact. (R).

... وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا (١٥٩)

and on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness against them.

C666. Cf. [4:41](#)

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبَاتٍ أُحِلَّت لَّهُمْ...

160. For the iniquity of the Jews We made unlawful for them certain (foods) good and wholesome which had been lawful for them;

C667. Cf. 6:146.

The ceremonial law of the Jews forbade the eating of the flesh of the camel, rabbit and hare (Leviticus 11:4-6), and the fat of oxen, sheep, and goats (Leviticus 7:23), and was in other respects very strict.

... وَبَصَدَّهُمْ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا (١٦٠)

in that they hindered many from Allah's way.

وَأَخَذَهُمُ الرِّبَا وَقَدْ نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكَلِهِمْ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ ...

161. That they took usury (interest), though they were forbidden; and that they devoured men's substance wrongfully;

... وَأَعَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٦١)

We have prepared for those among them who reject faith a grievous punishment.

لَكِن الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِي العِلْمِ مِنْهُمُ وَالمُؤْمِنُوْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَا اُنزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَا
اُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ...

162. But those among them who are well-grounded in knowledge,
and the believers, believe in what hath been revealed to thee;

... وَالمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الصَّلٰةَ وَالمُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰةَ وَالمُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَاليَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ...
and (especially) those who establish regular prayer and practice
regular charity and believe in Allah and in the Last Day:

... اُولٰٓئِكَ سَنُوْتِيْهِمْ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا (١٦٢)

to them shall We soon give a great reward.

Section 23

اِنَّا اَوْحَيْنَا اِلَيْكَ كَمَا اَوْحَيْنَا اِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ مِنْ بَعْدِهٖ ...

163. We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the
Messengers after him;

C668. First we have a general statement:

that inspiration was sent to many Messengers, and the
inspiration was of the same kind as that sent to the
Prophet Muhammad, for Allah's Message is one.

Note that what is spoken of here is Inspiration, not
necessarily a Book.

Every nation or group of people had a messenger:
[10:47](#). Some of these messengers have been mentioned
by name in the Quran, and some not: [4:164](#).

... وَاَوْحَيْنَا اِلَى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَالْاَسْبَاطِ ...

We sent inspiration to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the
Tribes,

C669. Cf. [2:136](#) and [3:84](#).

The list here given is in three groups.

- The first group, Abraham's family, is the same as in 2:136, (where see the note) and in 3:84.
- Then we have the prophets Jesus, Job and Jonah, who symbolize patience and perseverance.
- Then we have Aaron the priest and Solomon the King, both great, figures, but each subordinate to another primary figure, viz., Moses (mentioned in the next verse) and David (mentioned at the end of this verse),

David's distinction was the Psalms, some of which are still extant. Though their present form is different from the original and they do undoubtedly include Psalms not written by David, the collection contains much devotional poetry of a high order. (R).

... وَعِيسَىٰ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ ...

to Jesus Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon,

... وَأَتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا (١٦٣)

and to David We gave the Psalms.

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ ...

164. Of some Messengers We have already told thee the story; of others We have not;

... وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكْلِيمًا (١٦٤)

and to Moses Allah spoke direct.

C670. Allah spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. Hence the title of Moses in Muslim theology:

Kalim Allah: the one to whom Allah spoke.

رُسُلًا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ ...

165. Messengers who gave good news as well as warning, that mankind, after (the coming) of the Messengers, should have no plea against Allah:

C671. Every prophet proclaims Allah's goodness to the righteous and forgiveness to those who repent, (good

news), and the Wrath to come for those who reject Faith and live in iniquity (warning).

Their mission of warning is a prelude and complement to their mission of good news. No one can then say that he or she did not know.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (١٦٥)

for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

لَكِنَ اللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ أَنْزَلَهُ بِعِلْمِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ...

166. But Allah beareth witness that what He hath sent unto thee He hath sent from His (Own) Knowledge, and the angels bear witness:

C672. Inspiration, though it is clothed in human language, and shaped to the personality of the inspired one, proceeds from the knowledge of Allah. (R).

... يَشْهَدُونَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا (١٦٦)

but enough is Allah for a Witness.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا (١٦٧)

167. Those who reject faith and keep off (men) from the way of Allah, have verily strayed far, far away from the path.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَعْفُرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا (١٦٨)

168. Those who reject faith and do wrong, Allah will not forgive them nor guide them to any way.

إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا...

169. Except the way of Hell, to dwell therein for ever:

... وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا (١٦٩)

and this to Allah is easy.

C673. Easy: not in the sense that Allah takes any pleasure in any of His creatures going astray. The contrary is the case: for Allah's Grace recognises all good in us to such an extent that it is compared to gratitude in 4:147: see n. 653.

We must understand **easy** in the sense that Allah is Supreme in knowledge and power; if any forces of rebellion foolishly think that they can evade punishment, they are mistaken. Punishment comes as a matter of course. It is not a matter of difficulty or exertion on the part of Allah.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الرَّسُولُ بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَآمِنُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ...

170. O mankind! the Messenger hath come to you in truth from Allah: believe in him: it is best for you.

C674. Allah's solicitude for us is for our own good, not because He gets any advantage from it. For He is independent of all things, and everything declares His glory and praise.

... وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

But if ye reject faith, to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١٧٠)

and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ ...

171. O People of the Book! commit no **excesses** in your religion: nor say of Allah aught but truth.

C675. Just as a foolish servant may go wrong by excess of zeal for his master, so in religion people's excesses may lead them to blasphemy or a spirit the very opposite of religion.

The Jewish excesses in the direction of formalism, racialism, exclusiveness, and rejection of Christ Jesus have been denounced in many places. Here the Christian attitude is condemned, which raises Jesus to an equality with Allah: in some cases venerates Mary almost to idolatry: attributes a physical son to Allah: and invents the doctrine of the Trinity, opposed to all reason, which according to the Athanasian Creed, unless a man believes, he is doomed to hell for ever.

Let our Muslims also beware lest they fall into excesses either in doctrine or in formalism.

... إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أُلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ
وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ...

Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him:

... فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ...

so believe in Allah and His Messengers.

... وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةً انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ ...

Say not "Trinity": desist: it will be better for you:

C676. Christ's attributes are mentioned:

- that he was the son of a woman, Mary and therefore a man;
- but a messenger, a man with a mission from Allah, and therefore entitled to honour;
- a Word bestowed on Mary, for he was created by Allah's word "Be" (kun) and he was: 3:59;
- a spirit proceeding from Allah, but not Allah:
his life and his mission were more limited than in the case of some other Messengers, though we must pay equal honour to him as a Prophet of Allah.

The doctrines of Trinity, equality with Allah, and sonship, are repudiated as blasphemies. Allah is independent of all needs and has no need of a son to manage His affairs.

The Gospel of John (whoever wrote it) has put in a great deal of Alexandrian and Gnostic mysticism round the doctrine of the Word (Greek, Logos), but it is simply explained here. (R).

... إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ...

for Allah is One Allah: glory be to Him: (for Exalted is He) above having a son.

... لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth.

... وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا (١٧١)

And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

Section 24

لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ...

172. Christ disdaineth not to serve and worship Allah, nor do the angels, those nearest (to Allah):

C677. Christ often watched and prayed, as a humble worshipper of Allah; and his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane was full of human dignity, suffering, and self-humiliation (see Matt. 26:36-45).

... وَمَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْضُرُهُمْ إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعًا (١٧٢)

those who disdain His worship and are arrogant, He will gather them all together unto Himself to (answer).

C678. The disdainful and the arrogant are the crew of Satan, who will be gathered together before the Supreme Throne for punishment.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزيدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهِ...

173. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, He will give their (due) rewards, and more, out of His bounty:

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْتَنْكَفُوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا...

but those who are disdainful and arrogant, He will punish with a grievous penalty;

... وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (١٧٣)

nor will they find, besides Allah, any to protect or help them.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُّبِينًا (١٧٤)

174. O mankind! verily there hath come to you a convincing proof from your Lord: for We have sent unto you a light (that is) manifest.

C679. The **Proof** and the **Light** are the Quran and the Personality, Life and Teaching of Muhammad Mustafa.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِهِ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِي رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ...

175. Then those who believe in Allah, and hold fast to Him, soon will He admit them to Mercy and Grace from Himself,

C680. From Himself: From His Presence;

see [3:195](#) and [n. 501](#).

The Mercy and Grace are expressed here as specially bestowed by Him.

... وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمًا (١٧٥)

and guide them to Himself by a straight Way.

يَسْتَفْتُونَكَ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِي الْكَلَالَةِ...

176. They ask thee for a legal decision.

Say:

Allah directs (thus) about those who leave no descendants or ascendants as heirs.

... إِنْ امْرُؤٌ هَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَهُ أُخْتٌ فَلَهَا نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ...

If it is a man that dies, leaving a sister but no child, she shall have half the inheritance:

C681. This verse supplements the rule of inheritance of the estate of a deceased person who has left as heir neither a descendant nor an ascendant.

We shall call such a person A, who may be either a male or a female. In [4:12](#) (second half), A's case was considered where he had left uterine brothers or sisters.

Here A's case is considered where he has left brothers and or sisters by the father's side, whether the mother was the same or not.

"Brothers" and "sisters" in this verse must be construed to be such brothers and sisters.

For the sake of clearness, I have expanded the terse language of the original in the translation. Let me explain it more concretely in this note-A, and "brother" and "sister" being strictly defined as above, we proceed to consider how A's inheritance would be divided.

- If A left a widow or widower, the widow's or widower's share would first be calculated as in the first half of [4:12](#);
- if A left no spouse, this calculation would not be necessary.
- Then if A left a single "sister." she would have a half share, the remaining half (in so far as it, or a part of it, does not fall to a spouse, if any) going to remoter heirs:
- if a single "brother," he would have the whole (subject to the spouse's right if there is a spouse); if more than one "brother," they divide the whole (subject to etc.).
- If A left two or more "sisters," they get between them two-thirds, subject to the spouse's right, if any.
- If A left a "brother" and "sister," or "brothers" and "sisters," they divide on the basis that each "brother's" share is twice that of the "sister" (subject to, etc.).

In all cases debts, funeral expenses, and legacies (to the amount allowed) have priority as in [n. 522](#).

... وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَا إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهَا وَلَدٌ ...

if (such a deceased was) a woman, who left no child, her brother takes her inheritance:

... فَإِنْ كَانَتَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا التُّلُثَانِ مِمَّا تَرَكَ ...

if there are two sisters, they shall have two-thirds of the inheritance (between them):

... وَإِنْ كَانُوا إِخْوَةً رِّجَالًا وَنِسَاءً فَلِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثِيَّيْنَ...

if there are brothers and sisters, (they share), the male having twice the share of the female.

... يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَضِلُّوا وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (١٧٦)

Thus doth Allah make clear to you (His law), lest ye err.
And Allah hath knowledge of all things.



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