



**Al-Mizan An Exegesis of
the Qur'an
(Volume Three)**

Author

Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad
Husayn at-Tabataba'i

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"O' you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves (against evil) (183), for a counted number of days; but whoso among you be sick or on a journey than (he shall fast) that number of other days; and those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man, and whose, on his own accord performs good, it is better for him, and that you fast is better for you if you know (184); The month of Ramadan, in which was sent down the Qur'an, a guidance for the people, and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between right and wrong); so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein; and whosoever is sick or on a journey (he shall fast) the same number of other days; Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you; and so that you may complete the (prescribed) number, and that you may glorify Allah for his guiding you, and so that you may be thankful to Him. (185)



GENERAL COMMENT

The sequence of the three verses shows that they were revealed together; for a counted number of days (in the beginning of the second verse) is an adverbial phrase which qualifies the word, fasting, in the first verse; and the month of Ramadan in the beginning of the 3rd verse is a predicate, whose subject is a deleted but understood pronoun denoting the words counted number of days (which appear in the 2nd verse). Thus it would mean, the counted number of days is the month of Ramadan. Alternatively, it may be a subject of a deleted but implied predicate, and would mean the month of Ramadan is that in which fasting is prescribed for you. As a third possibility, it may be an alternative of the fasting mentioned in the first verse. Whatever be the grammatical position, it is the explanation and description of the counted number of days in which fasting has been prescribed. Therefore, all three verses are a well-arranged statement with a single aim, i.e., promulgation of the ordinance of fast in the month of Ramadan.

Obviously, the first sentences have been revealed to prepare minds for the final ones. The first two verses are like a preparatory statement, with which a speaker tries to keep the audience calm and quiet, and this ensures that they do not become restless on hearing the tough commandment which he is to announce shortly. All the sentences in these two verses

gently lead the hearer's mind to the ordinance of the fast of Ramadan They mention such things as remove gloom and anxiety, cheer the soul and imperceptibly assuage the mood of unruliness and disobedience. They point to various concessions and indulgences which have been incorporated in the commandment. And all this is in addition to the goods of this world and the next which may be earned by following, the law. It is for this reason that the sentence O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you is followed by the phrase as it was prescribed for those before you - hinting that you should not think it as a heavy burden nor should you feel 'gloomy, for it is not a new command for which you have been singled out; it was ordained for previous peoples also.

It further encourages them by pointing out: by following this command you may get what you aim at by your faith - and that is piety (taqwa) which is the best thing for those who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgment - and you are believers. This is the import of the phrase so that you may guard yourselves (tattaqun) from the same root as (taqwa).

Moreover, this worthy action, which inspires the hope of piety in you (as it did in your predecessors) does not involve all your time, nor even most of it. It is only for a counted number of days. The word days (ayyaman) is a common noun, and, it shows insignificance. Its adjective, "counted", hints that the number is very easy (as we see in the words of Allah in the Qur'an, 12:20, And they sold him for & price, some counted pieces of silver).

Allah, now points to further concessions: Look how We have been lenient on the man who has a genuine difficulty in keeping the fast, as well as on the person who is hard pressed to do so. Such a man should redeem it by a substitute which is neither difficult nor heavy, and that is feeding a poor person. But whoso among you be sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) that number of other days; and those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man. You must appreciate that this act brings much good to you; and that Allah has made it as easy for you as possible. It is in your interest that you should perform it willingly and eagerly without reluctance, sluggishness or annoyance; because if one performs a good deed on his own accord, it is better for him than if he does it under coercion. This point is made clear in the words: And whoso on his own accord performs good, it is better for him, and that you fast is better for you if you know.

In this way, the first two verses prepare minds for the third verse, So whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein ...

In the light of this explanation, it is clear that the sentence in the first verse, Fasting has been prescribed for you, is the report of the fact of prescription; it is not the initial promulgation [like the verses, O Ye who believe! retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain . . . (2:178) and Bequest is prescribed for you, when death approaches one of you if he leaves

behind wealth, for parents and near relatives . . . (2:180)] There is a difference between retaliation in the matter of the slain and bequeathing to parents and near relatives on the one hand, and the fast on the other. Retaliation for the slain is a matter which is dear to the hearts of the heirs of the slain; and it conforms with the natural rage which is inflamed in them when they see the murderer alive and safe without any worry for the crime he had committed. Likewise, tender love for one's relatives is in itself enough to encourage one to make one's will in favor of one's parents and relatives, and especially so at the time of death and permanent separation. These two commandments, i.e., retaliation and bequest are in conformity with natural feelings, and, as such, they do not require preparatory statements or preambles before their promulgation. But the case of the fast is different. Here the man is denied his choicest desires and most coveted acquirements, i.e., food, drink and sex. It is a heavy burden which should, by nature, be disliked by him. When such an order is directed to the general public it needs some preparatory and introductory statement so that they may accept this hardship willingly and eagerly. Therefore, the prescription in the verses of retaliation for the slain and bequest for parents and relatives is the original promulgation (without need of any preamble); but the words: Fasting has been prescribed for you is just a report of the commandment and has been used as the preamble of the actual command which comes later: so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein ...

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: O ye who believe.

This mode of address reminds them of a virtue (faith, belief) which encourages them to accept whatever order is given to them by their Lord, even if it is against their desires and habits.

The verse of retaliation also begins with this very phrase because the Christians, unlike other people, did not believe in retaliation. Therefore, it was necessary to point out that retaliation is allowed to the faithful, even if others do not believe in it.

Qur'an: Fasting has been written (i.e. prescribed) for you, as it was written (i.e. prescribed) for those before you:

"Kitabah" means to write. Metaphorically it is used for prescription, enjoinder and irrevocable decision, as Allah says, Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and My apostles (58:2 1); and We write down what they have sent before and their footprints (36:12); and We wrote on them in it, a soul for a soul (5:45).

"Siyam" and "sawm" are infinite verbs meaning to abstain from an action, like abstaining from eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, talking, walking, etc. Also it is said that it means

abstaining from desirable and coveted things. Later in religion, it was mostly used for abstaining from some specified things from dawn-break up to sunset with intention (niyya).

Those before you means the nations, that came before the advent of Islam: the followers of the previous prophets, like the followers of Musa and 'Isa etc. It is the meaning understood from this phrase wherever it occurs in the Qur'an.

The comparison as it was prescribed for those before you is not general; it does not cover all the peoples, nor all the details of the Islamic fast. In other words, it does not mean that the fast was prescribed for the followers of all previous prophets, nor that the fast ordained for them was like the Islamic fast in all the details, like period, rules and other particulars. The comparison is only in the principles of fasting and abstaining from some things - without any regard to the particulars.

Those before you indicates followers of the previous religions without specifying who they were. The words as it was written (prescribed), show that they were followers of revealed religions; and that the fast was ordained for them. The present Old and New Testaments do not say that fasting was compulsory and obligatory; rather they extol and praise it. Still, the Jews and the Christians do fast on various days in the year, in various ways, like abstaining from meat, or milk, or food and drink. There are stories in the Qur'an of the fasts of Zakariyya and Maryam in which they abstained from talking.

Fasting was also observed in traditional (unrevealed) religions, as is reported from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. The Hindus observe fasts even now. Apparently, it is human nature itself that leads one to believe that the fast is an act of worship which brings one nearer to the Creator.

Sometimes it is said that those before you means the Jews and the Christians; or that it refers to only the previous prophets (and not their followers). The basis of these assertions are some traditions which are not free from weakness.

Quran: So that you may guard yourselves (against evil) (or, so that you may become pious).

Idol-worshippers fasted to please their deities, or, on committing a sin, to extinguish their deities' anger, or to get their prayers granted. This turns the fast into a trade or barter; the man performs what is needed by the deity and the deity in its turn grants the prayers of the man; the worshipper pleases. The deity so that the deity may do what will please the worshipper.

But Allah is All-holiness. No want, need, emotion or grievance can be attributed to Him even

in imagination. In short, He is free from every shortcoming. So, all the good effects of the worship (whatever the act of worship and whatever the good results) return to the worshipper himself, not to the Lord. The same is the case of sins. Allah has said: If you do good, you do good for your own souls, and if you do evil it is for them (only) (17:7). It is this principle which the Quran teaches by always connecting the effects of good and evil actions with man: man, who is all needs and wants, as Allah says O man! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah is He who is the Self-sufficient (35:15); and refers to the fact specifically in connection with fasting in the words, so that you may become pious (may guard yourselves against evil).

There is no doubt that one may achieve piety through fasting. Everyone naturally feels that for union with the sublime world of holiness and for rising to the height of perfection and spirituality man should first of all restrain himself from gratifying material desires. He should keep away from satisfying the body's lust and inclinations, and purge his soul from the love of worldly affairs. In short, he should guard himself against all such things, which may carry him away from his Lord. This is piety (taqwa) which is achieved through abstinence from lust and desires.

Even more beneficial and more effective for the common man is the abstinence from common lawful desires like food, drink and sex. This trains him to keep away from unlawful things; and creates in him the will to guard himself against sin and evil, and to come nearer to Allah. Obviously, when he accepts the words of Allah by abstaining from lawful desires, and heeds to and obeys His commandment; he will be more needful and obedient to His words in connection with sins and unlawful things.

Qur'an: Counted number of days (ayyaman ma'dudatin):

"ayyaman" has the vowel of fathah, because an adverb of time, in (f) is understood before it. It is connected with the word fast (siyam). It has already been explained that bringing the word "days" as a common noun and attaching to it the adjective, "counted", implies that the order given is not very difficult or bothersome. This in turn encourages the man to obedience. Also it has been maintained that the words the month of Ramadan ... are the explanation of "days". So, the meaning of counted number of days is the month of Ramadan.

Some commentators have said that the words, counted number of days, mean three days in every month and the fast of the day of 'Ashura' (10th day of Muharram). Some others have said that it is the 13th, 14th and 15th days of every month plus the fast of 'Ashura'. According to them, the Messenger of Allah and the Muslims used to fast on these days, then Allah revealed the verses the month of Ramadan in which was sent down the Qur'an . . . and this verse abrogated the previous system and made the fast of Ramadan obligatory. These

commentators rely on many traditions of the Sunnis - traditions which contradict each other.

There are many things which prove the falsity of these assertions:

First: Fasting is a common act of worship involving the whole Ummah. Had there been a system, at any time, of fasting for three days in a month, it would have been recorded in history, and there would not have been any difference about its ordination and then abrogation. But - it is not so.

Moreover, saying that the fast of the day of 'Ashfird' was obligatory (or even desirable), like the fast of the three days of every month, is the innovation of the Umayyids (May Allah curse them). They wiped out the progeny of the Messenger of Allah and his family-members on the day of 'Ashura'; they killed their men-folk, imprisoned their women and children and tooted their belongings in the battle of Karbala'; and then they regarded it as a blessed auspicious day. They took that day as an Eid (festival), started its fast to obtain its supposed blessings, and then invented for it many virtues and excellences. They forged many traditions showing that it was an Islamic festival. They went even further and said that it was a common festival which had been observed even by the pagans of Arabia, as well as by the Jews and the Christians since the advent of Musa and 'Isa. But all these assertions are baseless. This day has no national importance like the Nowrooz of the Persians, nor did there occur any victory or important event on that day to make it an Islamic festival (like the Day of the first revelation or the Birthday of the Prophet) nor has it any religious aspect which could make it a purely religious festival 'Idu I-faar and 'Idu I-adha. So how could it be given importance without any reason?

Second: The context makes it impossible to say that the 3rd verse, i.e. the month of Ramadan.... was revealed alone, to abrogate the first two verses. As mentioned earlier, it is the predicate of a deleted but understood subject, or the subject of a deleted but implied predicate. Thus it is a clarification of the words, counted number of days, and all three verses are one interrelated speech with a single aim, i.e. the promulgation of the obligatory fast of the month of Ramadan.

Those commentators claim that the phrase, month of Ramadan, is the subject and words, in which was sent down the Quran, are its predicate. If we accept this claim then this third verse would become an independent sentence, capable of being revealed alone. But then it could not abrogate the previous two; verses, because there would be no contradiction between this verse and the previous ones; and no verse can abrogate another when there is no contradiction between them.

Even weaker than this is another view, which appears in some writings. It says that the second

verse, for a counted number of days, abrogated the first verse, Fasting has been prescribed for you ... They claim that fasting was prescribed for the Christians, but they went on changing its number after 'Isa (a.s.) until finally it was settled as fifty days. Allah then ordained it for the Muslims by the first verse, and people fasted accordingly in the beginning of Islam, until the second verse counted number of days was revealed and the new system was introduced abrogating the first order. This view is clearly weaker and more false than the previous ones and all the objections mentioned therein apply here also. Clearly the second verse is complementary to and a continuation of the first verse. The traditions upon which these people have based their views are obviously against the clear meaning and context of the Qur'an.

Qur'an: But whoso among you be sick or on a journey then (he shall fast) that number of other days:

"f. . ." then, but, so, and, etc.) here is for derivation. It means that the sentence is an off-shoot of Fasting has been prescribed on you and for a counted number of days. The fast is written-down and obligatory and the number is a part of that obligation. The basic obligation (fast) cannot be neglected and the same is the case of the prescribed number. Even if for any reason like sickness or journey the obligation of fasting during the counted number of days (i.e. month of Ramadan) is waived, the obligation of fasting an equal number of days after that month will still be enforced, in order to make up for the lost days of Ramadan. It is this principle which has been mentioned in the 3rd verse and so that you may complete the (prescribed) number. Here we find another significance of the phrase, counted number of days; it implies that the order given is not very difficult, and also it shows that the number is an integral part of the said obligation.

"Sickness" is the opposite of "health". Safar (journey, is derived from a root-word which means to uncover. It is as though the traveler is uncovered by going out of his house which is his refuge and shelter.

Allah used the words, on a journey, and did not say a traveler; it shows that for the purpose of this rule one must be on a journey presently. Past travel or a travel which is yet to start (i.e. to commence later) would not make one entitled to this concession.

Most of the Sunni scholars say that this sentence shows only that a sick person or a traveler is allowed, but not compelled, - leave the fast. According to them, a sick person or a traveler has the choice of fasting or not fasting. But, as has been explained earlier, the meaning of then that number of other days is that he is (not only allowed but is) 'compelled' not to fast during the originally prescribed days; he must fast that number of "other days". This is narrated from the Imams of the Ahlu I-bayt. Also, it is the ruling of a group of the companions of the Prophet

(s.a.w.a.) like 'Abdu 'r-Rahman ibn 'Awf, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Abu Hurayrah and 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr. The Sunni scholars say that this sentence means: but whoso among you be sick or on a journey (and did not fast) then (he shall fast) that number of other days; thus they suppose that there is a deleted but implied verb in this sentence. But this supposition is incorrect because:

First: such a supposition is against the apparent meaning. A deletion can be accepted only when the context demands it; and the context of this sentence does not need any such thing.

Second: even if we accept this implied verb, it will not mean that a sick person or a traveler has only an option to break his fast. In these verses Allah is promulgating a law and in this context the hypothetical, implied words, and did not fast will mean that during sickness or journey, breaking one's fast is not a sin, rather it is lawful. The word 'lawful' is a general one, meaning all or any of its three kinds: obligatory, recommended and allowed. There is no reason to suppose that in this context it would mean only "allowed" (to the exclusion of the other two meanings). Rather there is a reason against such a supposition, because the Wise Law-Giver when promulgating a law cannot leave one of its important and obligatory aspects.

Qur'an: and those who are with difficulty able to do so on them is a redemption, by feeding a poor man:

'spending one's active strength in a work' (itaqah) is the meaning explained by some scholars. It necessarily means that the work would be done with difficulty and by overstraining oneself. Fidyah means a substitute. Here it is a material substitute, i.e., food for a poor man. The word implies a food which satiates a hungry poor man; and it should be the normal food of the man.

The rule of the substitute also is obligatory, like the rule of repaying a fast afterward for the sick or the traveler. It is shown by the words,- 'on those' (ala'l-adhina), which is obviously for obligation and not merely for option or choice.

Some people have said that this sentence gave the people an option and then it was abrogated. According to them, Allah had given all those who were able to fast an option to keep the fast or to redeem it by feeding every day a poor man, because in the beginning people were not accustomed to fast. Then it was abrogated by the sentence, So whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein. Some of those writers said that this verse abrogated the option so far as able persons were concerned. But the rule regarding those who were unable to fast (like extremely old, persons, pregnant women and women who are suckling a baby) remained non-abrogated and they could give the substitute.

By God, such an explanation is nothing but playing with the Qur'an and cutting and chopping up the verses into shreds and fragments. If you study these 3 verses, you will see that it is all a well connected speech, delivered with one aim, all in one context only. Its sentences are connected with each other, having a sweetness and flow of their own. But if you cut it into pieces and accept these people's interpretation then everything will fall out of context and some phrases will contradict others; the latter sentences will clash with the former ones. According to their explanation, first it says 'Fasting is prescribed for you', then it says that 'those who are able to fast have an option to fast or to redeem it by a substitute'; then it goes on to say that 'fasting is obligatory for all of you when you witness the month'; then it abrogates the rule of redemption for able persons and keeps it unchanged for unable ones (while the fact remains that even before the supposed abrogation that verse was not concerned at all with those who were unable. They want us to believe that the single word meaning 'those who are with difficulty able to do so' (yutiqqunahu) referred, before the abrogation, to those who were able to fast; and now after abrogation the same word means 'those who are unable to fast'! In short, according to these commentators, those who are with difficulty able to do so in the middle of the verse would abrogate fasting is prescribed for you which is in the beginning of the verse, because both would be contradictory to each other; but the question would arise why that abrogation was made conditional on ability without any apparent reason. Then again the sentence, So whosoever of you witnesses the month he shall fast therein, at the end of the verse, would abrogate those who are with difficulty able which is in the middle. Still the question would arise as to how it abrogated that rule for only those who were able to fast and not for those who were unable to do so, when the verse is unconditional and comprehensive and covers able and unable persons alike. Interestingly enough, the supposedly abrogated verse in itself did not cover those who were unable. This is its most obviously absurdity.

Add to it their assertion that the words, the month of Ramadan...abrogated the words, counted number of days, which in their turn abrogated the words, Fast has been prescribed for you; and then ponder with this background upon the meaning of the verses and you will be astonished! Nothing of the verses would remain intact; all would have been abrogated!!

Qur'an: and whosoever on his own accord performs good it is better for him.

'To do work willingly and gladly' (tatawwu') is of the form tafa'ul from tawu which is the opposite of 'to dislike' (kurh). The meaning of acceptance is implied in the form tafa'ul; therefore, the meaning of tatawwu is 'the present doing of work willingly and gladly without reluctance or annoyance, whether that work is obligatory or not'. The use of this word especially for non-obligatory good work was established among the Muslims long after the revelation of the Qur'an, and this later usage is based on the view that it is only non-obligatory good work which is done willingly without compulsion, while there is a shade of

compulsion in obligatory work: because there is no choice, it has to be done. Anyhow, the word tatawwu' in its root or form, was not used only for non-obligatory good work.

The preposition for derivation is here represented by (f ; and, so, etc.), and the sentence is an off-shoot of the previous sentences. Thus its meaning is: Fasting is prescribed for you, keeping 'in view your good and betterment, with the additional advantage that it brings you in line with previous peoples, and it has been made easy for you; therefore you should perform it willingly, to do it thus rather than doing it reluctantly.

It appears from the above that the words of Allah: whoso performs good willingly have metaphorically put the 'cause' in the place of 'effect'. It says that to perform good willingly is better for him, instead of saying that to fast willingly is better. It is like the verse, Indeed We know, it certainly grieves thee that which they say, but verily it is not thee that they belie, but it the signs of Allah which the wrongdoers deny (6:33), which means "so endure it and do not be grieved because they do not deny, thee..,"

Sometimes it is said, that the sentence, whoso willingly performs good it is better for him, is connected with the preceding sentence, i.e. those who are with difficulty able to do so, on them is redemption by feeding a poor man. According to this interpretation it means that whoso performs non-obligatory good work by giving redemption twice - feeds one poor man twice or two poor man once it is better for him.

But there are three defects in this interpretation:

First: As mentioned earlier, there is no evidence to show that the word meaning 'to do a work willingly' (tatawwu) is reserved for non-obligatory good work.

Second: In this interpretation "f" would be without any real significance. It has been mentioned above that the sentence is an off-shoot of the previous sentence. But what is the connection between the rule of redemption and giving non-obligatory food on one's own accord?

Third: This interpretation confuses adding something on one's own accord with performing good willingly. But obviously these are two separate things.

Qur'an: and that you fast is better for you if you know:

This sentence is complementary to the preceding one; and the meaning is: Perform willingly the fast which is prescribed for you because willingly doing a good deed is in itself another good work, and the fast is good for you, therefore, to fast willingly is good twice.

Sometimes it is said that the sentence, and that you fast is better for you, is addressed to those who are excused from fasting and not to the other believers who are obliged to fast and for whom the fast is compulsory. They say that its apparent meaning is that fasting is better for you, but there would be no objection if you do not fast. Obviously this meaning can fit the non-obligatory fast only, and not the obligatory one. The implication is that those who have the option not to fast (like a sick person or a traveler) are exhorted to fast and it is recommended to them to keep the fast rather than to break it.

There are five objections to this interpretation:

First: There is no evidence to support this view.

Second: The two sentences differ in syntax. The pronoun in whoso among you be sick ... is in the 3rd person, and those in and that you fast ... are in the 2nd person.

Third: The first sentence does not give any option to the sick man or the traveler. On the contrary, the words, then (he shall fast) that number of other days, obviously specify fasting on other days, as explained earlier.

Fourth: Even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that the first sentence gives an option to the sick person and the traveler, that option is not between fasting and not fasting; it is between fasting in Ramadan and fasting on other days. And as both options are of a fast in different periods, merely the words, that you fast is better for you, cannot prove (in the absence of a clear context) any preference for fasting in Ramadan over fasting on other days.

Fifth: Allah in this sentence is not promulgating any law, so that it may be argued that the description of the preference of fasting shows that in this particular case it is not obligatory. Rather, according to the context of this verse, its aim is to emphasize that the law given by Allah cannot be devoid of benefit, good and advantage for you. Other examples of this style may be seen in many verses, like, therefore turn to your Creator and kill yourselves; that is better for you (2:54); then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know (62:9); you shall believe in Allah and His Apostles, and struggle hard in Allah's way with your properties and your lives; that is better for you if you know. (61:11). And there are many such verses which show that this style of speech in the Qur'an does not give an option to the believer, it only shows that a given order is for their own advantage and benefit.

Qur'an, the month of Ramadan, in which was sent down the Qur'an, a guidance...:

The month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the lunar Arabic calendar, between the months of Shaa'ban and Shawwal. No other month has been mentioned by name in the Qur'an. The word-meaning 'to come down' is nuzul .Its transitive forms meaning 'to bring down' are inzal and tanzil the difference between them is that inzal implies bringing down all at once, while tanzil implies bringing down gradually.

The Qur'an is the name of the book sent down to His Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), because it is recited and read [It is derived from the root form qaraa meaning to read or recite. Allah has said: Surely We made it an - Arabic Qur'an that you may understand (43:3). This name is used for the whole book as well as for its parts.

The verse proves that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadan. But Allah has also said, And the Qur'an which We revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We sent it down sending it (in portions) (17:106). And this verse clearly shows that it was revealed gradually during the entire period of the Call, which was about twenty-three years. Also accepted history proves it. This has apparently given room to the objection that there was a complete conflict between these two verses.

Some people have replied that the Qur'an was sent down all at once to the lowest heaven in the month of Ramadan, then was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) in portions, gradually, over about twenty-three years - the total period of the Call. This reply is based on some traditions, some of which will be quoted during the discussion of traditions.

Others have objected to this reply. They say that the words a guidance for mankind, and clear evidence of guidance and distinction which come immediately after these words do not support this interpretation; it is difficult to understand how the Qur'an guided the people and was a source of discrimination between truth and falsehood during the time when it was in the heaven for years and years. This objection has been answered in this way: The Qur'an is a guidance and a discrimination; it means that it had the potential and ability to guide those who needed its guidance and to discriminate between the truth and falsehood if there was any confusion. It could remain with that hidden potential for a while until the time came for that potential to become a fact. There are countless examples in civil laws and state constitutions where many articles remain on paper until the occasion arises for their enforcement and they are then acted upon.

But we must admit that there is a great difference between constitutions and civil laws on one hand, and addresses and lectures on the other. Lectures or talks cannot be delivered a single moment before their time and occasion, and there are in the Qur'an numerous verses of this type. For example: Allah surely heard the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah, and Allah knows the contentions of both of you . . . (58:1); And when

they see merchandise or sport, they break up for it and leave you standing. (62:11); Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah so of them is he, who accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet waits, and they have not changed in the least (33:23). Moreover, the Qur'an contains verses which have been abrogated and other that abrogated them, and there is no sense in combining both of them in revelation sent all together.

Another interpretation is that the declaration that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadan means that its first verses were revealed at that time.

It is difficult to accept this interpretation either. It is well known that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was sent with the Qur'an, and the beginning of his Call was on the 27th Rajab, and there is between this date and Ramadan a gap of more than thirty days. How could the prophethood remain without the revelation of the Qur'an for such a long period? Look at the 96th chapter which was the first chapter revealed (Read in the name of your Lord...) Its context shows that it was revealed at the beginning of the Call. likewise, the contents of the 74th chapter show that this also was revealed at the beginning.

Anyhow, the words, the month of Ramadan in which was sent down the Qur'an, obviously do not mean that only the first verses were revealed at that time; and there is no such indication in the context. Therefore, such explanation would be without any proof or evidence. Also there are some more verses, which have similar meaning. For example: By the Book that makes manifest (the truth), Surely We sent it down on a blessed night; Surely We are ever-warning (44:2-3); and Surely We sent it down on the Night of Destiny (97:1). Neither the apparent meanings of these verses nor their contexts support the view that sending down of the Qur'an means the beginning of its revelation or the revealing its first verses.

Deep consideration of the verses of the Book shows something quite different from all the above interpretations. The verses which say that the Qur'an was sent down in the month of Ramadan, have used the verbal form of inzal which indicates sending down all at once. (Quran 2:185; 44:23; 97:1). This "all at once" can mean either of two things:

1) To consider the complete book as one collection and look at it as a collective noun, as Allah says in 10:24 Like the water which we sent down from the sky. Now, the rain comes down gradually, but it is looked upon as one whole collection and that is why the verbal form inzal, and not tanzil, has been used. The same is the meaning of the verse (this is) a book We have sent down to you abounding in good, so that they may ponder over its verses . . . (38:29) in which the whole book has been taken as one collection and the verbal form inzal Qi has been used.

2) To accept that the reality of the Book is something different from the words written on paper, etc. Its common meaning gives the picture of a thing which can be divided and sectionalized and which can be a subject of expansion and graduality, but the reality of the Book is a single, non-gradual thing which was sent down all at once, and not in pieces.

This second meaning is apparent in many verses of the Qur'an. See for example the verses, (This is) a book whose verses were confirmed, then they were divided (made clear) from One Wise All-aware. (11:1) "Strengthened" or "confirmed" (uhkimat, is the opposite of "divided", "made clear" (fussilat,). The literal meaning of taffil is to divide into parts and sections; that is why it implies explanation and clarification. Therefore, confirmed (uhkimat) would mean that in that state it was indivisible and indistinguishable in its parts, because it was a single unit without any part of section. The sequence of the words in this verse shows that this division which we find in the Qur'an came to it later; before that, it was something confirmed, undivided and one.

More clear are the verses, And certainly, We have brought them a Book which We have 'sectionalized' (i.e. explained) with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for the people who believe; Do they wait for aught but its final interpretation? On the day when its final interpretation comes about, those who neglected it before will say: Indeed the Apostles of our Lord had brought the truth ... (7:52-53). Also the verses, And this Qur'an is not such as could be forged by those besides Allah, but it is a verification of that which is before it and a 'sectionalization' (explained) of the Book, there is no doubt in it, for the Lord of the worlds ... Nay, they rejected that of which they have not comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them . . . (10:37-38). These verses, and especially the last one, clearly show that the division into parts is a thing which came later unto the Book. Therefore, the reality of the Book is one thing and the division which it was subjected to is another. The unbelievers rejected the division (explanation) of the Book because they neglected (forgot) something to which that explanation led and which has been referred to here as the "final interpretation", and which will appear before them on the Day of Judgment and, at that time, they will inevitably know it, but then their regret will not benefit them, and it is too late to repent. These verses also imply that the real Book is the final interpretation of the Book.

Even far more clear are the verses, By the Book which makes manifest (the truth), surely We made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand, and surely it is in the Source of the Book with Us truly elevated, full of Wisdom. (43:2-4)

It is apparent that there is a Book which makes manifest the truth, which was later made into an Arabic Qur'an (Recited thing); and it was clothed in recited words and Arabic language so that people might understand; but in reality it is in the Source of the Book with Allah,

elevated, so that minds do not reach it, full of wisdom without any division. This verse contains the definition of the Manifest Book and that it is the foundation of the Qur'an revealed later in plain Arabic.

In the same way Allah says in 56:75-80 But nay! I swear by the falling of stars - and most surely it is a great oath if you only know - Most surely it is an honored Qur'an in a Hidden Book, none touches it save the purified ones; A sending down (revelation) from the Lord of the worlds. These verses clearly show that the Qur'an has its own place, in the Hidden Book, where none touches it save the purified servants of Allah, and it was only later that it was sent down. But before being sent down it was in a Book which is hidden from others. It is that Hidden Book which was referred to as the Source of the Book in 43:2-4. The verse 85:21-22 calls that Source the Guarded Tablet: Nay! It is a Glorious Quran in a Guarded Tablet. This tablet is called Guarded because it is preserved and protected from changes; but we know that in the Qur'an which was sent down gradually there are verses abrogating other verses; gradual completion itself is a sort of change. So this Qur'an cannot be called the Guarded Tablet. In short, the Manifest Book is the foundation of this Qur'an and this Qur'an is like a clothing to that Reality.

Now we know that the relation of this Qur'an, when it was gradually revealed, to the Manifest Book - which we call the Reality of the Book - is that of a dress to its wearer, and of a metaphor to its real meaning, and of a proverb to its actual aim. It is because of this relationship that the word Qur'an is sometimes used for the Real Book itself, as in the divine words, Nay! It is a Glorious Qur'an in a Guarded Tablet, and in other similar verses. Therefore, we may correctly interpret the 'sending down of the Qur'an', in the three verses, where it is said that it was revealed in the month of Ramadan (2:185), on a blessed night (44:3), on the Night of Destiny (97:1), as the revelation of the Source of the Book, i.e., the Manifest Book to the heart of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) all at once. And the sectionalized Qur'an was revealed to his heart gradually during the entire period of his prophetic Call.

This can be better appreciated when we study some other verses. Allah says, and do not make haste with the Qur'an before its revelation is made complete to you ... (20:114) Also He says: Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it; surely on Us is the collecting of it and the reciting of it. Therefore, when We have recited it, then follow its recitation; again on Us is the explaining of it. (75:16-19) These verses prove without any shadow of doubt that the Messenger of Allah had prior knowledge of what was being revealed to him. That is why he was asked not to make haste in reciting before its revelation was completed. (This matter will be further explained, God willing, in its proper place)

In short, after pondering on the verses of the Qur'an one cannot but accept that: This Qur'an which was gradually revealed to the Prophet is based on a sublime Reality which the minds of

common people cannot comprehend and the hands of defiled imaginations (defiled with lust, greed and materialism) cannot touch. That sublime Reality was revealed to the Prophet all at once in the month of Ramadan. And in this way Allah taught him the real goal and meaning of the Book. (This subject will be explained under the verse 3:7.)

This is what a deep consideration of the verses of the Qur'an leads one to believe. Of course, the traditionalists, and most of the theologians as well as the materialists (who do not accept the reality of metaphysics, the things beyond the matter) have no way but to interpret these and the like verses (e.g. the verses which say that the Qur'an is a guidance, mercy, light, spirit, setting-place of the stars, manifest book, in a guarded tablet, sent down from Allah, in purified pages etc. etc.) as metaphorical and figurative expressions. Thus they have turned the Qur'an into poetic prose!!

A writer has discussed the meaning of the revelation of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadan. What follows is the gist of his writing; our comment will follow thereafter: "There is no doubt that the beginning of the Call of the Prophet coincided with the revelation of the first revealed verses of the Qur'an, and with his being asked by Allah to announce the truth and warn the people. Also, there is no doubt that this happened in the night, as Allah says, Surely We sent it down on a blessed night (44:3). Again, there is no doubt that it was in a night of the month of Ramadan as Allah says, the month of Ramadan, in which was sent down the Qur'an. (2:185)

"The whole Qur'an was not revealed on that night; but as the chapter of The Opening was revealed in it, and this chapter covers all the features and knowledge of the Qur'an, it was as though the whole Qur'an was revealed therein. (Moreover, the name "Qur'an" is used for parts of the Book as well as for the complete book. Further, it is used in Qur'anic terminology for all divine books like the Torah, the Injil, the Zabur etc.)

"The first revelation was Read in the name of My Lord ... (96:1), which was sent down on the 25th night of Ramadan. It was revealed when the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was proceeding to the house of Khadijah in the middle of the valley, looking at Jibril, who revealed to him the divine words, Read in the name of Thy Lord Who created . When the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) received there revelation, it came into his mind to ask Jibril how to remember the name of his Lord. So, Jibril appeared before him and taught him the chapter of the Opening, In the name of Allah, the Beniftcent, the Merciful, All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the world... Then he taught him the method of prayer and disappeared. Then the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) regained consciousness, and did not find any trace of what he had witnessed except a fatigue which had overcome him because Jibril had pressed him hard at the time of revelation. Now, the Prophet continued on his way but he did not realize that he was sent by Allah as His Messenger to mankind, commissioned to guide them unto the right path. When he entered the house, he slept the whole night because of weariness. In the morning, the angel returned

and brought the revelation of God, O thou shrouded (in thy mantle!) Arise, and warn . . .(74:1-2)"

Then he goes on to say:

"This is the meaning of revealing the Qur'an in the month of Ramadan, and the coincidence of his Call with the Night of Destiny. As for the assertion of some Shiite books that the start of the Call was on the 27th day of Rajab, these traditions (which are only found in some Shi'ite books which were not written before the beginning of the 4th century of Hijrah) are against the Qur'an, as you know."

Then he says:

"And there are other traditions which support these (Shi'ite) traditions and say that the meaning of the revelation of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadan is that it was sent down, before the beginning of the Call of the Prophet, from the Guarded Tablet to the Inhabited House, and there Jibril dictated it to the angels so that it might be sent down to the Prophet after the beginning of his Call. But these mythological ideas which have been interpolated into the traditions are rejected, first, because they are against the Qur'an, and second, because the guarded tablet mentioned in the Qur'an means the physical world, and the inhabited house means the earth because mankind lives therein."

This was the gist of his writing; and, by my life, I do not know which sentence in this balderdash can be amended to conform with fact and reality. The damage is too extensive to be repaired.

First: It is a strange fabrication which he has uttered about the beginning of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'an for the first time. Where did he find that Read in the name of Thy Lord. . . was revealed to the Prophet when he was on his way; and that the chapter of the Opening was revealed to him then and there; and at the same time he was taught the prayer, and that thereafter he entered his house and slept weary and tired, and then in the morning the chapter of al-Muddaththir (the Shrouded) was revealed asking him to announce his prophethood and warn the people? All of this is just his imagination which has no basis at all; neither any clear verse nor any tradition of any standing supports it. It is just a mythological story which conforms with neither the Qur'an nor the traditions, as you will see.

Second: He claims that it is accepted that the beginning of the prophethood and the revelation of the Qur'an as well as the command to announce his prophethood, all happened at one and the same time. Then he explains it by saying that the prophethood started with the revelation of the Qur'an; and the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was a prophet without being an apostle

(Messenger of Allah) for one night, then in the morning he was given Messengership when the 74th chapter (The Shrouded) was revealed. But the writer cannot show any evidence to support himself either from the Qur'an or from the traditions; and what he claims to be "accepted" is not accepted at all.

As for the traditions, what he has criticized the Shi'ite collections for (that they were written long after the incident) equally discredits all other collections of traditions and no trust can be had in any of them, because not a single book of the traditions, whether of the Sunnis or the Shi'ahs, was written before the expiry of the second century of Hijrah or even later. This much about the traditions. The position of history - which, by the way, does not give the above details - is worse than the traditions. And the criticism of interpolation which he has leveled against the traditions must be directed against history also.

So far as the Qur'an is concerned, it does not support any of his assertions. On the other hand, it plainly contradicted what he has said and refutes what he has fabricated. The 96th chapter (Read In the name of Thy Lord ...) is the first one revealed, as has been described by the traditions and is proved by the meaning of the first five verses; and nobody has said that this chapter was revealed piecemeal, (at least there is a likelihood that the whole chapter was revealed all together). Now, this chapter clearly shows that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) used to pray in the presence of the Meccans, some of whom forbade him to do so and talked about him their gatherings. (We do not know the method of the prayer which the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) performed in the beginning of his Call to be nearer to Allah, except that this chapter mentions prostration.) Look at these verses of this chapter: Did you see him who forbids a Servant (of Allah) when he prays? Have you considered if he (the Servant) were on the Guidance or enjoined guarding (against evil)? Have you considered if he (the unbeliever) gives the lie (to the truth) and turns (his) back? Did he not know that Allah does see? Nay! If he desist not, We will certainly smite his forehead; a lying sinful forehead. Then let him summon his council; We too will summon the tormentors of Hell. Nay! 'Obey him not, and prostrate and draw nigh (to Allah) (95:9-19). These verses show that there was someone who used to forbid a worshipper to pray, and used to mention this matter in his council and did not desist from his deed; and obviously the one who used to pray was the Prophet himself (s.a.w.a.), especially as Allah directly addresses him in the last verse, Obey him not, and prostrate and draw nigh (to Allah). This chapter, therefore, proves that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) used to pray even before the revelation of the first chapter of the Qur'an, and was a Guidance, and enjoined piety and guarding against evil. In other words, his work at that time consisted of prophethood and was not just a warning. In short, even before the Qur'an was revealed, and the chapter of the Opening sent down to Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), and even before he was told to start his Call, he was a prophet and used to pray.

So far as the chapter of the Opening is concerned, it was revealed some time after the

beginning of the Call. Had there been any truth in the assertion of the above writer that it was revealed just after the 94th chapter because "it came into the Prophet's mind to ask Jibril how to remember Allah", it would have begun with the word say (qul): Say, in the name of Allah ... or Say, all praise belongs to Allah...; and would have ended at the words, Master of the Day of Judgment, because the last three verses have no relation with that supposed question, and it is not the style of the Qur'an to indulge in unnecessary talk. Of course, a verse in the 15th chapter (al-Hijr) says And certainly We have given you seven oft-repeated (verses) and the great Qur'an. (15-87) This chapter is of Meccan period as its subject matter shows. Seven oft-repeated verses means the chapter of the Opening, and it has been mentioned here side by side with the Qur'an, which shows its greatness and excellence. Yet it was not counted as the Qur'an, but only as seven of its oft-repeated verses, and only one of its parts. For further proof see 39:23 where the Qur'an has been given the adjective, "oft-repeated": Allah has revealed the best discourse, a Book conforming in its various parts, oft-repeated ... Thus, the Qur'an is "oft-repeated" and the chapter of the Opening is only seven of its verses.

The 15th chapter mentions the 1st chapter (the Opening). It proves that the 1st chapter was revealed before the 15th. And the 15th chapter contains the verses; Therefore, declare openly what you are bidden and turn aside from the polytheists. Surely, We will suffice you against the scoffers. (15:94-95) These verses show that the Messenger of Allah had refrained from openly warning for a time and then was told to start it again by the words, declare openly.

Now let us look at the 74th chapter (the Shrouded) and its 2nd verse, Arise, and warn. If this chapter was revealed all together, then this verse has the same implication as the verse declare openly what you are bidden (15:94) because this chapter contains the following verses: Leave Me and him whom I created alone and given him vast riches . . . Then he turned back and was big with pride and, then he said, this is naught but an enchantment narrated . . . (74:11-25) This subject matter is similar to 15:94 which says and turn aside from the polytheists. And if it was revealed piecemeal, then the context says that at least the verses in its beginning were revealed in the early days of the Call, after the Prophet had refrained from an open warning for some time.

Thirdly: He asserts that those traditions are forged and mythological which say that the Qur'an was sent down on the Night of Destiny from the Preserved Tablet to the Inhabited House all together before the beginning of the prophethood and then its verses were revealed in segments to the Messenger of Allah. He says that they are against the Book of Allah and their meaning is not correct. He claims that the Preserved Tablet means the Natural World and the Inhabited House means the Earth. Well, all the above claims are incorrect and a complete lie:

First, because no clear verse of the Qur'an goes against these traditions as has been explained

earlier.

Second, because nowhere in these traditions has it been said that the Qur'an was sent down to the Inhabited House before the beginning of the prophethood. This clause has been added by the said writer without any basis.

Third: His assertion that the Preserved Tablet means the natural world (i.e. the universe) is a very ugly interpretation; nay, rather it is a laughing stock. Can he explain what is the basis of naming this universe - in the word of Allah - as 'the Preserved Tablet'? Is this because this universe is free from change and alteration? But it is a world of movement, always in a state of fluidity, always changing its quality. Or is it because this universe is safe from physical deterioration? But the facts belie such a claim. Or is it because undeserving persons cannot have any knowledge of it (as Allah says in 56:77-79, Most surely it is an honored Qur'an, in a book that is protected; none shall touch it save the purified ones)? But the knowledge of the universe is not restricted to any one group.

In short, that writer did not produce any interpretation, concerning the revelation of Qur'an in the month of Ramadan, which could be in accord with the words of the verse. His interpretation boils down to this: The words, in it was sent down the Qur'an, means, "it is as though in it was sent down the Qur'an." And the words, Surely We revealed it in the Night of Destiny. Means "It is as though We revealed it in the Night of Destiny." Any such interpretation cannot be tolerated by language, usage and context.

Further, that writer says that the whole Qur'an was revealed to the Messenger of Allah in the Night of Destiny because he was given in that night the chapter of the Opening which contains an important knowledge of the Qur'an. Well why cannot others say that the revelation of the Qur'an all at one time means that all its knowledge was sent down to the heart of the Messenger of Allah in that night? There is nothing to contradict this interpretation.

There are many other fabrications and lies in that writing but this is not the place to go into a detailed refutation of it.

Qur'an: a guidance for the people and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between right and wrong): "People" generally refers to the lowest category of mankind whose intelligence is not high. This word is generally used in the Qur'an with this very implication. For example, but most people do not know (30:30); And these examples, We set them forth for the people and none understand them but the learned. (29:43) This word generally refers to the people who just follow what others say; they cannot understand abstract ideas even with the help of evidence and proof; they cannot discriminate between right and wrong through any argument; they need someone to explain ideals and a guide to

lead them to the right path. And the Qur'an is a guidance for these people; and what an ideal guidance it is!! Then comes the special group, which is perfect both in knowledge and deeds, ready to receive the light of divine guidance, and may be relied upon to discriminate between right and wrong. For such people, the Qur'an is the clear evidence and proof of guidance and discrimination. It leads them to the guidance and chooses right for them and shows them how to discriminate between good and evil, right and wrong. Allah says: Whereby Allah guides him, who follows His pleasure, into the ways of peace and takes them out from darkness towards the light by His will and guides them unto the path that is straight. (5:16)

From the above discourse one may understand why Allah has used here two words "guidance" and "clear evidence of guidance". The relation between the two is that of general and particular. The Qur'an is guidance for one group and clear evidence of guidance for another.

Qur'an: so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein.

Shahddah (witnessing) means 'presence' by which one acquires knowledge. Witnessing the month means arrival of the month and the knowledge of its arrival.

Some people say that witnessing of the month means sighting of the new moon, and not on journey. But there is no evidence to support, this interpretation. Of course, sometimes the context implies such a meaning; but there is no such context in this verse.

Qur'an: and whosoever is sick or on a journey (he shall fast) the same number of other days:

This sentence has been repeated here. But this repetition is not for emphasis. It was explained earlier that the first two verses did not promulgate any law; rather they paved the way for such promulgation and prepared the minds to accept and follow the law which was to be shortly announced. It is in this third verse in which that law has been promulgated. As the aim of the first sentences is different from this one, there is, in fact, no repetition.

Qur'an: Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for You; and so that you may complete the (prescribed) number:

It is the explanation of the above mentioned exception. A sick person or a traveler has to break his fast because Allah desires ease for you, and he shall fast the same number in other days so that You may complete the prescribed number.

So that "L"so that) in 'so that you may complete the number" (litukmilu l-iddah,)gives the meaning of cause, and it is governed by the verb "desires". Therefore, its meaning will be: We

ordered you to break the fast (under certain conditions) and repay it in other days to lighten your burden and to complete the prescribed number.

Qur'an: and that you glorify Allah for his guiding you, and so that you may be thankful to Him:

Apparently, these two sentences, the first of which begins with 'so that' (L) for a cause, give the reason of the fast, and not of the exception and exemption. The words the month of Ramadan are followed by the description of the revelation of the Qur'an in this month. And it indicates that there is a connection between the promulgation of the fast of the month of Ramadan and the revelation of the Qur'an in it as a guidance for the people and a clear evidence of guidance and discrimination between right and wrong. Therefore, the "so that" (L) points out that keeping the fast is meant to glorify Allah because He revealed the Qur'an for them and announced His Lordship and the people's servitude. Also it is a thanks to Him since He guided them unto the truth and gave them a Book which discriminates for them between right and wrong.

There is a difference between thanking Allah by fasting and glorifying Him through it. A fast can be said to be a thanks to Allah only when it contains the real spirit of the fast. What is the real spirit of the fast? To be sincere towards Allah by purifying oneself from material involvement and abstaining from the greatest desires of the heart.

But glorifying Him does not depend on that real spirit. The form of the fast and mere abstaining from those things which break the fast (whether it is done with sincere intention or not) shows the glory of Allah and His greatness, as the man is following His command with such self-denial.

Keeping in view this difference, Allah has differentiated between glorifying and thanking: Thanking has been prescribed with (la'alla) which literally means 'perhaps' and is used to indicate hope, while glorifying has begun with "so that" (L,) which indicates cause. And thus we find and that you glorify Allah ... and so that you may be thankful to Him. It is the same style which is used at the end of the first of these verses so that you may guard yourselves...

TRADITIONS

al-Hadith al-Qudsi: Allah said, "The fast is for Me and I shall give its reward." (or, "I shall be its reward")

Explanation: This hadith has been narrated by both groups (i.e. Sunni and Shi'ah) with slight variations. Why has the fast been declared to be for Allah? Because it is the only act of worship which consists of a negative aspect only, for example, not eating, not drinking, etc.,

while all other acts of worship, like prayer and pilgrimage etc., consist of positive actions or are made up of positive and negative aspects. The positive actions cannot be absolutely pure in showing the worshipper's spirit of servitude or the Lordship of Almighty Allah. It cannot be free of materialistic imperfections and limitations, and sometimes it may be done to please someone other than Allah (as in the case of hypocrisy and showiness). But the fast is an act of worship in which one has just to abstain from lust and desire and restrain oneself from worldly matters. This negative aspect is a thing which nobody can know except Allah. It is a dealing entirely between the servant and his Lord, and therefore this worship is purely for Allah; others can have no share in it.

"I shall give its reward" can also be translated "I shall be its reward". If the former, then it means that Allah Himself will give its reward directly and will not make anyone a link between Himself and His servant. The servant worshipped Him in a way that nobody knew but Allah, so he will be given its reward in a way that nobody will know it but Allah. It is like the hadith about alms: "Verily alms, Allah takes it Himself without making anyone a link in it. Allah said, Do they not know that Allah . . . takes the alms. (9:105)

If the second translation is correct, then it indicates that the reward of the one who fasts is nearer to Allah.

As Saqid (a.s.) said: "The Messenger of Allah, in the early days of his prophethood, used to fast continuously so that people would think that he would not leave a single day's fast, and then to leave the fast continuously so that they would say he would not fast again. Then he changed this regime and began fasting on alternate days, and this was the fast of Dawud; Then he changed it and started fasting three bright days (i.e., 13th, 14th and 15th) of the lunar month when the moonlight is the brightest.) Then again he divided the three days - one day each in every ten days, the first and last Thursdays and the Wednesday in the middle. And he continued with this regime till he left this world." [alKafi]

And there is a hadith from 'Anbasah al-'Abid that when the Messenger of Allah died it was his custom to fast in Sha'ban and Ramadan and three days in every month.

The author says: There are numerous traditions about it from Ahlul-bayt; and this is the sunnah fast which the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) used to keep in addition to the fast of Ramadan.

There is a hadith in Tasfir of al-Ayyashi under the words of Allah O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you, from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that "It is for the believers only".

Jamil asked as-Saqid (a.s.) about the words of Allah O ye who believe! Fighting has been

prescribed for you, and O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed on you. The Imam replied: "All such verses cover (even) those who have gone astray as well as the hypocrites, and (in short) everyone who accepted the declared Call (i.e. Islam)."

Hafs said: "I heard Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) say: 'Verily the month of Ramadan, Allah did not prescribe its fast for any of the people before us.' I asked: 'Then (what is the meaning of) the word of Allah: O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you?' (The Imam) said: 'Verily Allah prescribed the month of Ramadan for the prophets, not for their peoples. Thus Allah honored this ummah and prescribed its fast for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) as well as for this ummah.' " [Man la yahduruhu l-faqih]

The author says: This hadith is weak because there is Isma'il ibn Muhammad in its chain of narrators. The same thing is narrated from al-'Alim i.e. al-Kazim (a.s.), and probably both traditions are one and the same. In any case, this is a solitary tradition (khabaru l-wahid) -a tradition which is not narrated by a great enough number of narrators as to create a certainty of its truth). The obvious meaning of the verses does not support the view that "as it was prescribed for those before you" refers to, the prophets only. Had it been the case (and we know that this sentence has been revealed to encourage the believers to fast, to prepare them for it and to exhort them), then it would have served the purpose better if the word, 'prophets', had been clearly mentioned, as it would have been more effective. And Allah knows better.

There is a tradition from a man who asked as-Saqid (a.s.) whether the Qur'an and Furqan are two things or one. (The Imam) said: "Qur'an is the complete Book and Furqan is the obligatory law." (al-Kafi)

A hadith from the same Imam (a.s.) says: "Furqan is every clear verse of the Book." (Jawdmilu l-jirni'l)

The same Imam (a.s.) said: "Furqan is every clear law in the Qur'an and the Book is the complete Qur'an which vouches for the Previous prophets." [at-Tafsir, al-'Ayyashi and al-Qummi]

The author says: This interpretation is supported by the literal meaning of the word.

It has been said in some traditions that Ramadan is one of the names of Allah; therefore, one should not say 'Ramadan came' or 'Ramadan went away'; but should say 'the month of Ramadan . . .' But it is a solitary tradition and is unusual. This saying has been reported also - from Qatadah from among the commentators of the Qur'an. But the traditions which count the names of Allah do not mention Ramadan as one of His names. And the use of the word

Ramadan without the word "month" as well as its dual form "Ramadan" (two Ramadans) is very common in the traditions narrated from the Prophet and the Imams of Ahlu l-bayt (a.s.) This usage is very common; and it cannot be said that a particular narrator might have omitted the word 'month' by mistake.

As Sabah ibn Nubatah said: "I told Abu Abdillah (a.s.) that Ibn Abi Ya'fur told me to ask you some questions. The Imam said: 'And what are those?' I said: 'He asks you, if the month of Ramadan enters and one is in his house, is he allowed to go on a journey?' The Imam said: 'Verily Allah says so whosoever of you witnesses the month, he shall fast therein. Therefore, anyone who is in his house when the month of Ramadan enters is not allowed to travel except for hajj or 'umrah or in search of such goods which are in danger of being lost.'" [al-Ayyashi]

The author says: It is a fine inference of a non-obligatory law based on the generality of the words.

'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.) said: "And as regards the fast of a journey and sickness, the Sunnis (ammah) have conflicting views: a group says, he shall fast; others say, he shall not fast; still others opine, he will fast if he so wishes, and shall leave it if so desires. But we say, he shall leave the fast in both conditions. And if he fasted while on journey or during illness then on him is its repayment, i.e. he must fast the same number on other days, because Allah says, But whoso among you be sick or on a journey, then (be shall fast) the same number of other days." [al-Kafi]

The author says: al-Ayyashi also has narrated this tradition.

And there is in the same Tafsir (under the word of Allah, so whosoever of you witnesses the month . . .) a tradition of al-Baqir (a.s.) in which the Imam said: How clear is this verse for him who understands - He who is present in Ramadan shall fast, and he who is on a journey during it shall break the fast.

The author says: There are numerous traditions of the Imams of Ahul-bayt that it is incumbent on the sick and the traveler to break the fast; and the same is their madhhab. Also, you have seen that the verse of the Qur'an clearly proves the same.

Abu Basir said: "I asked him (the Imam - a.s.) about the words of Allah and those who are hardly able to do so, on them is a redemption by feeding a poor man. The Imam said: 'The aged man who is not able (to fast) and the sick.' " [al-'Ayyashi]

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) is reported to have said about that verse: "The aged man, and the one who has a sickness in which he is, always thirsty." [ibid].

As-Sadiq (a.s.) is reported to have said in explanation of that verse: "The woman who is afraid for her child and the aged man." [ibid]

The author says: There are numerous traditions from the Imams to this effect. And the "sick" mentioned in the tradition of Abu Basir (mentioned above) means that sick person whose illness continues the whole year till the next Ramadan comes; such a sick person will not be required to fast the same number of other days.

Sa'id said that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, there is takbir (Allahu akbar) on the day of 'Idu Iftir. I said: 'There is no takbir except in 'Idu I-Adha.' The Imam said: 'There is takbir on that day; but it is sunnah in prayers of sunset, nightfall, dawn, noon and afternoon and in the two rakats of IN.' " [al-'Ayyashi]

Sa'id an-Naqqash said: "Abu Abdillah (a.s.) told me, 'There is takbir on the eve of 'Idu I-fitr but it is sunnah. I asked him; 'And when is it?' He said: 'In the prayer of sunset, nightfall on the eve of 'Idu I-fitr and in the prayers of dawn and 'Id. Then it is discontinued.' I asked him: 'How should I say it?' He said: You say:

(Allahu akbar Allahu akbar la-illaha illa-llahu wa-llahu akbar Allahu akbaru 'ala ma hadana) - and it is the meaning of the words of Allah, so that you shall complete the number (i.e.prayer) and that you glorify Allah for His guiding you. And the glorifying (takbir) is that you say: (Allahu akbar, la illaha illa'llahu wa-llahu akbar wa NUN 'I-hamd).' And he said: 'In a tradition the last takbir is four times.

The author says: The first tradition includes prayers of noon and afternoon in glorifying (takbir) and the last one omits them. This difference may be an indication of the difference in the degrees of sunnah. And the word of the Imam, "i.e. prayer", perhaps indicate that the words of Allah, so that you shall complete the number, meand 'complete the number of the days of fast with the prayer of 'id and glorify Allah with prayers for His guiding you'. Ibis meaning is not against the meaning which we described earlier because it is an inference of a non-obligatory rule from a sentence containing an obligatory law. It is like the tradition quoted earlier in which the Imam inferred from the verse, so whosoever of you witnesses the month he shall fast therein the undesirability of travel - when one is in his abode on the first night.

The tradition has two different methods of takbir. This difference supports the opinion of some writers that glorifying in "that you glorify Allah" includes praising also, and that is why it is followed in this verse by the preposition on ('ala) which is the preposition generally used after praise (al-hamd).

Ibn Abi 'Umayr said that he asked as-Sadiq (a.s.): "May I be your ransom! Is it correct what we are told, that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) fasted for twenty-nine days much more than he fasted for thirty days? He (the Imam) said: 'Allah did not create a single letter of this talk. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) did not fast but thirty days, because Allah says: You shall complete the number. Was the Messenger of Allah shortening it?' " [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: This question is for repudiation. The tradition shows what we have already mentioned that completing here means completing the month of Ramadan.

One of our companions narrates about the words of Allah, so that you glorify Allah for His guiding you, that glorifying means 'extolling' and guidance means 'friendship of the Imams' (wilayah,). [al-Mahasin]

The author says: The interpretation of guidance as friendship of the Imam is like explaining an idea by giving a clear example. Also, it may be treated as its inner meaning. It is as has been mentioned in some traditions that in the verse: Allah desires ease for you and He desires not hardship for you, 'ease' means friendship (of the Imams) and 'hardship' means their enmity and friendship with enemies of Allah.

Hafs ibn al-Ghiyath asked Abu Abdillah (a.s.) about the words of Allah the month of Ramadan in which was sent down the Qur'an, when (the fact is that) the Qur'an was sent down twenty years from its beginning to its end. Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: "The Qur'an came all together in the month of Ramadan down to the 'Inhabited House'; then it came down (in segments) in a period of twenty years." Then the Imam said: "The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: 'The book of Ibrahim came down in the first night of the month of Ramadan, and the Torah was sent down on the sixth of the month of Ramadan, and the Zabur was sent down on the eighteenth of the month of Ramadan; in and the Qur'an was sent down on the twenty-third of the month of Ramadan.' [al-Kafi]

The author says: The tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) narrated by the Imam (a.s.) has been narrated by as-Suyutiti in ad-Durru l-manthiur, with several chains from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) through Wadthilah ibn al-Asqa'.

Ya'qub said; "I heard a man asking Abil 'Abdillah (a.s.) about the Night of Destiny, whether it occurred (once only) or it comes every year. Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) said: 'If the Night of Destiny were taken away the Qur'an would be taken away.' " [al-Kafi and Man la yahdurruhu l-faqih]

Ibn 'Abbas said: "The month of Ramadan and the Blessed Night and the Night of Destiny; because verily the Night of Destiny is the Blessed Night and it is in Ramadan - The Qur'an

came down all together from reminder (dhikr, to the Inhabited House and it is the falling place of the stars in the lowest heaven where the Qur'an came down. Later it descended on Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) piecemeal, about order, prohibition, and in battles.' " [ad-Durru l-manthur

The author says: This matter has also been narrated by others, like Said itin Jubayr. And it appears from this talk of Ibn 'Abbas that he inferred it from the Qur'anic verses; for example the words of Allah: and the wise reminder (3:58), And (I swear by) the Book written in an outstretched fine parchment and the inhabited house and the elevated canopy (52:2-5); But nay! I swear by the falling of stars, and most certainly it is a great oath if you only know, most surely it is an honored Qur'an in a Book that is hidden; none shall touch it save the purified ones (56:75-79); and We adorned the lowest heaven with lamps (stars) and (made it) to guard (41:12) And all His words are clear except what He said about the place of falling, that it is the lowest heaven and is the place of the Qur'an. The meaning of this assertion is obscure and the verses of the 56th chapter do not clearly show it, ofcourse; it is narrated from Ahlu l-bayt that the Inhabited House is in heaven, and we shall explain it, God willing, in its proper place.

What should clearly be understood is that traditions are like the Qur'an, because there are, in traditions also, some clear ones and others ambiguous. One very commonly finds in their talks which are based on hints and symbols, and especially so in the explanation of such facts as the Tablet, the Pen, the Curtain, the Heaven, the Inhabited House, the Swollen Sea etc. Therefore, it is obligatory for a research scholar to strive his utmost to find out if there is any hint or context to determine the true meaning of a given text.

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verse 186

And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am near, I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me, so that they may walk in the right way. (186)

COMMENTARY

Quran: And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then verily I am near, I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me:

This is the best expression of the subject matter in the most elegant and beautiful style. The

whole verse is based on the first person singular pronoun which shows the great importance which the speaker, i.e. Allah attaches to this subject; then come the words My servants and not "people" or such other words; and this enhances its importance even more; the reply (then verily I am near) starts dramatically just after the question without any preamble like: "then say that I am near"; and the reply has been emphasized with "verily" (inna) and the nearness of the speaker is described with the adjective near and not with any verb like "I come near him", thus it shows that He is already near and will always remain near; then it mentions answering the prayer with the verb the mudari' (aorist tense) which combines both the present and the future tenses; and indicates that He answers at present and will continue to answer the prayers of the supplicant; then the answer (I answer the prayer of the supplicant) is conditioned with when he calls on Me, but in reality it is not a condition separate from the main clause, both are one and the same thing, and it serves to emphasize that the prayer of the supplicant is answered without any condition or stipulation (as we see also in the verse: call on Me, I will answer you 40:60). These seven points show how much importance has been attached to the answering of prayers. In addition, this verse short as it is - repeats the first person singular pronoun seven times; it is the only verse with this characteristic in the whole of Qur'an.

"Du'd... and "dawah " mean to turn the attention of the called one to the caller. Asking (su'al) means to gain a benefit or advantage from the one whose attention is drawn towards the asker and before whom his (asker's) need is put. Therefore, asking (su'al) is the final aim of calling (du'd). This meaning covers all types of asking, for example, asking for the removal of ignorance, asking with the meaning of reckoning, asking in the sense of seeking beneficence.

Literally, "bondage" (ubudiyah), as explained earlier, is the status of being owned. It is not used for any other owned thing except human beings. Therefore, "servant" (abu), is used only for a human being or another intelligent being (like an angel).

The ownership of Allah is as different from the ownership of others as is the truth from pretence or the reality from metaphor. Allah owns His servants; his ownership is total and comprehensive. They have no authority, independent from Allah, over their own selves or over matters or things which are subordinate to them; for example, their attributes and actions and all things which are related to them, like wives, children, property, honor etc. Everything which they own and is related to them in any way - as we say, his self, his body, his ears, his eyes, his actions, his impression (and these are a sort of natural and real possessions), or as we say, his spouse, his wealth, his honor, his right - (and these are a sort of supposed or assumed possession) - is in his possession only because Allah allowed the establishment of that relation of ownership between man and his possession, whatever it may be. It is Allah, glorified be his name, who gave their selves and their persons to them - and if He did not wish so, it could not be attributed to them and they would have remained without any self or person - in other words, non-existent. It is He who gave them hearing and sight and hearts; and it is He who created everything, then fixed for it a

measure.

Therefore, Allah intervenes between a thing and its self, between it and between all its associates like child, spouse, friend, property, honor and rights. It means that He, is the nearest of all to His creatures. In other words, He is the Near One in the true sense of this word. He has said: And We are nearer to him than you, but you see (Us) not (56:85); and We are nearer to him than his life vein (50:16); and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart (8:24). 'Heart' here means the rational soul or spirit.

In short, Allah's ownership of His creatures is real ownership, and as they are His servants He is near to them in its true sense, which means nearest of all things. His ownership gives Him authority to make use of them as He wishes, without any hindrance or obstruction. Also it gives Him authority to answer any prayer which is put before Him by any of His creatures, and to fulfill his need by accepting his supplication, because the ownership is all-encompassing, and His Power and pervasiveness cover all possible situations. It is not as though He has authority in one eventuality and not in the other, as the Jews say that when God created things and decreed their destinies, His work was finished and now His hands are folded up, He can not take any new decision; there is no abrogation (of previous laws), no change and no answering of prayer because every affair is already finished. Nor is it, as a group of this ummah said, that Allah has no power about the actions of His creatures. They are called Qadariyyah and were named the Magians of this ummah by the Messenger of Allah. Sunnis and Shi'ah both have reported that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said: "Qadariyyah are the Magians of this ummah".

The truth is that real ownership in its totality is by Allah only and nobody owns any thing but when He makes him its owner and allows him to possess it. Therefore, whatever Allah wills and gives in possession and allows its coming into being, comes into being. And whatever He does not will, and does not give in possession and does not allow, does not come into being, even if one strives his utmost to bring it into being. Allah has said: O people! You are they who are needy unto Allah, and Allah is He who is the Self-sufficient, the Most Praised One. (35:15)

It is, thus, clear that this verse not only mentions a fact, i.e., answering prayer, but gives its reasons also: Because the supplicants are servants of Allah, He is near to them; and because He is near to them, He answers their prayers without any reservation. And the unconditional answering of prayer means that there is no condition imposed on prayer also; whatever prayer is addressed to Him, He shall answer it. Of course, it seems that His promise 'I answer the prayer of the supplicant' depends on the condition, when he calls Me. But this condition is not something different from the main clause; and such a mode of expression indicates that the main clause is free from metaphor and analogy; that its meaning is what appears from the words. For example, when we say, "Listen to the sincere advisor when he sincerely advises you", or "Respect the scholar if he be a scholar", it means that we want him to be sure that the advisor is really sincere

or the scholar is really a scholar so that listening to him or respecting him becomes necessary. In the same way, the condition when he calls on me shows that the promise of answering the prayer shall apply when the supplicant is a supplicant in reality; when he wants that. Thing according to his natural and deep-ingrained knowledge and when his heart is really in what his tongue is asking for. The reality of prayer and supplication is what the heart desires and the tongue of nature asks for, not this tongue of flesh which moves as it is moved without caring whether the word spoken is a truth or a lie, a reality or a metaphor, a serious talk or a joke. It is because of this that Allah has even mentioned such prayers in which the tongue is not used at all. He said: And He gave you of all that you asked Him; and if you count Allah's bounties, you will not be able to compute them; Verily, man is very unjust very ungrateful (14:34). Mankind prays to Him and beseeches Him for bounties which they cannot count, but this asking is not done by the tongue of the mouth, it is done by the tongue of their neediness, the tongue of nature and existence. Also He said:

All those in the heavens and the earth do beseech Him; every day He is in a (new) splendor (55:29). This verse more clearly proves what we have just said.

Therefore, the natural prayer addressed to Allah shall always be answered. If a prayer is not answered* then it lacks both or one of the two things mentioned in the verse: the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me. It may happen in following ways:-

First: There may be no prayer at all, it may only be a misunderstanding of the supplicant. For example, a man prays for an impossible thing (but he does not know that it is impossible), or for a thing which, if he knew the fact, would not have wanted at all. Let us say that someone was sick and died but his friend is unaware of his death and prays for his recovery, while now the prayer should be for bringing him back to life. If he had been really sure that a dead body could be resurrected and had asked for its resurrection (as the prophets did) his life would have been returned to him; but he does not have such firm conviction and therefore the prayer is not answered. Or, let us say, he asks for a thing which, had he known it really, he would not have wanted. Therefore, it is not granted.

Second: There is indeed a prayer, but it is not addressed exclusively to Allah. For example, a man beseeches Allah for his needs, but his heart is looking towards its apparent causes or to some imaginary beings whom he thinks have power to fulfill his needs. In this case, his prayer is not addressed exclusively to Allah. In other words, he did not beseech Allah at all; because Allah, Who answers the prayers, is the One who has no partner in His affairs. He is not the one who works in partnership with apparent causes and imaginary beings.

So these are the two groups of supplicants whose hearts were not sincere in their prayers even if their tongues were.

This is the gist of the subject of prayer according to the verse of the Qur'an. The meaning of all verses on this subject may be understood from this explanation. See, for example, the following verses:-

Say, my Lord would not care for you, were it not for your prayer; but you have indeed rejected (the truth), so soon you shall be in the grip (25:77).

Say, think you that if the chastisement of Allah comes to you or the Hour comes to you, will you call upon other than Allah, if you are truthful Nay! Him you will call upon, so He clears away that for which you pray, if He pleases, and you will forget what you set up (with Him) (6:40-41).

Say, who is it that delivers you from the (dread of the) darkness of the land and the sea (when) you pray to him (openly) humiliating yourselves and secretly: "If He delivers us from this, certainly we shall be of the grateful ones". Say, Allah delivers you from them and from every distress, yet again you associate (others) with Him (6:63-64).

These verses prove that man has been created with a natural prayer and inner beseeching which is silently addressed to his Lord. But when he spends his life in ease and prosperity, his soul becomes blinded by apparent causes and he treats them as partners to his Lord; thus he becomes confused and thinks that he does not ask his Lord for anything and does not beseech Him, while the fact is that he does not beseech anyone other than Allah, because this prayer (to Allah) is ingrained into his nature, and there is no change in the creation of Allah. Later comes the hardship and the apparent causes become divorced from the expected effects, and those whom he treated as partners of Allah or intercessors before Him disappear completely; then he realizes that there is no one to fulfill his needs and to answer his prayers except Allah. Thus, he returns to his natural monotheism and forgets every other cause and turns his face towards the Beneficent Lord; and the Lord clears away his hardship and fulfills his wants and places him under the shade of opulence. But as soon as he regains his prosperity and happiness - he goes back to the previous polytheism and forgetfulness.

And your Lord said: Call upon Me, I will answer you. Verily, those who are arrogant to My worship shall soon enter Hell, disgraced (40:60).

This verse invites mankind to beseech Allah, and promises the answering, and goes even further by naming the prayer as worship in the clause, arrogant to My worship which means "to my prayer". Rather, it equates the worship with prayer: it threatens with Hell those who do not pray, and such a threat can only be justified when one neglects worship completely, not on neglecting only one kind of it. Therefore, the prayer is not just an important type of worship; it is the foundation of worship itself.

From the above, one may appreciate the meaning of other verses on this subject:-

Therefore, call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in religion, though averse be the disbelievers (40:14).

And call on Him fearing and hoping; surely, the mercy of Allah is near to those who do good (7:56).

...surely they used to . . . call unto Us with love and reverence, and were humble before Us (21:90).

Call upon your Lord humbly and secretly; surely He loves not those who exceed the limit (7:55).

When called he (Zakariyya) unto his Lord in low voice. He said: My Lord! Surely my bones are weakened and my head fares with hoariness, and, my Lord! Never have I been unsuccessful in my prayer to Thee (19:3-4).

And He answers those who believe and do good deeds, and increases unto them of His grace (42:26).

There are other relevant verses, and all of these contain the pillars of prayer and explain the manner of the supplication. And the most important of all is to keep the prayer exclusively for Allah; it will come true when the feeling of the heart conforms with the words spoken by the tongue; when one abandons reliance on all apparent reasons other than Allah and depends exclusively upon Allah. Also among them are: fear of Allah; hope in His answering; His love and reverence; humility and humbleness; as well as perseverance in prayer; remembrance of Allah; good deeds; true faith; presence of heart at that time; and similar things.

Qur'an: So they should answer My call and believe in Me:

This sentence branches out from the previous one. Allah is near to His servants; nothings comes between Him and their prayer; He cares for them and for the things they ask for; that is why He invites them to call upon Him and He is of such high attributes.

Therefore, they should accept this invitation of their Lord and should advance towards Him, and have faith in Him about this attribute, having firm belief that He is near and He answers their call; so that they may be guided rightly in praying unto Him.

TRADITIONS

The Sunnis and Shi'ahs both have narrated from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that "Prayer is the armament of the believer."

It is narrated in al-Hadith al-qudsi: "O Musa! Ask from Me all that you need, even fodder for your goat and salt for your dough," ['Uddatu 'd-dai]

The Prophet said: "Calling (upon Allah) is better than reciting the Qur'an, because Allah (Powerful and Great is He!) said, 'Say, My Lord would not care for you were it not for your prayer.'" [Makarimu l-akhlaq]

The same hadith has been narrated from al-Baqir and as Sadiq (a.s.).

Muhammad ibn 'Ajlin narrates from Muhammad ibn 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn from his cousin, as Saqid (a.s.) from his forefathers from the Prophet that he said: "Allah informed one of his prophets in a revelation: 'By My Power and Dignity! Verily I shall change into despair the hope of everyone who hoped from other than Me, and I shall dress him with the clothing of disgrace before people, and I shall remove him from My relief and bounty.

Does my servant put his hope in other than Me in hardships, while hardships are in My hand; And does he expect anything from other than Me, while I am the Self-sufficient, the Munificent? In My hand are the keys of the doors' while they are closed; and My door is open for the one who calls on Me. ['Uddatu d-dai]

The Prophet said: "Allah said; 'No creature seeks refuge in another creature, leaving Me, but that I cut off all the means in the heavens and the earth for him. Then if he asks from Me, I do not give him; and if he calls on Me, I do not answer him. And no creature seeks refuge in Me, leaving My creatures, but that I make the heaven and the earth responsible for his sustenance; then if he calls on Me, I answer him and, if he seeks pardon from Me, I forgive!' " [ibid.]

The author says: The aim of the above two traditions is to emphasize that the invocation must be purely for Allah. It was not meant to negate the positive causes which Allah has created as instrumental links between the things and their needs. But these instruments are not independent causes. The Independent Cause is only Allah. And man does have an inner feeling of this fact: he feels by his nature that there is a Perfect Cause who fulfils his needs and who can never fail in bringing about the desired effect. On the other hand, he knows that all the apparent causes which are expected to produce an effect, some times fail to do so. Thus he knows that the First Cause, who is the Source and Origin of everything and upon whom every need relies and depends for its fulfillment, is other than these apparent causes. Once he realizes it, he will never entirely rely on these causes, forgetting the Real Cause. Man may appreciate this fact after just a little thinking.

Now, if he prays for something and that need is fulfilled, it will prove that he asked his Lord for it, and that the prayer, which emanated from his inner feeling and knowledge, reached through the apparent causes to his Lord and was granted by Him. On the contrary, if he prays to some apparent causes for it, then it does not originate from natural inner feeling and knowledge; it is just an imaginary need, based not on inner feeling but on some imaginary reasons. It is one of the situations where appearance goes against reality, because he thinks that he is praying, while his inner self knows nothing about that prayer.

Another example: Many is the time that a man likes a thing and makes all efforts to get it; but when he gets it, he finds that it is harmful to another thing which is far more important and far more dear than that thing. Then he leaves that which he had strived for and keeps that which is more important. Likewise, sometimes he dislikes a thing, but once it comes to him he finds it far more beneficial and far better than the alternative which he previously preferred. A child is sick; when he is given a bitter medicine, he refuses to take it and starts crying. But at the same time he wants to regain his health. Now the position is this: his natural inner feeling prays for health and, therefore, for the medicine; but his words and deeds reject the same medicine. Likewise, man, in his life, has a discipline based on natural understanding and inner feeling; and he also has a system based on his imagination only. The natural discipline makes no mistake, it never leads astray; while the imaginary discipline often goes wrong. It is clear from the example of the sick child that sometimes man asks for some thing urged by his imagination but in reality that very prayer is the prayer for its opposite.

This discourse will help the readers in understanding the meaning of the traditions, and it is also the implication of the words of 'Ali (a.s.) which come later, "Verily, the granting (of Prayer) is according to the measure of the intention..."

The Prophet said: "Call upon Allah and you can be confident for the answering." ['Uddatu 'd-dai]

"I am near the opinion (i.e. expectation) of My servant about Me; so, he should not have any opinion about Me (i.e. should not expect from Me) except good." [al-hadith al-qudsi]

The author says: It is because if one prays and at the same time is pessimistic or doubtful about its outcome, then it shows that the prayer is just a formality, the supplicant has no real intention of asking for it (see the previous explanation). And the traditions forbid asking for a thing which one is sure will not come about.

The Prophet said: "Resort to Allah in your needs; and seek refuge in Him in your misfortunes; and humiliate yourselves before Him and beseech Him, because, verily, supplication is the essence of worship. And no believer calls upon Allah but He answers him: either it is speeded up to him in

this world, or is kept in reserve for him for the next one, or his sins are forgiven in proportion to his supplication, provided he does not pray for a sinful thing." ['Uddatu 'd-dai]

'Ali (a.s.) wrote in his will for his son, al-Husayn (a.s.): "Then He placed the keys of His treasures in your hands in the sense that He allowed you to ask Him. Therefore, whenever you wish, you may get the doors of His bounties opened with prayer, and get the heavy rains of His Mercy to fall upon you. Delay in acceptance of the prayers should not disappoint you, because the granting (of prayer) is according to the measure of (your) intention. And sometimes, the answering of your prayer is delayed so that it brings a greater reward to, the asker and a better granting to the expectant. Sometimes you ask for a thing and it is not given to you, but a better thing is given to you, immediately or later; or a thing is diverted from you for some greater good for you, because often you ask for a thing which would have destroyed your religion had it been given to you. Therefore, your prayer should be for things whose beauty should last for you and whose evil should remain away from you. As for wealth, it will not last for you, nor will you last for it." [Nahju l-balaghah]

The author says: "The granting (of prayer) is according to the measure of (your) intention." 'Ali (a.s.) means that the answer is given according to the call. The supplicant is granted whatever he asks for from Allah with the firm conviction of his conscience and with his heart, and not what is asked for in words. As explained earlier, the words sometimes do not completely conform with the real requirement demanded by the nature. This sentence, therefore, shows in the most lucid and comprehensive way, the relationship between prayer and its answer. 'Ali (a.s.) has, in this writing, explained many cases in which it appears that the prayer was not granted, e.g. where there is delay in answering the call, or a material bounty is asked for but it is changed to some thing which is far better for him either in this world or in the next, or it is diverted to some thing more beneficial for the asker. The supplicant had, for example, asked for a pleasant bounty; and if he were given it without delay it would not have been really appreciated and valued, and, therefore, its granting was delayed. In short, when he asked for a "pleasant" bounty, he implicitly asked for a delay in granting of the prayer. likewise, a believer who seriously pays attention to his religion, prays for some thing which would be harmful to his religion, although he does not know it and thinks that it would bring him happiness. But his happiness is in his religion and in the next world. Therefore, his prayer is in fact for the next world, not for this one, and, accordingly, it is granted for the next world, not for this one. Al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "A servant does not extend his hand towards Allah, but that Allah is ashamed to return it empty. He puts in it from His bounty and mercy whatever He wishes. So, when one of you calls (upon Allah), he should not return his hand until he wipes it on his head and face." ['Uddatu 'd-dai] In another hadith it is "on his face and chest".

The author says: There are in ad-Durru l-manthur eight similar traditions narrated by a number of the companions, like Salman, Jabir, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Anas ibn Malik and Ibn Abi Mughith from

the Prophet; and all of them mention raising of the hands in the prayer. Therefore, it is meaningless to reject raising of hands in the prayer as someone has done saying that "it is suggestive of the belief that Allah has a body, because the raising of the hands towards the sky is an indication that He is there - Holy and Sanctified is He from it."

But this statement is wrong. All acts of worship performed by the body are in reality the heartfelt sense of gratitude and inner attention which is reduced to the level of symbolic appearance; and the spiritual realities are demonstrated in the moulds of the body, as one may see in the salat, the fast, the hajj, etc., and their parts. and conditions. Had it not been so, there would not have been any justification for worship by the body. And invocation is such a form of worship. It is the attention of the heart and the inner supplication demonstrated by the symbol of the begging of a wretched pauper coming near a powerful and wealthy person, raising and extending his hands towards him and asking his needs from him, humiliating himself before him and imploring him to grant him his requirements. ash-Shaykh has reported in al-Majalis wa 'I-akhbar, with his sanad (chain of narrators) from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and Zayd from their father, Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn from his father al-Husayn (a.s.) from the Prophet that "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) used to raise his hands when he prayed and beseeched (Allah) as a pauper begs for food." The same hadith is written in Uddatu d-dai without sanad.

'Ali (a.s.) heard a man saying "O Allah I seek refuge in Thee from temptation -" 'Ali-(a.s.) said: 'I see, you are seeking refuge against your wealth and children. Allah says: Verily your wealth and your children are temptations (8:28). You should rather say: O Allah! I seek refuge in Thee from misleading temptations." [Biharu'l-anwar]

The author says: It is another way of determining the meaning of a word. And there are many such examples in traditions. The fact is that the true meaning of every word is that for which it has been used by Allah in His talk. And some examples of this are the traditions which explain the meaning of 'part', 'many' etc.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, Allah does not answer the memorized prayer by a forgetful heart." ['Uddatu 'd-dai]

'Ali (a.s.) said: "Allah does not accept the prayer of an inattentive heart." [ibid]

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning; and the reason is that there is in reality no prayer and supplication with forgetfulness and inattention.

There is in the Torah: Allah says to His servant, "Verily, when you pray against one of my servants because he was unjust to you, then at the same time there may be another of my servants praying against you too because you were unjust to him. Now, if you so wish, I shall grant your prayer and

also his prayer against you; and if you so wish, I shall postpone the cases of both of you for the Day of Resurrection." [ar-Rawandi, ad-Da'wat]

The author says: If someone prays for something then it means that he is pleased with it and this pleasure naturally extends to all those things which are similar to it in all respects. He prays for punishment of his oppressor; he prays against him because of his oppression and injustice. It means that he is pleased with the punishment of the unjust. Now, if he himself oppressed another person then the same prayer against his oppressor shall become a prayer against himself. If he is pleased that he himself should be punished (and he shall never be pleased with it), then he will be given the same punishment which he wanted for his oppressor. And if he is not pleased with it, then there is in reality no prayer at all. Allah said: And man prays for evil as he ought to pray for good, and man is ever hasty (17:11).

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said to Abu Dharr: "O Abu Dharr! Should I not teach you some words by which Allah will benefit you? I (Abu Dharr) said: 'Surely! O Messenger of Allah.' He said: 'Guard (the commands of) Allah, (and) Allah will guard you. Keep (the remembrance of) Allah, (and) you will find Him before you. Make the acquaintance of Allah in opulence, He will know you in hardship. And when you ask, ask from Allah; and when you seek help, seek help from Allah, because whatever is to happen up to the Day of Resurrection has already been written, and if all the creatures together strived to benefit you with what Allah did not write for you, they would not be able to do so.' [Uddatu d-dai]

The author says: His words, "Make the acquaintance of Allah in opulence, He will know you in hardship", mean "Can upon Allah in opulence and do not forget Him, so that He will answer your call in hardship and will not forget you." Anybody who forgets his Lord in opulence is as if he believes that the apparent causes are the total and real cause of his opulence. Then comes the hardship and he starts calling on his Lord. His action indicates that he believes in the Lordship of Allah only when he is afflicted with hardship. But Allah is not so. He is the Lord in every condition and every situation. Therefore, if he calls on a lord whose lordship is limited to the time of hardship only, he does not call on the True Lord.

This meaning has been explained in some traditions in a different language. As Sadiq (a.s.) said: "One who goes on calling (on his Lord) in advance, his call will be answered when there comes down an affliction (on him), and it will be said, '(it is) a known voice', and it will not be screened out of the heavens. And the one who does not call (on his Lord) in advance, his call is not answered when an affliction comes, and the angels say, 'It is a voice which we do not know . . . ' " [Makarimu l-akhlaq]

And it is understood from the word of Allah, They forget Allah, so He forgets them (9:68). There is another tradition that du'a'- (prayer) is not rejected if one cuts oneself (from all apparent causes

and turns exclusively towards Allah). There is no contradiction between this tradition and those mentioned before, because affliction and hardship is something different from exclusively turning towards Allah.

His words: and when you ask, ask from Allah, and when you seek help, seek help from Allah. It teaches one to adhere only to Allah in reality while asking and seeking help; because so far as these. nominal causes, which we find in this world are concerned, their relation with their effects is confined within the limit set for it by Allah. They are not independent in producing the effect as it appears to uninformed eyes; they are only a means to produce that effect; the incumbent on the man to turn towards Allah in all his needs, without relying on nominal causes and means, although Allah has decreed not to produce an effect if its cause is missing. In short, the above sentence tells one not to rely on nominal causes and not to forget that it is Allah who has made it a cause of that effect. It does not mean that one should neglect the causes and means and ask for one's needs without striving for its cause; it would be rather asking for the impossible. One should realize that even the heart where the prayer originates, the tongue which utters the words of the prayer and the hands, etc., which are used in praying are but some of the causes and means. So, how can one escape from the apparent causes?

Let us look at the example of man himself. Whatever he does, is done with his limbs and organs: lie gives with his hands, sees with his eyes and hears with his ears. Now, if one asked his Lord to fulfill his needs neglecting its causes and means, it would be as if he asked someone to give him something without using his hand, or to look at him without using his eyes or to listen to his pleas without using his ears.

On the other hand, if one relies on the nominal causes without remembering Allah, it would be as though one thinks that it is the man's hand which gives, his eyes which see and his ears which hear, and forgets that the real doer of these actions is man himself. Such a person is stupid and a simpleton.

The above explanation does not mean that the Power of Allah is limited, or that His Authority is conditional. No, His Power and Authority are All-encompassing and without limit. In the same way the limitations are meant to apply to the deeds not to doers. Obviously, it is man who has the power to give, see and hear, though he gives with his hand, sees with his eyes and hears with his ears. Likewise, Allah is All-powerful, but the specification depends on intermediate causes. Zayd is a creation of Allah, and he was born through the union of his parents in a certain place or; a certain day when certain conditions were fulfilled and certain obstacles removed. Now, if even one of these causes be missing and one of these conditions be not fulfilled, there would be no Zayd. Thus the existence of Zayd depends on the fulfillment of all these causes and means; but what depends is the creature, i.e., Zayd, not the Creator. (Think on this point.)

His words: Whatever is to happen up to the Day of Resurrection has already been written. It is based on the sentence, And when you ask, ask from Allah, and gives its reason. It means that all events are written and decreed by Allah; no cause has any real influence on them; therefore, you should not ask from anyone other than Allah, and should not seek any one's help other than that of Allah. As for Allah, His authority is everlasting; His Power is Eternal; His Will is effective; and every day He is in a new Splendor. It is for this reason that this sentence is followed by the words: and if all the creatures together strived to benefit you with what Allah did not write for you, they would not be able to do so.

Among the traditions of du'a' is the near mutawatir hadith: "Verily, dua' (prayer) is a part of destiny."

The author says: This is the reply to the objection of the Jews and others on dua'. They say: The need asked for is either already measured and decreed (to happen) or not. If it is already decreed, then it would happen in any case and the prayer would be meaningless. If it is not decreed, then it can never happen and the prayer would be meaningless. In either case the prayer will have no effect at all.

The reply: Even when an event is already decreed, it does not mean that it is independent of its causes, and one of the means of its coming into existence is du'a. If one beseeches Allah for his need, one of the conditions of its existence is fulfilled; and the effect follows the cause. This is the meaning of the tradition, "Verily, du'a (prayer) is a part of destiny."

And there are other traditions with the same meaning. There is a hadith from the Prophet: "Nothing turns away the decree (fate) except prayer (du'a)." [Biharul I-anwar]. And there is another one from as-Sadiq (a.s.): "Prayer (du'a) turns away the decree even after it is confirmed." [ibid.] Another one from Abu I-Hasan Musa al-Kazim (a.s.): "On you is du'a, because du'a and asking from Allah turns the calamity away even when it is measured and decreed and nothing remains except its enforcement; then if Allah is called upon and asked, He removes that calamity entirely." [Ibid]

As-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, the prayer (du'a) turns away the confirmed decree even after its confirmation. Therefore, pray often (and repeatedly), because it is the key to every mercy and the fulfillment of every need. And what is with Allah is not obtained except through prayer; because verily, no door is knocked repeatedly but it is hoped that it will be opened to the knocker." [ibid]

The author says: This hadith exhorts one to pray often and repeatedly; and this is one of the important elements of prayer, as repeated remembrance of a need creates purity of intention.

Isma'il ibn Hammam narrates from Abu I-Hasan (a.s.): "One secret prayer of a servant is equal to

seventy open prayers."

The author says: This teaches one to keep one's prayer (du'a) secret and confidential because it helps in keeping the prayer pure.

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: ... The prayer is kept screened (i.e. is not granted) until he (the beseecher) prays for the blessings of Allah upon Muhammad and his progeny." [Makarimu l-akhlaq]

Also, as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Whoever advances (the names of) forty believers (in his prayers) then prays (for himself), his call will be answered." [ibid]

One of the companions of as-Sadiq (a.s.) said to him: "There are two verses in the Book of Allah (the application) for which I am seeking without finding it." The Imam asked: "And what are those?" The companion says: "I said, '(there is the verse): Call upon Me, I shall answer . . . but we call upon Him and do not get any answer.' The Imam said: 'Well, do you think Allah has broken His promise, I said: 'No!' He said: 'Then what?'" I said: 'I do not know.' He said: 'But I will tell you. Whoever obeys Allah in His commandments, and then calls upon Him in the proper way, He will answer him.' I said: 'And what is the proper way of prayer (dua)? He said: 'You shall begin with the praise of Allah and shall glorify Him and remember His bounties upon you and thank Him; then you shall pray for His blessings upon Muhammad and his progeny; then you shall remember your sins and confess them; then you shall seek (His) pardon for them. So this is the proper way of prayer (dua).' Then the Imam asked: 'And what is the second verse? I said: 'and whatever thing you spend, He returns it (34:39), and I find that I spend but He does not return it.' He said: 'Well, do you think Allah has broken His promise I said: 'No' He said: 'Then what?' I said: 'I do not know.' He said: 'If any of you earn his wealth lawfully and spend it in its proper place, he will not spend a single dirham but that Allah shall return it to him! ' " [ibid]

The author says: The reason of the manners of prayer (du'a) mentioned in these traditions is clear, because these things bring the servant (of Allah) nearer to the reality of prayer and beseeching.

Ibn 'Umar reported that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) said: "Verily, when Allah wishes to answer (the call of) a servant, He allows him to call (upon Him)." [ad-Durru l-manthur]

Also, Ibn 'Umar narrates from him (the Holy Prophet): "Whenever the door of prayer (dua) is opened for anyone among you, the doors of Mercy are opened for him." Another tradition says: "When the (door of) prayer is opened for anyone among you, the doors of the Garden (Paradise) are opened for him." [ibid.]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated from the Imams of Ahlu l-bayt also: "Whoever is given dua, is given (its) answer." Its meaning is dear.

Also there, is a tradition from Ma'adh ibn Jabal from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.): "Had you known Allah, as He should be known, verily the mountains would have been moved by your prayer." [ibid]

The author says: If a man does not know the dignity of the Creator and the power of His Lordship, and if he relies upon the causes, then he believes that these causes have real influence upon the result, and that events cannot happen without their normal and apparent causes. Sometimes he does not believe that these causes have any real effect upon the outcome, still he thinks that they are essential in order to bring a thing into existence. For example, we see that movement and walking brings one nearer to one's destination. And even when we do not believe that movement has any real effect on the nearness, we go on believing that movement is a means, though it is Allah who is the real cause, of that nearness, and in this way we go on believing that the middle causes are essential, at least as a means, if not as the real cause. Thus, we think that if there is no movement, we cannot come near our destination. In short, we believe that the effect cannot be separate from its causes, even if these causes are just apparent means and not the real cause.

But such a belief is below the dignity of Allah; it does not conform with divine authority which is total and perfect. It is this belief which creates the idea that effects cannot come into being without their normal causes, e.g. a body cannot be without a weight and gravity; movement is necessary for bringing two things nearer; eating and drinking is essential for satisfying the hunger and thirst, etc. etc. We have already mentioned in the discussion of miracles that the system of cause and effect is an inescapable fact; but it does not mean that the cause is confined to the normal causes only. Reason as well as the Qur'an and the traditions prove that while everything depends upon a cause, that cause is not confined within the limits of normal ones. The Creator may create causes for it, quite different from the normal ones. So, while it is true that the effect depends upon a cause, it is not true that it depends upon a particular cause.

Of course, the things which are, according to reason, impossible, cannot come into being.

In short, when you properly know Allah, you will believe that the prayer for what is not impossible by reason, even if normally it does not happen, will be answered. A major portion of the miracles of the prophets was basically the answer to their calls.

There is in the at-Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi under the words of Allah: So they should answer My call and believe in Me, a hadith from as-Sadiq (a.s.): "They should know that I have power to give them whatever they ask from Me.,'

And there is another hadith in Majmau l-bayan from the same Imam that he said: "...and believe in Me means that they should have firm belief that I have power to give them what they ask for;

so that they may walk in the right way means so that they may reach the Truth."

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verse 187

It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast to go in unto your wives; they are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them; Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves, so He has turned to you (mercifully) and forgiven you. Wherefore, now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you, and eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct unto you from the black thread (of night) at dawn-break, then complete the fast until night. And associate not with them while you are confined in the mosque. These are the limits (prescribed by) Allah; therefore, draw not yourselves near them. Thus does Allah make clear His signs for the people, so that they may guard themselves (against evil). (187)

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast to go in unto your wives:

Ihlal means to allow; its root is hall (to open, which is opposite of aqd (to tie) Rafath literally means to say clearly such words, which are generally unmentionable, which are normally only hinted at; such words are usually uttered during sexual intercourse. Now, this "uttering unmentionable words" has been used as metaphor of the sexual intercourse; and this is the nobility of the exalted Qur'an. And all words used for this meaning in the Qur'an are of the same type; none were made for copulation, all are used as a metaphor, like mubashirah (to be in contact with each other, dukhul (to enter), mass or lams (to touch), ityan (to come to), qurb (to be near), etc. The same is the case of the words, wa 't' (to press down) and jima'(to come together) which are used in Islamic books other than the Qur'an, although some of these words have been so much used for this meaning that now they are no longer metaphoric. The words, farj (an opening), and gla'it (the depth) which are, now commonly used for "vulva" and "excrement" respectively, are the other examples of this type. It is said that the preposition ila coming here after rafath gives the meaning of entering into.

Qur'an: they are apparel for you and you are apparel for them:

Libas means what a man uses to cover his body. The two sentences are used figuratively, because each spouse restrains the other from unchastity, and protects society from debauchery. Thus each one is like apparel for the other with which he/she covers his/her shame and protects his/her

privacy.

It is a very fine metaphor, and its literary value has been increased by putting it after the sentence, It is made lawful to you . . . to go in unto your wives. A man hides his private parts from others with his dress, but there is no hiding from the dress itself. Likewise, each spouse protects the other one from having sexual relations with others; but there is no restriction on them against such relations with each other.

Qu'ran Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves, so He has turned to you (mercifully) and forgiven you.

Ikhtiyān and khiyānah are synonymous; and it is said that they convey the meaning of defect, decrease. You were acting unfaithfully conveys the meaning of continuity; and it shows that this unfaithfulness commonly continued among the Muslims after the command of the fast had been promulgated; and they were sinning against Allah secretly by being unfaithful to their own souls. Had not this unfaithfulness been a sin, there would have been no need to mention turning to them mercifully and forgiving; and although these two words do not say openly that a sin had already been committed, still their most obvious meaning shows a preceding sin, especially when both are mentioned together.

Accordingly, the verse proves that before its revelation, sexual intercourse in the nights of the fast was forbidden; and that it was this verse which made it lawful and abrogated its prohibition, as has been stated by a group of the commentators of the Qur'an. As a further proof, look at the words, It is made lawful to you. You were acting unfaithfully, so He has turned to you (mercifully) and forgiven you and Wherefore, now be in contact with them. Had there been no previous prohibition, such words would have been out of context; instead there would have come the words like "there is no blame on you that you be in contact with them".

Some people say: "This verse does not abrogate any rule, because the verse of fasting mentioned earlier did not prohibit intercourse or food or drink in the night. Apparently, according to some Sunni traditions, when the fast was prescribed and the words were revealed, Fast has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you refers to the fast per se, and not meant total conformity in all the details of fast. It is said that the Christians used to eat, drink and go to their women during the early period of the night, then abstained from it. So the Muslims adopted the same system. But it proved difficult. Many youths could not restrain themselves from secret sexual intercourse, but they thought that they were committing a sin and acting unfaithfully to themselves. Likewise, aged persons found it a heavy burden to abstain from eating and drinking once they began their sleep. Sometimes someone could not keep his eyes open before eating and drinking and then thought that food and drink was unlawful for him. It was to remove this misunderstanding that this verse was revealed; it made it clear that sexual

intercourse, food and drink was not unlawful for them during the night of Ramadan.

This verse also made it clear that the comparison in as it was prescribed for those before you refers to the fast per se, and not to its details. The words It is made lawful to you do not necessarily mean that 'this was unlawful before that; it simply declares legality of this action. See, for example, the words: The game of the sea is made lawful to you (5:96); as it is known that the game of the sea was not unlawful to the pilgrims before the revelation of this verse, Likewise, the words Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves means that they were doing wrong according to their own view only.

That is why Allah said "unfaithfully to yourselves". Had He said "unfaithfully to Allah", it would have conveyed the meaning of prohibition, as, for example, in the verse: Be you not unfaithful to Allah and the Apostle (8:27). Also the word ikhtiyan maybe taken to mean "curtail" or "decrease" and the sentence may be translated, as "Allah knew that you were curtailing your desires". The words He has turned to you (mercifully) and has forgiven you do not clearly convey the idea that sexual intercourse was a sin before that.

But this argument is not conclusive, because it goes against the clear meaning of the verse. We have already said that the words like It is made lawful to you; you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves, He has turned toward you (mercifully) and forgiven you do not say openly that a sin had already been committed; still, this is their most obvious implication. Add to it the words now be in contact with them which would be inappropriate if there were no previous prohibition, as I have explained earlier.

The argument, that "this verse does not abrogate any rule because the verse of fasting did not prohibit sexual intercourse in the night", is not valid because that verse did not prohibit it clearly for the day time also. It is known that the Messenger of Allah had explained the rules of fasting before this verse was revealed, Perhaps the prohibition of sexual relations during the night was one of those rules; and the verse abrogated it. So this verse cancels not another verse, but a tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

Someone may object: The words they are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them have been used as the reason for this permission. Now, the husband and wife were the apparel to each other when, supposedly, copulation at night was forbidden and they remained like the apparel when that prohibition was supposedly lifted. So where, in these words, is the reason for the supposed abrogation if they are equally true in both conditions before abrogation and after abrogation? We know that the reason given for a rule of the shari'ah is mostly its benefit, and not necessarily its real causes. And as a benefit, it need not be fully comprehensive. Still, in a supposedly abrogating verse at least it should not be common to both conditions.

But deep consideration of the verse does not sustain this objection. It is not acceptable that this sentence is the reason of this permission, The permission in this verse is limited to the night of the fast, while the simile of apparel is as much true during the day as in the night. So, it cannot be the reason of that permission.

The fact is that the three clauses in this verse coming one after the other, and all taken together, give us the reason for this abrogation. They are on the night of the fast, they are an apparel for you and you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves.

As the spouses are like apparel to each other they should be allowed to establish sexual relations together without any restriction. Then came the commandment of the fast, without demanded self-denial and abstention from desires, like food, drink and sexual relations. But the servants of Allah found it difficult to abstain for a full month from copulation, and this unfaithfulness was common and continued. Therefore, Allah in His mercy eased the conditions and lightened their burden by allowing it during the night.

In this way, the general implication of the sentence of apparel is made subordinate to the fast; and thus is limited to the nighttime only (when there is no fast).

In short, the sentence of apparel is not a reason for this permission; rather it is the reason or benefit of copulation per se. The main aim of the whole verse is to explain why copulation was allowed in the night of fast. And the sentence beginning with they are an apparel and ending on forgiven you taken together show this reason, not any single sentence alone. And this reason is not found in the rule which was followed before this permission.

Qur'an: Wherefore, now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you:

This is an order preceded by prohibition; thus it means permission. The verse begins with the words, It is made lawful to you. The meaning, therefore, is, "from now on you are allowed to establish sexual relations with them". Ibtigha means 'to seek', 'to desire'. Seek what Allah has written for you means seeking the children which Allah has written to give to the mankind. Allah created in human being the desire to copulate and made it the means of that gift (of children) and to some extent put them under the pressure of that desire. When a couple engages in that action, they are in reality seeking what Allah has written for them, even if at that time their only aim is to satisfy their sexual desire or lust. It is like taking food and drink. Allah had written that their lives, growth and health depend on food and drink, and that remains the goal of nature even when they, at that particular time, do not look further than satisfying their hunger and thirst or to pamper their gustatory pleasure. This is the compulsion put on them by Allah in all such matters.

It has been said: What Allah has written for you means "what Allah has allowed to you"; and the

implication is that they should take advantage of this permission. Allah likes His servants to take advantage of His permission, as He likes them to obey His compulsory commandments.

But his view is not acceptable, because we have not seen a single instance in the Qur'an where "writing" is used for 'permission'.

Qur'an: and eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct unto you from the black thread (of night) at dawn-break:

There are two dawns: the first is called the 'false' dawn because it vanishes in a short time. It is also called the tail of the wolf because it looks as if a tail is raised. This false dawn is a beam of light like-a vertical column; it appears at the end of the night on the eastern horizon when the sun reaches an angle of 18 degrees below the horizon. Then it gives way to a horizontal line of light which looks as if a white thread has been stretched on the horizon. This is the second dawn. It is called 'true' dawn because it truthfully announces the arrival of day-time and is connected with sunrise.

Obviously, the white thread in this verse means the "true dawn"; and "at" (min), in "at dawn-break" (mina'l-fafri), is explanatory so as to clarify this phrase. This sentence is metaphorical and it likens the streak of light, stretched across the horizon, to a white thread and the darkness of night adjoining that light to a black thread.

This shows that the limit of the given permission is exactly the beginning of the true dawn; because soon after, when the sun comes nearer to the horizon, both threads disappear. There remains neither the white thread nor the black.

Qur'an: Then complete the fast until night:

As the start of the fast was from the dawn-break, there was no need to say, 'keep the fast during daytime'. Instead its other limit is now mentioned in these words.

Complete the fast shows that the fast of one day is one unit, a single act of worship which is not made up of a various parts. There is a difference between completion (tamam) and perfection (kamal). Completion (tamam) the word used in this verse, means that a single thing (which is not made of such parts which may have separate functions) finally comes into being. Perfection (kamal), means that a single thing (which has various parts and every part has a separate function) finally comes into being. Allah says: This day I perfected (akmaltu) for you your religion and completed (atmamtu) My favor on you (5:4). The religion is a collection of various things like prayer, fast, hajj etc. and all these have a separate effect; therefore, the religion was "perfected", But the favor of Allah is the one thing without any parts (as I will explain under that verse);

therefore, it was "completed".

Qur'an: And associate not with them while you are confined in the mosques:

ukuf and I'tikaf both mean "to keep close to". When used with the name of a place, they mean to remain continuously in that place. I'takaf is an act of worship. When in i'tikaf one must remain inside a mosque, not going out without a genuine reason (e.g. to relieve oneself); and fasting is an essential part of this act of worship.

As the Muslims were given permission to have sexual relations with their wives in the night of fast, there was a possibility that they might think that that permission extended to the nights of i'tikaf also, when they were inside a mosque. This sentence removed the chance of any such misunderstanding.

Qur'an: These are the limits (prescribed by) Allah; therefore, draw not near them:

Hadd (limit) literally means "to keep from", "to restrict". All its uses carry this meaning; for example, haddu 'ssayf (edge of sword), Waddu 'd-dar (boundary of the house), haddu l-fuilir (punishment of immorality) etc. Therefore the phrase, haddu 'l-fujur mentioned in the verse, means, the "restrictive ordinances of Allah" and the command not to go near them figuratively means not to commit that sin. In short, it says: you should not commit the sins mentioned here, i.e., eating, drinking and copulating during the prohibited hours; you should not trespass beyond the limits ordained for you; you should not neglect the fast or the guarding of yourselves against evil in the period of that special worship.

TRADITIONS

As Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Food and copulation were unlawful in the month of Ramadan at night after sleeping." (That is, if one prayed the prayer of al-'Isha' and slept without breaking one's fast, then, he was not allowed to eat or drink even if he awoke later in the night. And sexual intercourse was unlawful in the month of Ramadan both in the day and in the night.) There was a companion of the Messenger of Allah, Khawwat ibn Jubayr al-Ansari. He was brother of Abdullah ibn Jubayr, who in the battle of Uhud, was deputed by the Messenger of Allah at the mouth of the mountain-pass with fifty archers; most of them left him, but he remained at this station with only twelve soldiers and was martyred there. His brother Khawwat ibn Jubayr, was an aged and weak person, and was fasting with the Messenger of Allah in the battle of the Khandaq (Trench). In the evening he came to his house and asked: "Do you have any food?" They said: "Do not go to sleep; we shall prepare some food for you." There was some delay in cooking and he was overcome with sleep before breaking his fast. When he woke up he said to his family: "Now eating is forbidden to me tonight." Next day, he presented himself at the Khandaq and fainted. The Messenger of Allah looked at him

and felt pity for him. Also, there were some youths who had secretly indulged in sexual relations at night in the month of Ramadan. Therefore Allah sent down (the verse); It is made lawful to you on the night of fast to go in unto your wives ... Thus Allah allowed sexual relations during the nights of the month of Ramadan, and eating after going to sleep up to the dawn-break, as He said, until the white thread becomes distinct from the black thread (of night) at dawn-break. The Imam said: "It means the whiteness of the day from the darkness of the night." [at-Tafsir, al-Qummi]

The author says: The sentences (given in bracket), starting with "That is" and ending upto "both in the day and in the night", are explanatory notes of the narrator of this tradition.

This episode is narrated in other traditions also, by al-Kulayni, al-Ayyashi and others. All these traditions say that the words, eat and drink ... were revealed because of the event of Khawwat ibn Jubayr al-Ansari; and the words It is made lawful to you ... were revealed because of the secret doings of some Muslim youths.

There is another tradition in ad-Durru l-manthur from various commentators and traditionalists from Bara ibn 'Azib who said: "It was the custom among the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that if someone fasted and the time of Iftar (breaking the fast) came but he went to sleep before breaking his fast, he did not eat that night and fasted the next day without eating anything, till the next evening came. Once Qays ibn Sarmah al-Ansari fasted, and that day he had been working in the field. The time came for breaking the fast and he came to his wife and asked: 'Do you have any food? He could not keep awake and went to sleep. When his wife returned and found him sleeping she said: 'Woe unto you! Did you go to sleep? In the noon of the next day, he fainted. This was reported to the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Then this verse was sent down: It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast . . . at dawn-break. And the Muslims were extremely happy at it."

The author says: This story is narrated by other chains also. In some of them the name is given as Abu Qubays ibn Sarmah; in others, Sarmah ibn Malik al-Ansari. There is some variation in the story also.

Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas, as follows:- "The Muslims were forbidden (sexual relations with) women and food in the month of Ramadan once they had prayed the prayer of al-'isha', till the next evening. But some of them ate food and had sexual intercourse with women after the al-isha one Ramadan; one of them was 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. Then they complained about it to the Messenger of Allah. Therefore Allah sent down the verse, It is made lawful to you- be in contact with them. [ad-Durru l-manthur]

The author says: There are numerous traditions from Sunni chains about this matter; most of them mention the name of 'Umar. All say with one voice that the rule about sexual intercourse in the night of Ramadan was the same as that about food and drink: All of these were allowed

before the sleep, forbidden after it. But the obvious meaning of the first tradition is that the sexual intercourse was completely forbidden in the month of Ramadan, during the night as well as in the daytime; and the food and drink were allowed before sleeping, forbidden after that. And the context of the verse supports this tradition. Had the sexual relation been like food and drink (allowed before sleeping and forbidden after) it would have been necessary to mention here the farthest limit of the permission, as was done about food and drink (eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct...) But it only says: It is made lawful to you on the night of the fast to go in unto your wives, without putting any limit to it. It shows that previously they were forbidden to indulge in this act the whole "night of the fast".

Some traditions say (and the one quoted last is one of them) that the Muslims were acting unfaithfully not only in the matter of sexual relations, but also in food and drink. But the sequence of the sentences of the verse does not support it. The sentence, Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully... is put in the middle of the permission for sexual relations and the words eat and drink appear after this topic has ended, Therefore the "acting unfaithfully" cannot be connected with eating and drinking.

Verily, the Messenger of Allah said: "The dawn is of two kinds. The one which looks like the tail of the wolf does not allow anything, nor prohibits anything. But the long one which covers the horizon allows the prayer (of dawn) and prohibits food." [ad-Durru l-manthur]

The author says: The traditions of this meaning are nearly mutawatir from Sunni and Shi'ah sources; as are the ones about i'tikaf and prohibition of sexual intercourse in that period.

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verse 188

And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means; neither seek to gain access thereby to the authorities, so that you may swallow up a portion of the property of men wrongfully while you know (188)

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means.

Akl (to eat, to swallow up) metaphorically means 'to take hold of, or to make use of'. The reason of this metaphorical use is that eating is the most common and the earliest natural desire; as soon

as his life begins, man feels the need of food and then gradually proceeds to other needs like clothing, habitation and marriage, etc. Acquiring food is his first natural action and willful doing. That is why if one uses or takes a thing it is said one has eaten it, and especially so in the case of wealth and property. And this figure of speech is common to all languages.

Mal (wealth, property) literally means the possession which is desired. It seems that its root is mayl (inclination, desire, bent), because it is one of those things to which the heart is inclined, which it desires. Baynakum (among yourselves, (bayn) means the gap between two or more things. Wrong (batil) is opposite of truth (haqq) haqq means a thing which is confirmed.

The proviso among yourselves added after the command do not swallow up your property shows that wealth is for all the people; but Allah has distributed it among them - a just distribution - by promulgating laws based on justice and equity, which cut at the roots of corruption and immorality. If anybody trespasses the limits put by these laws, it will be invalid and wrong. This verse, in a way, explains the verse: He it is who created for you all that is in the earth (2:29).

Your property (amwalakum), History and ancient tradition show that ever since man put his foot on this globe, society has recognized the right to property and upheld it in one way or other. By using this possessive pronoun, Allah confirms this right. This principle has been mentioned in the Qur'an in more than a hundred places, in various words like dominion (mulk) property (mal), the preposition for (L) used for possession, and istikhkaf (to make man Allah's deputy on earth); but there is no need to quote the references here. Likewise all the verses which regulate selling, trade and other commercial dealings implicitly recognize this right. example: and Allah has allowed trading (2:275), do not swallow up your. Property among yourselves by wrongful means, except that it be trading by your mutual consent (4:29), and the trade dullness of which you fear (9:25) and other such references. And mutawatir traditions support it.

Qur'an: neither seek to gain access thereby to the authorities, so that you may swallow up a portion of the property of man wrongfully while you know.

Idla (translated here as "to gain access") literally means to send the bucket (dalu) down into the well for drawing water. Its metaphorical use in this verse implies offering money, etc., to the authorities to induce them to give judgment in favor of the bribe-giver. It is a very nice allegory. The desired judgment is the water in the depth of the well; the bribe is the bucket which is sent down to bring the desired result.

A portion (fariqan) It is a part separated from the whole.

This sentence is in conjunction with the word swallow up; therefore, grammatically it is a prohibitory verb, and hence the sign of quiescence.

Another possibility: The "and" (wa) (the conjunction word not appearing in the above translation) may be taken to mean "with" (ma'), and further it may be presumed that after it, the word that (inna) is implied. In this case the whole verse will be one sentence and will mean: ". . . by wrongful means with seeking to gain access. . ." Thus, the verse prohibits the mutual understanding between the bribe-giver and bribe-taker so that they wrongfully swallow up the property of the people by sharing it between themselves – the bribe-taker taking the portion which has been offered to him, and the giver usurping the other portion - while they know that it is wrong and unjust.

TRADITIONS

In a tradition, as-Sadiq (a.s.) says about this verse: "The Arabs used to gamble with their wives and property. So, Allah prohibited them to do so." [al-Kafi]

Abu Basir says: "I asked Abu 'Abdullah (a.s.) the meaning of the words of Allah in His book: and do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means; neither seek to gain access thereby to the authorities. He (the Imam) said: 'O Abu Basir! Verily Allah knew that there would be in this ummah judges who would do injustice. Verily, He did not mean (here) judges of a just authority, but He meant those of an unjust authority. O Abu Muhammad! (i.e. Abu Basir) If you had a right against someone and you summoned him to the judges of a just authority, but he did not agree to it and compelled you to put your case before the judges of an unjust authority, so that they might decide in his favor, then that man would be among those who had resorted to the Judgment of the taghut (Satan). And it is the word of Allah: Have you not observed those who think that they believe in what has been sent down unto you and what was sent down before you? They intend to resort to the Judgment of taghut (Satan), though they were commanded to deny (reject) him ... (4:60)' " [ibid.]

There is a tradition from Abu Ja'far (a.s.): "The meaning of 'wrongful means' is the false oath with which property is usurped." [Majam u l-bayan]

The author says: All the above traditions give some examples, but the verse is general.

Discourse on Social Science

All organic things, vegetable, animal and human beings make use of other things to sustain their lives. They actively take advantage of those surrounding things which may help in their continued existence.

We have never heard of a thing which exists but is not active, or an action which is done without

the doer expecting its benefit to return to him. Remark the vegetable kingdom which does whatever it does with the single aim of benefiting from it in its existence, growth, and reproduction. Similarly, all animals and human beings do whatever they do with the aim of getting benefit one way or another, even if that benefit be only in the imagination and thought.

Plants have been taught by the Creator, and animals and men know by their instinct that they cannot use any material for the fulfillment of their natural needs and the protection of their existence unless that material has a very special relation to them; in other words, unless it belongs to them. They know that one deed cannot be done by two doers. Accordingly, man and animal etc. prohibit others from interfering in their affairs and do not allow anything to utilize what they want to utilize for themselves. This is the foundation of this special relation - namely, possession which is recognized by one and all. Hence the words 'my', 'your', etc. etc.

For a further proof, look at any animal fighting to remove others from its territory, its prey, or its mate. Again, see children quarrelling for, and defending, whatever food, or toy, they have got. Even a suckling infant does not allow another infant to suck at the same breast. This is the lesson taught by nature. When man, being a social animal, established society, that natural instinct was bound to become more pronounced; and eventually became a well-organized and well balanced system that took the shape of social ethics and moral values; gradually the basic concept of that special relation branched off into various kinds with different names: the monetary relation was named 'property', the non-monetary, 'right', and so on.

Human beings may have different views on the legality of various means of acquiring property, like inheritance, trade, confiscation by the ruling authority, etc., or on the suitability of the owner, whether he is adult or minor, sane or idiot, a single person or a group, and so on. But there is no escape from recognizing the basic principle of ownership. That is why even those who apparently reject the idea of ownership, have only transferred it from the individual to the society or the state.

Even then, they have not been able to abolish private ownership totally; and they will never be able to do so, because it is the verdict of nature, and if nature is rejected, man will perish.

We shall discuss, God willing, in their proper places the details of this basic principle, according to the means of its acquirement, such as trade, profit, inheritance, war-booty, collection, etc. and according to the status of the owner, i.e. adult or minor, etc.

They ask you concerning the new moons. Say, they are (indications of) times fixed for men and (for) the pilgrimage. And it is not righteousness that you should enter the houses from their backs; but righteousness is the one who guards himself (against evil); and enter the houses by their doors and fear Allah, so that you may be successful (189).

COMMENTARY

QUR'AN: They ask you ... the pilgrimage:

Ahillah is plural of hilal (crescent). The moon is called hilal at the beginning of the lunar month when it comes away from the direct rays of the sun; it is named crescent (hilal) on the first and second nights according to one group, while some others say that it is named so for the first three nights; still others say that this name continues until a faint circle of light shows the outline of the moon. A fourth group says that is a "crescent" until its light brightens the night; this occurs on the seventh night, after which it is simply called moon (qamar) and on the fourteenth night it becomes full moon (badr). Its general name in Arabic is zibriqan.

The Arabs say istahalla 's-sabiyy when the newly born child cries soon after birth. Also they say ahalla 'l-qawmu bi l-hajj when the pilgrims call out loudly labbayk Allahumma labbayk. Thus the root H-L-L gives the idea of raising one's voice, and the new moon is called hilal because people hail it and raise their voice to point it out. Mawaqit is plural of miqa which means the time appointed for a work. It also means the place appointed for it, as we say: The miqat of the Syrians or the Yemenis, which means the place where they wear the robes of ihram for pilgrimage. In this verse it has the first meaning, i.e., the appointed time.

They ask you concerning the new moons. It does not say what the question was. Some say that they wanted to know the reality of the moon and why it appeared in different shapes from night to night. Others think that they wished to know the reason for the reappearance of the new moon after its disappearing at the end of the month.

But the word used is ahillah (new moons) in the plural, and it proves that the question was not about the reality of the moon or its various phases; because in that case it would have been appropriate to say "they ask you concerning the moon" not "the new moons". And if the question was about the reason of the new moon, the proper words would be "they ask you concerning the new moon". In both cases the use of the plural would be inappropriate. This plural "new moons" proves that the question was: What is the reason or benefit of the appearance of the moon as crescent after crescent and of its marking the lunar months? This question was shortened into "new moons" because it is the new moon which starts a new month; and then its benefit was

explained.

This question may be inferred from the reply: say they are (indications of) times fixed for men and (for) pilgrimage. The times fixed for various actions and activities are the 'months', and not the various shapes of the moon but about the lunar months which are marked by the new moons. And Allah explained that these months were the times fixed for the benefit of man in affairs of their material and spiritual lives. Man, by his nature, is obliged to measure all his activities by time. It was, therefore, necessary to divide time (which is the yard-stick of his actions) into various short and long portions. The mercy of Allah which looks after the affairs of His creatures, and guides them towards the betterment of their lives, effected this division- by- creating night, day, month, season and year etc. The most obvious and the clearest division is the grouping of the days in the lunar months. Everyone may benefit from it, be he a scholar or an ignorant person, a Bedouin or a city-dweller; everyone can observe the beginning of the new moon if his eyesight is correct; and everyone may easily keep its count. These benefits are conspicuously absent in the solar calendar: man did ' not wake to this idea, and could not come to grips with its complicated reckoning, until many centuries after human society came into being. Moreover, not every one can always know the dates of the solar calendar.

Therefore, the lunar months are the times fixed and prescribed for men for their use in their material and spiritual affairs, and especially so for the hajj (pilgrimage) because it is performed in the known months.

The hajj (pilgrimage) has especially been mentioned here as an introduction to the topic which is dealt with in the following sentences.

Qur'an: And it is not righteousness ... by their doors.

It is known from the reports that in the days before Islam it was the custom of some Arabs that after Wearing the robes of ihram for pilgrimage, if they had to enter their houses for any reason, they did not use the doors, but cut a hole in the wall for that purpose. Islam disapproved that practice and told them to enter the houses from their doors. The verse has been revealed in a way that the above-mentioned report may be believed to be true.

Had there been no such reliable report, these words could be interpreted metaphorically as a prohibition of performing religious rites in any way other than the prescribed one. For example, pilgrimage should not be done but in its prescribed months, fast should not be kept in any month other than Ramadan, and so on. In that case, the sentence would have been complementary to the previous one. The meaning would have been: These months are the times prescribed for the religious deeds fixed for them, and it is not permitted to transfer those deeds to other months, like doing hajj (pilgrimage) outside the prescribed months or fasting in a month other than

Ramadan.

But the first interpretation is supported by the traditions. The words, it is not righteousness to enter the houses from their backs, proves that this practice was never approved of by the religion; otherwise it would not have been said to be against righteousness. It was just a bad custom of the pre-Islamic times; and Allah said that it was not righteousness. Rather, righteousness was the fear of Allah and guarding oneself against evil.

but righteousness is the one who guards himself (against evil): Apparently, the sentence should have been "but righteousness is guarding oneself (against evil)", but Allah used the expression the one who guards himself to show that the real virtue is in practicing "piety", and not in its abstract idea. It is like the verse: It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the east and the west but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah (2:177)

and enter the houses by their doors: It is not a compulsory order; it is a guidance that entering into houses from their doors is the proper method, as it is the usual and recognized way. People build houses and put doors in them for this very purpose, and there is no reason why a hole should be drilled for entering into, or going out of, the house. This sentence admonishes them not to follow a foolish custom which goes against common sense. In short, the sentence does not say that it is obligatory on every one to enter into a house through the door. It just tells them that it is the proper way. Of course, if one enters into a house by a way other than the door, thinking that this custom is a part of religion, then it will be an "unlawful innovation".

Qur'an: and fear Allah, so that you may be successful.

It was mentioned in the beginning of this surah (chapter) that taqwa (piety) is virtue which gathers in its fold all ranks of the faith and all stages of perfection. Obviously, not every stage and rank leads one to spiritual success and happiness, as do the last stages which remove all shades of polytheism and misdirection. It is these last stages which guide one to success and bring the good tidings of happiness. That is why Allah said, so that you may be successful, using the word 'may'.

Also, it is possible to interpret the words, "fear Allah", here as following this particular order, and discarding the practice of going into houses from their backs.

TRADITIONS

Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The people asked the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) concerning the new moons. Then this verse was revealed, They ask you concerning the new moons. Say, 'they are (indications of) times fixed for men'; they know from them the time their loans are due, the waiting period (number of months a women must

wait after divorce or the death of her husband before the next marriage) of their women and, the time of their pilgrimage." [adDurru 'I-manthur] Some others from different chains are from Abu 'I-'Aliyah, Qatadah and others.

There is another tradition that someone asked the Prophet about the various phases of the moon; so this verse was sent down. But we have already commented on this report that it is against the apparent meaning of the verse, and, therefore, is not worthy of consideration.

There is a tradition reported by Waki', al-Bukhari and Ibn Jarir from al-Bara'. In the days of "ignorance", when they wore the ihram, they used to go into the house from its back. Therefore, Allah sent down the verse And it is not righteousness that you should enter the houses from their backs; but righteousness is the one who guards himself (against evil); and enter the houses by their doors. [ad-Durru I-manthur]

There is another tradition reported by Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Hakim (and he has said that it is "correct") from Jabir. He said: "The Quraysh were called hums (enthusiastic, strenuous), and they used to enter by the doors in the condition of ihram. The ansar (helpers) and other Arabs did not enter from the door in ihram. Once the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) was in a garden, and came out from its door, and Qutbah ibn 'Amir al-Ansari came out with him. The people said, 'O Messenger of Allah!

Verily Qutbah ibn 'Amir is a sinner, he came out with you from the door.' The Prophet asked him: 'Why did you do so?' He replied: 'I saw you doing it, so I did as you did.' The Prophet said: 'I am an ahmas (i.e. Qurayshite).' He said: 'But my religion is your religion. Then Allah sent down: it is not righteousness that you should enter the houses from their backs. [ibid]

The author says: Other traditions of nearly the same meaning have been narrated from other chains. Hums is the plural of ahmas from himsah which means "hardiness". The tribe of Quraysh was called hums because of their zeal in the matter of their religion, or because of their bravery and strength.

Apparently, this tradition shows that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) had allowed the continuation of that custom by non-Qurayshites before this incident; and that is why he admonished him in these words: "Why did you do so?" If we accept this view then this verse was revealed to abrogate a rule which was enforced not by a verse but by the order of the Prophet. But you already know that the verse does not support this view. It says, it is not righteousness that you should enter . . . It is unimaginable that Allah or His Apostle on divine command enforced a rule and then Allah at the time of its abrogation condemned and criticized it as being against righteousness.

al-Baqir (a.s.) said about the word of Allah, and enter the houses by their doors: "Allah means that every affair, whatever it may be, should be approached in its (proper) way". [al-Mahasin]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The Imams (al-awliya) are the doors of Allah, from which Allah is approached; and had they not been there, Allah would not have been known; and it is through them that Allah has established His proof over His creatures." [al-Kafi]

The author says: This tradition gives an example of the general meaning of this verse, which has been explained in the previous one. There is no doubt that the verse is general in its meaning, even if it was sent down on a particular occasion. The Imam said: "had they not been there, Allah would not have been known". This refers to the true explanation of religion and the complete Call (Mission of the Prophet) which are with them. This sentence has a deeper meaning also; maybe we shall explain it later on. There are numerous traditions of the same meaning as given in these two.

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verses 190-195

And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you and do not exceed the limits. Verily, Allah loves not those who exceed the limit. (190) And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out from whence they drove you out; and mischief (disbelief) is more grievous than slaughter; and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you therein; but if they do fight you then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers. (191) But if they desist, then verily Allah is forgiving, Merciful. (192) And fight with them until there is no (more) mischief (disbelief), and religion be only for Allah; but if they desist then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors. (193) The sacred month for the sacred month and reprisal (is lawful) in all sacred things; whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict the like aggression on him as he has inflicted on you; and fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who guard (against evil). (194) And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands; and do good; verily Allah loves those who do good. (195)

GENERAL COMMENT

The context of the verses shows that they were revealed together. The whole talk has only one aim: permission, for the first time, of fighting with the polytheists of Mecca. These verses refer to driving them out from whence they drove the believers out, to disbelief and to reprisal; they prohibit fighting with them at the Sacred Mosque unless they fight the believers in it. All these

matters were connected with the polytheists of Mecca. Also, the sentence: fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, deserves more attention. It is not a condition, i.e., it does not mean, "fight with them if they fight with you". Nor is it a restrictive clause (as some people think) meaning, "fight with the men, and not with their women and children who are not in a position to fight with you", because nobody "fights" with those who are unable to fight back. Had it been the aim of the sentence, it would have been proper to say "do not kill them". Therefore, the words those who fight with you only refer to a fact - fight those who are presently engaged in fighting against you. And it points to the polytheists of Mecca.

The verses have the same significance as the following verses: Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made, for they have been oppressed, and most surely Allah is able to help them; those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, Our Lord is Allah (22:39-40). These verses also contain the initial (but unconditional) permission to fight with the fighting polytheists.

These five verses together promulgate a single law covering all its limits and details. And fight in the way of Allah is the basic law; and do not exceed the limit puts disciplinary restriction on it; And kill them wherever you find them defines the limits of pressure; and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you therein puts a restriction according to the place; and fight with them until there is no more mischief (disbelief) shows its duration; The sacred month for the sacred month, and reprisal (is lawful) in all sacred things explains that this legislation is based on the principle of retaliation in fighting and killing, it is paying them in their own coin; And spend in the way of Allah makes the believers responsible for the financial preparations for war: they must spend for their own preparation and for that of others. Therefore, it seems that all the five verses were sent down together about one subject. It is wrong to say (as some have done) that some of these verses abrogate the others; or that they were revealed separately on different occasions. In fact, the aim of all these verses is one: permission to fight against the polytheists of Mecca who were fighting the believers.

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you:

qital means attempting to kill someone who is attempting to kill you. This fight was in the way of Allah because its aim was to establish the religion and to raise the belief of monotheism. It was an act of worship done to gain the favour of Allah,, and not to usurp the property of people or to damage their dignity. War in Islam is basically defensive; it protects the right of humanity sanctioned by nature, as will be explained later. Defense is by nature a limited venture; that is why Allah said soon after this permission, and do not exceed the limit.

Qur'an: and do not exceed the limit. Verily, Allah loves not those who exceed the limit:

i'tida' means going beyond the boundary. The Arabs say ada and i'tada when someone goes beyond the boundary. This prohibitory order is general and covers all the situations where one may be said to exceed the limit, like fighting someone before calling him to follow the path of truth, or starting a war, or killing women and children, or not desisting from war when ordered: Its other examples are explained in the traditions of the Prophet.

Qur'an: And kill them wherever than slaughter:

thiqafah means "to find". This sentence is similar to the verse: then slay the polytheists wherever you find them (9:6). Fitnah is the means of testing a thing. It is also used for the test itself as well as its related things like difficulty and hardship. It is also used for punishment, and the crimes and sins which bring that punishment in their wake, like polytheism, disbelief and going astray. The Qur'an has used this word in various places in all these meanings.

In this verse the word means ascribing a partner to Allah and disbelieving in His Messenger and persecuting and oppressing the Messenger of Allah and the believers as was done by the polytheists of Mecca before and after the Hijrah.

The verse says: Put the utmost pressure on the polytheists by killing them wherever they be found until they are compelled to go out of their town and emigrate from their land, as they did to you. And whatever they did to you was more grievous, because it was simply a mischief and an act of infidelity; and mischief and infidelity are more grievous than killing. Killing only terminates the life of this world while infidelity terminates this life as well as the next one and destroys both worlds.

Qur'an: and do not fight with them . . . recompense of the disbelievers:

It prohibits fighting with them at the Sacred Mosque (Masjidu l-Haram), to protect its sanctity, as long as they respect that sanctity. Therein refers to the Sacred Mosque.

Qur'an: Then if they desist, then verily Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Intiha means to desist from, to abstain from. If they desist means "if they desist from fighting near the Sacred Mosque", because the sentence is mentioned immediately after that topic. It does not mean desisting from fighting altogether by accepting Islam and obeying its commands. However this topic comes soon after it and then Allah will refer to it in these words, but if they desist then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors.

Thus the two sentences refer to two completely different matters, and there is no repetition.

Then verily Allah is forgiving, Merciful. This sentence puts the cause in the place of the effect. The full meaning is: "But if they desist from fighting at the Sacred Mosque, then you must desist from it, because Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

Qur'an: And fight with them until there is no more mischief (disbelief) and the religion be only for Allah:

This defines the time limit of the fighting. Fitnah (translated here as 'disbelief' and 'mischief') means here 'ascribing a partner to Allah and worshipping idols', as was the custom of the polytheists of Mecca, who compelled others to do likewise. This meaning is inferred from the next sentence, and religion be only for Allah.

This verse is similar to the verse: And fight with them until there is no mischief (disbelief), and the religion be only for Allah; but if they desist, then verily Allah sees what they do. And if they turn back, then know that Allah is your Master; The Most Excellent Master and the Most Excellent Helper (8:39-40).

This verse shows that it is obligatory to call them to the right path before the war. If they accept the call, there will be no fighting; but if they reject it then there is no Master except Allah, and He is the most excellent Master and the most excellent Helper; He helps his believing servants. It is known that fighting is prescribed so that the religion be only for Allah. Such a fighting cannot be started until the adversaries are first invited to come onto the right path, i.e. the religion based upon monotheism.

Some people wrote that this verse was abrogated by the verse: Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, from among those who were given the Book, until they pay the jizyah (tributary tax) with their hand while they are in a state of subjection (9:29).

But there is no question of either verse abrogating the other, because they deal with different subjects. The verse under discussion is, as explained earlier, about the Meccan polytheists and does not cover the People of the Book who are referred to in verse 9:29. And the religion be only for Allah means that idol worship be abolished and the oneness of Allah be accepted. The people of the Book do believe in One Creator, We know their belief is in reality disbelief as Allah says that they: do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth. But Islam is content with their mere profession of monotheism. Fighting with them was ordained not to make them believe in monotheism, but simply so that they might pay tribute to the Muslims, thus raising the true creed above their creed and making Islam victorious over all religions.

Qur'an: but if they desist then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors:

If they desist from disbelief in what you believe in, then cease fighting with them, because there is no hostility except against the oppressors. In this verse also, the cause has been mentioned in place of the effect. Instead of saying "then cease fighting with them" it points out the cause that, there should be no hostility except against the oppressors. It is like the verse: But if they repent and establish the prayer and pay the zakat, then they are your brethren in faith (9:11).

Qur'an: The sacred month for the sacred month and reprisal (is lawful) in all sacred things:

hurumat (sacred things refers to the sanctity of the sacred month, the sanctity of the "boundary" (haram) of Mecca, and the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque. If the Meccan polytheists disregard the sanctity of the sacred month by fighting in it - and they did violate its sanctity when they prevented the Prophet and his companions from pilgrimage (umrah) in the years of Hudaibiyah (6 A.H.), and attacked them with arrows and stones - then the believers are allowed to fight them in that month and it would not be deemed disrespectful towards it. The believers are fighting in the way of Allah and are obeying His Command to raise up His word. Likewise, if the infidels violate the sanctity of the boundary of Mecca or the Sacred Mosque by fighting in it or in that area then the believers may hit back at them in that place and that area.

The sacred month for the sacred month describes a particular example, followed by a general observation, and reprisal (is lawful) in all sacred things. This in its turn is followed by even more general principle, whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict the like aggression on him as he has inflicted on you.

The meaning, thus, will be: Allah has sanctioned reprisal in the sacred month because He has sanctioned it for all sacred things. And He has sanctioned reprisal for all sacred things because He has made it lawful for His servants to inflict aggression equal to the aggression inflicted upon them.

Then He exhorts them to remain steadfastly cautious when inflicting aggression in reprisal, lest they trespass the limit. After all, punishing an oppressor seems sweet, and all animal instincts are roused when one is engaged in taking revenge. There are more chances of deviation from justice, by the use of excessive force, and by disregard of the limits put by the religion. But the fact has already been mentioned that Allah loves not those who exceed the limit. And the believers are most in need of the love of Allah His patronage and His help. Therefore, they are told to fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who guard (against evil).

The question arises: Why Allah sanctioned acting aggressively when He does not love those who

act aggressively (or, as translated above, exceed the limit)? Of course, acting aggressively is to be condemned, but only when it is not in response to an aggression. But if it is in reprisal of an aggression, then it is not "exceeding the limit" or "acting aggressively". It is defending oneself from degradation, and liberating oneself from the fetters of slavery, oppression and injustice. It is like showing pride before a proud man, or the open utterance of evil in speech by the one who has been wronged.

Qur'an: And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands.

It is the command to spend wealth for waging war in the way of Allah. The clause, in the way of Allah attached to "spending" has the same significance as when attached to "fighting" in 2:190. "With your hands" (biaydikum); with (b . . .) here is extra, added for emphasis. The meaning is "and cast not your hands in perdition". The hand is a symbol of power, ability and strength; and the verse says: do not nullify or waste your strength by not spending money in preparation for war. Another interpretation: "with" (b ...) signifies the cause or means; and the object of the verb is yourselves (anfusakum) which is deleted but understood. Accordingly, the meaning will be as translated above: and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands.

Tahlukah and hilak are synonymous; both mean to perish, to fall in perdition. When man becomes in such a condition that he does not know where he is, this word is used. Tahlukah is with the paradigm of taf'ulah There is' no other infinitive verb in Arabic with this paradigm.

The order is, anyhow, general; and it prohibits any commission or omission which may cause perdition, whether it is on the side of excess or deficiency. For example, miserliness and avarice when preparing for war would weaken the fighters and make the army of Islam the target of the enemy; and many would be killed. On the other hand, extravagance in expenditure would bring poverty and misery to such a spender, degrade him in society and make life unbearable. Both these actions are prohibited by this verse.

Allah finished this talk on "doing good", and said: and do good; verily Allah loves the doers of good. Doing good does not mean desisting from fighting, or clemency in killing the enemies of the religion etc. It means doing a work in its proper way: Fight when fighting is required; restrain yourselves when restraint is preferred; be strict where strictness is demanded by reason, and forgive where forgiveness will not embolden the enemy. In short, repulsing the oppressor by the most reasonable means is to do good for humanity, because this repulsion guarantees humanity its due right, and defends the religion which would improve man's condition in both worlds.

Further, desisting from 'exceeding the limits while obtaining the due right is another good action. And love of Allah is the final good of the religion; and it is essential for every follower of religion to be worthy of the love of Allah by obeying His command and following His Apostle. Allah says in

the Qur'an: Say "if you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins" (3:30).

These five verses - and they are about fighting - began with the prohibition of exceeding the limit and that: Verily Allah loves not those who exceed the limit, and ended with the command to do good and that: Verily Allah loves those who do good. Its delicacy and subtlety need no explanation.

TRADITIONS

Ibn 'Abbas said about the verse, And fight in the way of Allah . . . : "This verse was revealed about the treaty of Hdaybiyah. And it was like this: The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w,a.) and his companions came out in the year when they wanted to perform 'umrah. They were one thousand and four hundred persons. They proceeded till they reached Hdaybiyah. There the polytheists prevented them from reaching the Sacred House. Therefore, they slaughtered their sacrificial animals at Hdaybiyah. The polytheists made an agreement with them that they were to go back that year; they would return for 'umrah next year when they would be allowed to enter and remain in Mecca for three days to perform tawaf and whatever religious rites they wished.

"The (Messenger of Allah) thereon returned to Medina. Next year the Prophet and his companions made preparations for the 'umrah which had become qada the previous year. At the same time, they were afraid that the Qurayshites would not honor the agreement and would again prevent them from reaching the Sacred House and would fight. The, Messenger of Allah did not like the idea of fighting with them in the Sacred month within the sacred boundary of Mecca. Then Allah sent down this verse." [Majam'u l-bayan]

The author says: Similar traditions have been written in ad-Durru l-manthur with various chains from Ibn 'Abbas and others.

Another tradition from ar-Rabi' ibn Anas and 'Abdu 'r-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam said: This is the first verse revealed about fighting. When it was revealed, the Messenger of Allah used to fight with those who fought with him and desisted from fighting those who refrained from fighting, until was revealed the verses, Kill the polytheists wherever you find them. Thus the above verse was abrogated. [Majam'u l-bayan]

The author says: It is their own opinion. You know that the verse: Kill the polytheists wherever you find them does not abrogate the verse And fight in the way of Allah ... Rather it generalizes an order which was specific.

About the verse, and kill them wherever you find them . This verse was revealed because one of

the companions killed an infidel in the sacred month, The believers condemned him for it. Then Allah made it clear that mischief in religion, i.e. polytheism, is more grievous than killing polytheists in the sacred month, even though it was not allowed. [Majam' u l-bayan]

The author says: You know that the singleness of the context and inter-relationship of all the five verses obviously proves that they were revealed all together, not piecemeal.

There is a tradition from various chains, from Qatadah. He said: "And fight with them until there is no more mischief, i.e. polytheism, and the religion be only for Allah." He said: "till it is said, 'there is none to be worshipped except Allah.' It is this cause which the Messenger of Allah fought for, and called the people to. And we are told that the Prophet used to say, 'Verily Allah ordered me to fight the people till they say, "there is none to be worshipped except Allah", then, if they desisted (from polytheism), there should be no hostility except against the oppressors." He said: "And verily the oppressor, who refuses to say 'there is none to be worshipped except Allah' shall be fought with till he says 'there is none to be worshipped except Allah'." [ad-Durru l-manthur]

The author says: The sentence "And verily the oppressor. . is the saying of Qatadah; he has inferred it from the saying of the Prophet and it is a fine inference.

A similar interpretation has been reported from 'Ikrimah.

Al-Bukhari, Abu sh-Shaykh and Ibn Mardawayh have narrated from Ibn 'Umar that two persons came to him during the fitnah (mischief) of Ibn az-Zubayr and told him: "Verily, people have done (what they have done) and you are the son of 'Umar and a companion of the Prophet; then why do you not come out?" He (Ibn 'Umar) said: "It prevents me (from coming out) that Allah has forbidden (shedding) the blood of my (Muslim) brother." They said: "Has not Allah said, fight with them until there is no (more) mischief?" He said: "We fought until there was no more mischief and the religion became only of Allah ; but you want to fight until there be mischief and the religion be for other than Allah." [ad-Durru l-manthur]

The author says: He was mistaken in the meaning of fitnah and also the two questioners were mistaken. The meaning of fitnah has already been explained. The event of Ibn az-Zubayr was not "polytheism or disbelief", it was an example of disorder on earth, or fighting with one another without any just cause; and believers were not allowed to remain silent about it.

There is in Majma' u l-bayan, under the verse, and fight with them until there is no (more) mischief. "That is polytheism", and the author of Majam' u l-bayan said: "And it is narrated from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.)."

There is a hadith in the Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi about the words of Allah: The sacred month for the

sacred month; al-Ula' ibn al-Fudayl said: "I asked him (the Imam) Whether it was allowed to the Muslims to start fighting with the polytheists in the sacred month. He said: 'If the polytheists start the fight with them by (practically) making it lawful (to fight in the month), then the Muslims will see how they can overcome the polytheists (and do it). And it is the word of Allah, The sacred month for the sacred month and reprisal (is lawful) in all sacred things.' "

Ahmad and Ibn Jarir, and an-Nahhas in his Nasikh, have narrated from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah that he said: "The Messenger of Allah did not fight in the sacred month until he was fought with, and if ever he was in a fight and the sacred month began, he would desist (from fighting) until it came to an end." [adDurru l-manthur]

Mu'awiyah ibn 'Ammar said: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about a man who killed another man, outside the sacred territory and then entered the sacred territory. The Imam (a.s.) said: 'He will not be killed (therein), but he will not be given anything to eat or drink, and will not be sold anything until he comes out of the sacred territory; then he will be given the punishment of his crime'." The narrator said that he then asked the Imam (a.s.): "Then what do you say about a man who killed someone in the sacred territory or stole therein. He (the Imam) said: 'He will be punished inside the sacred territory because he himself did not maintain respect of it. And Allah has said, whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict the like aggression on him.' (The Imam said) 'This is the law about the sacred territory; and Allah said, there should be no hostility except against the aggressors'." [al-Kafi]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allah, and cast not yourselves into perdition.. "If a man spent in the way of Allah all that he had, he would not have done good and God would not lead him to success. Does Allah not say: and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands; and do good; Verily Allah loves those who do good, i.e., who are economical." [ibid].

as-Saduq has narrated from Thabit ibn Anas that he said: "The Messenger of Allah said: obedience to the ruler is obligatory; and one who has left the obedience to the ruler has not obeyed Allah and has entered into His prohibition, as He says: and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands'."

It is narrated in ad-Durru l-manthur with numerous chains, from Aslam Abi Imran that he said: "We were (fighting) at Constantinople; 'Aqbah ibn Amir commanded the Egyptians, and Fudalah ibn 'Ubayd led the Syrians. There came out a big row of the Romans, and we stood in row against them. Then a man from our side attacked the Roman row until he entered in its midst. The people (Muslims) cried out, 'Glory be to Allah! He is casting himself in perdition with his own hands!' Then Abu Ayyub, the companion of the Messenger of Allah, stood up and said: 'O people! You are interpreting this verse in this way, while (the fact is that) it was sent down about us, the group of the Helpers. Verily, when Allah made His religion powerful, and its helpers increased in number,

some of us told others, keeping it secret from the Messenger of Allah, "Verily, our properties are ruined, and (now) Allah had made Islam powerful and its helpers have increased. Therefore, (it would be better) if we stayed in our properties and mended what had been damaged therein." Then Allah revealed to his prophet, refuting what we had said, And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves into perdition with your own hands. So, perdition meant our staying in our properties and repairing them by leaving fighting (in the way of Allah)'."

The author says: The difference of the traditions in interpreting the meaning of this verse supports what we have said that this verse is general and covers both extremes (extravagance and miserliness) in spending, and that it is not confined to spending only, but covers other aspects also where "casting oneself into perdition" can be applied.

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verses 196-203

And complete the hajj (pilgrimage) and umrah for Allah, but if you be prevented, then (send) whatever offering (sacrificial animal) is easy to obtain, and do not have your heads until the offering reaches its destination; but whoever among you is sick or has an affliction in his head, then (he should effect) a redemption by fasting, or alms, or sacrifice. But when you are secure (from the hindrance) then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for the hajj, (he should offer) whatever offering (sacrificial animal) is easy to obtain; but he who cannot find (any offering) should fast for three days during the hajj (pilgrimage) and for seven days when you return; these (make) 'ten (days) perfect; this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque; and fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in requiting (evil). (196). Hajj is the months well-known; so whoever determines (to perform) the hajj therein, then there shall be no sexual intercourse, nor bad language, nor quarrelling during the hajj; and whatever good you do, Allah knows it; and make provision, for surely the best provision is piety (guarding oneself against evil),- and fear Me, O people of understanding! (197) There is no blame on you if you seek bounty from your Lord; then when you march from 'Arafat, remember Allah near the Holy Monument, and remember Him O He has guided you, although before this you were surely of those who had gone astray. (198)'Then march on from whence the people march on, and ask for the forgiveness of Allah; verily, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

(199) So, when you have performed your rites, then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance. For, of men there is he who says, "Our Lord! give us in this world", and for him there shall be no portion in the Hereafter. (200) And among them there is he who says, Our Lord! give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from

the chastisement of the Fire". (201) They shall have (their) portion of what they have earned; and Allah is quick in reckoning. (202) And remember Allah during the counted number of days; then whoever hastens off in two days, there is no sin on him, and whoever tarries (there) there is no sin on him, (this is) for him who guards (himself); and fear Allah, and know that you (all) shall be gathered together unto Him. (203)

COMMENTARY

These verses were revealed during the last pilgrimage (hajjatu-l-wida) performed by the Messenger of Allah. They (the verses) promulgated the pilgrimage of enjoyment hajj 't-tamattu',

Qur'an: And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah:

Completeness (tamam) of a thing is the final part, when added to the other parts it makes that thing whole, the thing becomes itself; and then the expected effects follow. When a thing is started and some of its parts are assembled and then the final part is added, it is called itmam (completion, to complete). Perfection (kamal) is a condition, virtue or characteristic which creates such an effect in a complete thing which would not be found in it without that perfection. When a human foetus receives all its limbs and organs, it is its completion. When he is called knowledgeable, courageous or chaste it is his perfection.

Sometimes, completion (tamam) is used metaphorically in place of perfection (kamal) to show the extreme importance of that virtue or characteristic; the speaker implies that that virtue or is not something extra or external, it is an integral part without which the thing would remain incomplete.

In this verse, the completion of hajj and 'umrah has been used in the first (literal) sense; and it is proved by the following sentence, but if you be prevented. Obviously, this means prevented 'from carrying on the hajj and 'umrah to their last rite'; in other words, 'from completing them'. It cannot mean 'prevented from perfecting them'.

Hajj is a well-known Islamic act of worship, started by the Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.). It continued among the Arabs, and Allah promulgated it for this ummah as a law which would continue up to the Day of Resurrection.

This action begins with ihram and the stay in 'Arafat and then in the Sacred Monument. The pilgrims sacrifice an animal each at Mina, throw stones on the three Stone-pillars, circumambulate around the Ka'bah, pray, and march between the Safa and the Marwah. There are some other obligations as well.

Hajj is of three kinds: hajju l-ifrad, hajju' l-qiran, and hajju 't-tamattu'. This last one was ordained in the last days of the Messenger of Allah.

'Umrah is another act of worship. In 'umrah, the pilgrims visit the House of Allah after putting on ihram from one of the appointed places. Then they go round the Ka'bah, pray, and march between the Safa and the Marwah and finally cut off some nails or hair.

Hajj and 'umrah are acts of worship and cannot be complete except when they are done for the sake of Allah, as is seen in the sentence: And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah.

Qur'an: but if you be prevented . . . offering reaches its destination:

ihzar, means to prevent, to obstruct. The verse refers to being prevented from completing the hajj or 'umrah, after ihram, because of an ailment or enemy. Istisar of a thing means its becoming easy, not difficult; this paradigm implies that that thing acquires easiness for itself. Hady means the animal presented by one man to another or to a place, to seek someone's pleasure with it. It is derived from hadyah (gift, present) or from huda (to lead to destination) It is used in both masculine and feminine forms, hady and hadyah like tamr and tamrah (date, Here it means the animals brought or led by the pilgrims for sacrifice during the hajj.

Qur'an: but whoever among you be sick ... or sacrifices:

This sentence is an offshoot of the preceding one, do not shave your heads . . . It implies that the sickness refers to only that one in which the man would suffer if his head were not shaved.

or has an affliction in his head: The conjunctive "or" shows that the affliction here means a suffering other than sickness, like vermine. It figuratively means to be afflicted with vermine, e.g., lice. These two things (sickness and lice) make it lawful to shave the head; but a redemption should be effected by any of the three ways: fast, alms or sacrifice.

It is narrated in a tradition that the fast is for three days; the alms are to feed six poor persons, and the sacrifice is one goat.

Qur'an: But when you are secure (from the hindrance), then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for the hajj:

It is an offshoot of the sentence: if you be prevented. The meaning is: When you are safe from all hindrances like sickness, an enemy or other such things, then whoever enjoys by 'umrah for the hajj i.e. enjoys because of 'umrah. How does one enjoy because of 'umrah? It is because 'umrah is completed and the, restrictions of ihram are lifted until the time comes to wear ihram again for

hajj. Therefore, by (bi,) in by 'umrah (bi 'l-'umrah) is causative. How does 'umrah cause enjoyment ? It is because when 'umrah is completed, the restrictions of ihram like women, perfume, etc. are lifted, and one may enjoy them till the time comes for the ihram of hajj.

Qur'an : (he should offer) whatever offering is easy to obtain:

Obviously, the sacrifice of the animal is an independent rite. It is not a substitute to make up for not wearing ihram of hajj from an appointed place; as it puts uncalled for strain on the mind to infer such a meaning from this verse.

Someone might say: (he should offer) whatever offering is easy to obtain is based on: then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah, just as an effect is based on its condition. In other words, the offering of the sacrifice is prescribed because of the enjoyment. Moreover, the word enjoyment mentioned in the conditional clause hints that the sacrifice is a recompense of that enjoyment which was allowed to lighten the burden and hardship of pilgrims, and the sacrifice compensates for it.

The author says: The above argument is refuted by the phrase, by the 'umrah, i.e. because the enjoyment is allowed after the 'umrah comes to its end. The argument of lightening the burden could be advanced only if the enjoyments were allowed during the 'umrah. But how can the words lightening the burden be used in this case when the 'umrah is already completed and the restrictions of ihram terminated; and when the ihram of hajj is yet to start?

And if there is any hint, it is only that the sacrificing of the animal has been prescribed because of the ordination of enjoyment by the 'umrah for the hajj. There is no hint whatsoever in it that the sacrifice is to compensate for not doing ihram of hajj from the appointed place (miqat) outside Mecca.

Apparently the verse, then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for the hajj, (he should offer) whatever offering is easy to obtain, mentions hajju 't-tamattu' as an already prescribed act of worship. It is not the original and initial ordination. It mentions enjoyment (tamattu') as an established fact and then, on the basis of it, prescribes the sacrifice of the animal. It says, whosoever performs hajju 't-tamattu, shall offer sacrifice. It does not say, "performs hajju 't-tamattu' and offer sacrifice". The original and initial prescription of tamattu' comes in the verse which comes later, this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque.

Qur'an: but he who cannot find (any offering) should fast for three days during the hajj and for seven days when you return:

Hajj is mentioned as the time of the fast because the time and place of both are the same. The

time of hajj - from the ihram of hajj to the returning from it - is the very time of the three days' fast. There are traditions from the Imams of Ahlu l-bayt that the time of this fast is before the Day of Sacrifice (10th Dhu 'l-hijjah) or, if one could not fast at that time then, after the 13th of Dhu l-hijjah, or, as a last alternative, at the time of returning to one's home.

The time of the seven-day fast is after returning to one's home, as is clear from the words, when you return. It should be noted that Allah did not say, "at the time of returning". Moreover, the change of pronoun from the (previously used) third person to the second person in when you return is a hint that the hearer is now present - at home.

Qur'an: these (make) ten (days) perfect:

Three and seven together make ten perfect days. The seven days make perfect the previous three days; they do not complete it. The difference between perfection and completion has been explained in the beginning of the verse; and it means that both groups of three and seven days have separate identities with separate rules. The fast of three days is a complete act in itself; it depends on the fast of seven days for its perfection, not completion.

Qu'ran: this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque:

This order of enjoying by the 'umrah for the Hajj for the non-resident i.e. the person who dwells not less than twelve miles away from the Sacred Mosque. His family (ahlul) here means his dependents, like his wife and children, The non-resident has been described as he whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque. It is a very fine way of expression as it not only promulgates the law but explains its reason also; and that reason is to lighten the burden. The pilgrims who come from far off places for the hajj have to undergo all kinds of troubles, hardships and difficulties during the journey; and when they reach Mecca, they are tired and worn out. They naturally need a place to rest and recuperate. Usually, one gets this rest with his family, but here is a pilgrim whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque. Therefore, Allah ordained for him enjoyment (tamattu) he may enjoy himself after completing the 'umrah up to the time of hajj and then may raise his voice in talbiyah i.e. he may wear the ihram of hajj from the Sacred Mosque without going back to an appointed place for that purpose.

It has been explained earlier that it is this sentence that promulgates hajju t-tamatt' it is a general ordinance, and is not limited to a particular time, or to a particular person, or to a particular situation. It is for all the non-resident pilgrims, for all times, and for all situations.

Qur'an: and fear Allah and know that Allah is severe in requiring:

This extreme severity in this humiliating way shows that there was a likelihood of the audience

rejecting this order or hesitating to follow it. And this is what actually happened. Of all the laws of Islam, hajj had already been practiced by the Arabs since the days of Ibrahim and all its rites were well-known to, and performed by, them. They were used to those rites, and when Islam came, it let it be, as it was, until the last days of the Prophet's life. Therefore, it was not an easy thing to make any change in its method; they were not expected to accept any change in it willingly. That is why they protested against the law of enjoyment by 'umrah and, as the traditions show, many of them did not welcome that order. So much so that the Prophet felt a pressing need to deliver a lecture telling them that the authority was from Allah only, He ordains as He wishes, and that it was a general order, nobody was exempted from it - neither the Prophet nor the ummah. This explains why the verse ended on such a harsh note, ordering them to fear Allah and threatening them with the chastisement of Allah.

Qur'an: hajj is the months well-known; . . . nor quarrelling during the hajj:

hajj at the beginning of the verse means "the time of half ". "Well-known", i.e., to the Muslims; and the sunnah has explained it as Shawwal, Dhu l-qa'dah and Dhu l-hijjah. So far as Dhu l-hijjah is concerned, it is only about a half of the month which is the time of hajj; but there is no objection to counting it as one of the "months" of hajj.

We say: ... The time of our reaching Mecca is Friday". But we reach there at a certain hour and minute, not during the whole day.

The noun hajj has been repeated three times in this verse. Why was the pronoun not used, which could have shortened the sentence? The fact is that the sentence has been shortened by using the noun instead of the pronouns: hajj is the months ... means "the time of hajj"; whoever determines the hajj means the action itself; nor quarrelling during the hajj refers to "the duration and place of hajj. If the noun had not been repeated, it would have been necessary to lengthen the sentence to make the meaning clear.

so whoever determines the hajj therein: farada fi hinna l-hajj literally means 'makes hajj obligatory therein'; and it implies, "makes hajj obligatory I or himself by beginning its rites", because Allah says, And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah. Therefore, once one starts the hajj, it is obligatory on one to complete it, Rafath as mentioned in an earlier verse, literally means to say clearly such words which are generally unmentionable: fusuq means "disobedience" and jidal is "disputation in the talk". But sunnah has explained that in this verse rafath means sexual intercourse; fusuq is lie; and jidal is swearing by the name of Allah - 'No, by God', 'Yes, by God' '

Qur'an: and whatever you do, Allah knows it:

It is a reminder that one's actions are not hidden from Allah; it calls one to piety and fear of Allah,

so that one's acts of worship might not be devoid of the spirit of devotion; so that one might not go through the external rites of worship with one's mind absent and one's heart forgetful. This is, generally, the style of the Qur'an in all subjects. You will find it explaining the fundamentals of the faith, narrating the stories of previous peoples, or promulgating laws; but whatever the subject, it is invariably followed by a lesson and an admonition so that knowledge is not without practice. Knowledge without practice has no value in Islam. That is why this exhortation to piety and fear of God was immediately followed by the words, and fear Me, O people of understanding. In the preceding sentence the name of Allah was mentioned in the third person (Allah knows it) but immediately it is changed to the first person (fear Me) - it is to show the utmost importance of piety, and to imply that the pious person has not reached nearer to Allah and is now directly addressed by Him.

Qur'an: There is no blame on you if you seek bounty from your Lord:

It is like the words of Allah: O you who believe! when the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading . . . And when the prayer is ended then disperse in the land and seek of the grace of Allah. . . (62:9-10). The trading of the first verse was changed to the seeking of bounty of Allah in the next one, showing that both are the same. That is why the sunnah has interpreted the words, seek the bounty of Allah in the verse under discussion as "the trading". This verse proves that trading during the pilgrimage is lawful.

Qur'an: then when you march from 'Arafat, remember Allah near to the Holy Monument:

ifadah means going out from a place in a group. This verse, therefore, describes the stay at 'Arafat as well as the stay at the Sacred Monument, i.e. al-muzdalafah

Qur'an: and remember Him as He has guided you...:

Remember Him intensely enough to be like His guidance to you, although before His guidance you were surely of those who had gone astray.

Qur'an: Then march on from whence the people march on:

The verse makes it compulsory to march on as "the people" were doing, and obliges the immediate audience to follow "the people". This supports the reports that the Qurayshites and their allies (together known as hums) did not stay at 'Arafat; instead they went direct to al-muzdalafah and stayed therein, claiming that they were the people of the sacred territory of Allah and, therefore, they would not leave that boundary. Allah, therefore, ordered them to march on (to al-muzdalafah) from whence the other people march on, i.e. from 'Arafat. in other words, the Qurayshites also must stay at 'Arafat and then march on from there with others.

That being the case, why did Allah mention this order after the order to march from 'Arafat, and begin it with then (thumma)

This sentence has been figuratively written as a sort of istidrik (to catch up what had escaped). The meaning thus, will be: "The rules of hajj are as mentioned above, except that you are obliged to stay at, and march on from, 'Arafat, not al-muzdalafah."

Qur'an: So, when you have performed . . . intense remembrance:

It is a call to remember Allah with utmost intensity. The pilgrim should remember Him as he remembers his forefathers, or even more intensely. The grace of Allah on him (i.e. the grace of guidance, as He mentioned it just above, remember Him as He has guided you) is far greater than the right of his forefathers upon him.

It has been said that the Arabs, in the days of ignorance, used to stay at Mina after the rites of hajj to boast vainly about their forefathers, in lectures and poetry. Allah by this verse changed it to His own remembrance.

Aw in aw ashadda dhikran (or a more intense remembrance) is used in the meaning of "rather". The remembrance should be "tense". Remembrance may be intense (in quality) or frequent (in quantity). See, for example, the following verses where the adjective of quantity kathiran (much, frequently) has been used: remember Allah, remembering frequently, (33:35); and the men who remember Allah much (33:35). Remembrance of Allah, in reality, is not by words alone. It is a thing concerned with the heart and mind; words are merely a demonstration of that feeling. Therefore, it may be described as frequent (in quantity), if one remembers Allah most of the time, as the Qur'an says: Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and reclining on their sides . . . (3:191). And it may be described as intense (in quality) at some other times. As remembrance was ordered for a time (when you have finished your rites) when one is liable to divert one's attention from Allah and forget Him, it was appropriate to use the adjective "more intense" rather than "more frequent".

Qur'an: For, of men there is he who says ... what they have earned:

It is based on the sentence: then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance. Nas (men, people) is general; it describes all human beings, the unbelievers as well as the believer - the unbelievers who only remembers his forefathers. In other words, he only wants the vainglories of this world, only seeks material greatness, and has no concern with the Hereafter. And there is the believer who only seeks the pleasure of Allah, and even when he wants something from this world, he wants only that which his Lord is pleased to

bestow upon him.

In view of above explanations, it is clear that the word says in both places does not mean asking or saying in so many Words. It means 'wanting' by one's state and inner feeling. Thus, the verses mean that some people do not "want" anything except this world, and they shall have no portion in the Hereafter; and there are others who do not seek anything except what Allah is pleased to give them whether it be in this world or in the Hereafter; and they shall have their portion in the Hereafter.

Good (hasanah) is mentioned in the saying of the believers but not in that of the unbelievers. It is no secret that the one who wants this world, does not care whether it is good in the eyes of Allah or not. The whole world is sweet and good, in his thinking, if it satisfies his desire and if he can enjoy it. It is diametrically opposed to the thinking of the believer who wants the Hereafter. As the Hereafter will be either good or bad, he only wants and only asks for, the good, and not the bad.

The contrast between the sentences, and for him there shall be no portion in the Hereafter and they shall have (their) portion of what they have earned, shows that the deeds of the first groups (but not of the second) shall be void and forfeited. Allah has said; And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them like dust scattered in air, (25:23); And on the day when those who disbelieve shall be brought before the fire: You did away with your good things in your life of the world and you took your fill of pleasure in them ... (46:20); so their deeds become void and We will not assign to them any weight on the Day of Resurrection (18:105).

Qur'an: and Allah is quick in reckoning:

sari'ū l-hisab (quick of reckoning) is one of the names of Allah. Its generality suggests that it covers this world as well as the Hereafter. Even now the reckoning is in progress; whenever a man does any good or bad deed, Allah gives him its full recompense.

In short, the purpose of these two verses is to exhort people to remember Allah. Men are of two types: Some want this world, and do not know or remember anything else; such persons have no portion in the Hereafter. And there are others who want what God is pleased to give them; they shall have their share in the Hereafter; and Allah is quick in reckoning - He quickly reckons what His servant wants, and recompenses him according to his wish. Therefore, you should remember Allah so that you may be among those who will get their portion in the Hereafter; do not join that group which does not remember Allah and, therefore, will have no portion. Otherwise, you will be disappointed on that day.

Qur'an: And remember Allah during the counted number of days:

The counted days are the days of brightness, i.e., the 11th, 12th and 13th of Dhu I-hijjah. The proof that these counted days are after the 10th of Dhu I-hijjah is that this order has been given when all the rites of hajj have already been mentioned. The proof that they are three days may be found in the next sentence, then whoever hastens off in two days. One may "hasten off" in two days only when the original number of days is three.

And the traditions also have interpreted it in the same way.

Qur'an: then whoever hastens . . . him who guards (himself):

No (la) here is for negation of a genus. There is no sin on him (la ithma 'alayh), mentioned in the two sentences means that the pilgrim is free from the genus of sin, i.e. from all sin. Had Allah meant to say that there would be no sin on the pilgrim in hastening off or in tarrying therein, the sentences would have contained some words to show it; but they are unconditional. Therefore, the verse means that the pilgrim who performs the rites of hajj is forgiven all his sins, there remains no sin on him whether he hastens off in two days or tarries therein.

It appears from the above that the aim of this verse is not to show that the pilgrim has an option between hastening off and tarrying; its purpose is to declare that all the sins of the pilgrim are forgiven in either case.

The words: (this is) for him who guards (himself), are not related to the forgiveness of sins; otherwise it would have been "on him who guards (himself)", not "for him". Apparently it is like a previous sentence, this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque. As that sentence pointed to the group which shall be governed by the law of enjoying by 'umrah, likewise, the words, for him who guards, specify those who have the option of hastening off or tarrying therein. This option is for him who guards himself; if someone did not guard himself, then it is not for him. It follows that the guarding here is confined to guarding against those things which Allah has forbidden during hajj. In other words, the meaning is this: This choice is given to him who guards himself from the things forbidden during the ihram. If he was not careful then he must stay a full three days at Mina and remember Allah in those counted days. This meaning has been given in some of the traditions of the Imams of Ahlu I-bayt.

Qur'an: and fear Allah ... gathered together unto Him:

The topic ends on the order to fear Allah and on the reminder that all shall be resurrected and gathered unto Him. Piety and fear of Allah cannot be complete, and sins not avoided, unless one remembers the Day of Recompense. Allah says: those who go astray from the path of Allah, for them shall surely be a severe punishment, because they forgot the Day of Reckoning (38:26).

The choice of the word *tuhsharun* (you shall be gathered together) at the end of the topic of *hajj* (where people assemble and gather together from all parts of the world) is highly suitable. Also, it gives a hint that when the pilgrim, at the time of his *hajj*, sees the gathering and marching together, he should remember the Day when Allah will gather them together and will not leave any one of them behind.

TRADITIONS

There is a tradition from *as-Sadiq* (a.s.) about the words of Allah, And complete the *hajj* and *'umrah* for Allah. He said: "They are obligatory." [at-Tahdhib and al-Ayyashi]

There is a tradition narrated by *Zurarah*, *Himran* and *Muhammad ibn Muslim* from *Abu Ja'far* and *Abu 'Abdillah* (peace be on them). They said: "We asked both *Imams* about the words of Allah, And complete the *hajj* and *'umrah* for Allah. Both replied: 'Verily, it is the completion of *hajj* that one should not indulge in sexual intercourse, nor in bad language nor in quarrelling'." [al-'Ayyashi]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) said in a tradition, inter alia: "(Allah) means by their (*hajj* and *'umrah*'s) completion, performing them and guarding oneself from the things which a pilgrim in condition of *ihram* should guard against." [al-Kafi]

The author says: There is no conflict in these traditions and the meaning of completion (*itmam*) explained by us in the beginning, because their being obligatory and their performance is the same as completing them.

al-Halabi narrates from *as-Sadiq* (a.s.) that he said: "Verily, when the Messenger of Allah performed the last pilgrimage (*hajj*), he proceeded (from Medina) on the 26th of *Dhu 'l-qa'dah*, until he reached (the Mosque of) *Shajarah* (which is the *miqat*) i.e. appointed place of *ihram* for pilgrims from Medina) and prayed there. Then he led his camel till he reached the desert (i.e. open space) and he re-affirmed the intention (*niyyah*) of the *ihram* there and said *labbayk Allahumma labbayk . . . (talbiyah)* of *hajj*, and drove a hundred camels (of sacrifice); and (likewise) all the people put on the *ihram* of *hajj*'; they did not have the intention of *'umrah*, and knew nothing about *mut'ah* (enjoyment of *'umrah*). When the Messenger of Allah reached Mecca, he circumambulated the House and the people circumambulated with him; then he prayed two *rakah* near the Stand of *Ibrahim* and kissed the (Black) Stone. Then he said: 'I begin with what Allah has begun with'. So, he came to (the hill of) *Safa*, and began from there and went between *Safa* and *Marwah* seven times. When he finished his perambulation at *Marwah*, he stood up before them to give a lecture. (In that lecture he ordered them to end their *ihram*, and treat it (the rites performed so far) as *'umrah*; and that it was a system ordained by Allah. So the people ended their *ihram*. The Messenger of Allah told them that had he advanced from his affairs what he had delayed (i.e. had he known this system before) he also would have done as they were

doing but he could not do so because he had led his sacrificial animals with him and Allah had said: and do not shave your heads till the offering reaches its destination. Suraqah ibn Ja'tham al-Kinani said: 'We have learned our religion as though we were born today. Do you think that this system which you have taught us is only for this year? Or for every year The Messenger of Allah said: 'No. It is for eternity.' And another man stood up and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Shall we go out for hajj (on 8th of Dhu 'l-hijjah) and our heads shall be wet (by obligatory bath) because of going unto our women? The Messenger of Allah said: 'Verily, you shall never believe in it'."

The Imam said: "Then 'Ali (a.s.) proceeded from Yemen till he reached (Mecca near the time of) hajj; and found that Fatimah had ended her ihram, and felt the smell of perfume. So, he went to the Messenger of Allah, to enquire about it. The Messenger of Allah asked him: 'O 'Ali! On what did you raise your voice in talbiyah i.e. what was the intention of your hajj?' He said: '(My intention was) according to the intention of the Prophet.' So, the Messenger of Allah told him: Then you do not end your ihram. Then the Prophet gave him a share in his sacrificial animals, he gave him thirty seven and sacrificed himself sixty-three, slaughtering them by his own hand. He took a portion from each sacrifice, put all portions in one pot, and ordered it to be cooked. He ate from it and sipped a little of its soup and said: 'Now we have eaten from all of them. And hajju 't-tamattu' (mut'ah) is better than hajju l-qiran in which the pilgrim leads his sacrificial animal, and better than hajju 'l-ifrad.' " The narrator says: "I asked the Imam whether the Messenger of Allah began his ihram at night in the daytime. The Imam said: 'At daytime'. Then I asked, at what time. The Imam said 'At the prayer of noon (zuhr)!' " [al-Kafi]

The author says: This matter has been reported in Maimau 'l-bayan and other books also. There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "The 'umrah has entered into hajj upto the Day of Resurrection. Then whoever enjoys by 'umrah for the hajj (he should offer) whatever offering (sacrificial animal) is easy to obtain. Now, no one has any option but to perform hajj t'-tamattu, because Allah sent it down in his book and it was started by the traditions of the Messenger of Allah." [at-Tahdhib]

There is from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the word of Allah, whatever offering is easy to obtain, that it is "a goat". [al-Kafi]

There is from the same Imam that he was asked what was the one doing hajj al-tamattu to do if he did not get a goat. He said: "He will fast before the day of tarwiyah (8th of Dhu 'l-hijjah) and on the day of the tarwiyah and the day of 'arafah (9th of Dhu 'l-hijjah)" He was told: "(Suppose) he reached there on the very day of tarwiyah." He replied: "He shall fast three days after tashriq i.e. after 13th He was asked: "What if his camel-driver did not stay there?" The Imam said: "He shall fast on the day of hasabah and the following two days". It was asked: "And what is hasabah?" He said: "The day of his (return) journey." It was said: "Will he fast when he is on a journey?" He said: "Yes. Is he not on journey on the day of 'arafah? Verily, we the Alul 'l-bayt say so. Allah says,

should fast for three days during the hajj . Allah means in Dhu I-hijjah." [Ibid]

ash-Shaykh has narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "Whatever is after the miqat upto Mecca, (its inhabitants) is the dweller of the Sacred Mosque and for him there is no hajju 't-tamattu (mutah),

The author says: It means that the residence of the area from the appointed place of ihram up to Mecca come under the term "dwellers of the Sacred Mosque" and they cannot do hajju 't-tamattu'. And there are numerous traditions of the same meaning from the imams of Ahlu I-bayt.

There is a tradition from al-Baqir (a.s.) about the word of Allah: hajj is the months well-known, that he said: hajj is in the months well-known, Shawwal and Dhu 'l-qad'dah and Dhu I-hijjah. Nobody can perform hajj in other months." [al-Kafi]

And there is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah: so whoever determines (to perform) hajj therein, that fard (obligation, determination,) is (by) talbiyah (labbayk Allahumma labbayk), and ish'ar (putting some recognized signs on the sacrificial animals) and taqlid (putting a string on its neck). Whichever of these the pilgrim does, he determines to perform the hajj." [ibid]

And there is in the same book from the same Imam under the word of Allah, There shall be no uttering unmentionable words...that rafath means sexual intercourse, fusuq means a lie or abuse and jidal is saying, 'No, by God'; 'Yes, by God'.

It is narrated from as-Saqid (a.s.) about the words of Allah, There is no blame on you if you seek bounty from your Lord, that the bounty (fadl) here means sustenance. When the pilgrim has ended his ihram and performed his rites then he may purchase and sell in that season. [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: It is said that according to their belief, trading during the season of hajj was a sin; so Allah removed this misunderstanding with this verse.

And it is said that it means that there is no blame on you if you seek forgiveness from your Lord. This meaning has been narrated by Jabir from Abu Ja'far (a.s.)."[Majma'u 'l-bayan]

The author says: This tradition looks at "bounty" in its generality and interprets it with its best example.

There is a tradition from as-Saqid (a.s.) about the word of Allah, Then march on from whence the people march on, He said: "Verily, the people of the haram (the Quraysh) used to stay at the Sacred Mosque and other people used to stay at 'Arafat, and (the Quraysh) did not march on from

there until the people of 'Arafat came in sight (coming from 'Arafat). There was a man, with the patronymic, Abu Sayyar; he had a fast donkey and always went ahead of the people of 'Arafat. When he came into sight they said, 'Here is Abu Sayyar' and then started marching on. So, Allah ordered them (i.e. the people of haram) that they must stay at 'Arafat and march on from there." [al-Ayyashi]

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning.

There is a tradition from the same Imam about the words of Allah: Our Lord! give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter. He said: 'The pleasure of Allah and the Garden in the Hereafter, and increase in sustenance and good disposition in this world.'

And also he said: "The pleasure of Allah, and increase in sustenance and good company; and in the Hereafter, the Garden."

And Ali (a.s.) said: "Good in this world is a virtuous wife and good in the Hereafter is the hour; and the chastisement of the Fire is a bad (ill-tempered) wife." [ibid]

The author says: These traditions give sortie examples; otherwise the verse is general. The pleasure of Allah can be got even in this world, although its complete manifestation will be in the Hereafter. That is why it may be counted as a good in this world (1st tradition) as well as in the Hereafter (2nd tradition).

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the word of Allah, and remember Allah during the counted number of days. He said: "and they are the days of brightness (tashriq) (the 11th, 12th and 13th of Lunar month). When the Arabs stayed at Mina after sacrificing the animals, they used to boast against one another. One would say: 'My father used to do this and that.' So Allah said: when you have performed your rites, then remember Allah as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance." He further said: "And the takbir is Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, la ilaha illallahu wa'llahu akbar, wa lillahi 'l-hamd, Allah akbar ala ma hadana, Allahu akbar 'ala ma razaqana min bahimati 'l-an'am." [al-Kafi]

The same Imam said: "And the takbir is in the days of brightness from the prayer of noon on the day of sacrifice till the prayer of dawn on the third day. And in (other) towns takbir would be (recited) after ten prayers." [ibid]

About the word of Allah, then whoever hastens off in two days, there is no sin on him, and whoever tarries (there) there is no sin on him, that as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked about it, and he said: "It does not mean that lie has the option to do like this if he wishes. But it means that he returns (from hajj) and his sins are forgiven, there is no sin on him. " [Man la yahduruhu 'l-faiqih]

And there is a tradition from as-Saqid (a.s.) that he said: "He returns and his sins are forgiven, there is no sin on him, (this is) for him who guards (himself)." [al-'Ayyashi]

And there is in al-Faqih from the same Imam about the word of Allah, (this is) for him who guards (Himself). He said: "He shall guard himself against hunting till the people of Mina return (from it)."

And al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "(This is) for him who guards himself against sexual intercourse and bad language and quarrelling and those things which Allah has forbidden in ihram." Also he said: "for him who fears Allah."

And as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "for him who guards himself against big sins."

The author says: The meaning of the sentence has already been explained. But it is possible to interpret taqwa (piety, fear of Allah) in its general meaning, as has been done in the last two traditions.

TRADITIONS ON MUT'ATU'L-HAJJ

Al-Bukhari and al-Bayhaqi have narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he was asked about hajju 't-tamattu'(mu'atu l-hajj He said: "The Emigrants (muhajirin) and the Helpers (ansar) and the wives of the Prophet raised their voices in talbiyah (i.e. put on ihram) in the last pilgrimage, and we did likewise. When we reached Mecca, the Messenger of Allah said: 'Make (i.e. change) your intention of hajj into that of 'umrah, except the one who has put string on his sacrificial animal.' So we circumambulated the House and (arched) between Safa and Marwah; (then we ended our ihram) and went to the women and put on (sewn) clothes. And the prophet said: He who put string on the sacrificial animal shall not end his ihram until the sacrifice reaches (its destination).' Then he ordered us on the eve of tarwiyah (8th of Dhu l-hijjah) to raise our voice in talbiyah to wear the ihram of hajj. When we finished the rites (upto Mina), we came and circumambulated the House and (marched) between Safa and Marwah and our hajj was completed. And on us was a sacrifice, as Allah said: Whatever offering is easy to obtain, but he Who cannot find should fast for three days during the hajj and for seven days when you return to your towns; and a goat is enough. Thus the pilgrims combined the two rites, hajj and 'umrah, in one year. For, verily Allah sent it down in His Book, and His prophet promulgated it and made it lawful for all people except the people of Mecca. Allah has said: this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque. And the months of hajj, which Allah has mentioned, are Shawwal, Dhu l-qadah and Dhu 'l-hijjah. Therefore, he who performs mu'tatu l-hajj in these months, on him is a sacrifice or the (10 days') fast. And rafath is sexual intercourse, and fusuq is sins and jidal) is quarrelling." [ad-Durru 'l-manthur]

al-Bukhari and Muslim have narrated from Ibn 'Umar that he said: "The Messenger of Allah, in the last pilgrimage, enjoyed by the umrah for the hajj, and offered the sacrifice. He led the sacrificial animals with him from Dhu 'l-halifah. And the Messenger of Allah began and raised his voice in talbiyah (i.e. put on ihram) of 'umrah. Later on, he raised his voice in talbiyah (i.e. put on ihram) of hajj. And the people enjoyed with the Prophet by the Umrah for the hajj. Some people had taken their sacrificial animals with them, others had not done so. When the Prophet reached Mecca he told the people: 'Anyone of you who has led his sacrificial animal with him, (shall not end his ihram and) no such thing, which was forbidden for him, shall be allowed to him until he performs his hajj. And he who has not taken his sacrifice with him, he will go around the House, and (march) between Safa and Marwah, and cut some hair or nails, and his ihram will come to end; then later he will raise his voice in talbiyah (i.e. will put on ihram) of hajj; and if he cannot find an offering, he will fast for three days during the hajj and for seven (days) when he returns to his family.' "

[ibid]

al-Hakim. has narrated (and said that it is "correct") through Mujahid and 'Ata', from Jabir that he said: "There are many people talking (without knowing the facts). We came out (from Medina) for hajj. When only a few days remained for our ihram to come to an end, we were ordered to (then and there) finish our ihram. We said, 'Well, shall one go to Arafat (at the beginning of hajj) with one's penis dripping semen? This talk reached the Messenger of Allah, so he stood up to deliver a lecture, and said: 'O people! Do you (want to) teach me about Allah? For, by Allah, I am the most knowledgeable of you about Allah, and the most God-fearing of you. And had I advanced my affair which I kept behind, I would not have taken any sacrifice with me and would have ended my ihram as they had done. Then (at the time of hajj) he who did not have any sacrificial animal would fast for three days in the hajj and for seven (days) when he returns to his family; and he who had found animal would slaughter it. Thus, we slaughtered animals for seven days.' " 'Ata' said that Ibn 'Abbas said: "Surely, the Messenger of Allah distributed sheep and goats among his companions that day; and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas received a he-goat and slaughtered it on his own behalf." [ibid]

Ibn Abi Shaybah, al-Bukhari and Muslim have narrated from Imran ibn Hasin that he said: "The verse of mut'ah came down in the Book of Allah and we did it in the company of the Messenger of Allah, then there did not come down any verse to abrogate the verse of the mut'atu 'l-hajj, nor did (the Messenger of Allah) forbid it till he died. (And then) one man said by his own opinion what he wished." [ibid]

The author says: This tradition has been narrated (in another place) with different words but the same meaning.

There is a tradition from Mutrif that he said: " 'Imran ibn Hasin sent for me in his illness in which he died, and said: 'I was narrating to you some traditions so that Allah may benefit you by them.

Now, if I remain alive, keep them as my secret, and if I die, then narrate them on my authority, because then I will be safe. And know that the Prophet of Allah combined the hajj and the 'umrah; then nothing was sent down on this subject in the Book of Allah, nor was it forbidden by the Prophet of Allah. (But) one man said about it by his own opinion what he wished.' [Muslim; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, as-Sunan, an-Nasa'i]

It is reported that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar was asked about mut'atu 'l-hajj He said: "It is halal (lawful)." The questioner told him: "Surely, your father forbade it!" He said: "If my father forbade it and the Messenger ' Allah performed it then what do you think I should do? Should I follow the order of my father or the order of the Messenger of Allah?" The man said: "Rather, the order of the Messenger of Allah." He said: "Surely the Messenger of Allah preformed it." [at-Trimidhi, Zadu 'l-ma'ad]

And there is from Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah that he heard Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and Dahhak ibn Qays, (in the year when Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan performed his hajj) talking about enjoyment by 'umrah for hajj. Dahhak said: "Nobody shall do it except he who is ignorant of the command of Allah." Sa'd replied: "What evil did you utter, O my nephew!" Dahhak said: "But surely 'Umar ibn al-Khattab forbade it." Sa'd said: "Surely, the Messenger of Allah did it and we did it in his company." [at-Tirmidhi, as-Sunan, an-Nasa'i as-Sunan al-kubra; al-Muwatta' and al-Umm]

al-Bukhari, Muslim and al-Nasa-i have narrated from Abu Musa that he said: "I came to the Messenger of Allah while he was in al-Batha'. He said: 'Did you raise your voice in talbiyah (Did you put on ihram)?' I said: 'I raised my voice as the Prophet did.' He asked me: 'Have you brought any sacrificial animal?' I said: 'No,' The Prophet said: 'Go around the House and (march) between Safa and Marwah, then end your ihram.' So I went around the House and, (marched) between Safa and Marwah. Then (after ending the ihram) I went to a woman from my people, she combed my head and I washed my head. Thereafter, I used to give religious decisions during the rule of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Once I was standing in the season (of hajj) when a man came to me and said: 'You do not know what the leader of the faithful ('Umar) has invented concerning the rites (of hajj).' So I said: 'O people! Whoever we might have given him our decision, let him wait, because this leader of the faithful is coming to you concerning it.' When he ('Umar) arrived, I asked him: 'What have you invented concerning the rites?' He said: 'if we take the Book of Allah, then Allah says: And completed the hajj and 'umrah for Allah, and if we take the tradition of our Prophet, then he did not end his ihram until he slaughtered the offering.' " [ad-Durru 'l-manthur]

Muslim has narrated from Abu Nadrah that he said: "Ibn 'Abbas used to order mutah and Ibn az-Zubayr used to forbid it. This was reported to Jabir ibn 'Abdullah; so he said: 'On my hand the talk progressed. We did mut'ah in the company of the Messenger of Allah; then when 'Umar stood up (became caliph) he said: "Surely, Allah used to make lawful for the Messenger of Allah whatever He wished from whatever He wished. And surely the Qur'an came down gradually. Therefore,

complete the hajj and 'umrah as Allah has ordered you, and separate your hail from your 'umrah, as it is more completing. for your hajj and more completing for your 'umrah [ibid]

And there is from Abu Musa that 'Umar said: "It (i.e. mutah) is the sunnah (custom) of the Messenger of Allah. But I am afraid that they will sleep with them (i.e. the women) under the trees and then proceed with them as pilgrims." [Ahmad ibn Hanbal] There is a tradition from Sa'id ibn Musayyab (that he said) that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab forbade Mut'ah in the months of hajj and said: "I performed it in the company of the Messenger of Allah and I forbid it. And it is because one of you comes from a far away place dishevelled, worn out, having the intention of 'umrah in the months of hajj. And his dishevelment, and tiredness and talbiyah are only for his 'umrah. Then he arrives and goes around the House, and ends his ihram and wears sewn clothes) and uses perfume and sleeps with his wife if e with him. Thereafter, when the day of tarwiyah comes he raises his voice in talbiyah of hajj and proceeds to Mina, saying talbiyah of hajj in which there is neither dishevelment, nor tiredness nor talbiyah except for one day only. And the hajj is better than 'umrah. If we leave them on this system, they shall embrace them (i.e. the women) under the trees. Moreover, the people of the House (i.e. Meccans) have neither any cattle nor any crop, and their spring is only those who stay with them." [Jam'u 'l-jawami] There is from Muslim from Abu Nadrah from Jabir. (Abu Nadrah) said: "I said: 'Verily, Ibn az-Zubayr forbids mutah and Ibn 'Abbas orders it.' He (Jabir) said: 'On my hand the talk progressed. We did mu'tah in the company of the Messenger of Allah and in the company of Abu Bakr. When 'Umar became ruler, he delivered a lecture before the people and said: "Verily, the Messenger of Allah is this Messenger, and the Qur'an is this Qur'an. And, surely, there were two mut'ah's in the days of the Messenger of Allah, and I forbid them and shall inflict punishment for them; one of them is the mu'tah of women; and I will not get hold of a man who marries a woman for a period, but that I shall eliminate him with stones; and the second is the mu'tah of hajj." [asSunan al-kubra]

There is a tradition from Ibn 'Abbas that he said that he heard 'Umar saying: "By Allah, verily I forbid you the mu'tah, and surely it is in the Book of Allah and surely the Messenger of Allah performed it." He meant 'umrah in the hajj. [as-Sunan al-kubra] Muslim has narrated from 'Abdullah ibn Shaiq that he said: 'Uthman used to forbid the mutah and 'Ali used to order it. So, Uthman said something to Ali and Ali said: 'Surely, you know that we performed mutah in the company of the Messenger of Allah.' 'Uthman said: 'But we were afraid'." [ad-Durru 'l-manthur]

Ibn Abi Shaybah and Muslim have narrated from Abu Dharr: "Mut'ah in the hajj was (prescribed) especially for the companions of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)." [ibid.]

Muslim has narrated from Abu Dharr that: "The two mutah's are not suitable but for us especially." He meant the mutah of women and mutah of hajj. [ibid]

The author says: The traditions of this meaning are very numerous, but we have quoted only what

was relevant to the scope of our discussion, and that is to discuss the prohibition of mut'atu 'l-hajj from the point of view of the Tafsir. Sometimes, the argument about it is to see whether the man who prohibited it was right or not, or whether had any excuse for it or not. But such a discussion comes under 'ilmu 'l-kalam (Theology); it is outside the limits of our book. And sometimes, the arguments are to see what reasoning has been advanced in the traditions concerning this subject, with special reference to the Qur'an and the sunnah. Such a discussion is based on the meaning of the Qur'an and the traditions. And it is relevant to the subject of this book of ours.

Therefore, we shall look, one by one, into the arguments put in these traditions:-

First Argument: It is claimed that the words of Allah, And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah show that hajju 't-tamattu is not lawful, and that hajju 't-tamattu' was especially allowed for the Messenger of Allah. This argument has been put in the tradition of Abu Nadrah from Jabir that 'Umar said: "Surely, Allah used to make lawful for the Messenger of Allah whatever He wished from whatever He wished. And surely the Qur'an came down gradually. Therefore, complete the hajj and 'umrah as Allah has ordered you."

Reply: You very well know that the words of Allah, And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah . . . do not say anything except that it is obligatory to complete the hajj and 'umrah after one determines to perform them. For a further proof, see the next sentence, but if you are prevented, i.e. from completing them.

Complete the hajj and 'umrah cannot, by any stretch of imagination, mean that 'umrah and hajj should not be combined. Likewise, there is not even an iota of proof that combining the 'umrah and the hajj was an order given specially to the Prophet only, or to him and his companions on the last pilgrimage only.

By saying that it was an order especially for the Prophet and/ or his companions, one has to accept that it was a system established by the Messenger of Allah. See the tradition of an-Nasa'i from Ibn 'Abbas that he heard 'Umar saying: "By Allah, verily I forbid you the mut'ah, and surely it is in the Book of Allah and surely the Messenger of Allah performed it."

Second Argument: Mut'atu l-hajj was forbidden on the basis of the Book of Allah and the tradition of the Prophet. This argument is seen in the tradition of Abu Musa, where 'Umar told him: "If we take the Book of Allah, then Allah says, And complete the hajj and 'umrah for Allah, and if we take the tradition of our Prophet then (we find that) he did not end the ihram until he slaughtered the offering."

Replies: So far as the Book of Allah is concerned, it has just been shown that it goes against his claim. His reference to the tradition of the Prophet is equally weak:

First, he contradicts himself in this claim. He has already said in other traditions (some of which have been quoted earlier) that "surely the Messenger of Allah performed it."

Second: The traditions loudly say that the Messenger of Allah performed it; and that once he raised his voice in talbiyah of 'umrah and later on raised his voice in talbiyah of hajj; and that he admonished the people, saying, "Do you (want to) teach me about Allah?"

The claim of Ibn Taymiyyah at this juncture that the Messenger of Allah had performed hajju 'l-qiran that year is a very astonishing thing. Even more amusing is his claim that hajju 'l-qiran was called mut'atu 'l-hajj!!

Third: What the traditions say is that the Prophet did not shave his head after performing the 'umrah, because his sacrificial animals had not yet reached their destination. But it does not mean that he had not ended his ihram of 'umrah or that he went to hajj with the same ihram. The verse clearly says that the pilgrim who leads his offerings with him, is not to shave his head until the offering reaches its destination. Also, it clearly says that the one whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque shall do mut'atu 'l-hajj. If a non-resident pilgrim brings his offering with him, he is obliged to perform mut'atu 'l-hajj (because he is non-resident) and at the same time, not to shave his head (because the offering is yet to reach its destination.) Merely not shaving the head does not mean that one has not ended one's ihram of 'umrah.

Fourth: Let us accept, for the sake of argument, that the Messenger of Allah himself did not perform mutatu l-hajj. But it is universally accepted, that he ordered all his companions and family members to perform their hajj according to the newly established system of mut'atu 'l-hajj. Now which of the two could be called the system promulgated by the Prophet for his ummah? The one which was especially meant for his own self? Or the other which he ordered his ummah to follow and which was also supported by the Qur'an.

Third Argument: It was claimed. that mut'atu 'l-hajj creates a situation which is riot suitable for the pilgrims. After 'umrah and before hajj, he is allowed to wear beautiful clothes, use perfume and sleep with the women. And it is against the dignity of hajj. This claim is found in the traditions of Abu Musa in which 'Umar is reported as saying: "But I am afraid that they will sleep with them (women) under the trees and then proceed with them as pilgrims." And as he said, according to another tradition: "Surely I know that the Prophet and his companions did it. But I did not like them sleeping with them (i.e. with their women) under the trees and then proceeding to hail with the water dropping from their heads" (because of the obligatory bath).

Replies: It is preferring one's own opinion against a clear order of Allah. Allah and His Messenger had clearly promulgated the system of muta'a tu 'l-hajj; and Allah and His Messenger knew very

well that this system would lead to this supposedly undesirable effect. Still they thought it good for the Muslims. Then why should 'Umar be afraid of this effect?

It is interesting to note that the relevant verse of the Qur'an gives the same reason for the promulgation of this system which he is using to show his displeasure and dislike. Allah says: then whoever enjoys by the 'umrah for hajj. What is the meaning of enjoyment if not 'taking one's fill of the pleasure', 'sleeping oneself with sexual activities, fine clothes, etc.' So, Allah mentions it approvingly and 'Umar disliked it and was displeased with W!

We are even more astonished when we see that the companions had offered the same criticism against Allah and His Prophet (when the verse was revealed and the Prophet ordered them to adopt the system of muta'a tu 'l-hajj) which 'Umar used as the basis of his prohibition. See the tradition reported in ad-Durru l-manthur through al-Hakim from Jabir in which he says: "We said: 'Well, shall one go to 'Arafat with one's penis dripping semen? This talk reached the Messenger of Allah, so he stood up to deliver a lecture" and replied to their objection and again ordered to perform muta'a tu 'l-hajj as he had ordered them the first time. Was that reply not enough to bury such displeasure for ever?

Fourth Argument: It is said that this system badly affects the market of Mecca. We see this argument in the tradition of alSuyuti from Sa'id ibn Musayyab, in which 'Umar says: "The people of the House have neither any cattle nor any crop, and their spring is only those who stay with them."

Replies: This also is preferring one's own opinion against a clear order of Allah. Moreover, Allah has refuted such claims in a similar situation where He says: O you who believe Verily, the idolaters are unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this very year; and if you fear poverty, then soon Allah will enrich you through His grace, if He please; Surely Allah is All-knowing, All-wise. (9:28)

Fifth Argument: It is claimed that mut'atu 'l-hajj is allowed when one is afraid, and when there is no fear there should be no mut'atu 'l-hajj. It is seen in the tradition of Muslim from Abdullah ibn Shaqiq that 'Uthman said to Ali: "But we were afraid." Also it is written in ad-Durru l-manthur that Ibn Abi Shaybah, Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir have reported from Ibn az-Zubayr that he said in a lecture: "O people! By Allah, enjoying by 'umrah for hajj is not as you do. It is for the men who raises his voice in talbiyah of hajj, then he is prevented by an enemy or illness or fracture or any other reasons till the days of hajj are gone, then he reaches (Mecca); so he shall change it to 'umrah, and go on enjoying until the next year; then he shall perform hajj and offer sacrifice. This is the meaning of enjoyment by 'umrah to hajj."

Replies: The verse is general and unconditional; it covers those who are afraid as well as those

who are not afraid. It has been explained earlier that the sentence which promulgates mut'atu 'l-hajj is the verse: this is for him Whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque. And it is without any condition.

Moreover, the traditions clearly say that the Prophet performed his last pilgrimage as hajju 't-tamattu' and he did the intention (niyyah) of ihram twice - first for 'umrah and later for hajj. And nobody can say that at that time there was any risk or danger for the Muslims.

Sixth Argument: It is claimed in the two traditions of Abu Dharr, reported in ad-Durru l-manthur, that mut'atu 'l-hajj was a system meant especially for the companions of the Prophet.

Replies: If it means what 'Uthman and Ibn az-Zubayr claimed that they were at that time in danger and, therefore, it was allowed to them, then the reply given to the fifth argument applies here also.

But if it means that it was a special rule made for them only, then it is refuted by the words of Allah: this is for him whose family dwells not near the Sacred Mosque. It does not say, "this is for the companions of Muhammad only".

Moreover, if it was meant especially for the companions of the Prophet, then why did some of the companions, like 'Umar, 'Uthman, Ibn az-Zubayr, Abu Musa, Mu'awiyah, and, according to a report, Abu Bakr reject it?

Seventh Argument: Some people say that 'Umar prohibited it by his own authority as he was Master of the Affairs (khalifah) (waliyu l-amr) and Allah has made it obligatory on the Muslims to obey the Masters of the Affairs, as He says:

Obey Allah, and obey the Apostle and the Masters of the affair from among you. (4:59)

Replies: The authority vested in the Masters of the Affairs does not cover this case. There are very many verses in the Qur'an which show that, it is compulsory to obey and follow what Allah has revealed to His Prophet: Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord. . . (7:3)

Whatever was ordained and promulgated by the Prophet was according to the command of Allah, as may be understood from the verses: . . . nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited ... (9:29), . . . and whatever the Apostle gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you keep back . . . (59:7). 'Me meaning of gives you is 'orders you', because it is used here as the opposite of "forbids you". It is obligatory to obey Allah and His Apostle by doing what he orders and keeping back from what he forbids.

Likewise, the judgment and decision must be according to the revelation sent down by Allah: and whoso judges not by what Allah has sent down, these then are the unjust. (5:45) and whoso judges not by what Allah has sent down, these then are the transgressors. (5:47); and whoso judges not by what Allah has sent down these then are infidels. (5:44). Again Allah says: And it is not for a believer man or woman to have any choice in their affair when Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Apostle, indeed he has strayed off a manifest straying (33:36); And thy Lord creates whatever He pleases, and chooses too; it is not theirs to choose ... (28:68). Choosing means judging and legislating, or else it is general in meaning which includes judging and legislating too.

The Qur'an has openly declared that it is a Book not to be abrogated and that its laws will remain as they are up to the Day of Resurrection. And surely it is Mighty Book. Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the All-wise, the Most Praised One. (41:41-42). The verse is general and the "falsehood" includes abrogation also, which is rejected by this verse.

In short, whatever has been ordained by Allah and His Prophet, or whatever has been decided by Allah and His Prophet must be obeyed and followed by the whole ummah, the rulers as well as the ruled.

It is obvious from above that the word of Allah, Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and the Masters of the Affair from among you, gives "the Master of Affairs" authority in other than the shari'ah. Because protecting and following the shari'ah is obligatory on the rulers as well as the others; nay! it is more binding on the rulers. The authority of the Masters of Affair (ulu l-amr) is confined to giving orders which they think to be in the interest of the ummah provided that the command of Allah concerning that matter is protected and followed. It is only then that the ummah is expected to obey them.

A man has an option to eat on a certain day and abstain from food next day, while he accepts that it is lawful to him to eat from his own money. He is free to sell or buy at any time, or not to do so, if he so wishes, while the basic matter - trade - is lawful. If someone quarrels with him about his property, he may appeal to the judge to protect his right; on the other hand, he may refrain from doing so; but the basic shari'ah will remain in force that it is his right to bring the matter before the judge. It all depends on his own choice on what he thinks to be in his best interest. But the basic rules remain intact, that it is lawful -f or him to eat, sell and buy, or to put his case before the judge.

But he has no right to drink liquor, or take interest or usurp other's property, even if he thought that it was in his best interest. Why? Because it directly conflicts with the laws ordained by Allah.

The above were the examples of personal affairs. In the same way the ruler has the authority to manage the affairs of the state according to the best interest of the ummah, but always protecting and preserving the laws of Allah as He has ordained. For example, he may decide to defend a frontier of the Islamic state at a certain time, or to retreat from it if it is more advantageous. He may announce a public holiday on a certain day and things like that, as he, in his best judgment, thinks beneficial for the ummah. But he cannot change the shari'ah.

In short, as an individual has a right to take a decision in his personal or family affairs, keeping within the limits imposed by the relevant laws, so also, a ruler appointed by the authority of the Messenger of Allah has the authority to take a decision in the affairs of the state and the ummah, keeping within the relevant laws ordained by Allah.

Had a ruler been given authority to manipulate the laws of the divine shari'ah, if he thought that the manipulation was in the interest of ummah, no rule and no law could remain intact; the talk that the shari'ah of Islam was to continue up to the Day of Resurrection would become meaningless.

What is the difference between the three statements appended below?

"The law of enjoying the good things of life is not suitable for the pilgrim who was expected to spend his time in devotion and worship. Therefore, this law must be abolished."

"The laws legalizing slavery are not suitable for the modern world which stands for general freedom. Therefore, these laws must be abolished."

"The penal code of Islam cannot be tolerated by the advanced human society of modern times, nor is that code in conformity with current codes. Therefore, this code must be abolished." Why should the first statement be accepted and the others rejected?

Some traditions on this subject show that this basic principle was raised during that controversy. Ishaq ibn Ra'wiyah (in his alMusnad) and Ahmad have narrated from Hasan: "Verily, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab wanted to prohibit mut'atu 'l-hajj. Ubay ibn Ka'b stood up and said: 'You have no right to do so. Surely, the Book & Allah came with it (i.e., it was promulgated by the Qur'an) and we did 'umrah (of tamattu) with the Messenger of Allah. 'Thereupon, 'Umar came down.'" [ad-Durru l-manthur]

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verses 204-207

And among men is he whose talk in the life of this world pleases you, and takes Allah to witness as to what is in his heart, yet he is the most violent of adversaries (204). And when he becomes ruler, he strives on earth that he may cause mischief therein and destroy the crop and the progeny; and Allah does not love mischief (205). And when it is said to him, fear Allah, he is overcome by honor (pride) by sin; so enough for him is Hell; and certainly it is an evil abode (206). and Among men is he who sells his self (soul) to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is Affectionate to the servants (207).

COMMENTARY

This is another classification of men according to their character. As the preceding verses (200-202) classified them according to their want of this world or the Hereafter, these verses do so from the point of view of their hypocrisy or the sincerity of their faith. And this is the link between these and the preceding verses.

Qur'an: And among men . . . most violent of adversaries:

a'jabahu means gave him pleasure, delighted him. The words, in the life of this world are connected with pleases you. The meaning is: his talk pleases you in this life, because in this life one has to rely on appearances. The deeper traits and inner feelings are hidden behind a curtain which cannot be lifted at all, although sometimes some clues are found which help one to surmise what lies behind the curtain.

Then come the word: and takes Allah to witness as to what is in his heart. He talks in a way that pleases you: he seems eager to protect the way of the truth, appears keen to do good for the people, looks enthusiastic for the advancement of the cause of the religion and the ummah. And to show that his voice comes from the depth of his heart, he calls on Allah to be his witness. But, in reality he is the most virulent enemy of the truth.

Aladd is the adjective in superlative degree, derived from ladda luddudan (he became a very violent adversary, khisam is plural of khashm by the paradigm of sa'b:si'ab and ka'b: ki'ab. Also it is said that it is an infinitive verb, and that aladdu l-khisam means "most violent in enmity".

Qur'an: And when he become ruler he strives on earth that he may cause mischief therein:

tawalli means to get authority and power. Further support of this meaning comes from the next verse: he is overcome by honor (pride) by sin. It shows that he has got an honor (i.e., a cause of pride) earned with sin. (The sin is committed by his heart that does not conform with his tongue.)

Sa'y means to strive, to walk hurriedly. Thus the verse means: When this hypocrite, this most violent of adversaries, gets a chance to do something, and is given authority and rules over the people, he hastens hither and thither and strives to create mischief in the land.

Tawalli may also mean to turn back, to be out of sight. In that case the verse would mean: "And when he turns back (from you), his actions in your absence belie his talk in your presence." The enthusiasm for the common welfare and the good of the ummah turns into striving in the land to create mischief and evil.

Qur'an: and destroy the crop and the progeny:

Apparently it is a description of the mischief. He creates mischief by destroying the crop and the progeny. The continued existence of the human species depends on food and procreation. These are the two most essential things which the human species cannot do without. Procreation is clear from the word 'progeny'. So far as food is concerned, man acquires it from the animal and the plant; animals again acquire it from plants. Thus, the basis of food is the plant which is obtained from crops. That is why the mischief and destruction has been explained in terms of crops and progeny. The verse means that he creates mischief and destruction in the earth by eliminating through the destruction of crop and progeny.

Qur'an: and Allah does not love mischief:

fasad literally means deterioration, corruption, decay, negation, immorality; here it has been translated as mischief.

fasad in this sentence does not refer to the physical decay or destruction in this world. This universe is based on such a system that every destruction leads to a subsequent construction. A struggle for survival is continuously going on; every existence is followed by extinction, every life by death. Both are found in this natural cosmos side by side. This is the system created by Allah; and how can He hate a thing which He Himself has created and decreed?

It follows that the "mischief" here refers to corruption in the shari'ah and legislation. Allah ordained the laws of religion for the betterment of the actions of His servants; these laws will improve their character and traits; they will keep human society and human beings on the straight path, on the path of moderation. Thereupon, they will find happiness and prosperity in this life as well as in the life Hereafter. (This will be further explained under the verse 2:213)

Then this man appears on the scene whose words belie his inner feelings; he starts running hither and thither to create immorality and mischief on the earth. He pretends to improve society, but in

reality he destroys. He alters the words of Allah by giving them a wrong meaning; he changes the laws ordained by Allah; he manipulates the teachings of the religion. All this leads to depravity of character and perennial controversy in religion and society. And, in this manner, the religion is negated, humanity is eliminated and the whole world is ruined.

To appreciate how true these verses are, look at the history of Islam and see how unauthorized people took the reins of the state in their hands, how they imposed themselves on the Muslim ummah and how they corruptly conducted the affairs of religion and state. They did what they did and the losers were the religion (which got nothing but evil results), the Muslims (who are always in decline and decadence) and the ummah (which is perennially plagued with internal strife and dispute.) The religion is now a ball in the hands of anyone who wants to play with; and human values a toy to be treasured and then discarded at the whim of the child.

The result of this striving of that hypocrite is decay and deterioration on the earth; first, he corrupted religion and then destroyed humanity. That is why in some traditions and destroy the crops and progeny has been interpreted as the destruction of religion and humanity.

Qur'an: And when it is said to him, fear Allah, he is overcome by honor (pride) by sin; so enough for is Hell, and certainly it is an ill abode:

'Izzah means honor, mihad is the paved way, abode. Apparently, the words by sin qualify the word, the honor, and have no connection with he is overcome. The verse says that when he is told to fear Allah, he is overcome by the apparent honor which he has earned through his sins and hypocrisy.

The real honor comes from Allah as He says: and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom thou pleasest (3:26); and to Allah belongs the honor and to His Apostle and to the believer (63:8); Do they seek honor from them? Then, surely all honor belongs to Allah (4:139). Honor is a status which Allah attributes to Himself and declares that it is only He who bestows it on His chosen creatures. Such a thing cannot be a source of sin or evil. It naturally follows that the honor mentioned in this verse is not real honor which is given by Allah. It is only a masquerade which deceives none except the ignorant people who mistakenly accept it as honor.

The preposition "by" (b. . .) in "by sin" (bi 'l-ithm) has no connection with the verb he is overcome; the word "sin" is neither the object of "is overcome", nor its cause. In other words, the verse does not say that his honor or pride drives him to sin and to rejection of the advice to fear Allah, or incites him to answer back the said advisor in unbecoming language. Nor does it mean that sin drives him to pride. As mentioned above, the word by sin qualifies the word honor (or pride), and indicates the honor or pride gained by sin. Had the word honor been left unconditional, it would have meant that Allah recognized it as real honor (which comes from Allah). And in that case it

could not be said to create, or be created by, sin or pride. That is why we say that it is conditional and means an apparent honor which is earned through sin and hypocrisy.

There is another verse where the word honor (izzah) has been used for the unbelievers. But there, also, the context shows that it means only an appearance of honor, not real honor. Allah says: Nay, those who disbelieve are (steeped) in self-exaltation 'izzatin, and opposition. How many did We destroy of the generations before them, then they cried but there was no longer any escape (38:2-3). Here the word izzatin (translated above as "self-exaltation") is a common noun, it does not have any definite article before it, and the next verse describes the destruction of people like them. These points clearly show that here also it is only an appearance of honor, a passing shadow which will not last long.

Qur'an: And among the man is he who sells his self (soul) to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is Affectionate to the servants.:

This verse is in contrast to the preceding three ones. On one side there is a man priding himself in his sins, boasting and self-exalting, showing the doing of good to people, hiding his hypocrisy behind a mask of charming words; and religion and humanity cannot expect of him anything except ruin and destruction.

On the other side is a man who has sold his soul to Allah, he wants nothing except what Allah wishes; he desires nothing for his self; his honor and strength come only from Allah, and he seeks nothing but the pleasure of Allah. By his presence, religious and worldly affairs re-acquire their correct shape, the truth is revived, humanity enjoys a happy life and the good effects of Islam reach every one.

This also shows the connection of the end of the verse, and Allah is Affectionate to the servants, with its beginning. Surely, the presence of such a man is a great mercy from Allah to His servants. Had there not been such virtuous people to counteract the designs of those others (whose stock-in-trade is hypocrisy and mischief), the structure of religion would have fallen into ruins, and the foundation of righteousness and goodness would have been destroyed. But it is the method chosen by Allah that He removes that wrong by this truth, and repairs the damage inflicted by His enemies with the good spread by His beloved and chosen servants. He has said: And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth certainly would be in a state of disorder (2:251); And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly would have been pulled down cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered (22:40); therefore if these disbelievers in it, We have already entrusted it with a people who are not disbelievers in it (6:89). The decadence brought upon the religion and the world by those who love nothing but their own selves cannot be removed except through the good overflowing from those who have sold their souls to Allah, who love nothing except Allah

and who desire nothing except that the world and the people of the world may become virtuous.

This deal has been praised by Allah in many verses, one of which is as follows:

Surely Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their properties, for this that theirs be the Garden; they fight in Allah's way, so they slay and are slain; (this is) a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Injil and the Qur'an; and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Therefore, rejoice in the trade that you have transacted; and that is the great achievement (9:111).

TRADITIONS

It is reported from as-Suddi about the verses, And among the men is he whose talk . . . an evil abode, that they were revealed about, Akhnas ibn Shariq ath-Thaqafi, an ally of Banu Zuhrah. He came to the Prophet in Medina and said: "I have come seeking Islam, and Allah knows that surely I am truthful." The Prophet was pleased with that talk. The words of Allah, and takes Allah to witness as to what is in his heart refer to this, aspect. Then he went out and passed by an agricultural field and some donkeys belonging to some Muslims. He burnt the filth and wounded and killed the donkeys. It was about that that the verse was revealed, and when he turns away (from you) he runs hither and thither on earth so that he may cause mischief therein and destroy the tilth and the stock. [ad-Durru 'l manthur]

It is narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that the three verses were revealed about the hypocrites because he shows what is opposed to what he hides in his heart. The author of al-Majma' (said that the same was also narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.). [Majma'u 'l-bayan]

The author says: But this interpretation does not fit the apparent meaning of the verse.

It is written in some traditions narrated from the Imams of Ahlu l-bayt that these verses were revealed about their enemies.

It is narrated from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the words of Allah, and destroy the crop and progeny, that crop means religion, and progeny, humanity. [Majma'u 'l-bayan]

The author says: This tradition has already been explained earlier. In another tradition the crop has been interpreted as 'progeny and crop'. It is easy to see how this also may fit the earlier explanation.

ash-Shaykh has narrated in his al-Amali a tradition from 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (a.s.), about the verse: And among men is he who sells . . . Affectionate to the servants, that he said: "It was revealed

about 'Ali (a.s.) when he slept (on the night of hijrah) on the bed of the Messenger of Allah."

The author says: There are innumerable traditions from both

Shi'ah and Sunni chains that this verse was revealed about 'Ali concerning his sacrifice on the night of hijrah,. Tafsir al-burhan gives five of those chains from ath-Tha'labi and others.

Ibn Marduwayh has narrated from Suhayb that he said: "When I intended to emigrate from Mecca to the Prophet in Medina, the Qurayshites told me, 'O Suhayb! You came to us and you had no wealth. Now you want to emigrate with all this wealth of yours, By God, this can't be.' So I said to them, 'What do you think? Would you leave me if I gave you all my wealth?' They said: 'Yes!' Thereupon I gave them my wealth and they left me. I came out till I reached Medina. This incident was reported to the Prophet and he said: 'Suhayb profited twice.' " [ad-Durru l-manthur]

The author says: He has narrated it from some other chains also, some of which add: and then the verse was revealed: And among men is he who sells his soul. . .

Some other traditions say that it was revealed about Suhayb and Abu Dharr because they purchased themselves by giving away their properties. But the verse does not say, "he who purchases . . .", it says, he who sells. And the interpretation of the verses does not agree with the meaning of "purchase".

There is a tradition from 'Ali (a.s.) that this verse refers to a man who is killed because of enjoining to do good and forbidding to do bad. [Majma'u l-bayan]

The author says: It is one example of the general meaning of the verse. There is no difficulty in explaining the meaning of the verse in general terms, though it was sent down on a particular occasion for a particular person.

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verses 208-210

O you who believe! Enter you one and all into submission wholly and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is to you an open enemy. (208) But if you slip after clear signs have come to you, then know that Allah is Almighty, Wise. (209) Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angels; and the matter is decreed away; and all matters are returned to Allah. (210)

COMMENTARY

These three verses, together with the four that follow them, guide us as how to preserve religious unity in human society: To enter into total submission, to limit oneself to the word spoken by Allah and to that deed whose path is shown by Allah. They declare that religious unity was never disintegrated, nor was the happiness of both worlds turned into misery with disaster visited upon the territory of a people, except when they left submission, manipulated the signs of Allah by altering them and putting them into the wrong place. This had happened to the children of Israel and other people, and will surely happen to this umrah also. But in the end Allah promises them His help, Surely the help of Allah is near.

Qur'an: O you who believe! Enter you one and all into submission wholly:

silm (submission), islam and taslim all are the same kaffatan is for emphasis and means 'all', 'wholly'. As the verse is addressed to the believers, and they are ordered to enter into submission "wholly" the command covers the whole group as well as every individual. It is obligatory on each and every believer, as it is on the whole of Muslim society not to contravene this command and to submit all matters to Allah and His Apostle. Hence the phrase one and all in the translation.

Again, as the hearers are already believers the submission called for means total submission to Allah after believing in Him. Hence the word wholly in the translation. It follows that the believers must submit all their affairs to Allah, they should not decide themselves what was good for them and what was not, they should not prepare or select any path for themselves without the guidance of Allah and His Apostle. They must remember that no people were destroyed except that they followed their own views and desires, and talked without true knowledge; and no people forfeited the right of life and happiness except that they became disunited.

It is clear from the above that following the footsteps of Satan does not mean following him in all the falsehood which he invites to, because a believer cannot follow Satan in all satanic schemes. Rather, it means to follow him in the matters of religion. Satan furnishes some paths of untruth with the signposts of truth; in this way, he puts into religion what is not from religion. Thus, a believer is deceived into following that path without realizing his error.

One way of becoming aware of such an interpolation is to find out whether AM and His Apostle have ever mentioned it in their teachings of the religion.

The context and words of the verses also show what has been explained above. "Footsteps" are found in a trodden path. The believer is proceeding on that path; therefore, it must be the path of true religion. But Satan has put his marks thereon. So, the footsteps of Satan should refer to

Satanic ways within the highway of true faith. The believer is obliged to enter into submission. Therefore, wherever he proceeds without wholly submitting himself to Allah and His Apostle, it must be in the footsteps of Satan. If he goes on to that path, he is following Satan's footsteps.

This verse is similar to some others. For example: O men! Eat of what is in the earth lawful and good, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is to you an open enemy. He only enjoins you evil and indecency, and that you should say against Allah what you do not know (2:168-169); O you who believe! Do not follow the footsteps of Satan; and whoever follows the footsteps of Satan, then surely he enjoins indecency and evil. (24:21); Eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of Satan, then surely he enjoins indecency and evil. (24:21); Eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely he is your open enemy. (6:142). The difference between the verse under discussion and those quoted above is that this verse addresses the group as a whole, as it contains the word *kaffatan* (all, wholly, but those other verses are general. Accordingly, this verse implies the same meaning as the verses, And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided. (3:103); And surely this My path is straight one, so follow it; and do not follow the (other) ways, for they will scatter you from His path. (6:153).

The verse implies that Islam guarantees that it contains all kind of laws and knowledge which are needed by the human beings for their welfare and good.

Qur'an: But if you slip ... Mighty, Wise:

zallah means a slip, a falling. The verse says: If you did not enter one and all into submission, wholly and slipped - and the slip refers to following the footsteps of Satan - then know that Allah is Mighty, Who is not prevailed upon in His orders, and Wise, Who decides in your affairs according to His Wisdom. Thus He shall decide about you according to His Wisdom and shall enforce it upon you and nobody will be able to hinder it.

Qur'an: Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angel:

zulal is plural of *zullah* which means "anything used for shade", like canopy, awning, tent. Apparently, the word "angels" is in conjunction with the divine name "Allah".

'Me preceding two verses were addressed to the believers (in the second person). This one dramatically changes it to third person and starts addressing the Apostle of Allah; implying that those who slip up and follow the footsteps of Satan are not worthy of direct address from Allah. It appears as though they are awaiting a decree by their following the footsteps of Satan and by their disunity and division. And that decree should be that Allah and the angels come unto them in

canopies of cloud, and the matter be decided while they are still unaware of it - or without having any pity on them and on their plight; and all matters are returned to Allah; there is no escape from His judgment and decree.

The context shows that Do they await aught ... is the description of the threat implied in the previous sentence, then know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.

It is self-evident truth, which is also proved by the Qur'an and the sunnah, that attributes of the body cannot be used for Allah, nor can He be described with adjectives of transient things. No such word, phrase or sentence can be used for Him which implies transience, need, deficiency or want. Allah says: Nothing whatsoever (is there) like the like of Him. (42:11); and Allah is He Who is Self-sufficient (35:15); Allah is the Creator of everything. (39:62) There are numerous such verses; and all of them are confirmed and decisive ones to which the ambiguous verses should be referred. It is these confirmed verses which guide us towards the correct interpretation of the ambiguous ones. If any verse apparently attributes to Allah an action or a characteristic of transient things, then it must be referred to the confirmed verses and interpreted in a way which is not below His dignity nor opposed to His beautiful names.

Now here is a verse which attributes the action of "coming" to Allah. A few other verses also have used this word for Him. And comes your Lord with the angels arrayed in ranks (89:22); then came upon them Allah from whence they did not expect (59:2); so Allah came upon their structure from the foundations (16:26). In all such verses, it is necessary to interpret them with such meanings which are worthy of Divine sublimity. We may give them the meaning of, let us say, sending His chastisement upon them, surrounding them with His power or wrath. Accordingly, the meaning of Allah should come to them in this verse shall be "Allah should surround them with His power for enforcing His decree on them".

Further, whenever Allah is pleased to show that the apparent means and the intermediate causes are not independent of the order of Allah, He discards attributing the action to such causes and means; instead He attributes it to Himself or to His order. He says in one place: Allah takes the souls at the time of their death (39:42); while in other places He attributes this action to the angel of death or the angels; Say, the angel of death ... shall cause you to die (32:11); Until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers (i.e. angels) take him away (6:61). To make it more clear, look how He has declared about the angels that: only according to His command do they act (21:27).

Likewise, He says, Surely your Lord will judge between them (10:93), and when the order of Allah came, judgment was given with truth (40:78).

And the same is the case with the verse under discussion (Do they await aught but that Allah

should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angels) and the verse Do they await aught but that the angels should come to them or that the order of your Lord should come (16:33).

The above verse proves that the verse under discussion, Allah should come, also means "the order of Allah should come". Likewise, in every place where the action attributed to Allah is below His power and dignity, we may safely say that the word 'order' or 'command' is implied, as the above verses have shown.

This explanation has been accepted by the majority of the commentators of the Qur'an and it is correct. But there is even a deeper and finer meaning which can be understood if one ponders on the Qur'an.

A characteristic which is accompanied by a deficiency, want or imperfection is not attributable to Allah. But if that characteristic could be separated from that deficiency, want or imperfection, then there is no reason why it cannot be attributed to Allah, provided it is suitable for His sublimity and perfection. The word "coming" creates in our mind a picture of a body gradually moving and shortening the distance between itself and another body till it reaches quite near to that. If we can remove the material characteristics from this meaning, there will remain the idea of "nearness", with the disappearance of any obstruction in between. In that case, it would be quite correct to use this word for Allah literally, not metaphorically. Accordingly, Allah should come to them would mean that there would remain no curtain between His creatures and His judgment about them.

Anyhow, this verse contains the threat, which was implied in the preceding sentence, then know that Allah is Mighty, Wise. This threat may be about the chastisement awaiting them in the Hereafter, as it is in the similar verse: Do they await aught but that the angels should come to them or that the order of your Lord should come (16:33), which, as its context shows, is clearly about the events of the Hereafter.

Or, it may be about something expected to happen in this world, as may be seen in the verses of surah Yunus: so when their apostle came, the matter was decided with justice, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. And they say, 'when this promise will come to pass, if you are truthful. . .' Say, Do you see if His chastisement overtakes you by night or by day, what is there of it that the guilty hasten for? (10:47-50). The same is the implication of the verses, 30:30-36, and the verse, How many a town, which was unjust, We did destroy and We raised another people after it? (21:11).

The chastisement of this world is because this world is a foretaste of the life Hereafter, where every aspect of this world would appear more perfectly and: completely.

And it is possible that the promised punishment would be in both worlds together.

In any case, the words, in the canopies of bright cloud would be interpreted according to the place where the promised punishment would be meted out.

Qur'an: and the matter is decreed away; and all matters are returned to Allah.: The matter is decreed away by Allah, but His name is not mentioned to show His Greatness. There are many examples of such deletion in the Qur'an.

TRADITIONS

Many traditions have been written concerning verse 2:168 (O men! Eat the lawful and good things out of what is in the earth; and do not follow the footsteps of Satan ...) which support the meaning given by us of following the footsteps of Satan.

Some traditions say that "submission" means the love and obedience of the Prophet and his progeny (wilayah) There is a tradition from ar-Rida (a.s.) about the words of Allah, Do they await aught but that Allah should come to them in the canopies of bright cloud and the angels: He said: "Allah says: 'Do they wait aught but that Allah should come to them with the angels in the canopies of bright clouds'. Like this it was revealed." And he said, about the word of Allah; And comes your Lord with the angels arranged in ranks (89:22), that : "Surely, Allah cannot be described with attributes of coming and going. Elevated is He from transferring from one place to another. Verily, it means, 'And comes the command of your Lord with the angels arranged in ranks'." [at-Tawhid and Ma'ani al-akhbar]

The author says: The words of the Imam at the beginning of the interpretation, "Allah says", do not mean the actual word or recitation of the verse. The word "says" here stands for "means". The interpretation given in this tradition is the same, which we have already explained, that "coming of Allah" means coming of His command. The Angels do whatever they do, and come down whenever they come down, by the command of Allah. He says about angels: Nay! They are honored servants; they do not precede Him in speech and (only) according to His commandment do they act. (21:27), and He sends down the angels with the spirit by His commandment (16:2).

The verse begins with an interrogation which here stands for denial and disapproval. It means that "they do not await" or "they should not await". But some people have said that this denial and disapproval is comprehensive and refutes not only their awaiting but even the thing awaited. In other words, it means that they do not await aught but an impossible thing - that Allah should come to them in the canopies of cloud as one body comes to another body, and that the angels should come with Him and He should order them and forbid them. Obviously such a thing is

impossible; and the aim of the verse would be to hint that these people cannot mend their ways by these exhortations and sermons.

But this meaning does not agree with the context of the verse. It has been explained that all these verses have one context. Therefore, this verse also is about the condition of the believers. And the believers cannot be condemned in the suggested manner. Apart from that if Allah had meant to show that the thing awaited was impossible or beneath His sublimity, He would have followed it with some words to show that it was so. And we find that it is the custom of the Qur'an everywhere on such occasions. For example: And those who do not hope of our meeting say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or (why) do we not see our Lord?" Certainly they think too high of themselves and have revolted (in) a great revolt. (25:21); And they say: "The Beneficent (God) has taken to Himself a son!" Glory be to Him! (21:26).

Apart from that, what would be, in this case, the significance of the words, in the canopies of bright cloud? And what would the subsequent words mean?

OTHER TRADITIONS

This last verse has variously been interpreted in the traditions of the Imams of Ahlu l-bayt as referring to the Day of Resurrection (al-Ayyashi from al-Baqir – a.s.) or the Day of Return (the raj'ah) as-Saduq from as-Sadiq (a.s.) or the Reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) (al-'Ayyashi from al-Baqir [a.s.] with two chains.)

And there are many such cases where a verse has been interpreted by them as referring to the Day of Resurrection in one tradition, and to the Day of Return in another, and to the Reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) in yet another one. It is because all these meanings are interrelated, so much so that they can be said to be basically one. As the people have not gone deep into the subject of the Resurrection and have not looked into it in the light of the Qur'an they have gone their separate ways about these traditions. Some have discarded them altogether, even though there are probably more than five hundred traditions on its various aspects; some have interpreted them according to their own views even though the wordings of the traditions are very clear and explicit. A third group quotes these traditions and refrains from giving any opinion - these people are the most reasonable of all.

The non-Shi'ah Muslims believe that Imam al-Mahdi! will appear; they have narrated mutawatir traditions about it from the Prophet, but they reject the idea of the raj'ah and say that this belief is a peculiarity of the Shi'ah. And in these days some people, claiming to be Shi'ah, also have rejected this belief, saying that it has been foisted into Shi'ism by the Jews and some nominal Muslims like Abdullah ibn Saba and his companions. One of them tried to refute this belief by intellectual argument, the gist of which is as follows:-

"It is a special grace of Allah that a living person is not given death until he reaches the perfection of the life and all his potentialities are converted into achievements. If after death he is again sent back to this world it would be retrogression, a backward step from accomplishment to potentiality, and it is impossible, except when a truthful informer tells us about it, i.e., Allah or any of His Representatives, as He has informed us concerning the events of Musa, 'Isa, Ibrahim (peace be on them all) and others. But we have not, been told by Win or them anything about ar-raj'ah. And the evidence put by the believers in ar-raj'ah is not complete."

After saying this he went on to claim about each and every tradition that it was weak - without knowing the difference between the correct ones and the defective ones. The poor man did not realize that this argument is not a rational one at all. Its first part refutes its second part. If something is impossible, by nature it would remain impossible without any exception. An "impossible" idea would not be turned into "possible" just because a truthful informer said so. Anybody who said about an impossibility that it became a possibility, would not be "truthful". And if he was supposed to be really truthful then that thing would not have been an impossibility in the first place. Would we say that he was truthful if he were to say that one is not a half of two, or that a truthful person was at the same time a liar?

This much about the consistency of his argument. Now, we come to his argument that (1) All people die when they reach the perfection of the life, and when their potentialities are converted into achievements; (2) What has attained achievement cannot be turned back to potentiality; (3) Therefore, a dead man cannot be returned to this life.

In this argument, the second premise is correct; the first is not. It is not "all" people, but only "some", who die after attaining perfection and converting their potentialities into achievements. A man, who completes his natural span of life and dies from old age, may be said to have reached the last stage of his perfection. But what about another man who prematurely dies of an epidemic or fatal sickness, or is killed? Can it be claimed that he had already reached the last stage of his potential perfection? The answer is 'No'. Therefore, it cannot be said that it is impossible for such persons to be returned to the life of this world. Now it is obvious that his argument is neither comprehensive nor correct. We can think of many cases where it might be possible for a dead person (even if he had died after attaining his perfection) to be sent back to this world; for example, a man in his first life had a potential for a perfection which was not available at that time; he died; then by the progress of society, that perfectness became possible. What is there to prevent his return to this world to achieve that perfection for which he had a potential in the first life? Because it will not be a step backward - from perfection to potentiality,- it will be progress from potential to perfection.

There are other examples, but this is not the place to go into the details of this subject.

As regards his argument against individual traditions, it has two serious defects: (1) These traditions are mutawatir, in their meaning, from the Imams of Ahlu'l-bayt - so much so that non Shi'ite Muslims have counted the belief of ar-rajah, from the very early days of Islam, as one of the special beliefs of the Shi'ah and their Imams - and a mutawatir matter cannot be refuted even if the individual traditions be really defective, or weak, or arguable. (2). There are many verses revealed on this subject and many traditions which are complete in their meaning and reliable in their chains. We shall mention them when we come to the relevant verses like: And on the day when We will gather from every people a party from among those who rejected Our signs, then they shall be formed into groups (27:83). There are other verses to prove this belief.

Apart from these specific verses, there are others which imply this meaning. For example, the words of Allah which come shortly after the verse under discussion: Or & you think that you will enter the Garden while yet has not come upon the like of which came upon those who have passed before you (2:214). And one of the things which came upon previous nations was that some of their dead were resurrected, and lived again in this world, as the Qur'an narrates concerning the stories of Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa, 'Uzayr, Armia and others. And the Messenger of Allah has said: "By Him in Whose hand is my soul! Most certainly you shall follow the traditions of those who were before you, as in a pair of shoes the one tallies with the other, and as one flea looks like another, until you will not miss their path, nor will they miss yours; (and this means) the traditions of the Israelites.

Moreover, these matters are among the reports of the great events of the latter days, foretold by the Imams of Ahlu l-bayt; these prophecies were preserved by reporters and narrators in books which were written and copied centuries before the events; and every day we see some of its parts fulfilled in exactly the same way without any addition or subtraction. This compels us to believe that the remaining part of those prophecies (including ar-raj'ah) must be true,

Now we come back to the topic in hand. We were discussing why a single verse is sometimes explained as referring to the Day of Resurrection and sometimes as describing ar-raj'ah or the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.). It appears from the characteristics and details of the Day of Resurrection, mentioned in the Qur'an, that it will be a day when no intermediate cause will hinder one from the signs of Allah; there will remain no veil on the face of truth. All illusions will vanish and the signs of Allah will appear in their perfect manifestation.

That day could exist side by side with this world, but it is obvious from the Qur'an and sunnah that human beings, i.e., this species of homo sapiens who are descended from Adam and his wife, will become extinct in this world and only then will this great day dawn upon them.

The life of this world and the life of the Resurrection can exist side by side for different groups and

species. The life of the period between death and the Day of Resurrection (barzakh) exists for our dead side by side with our life on this earth; neither does our life interfere with theirs, nor theirs with ours. Allah says: By Allah Most certainly We sent (apostles) to nations before you, but Satan made their deeds fair-seeming to them; so he is their guardian today and for them is a painful punishment (16:63).

This, therefore, is the reality of the Day of Resurrection, "the Day on which men shall stand before the Lord of the worlds" "the Day when they shall come forth; nothing concerning them remains hidden from Allah". That is why sometimes even death is called Resurrection, because the veil of intermediate causes is lifted from the imagination of the dead person. 'Ali (a.s.) has said: "Whoever dies his resurrection begins." This subject will be explained, God willing in its appropriate place.

The traditions which prove ar-raj'ah in spite of their large number, are one in their essence. They show that the world is proceeding towards a day when the signs of Allah will appear in their perfect manifestation; man will not disobey Allah, but shall worship Him with a sincere and pure heart, untainted by the desires of this world; and he will not be deceived by Satan. At that time some dead persons - some friends of Allah and some of his enemies - shall be returned to the world again, and the truth will be separated from the falsehood.

It appears from above that the Day of Return shall be one of the stages of the Day of Resurrection. But it will be a lesser manifestation, because there shall remain, at that time, the possibility, to a certain extent, of evil and mischief, which will be impossible on the Day of Resurrection

And that is the reason why in some traditions the same verses have been said to be related concerning the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.). It is because at his reappearance also the truth will be manifested perfectly, though it will be less than on the Day of "Return".

There are traditions narrated from the Imam s of Ahlu 'l bayt that "The days of Allah are three: the Day of reappearance, and the Day of Return, and the Day of Resurrection." Some of them say that "The days of Allah are three: the Day of Death, and the Day of Return, and the Day of Resurrection."

The three days are one in their nature but different in degrees. It is because of this oneness of essence that a single verse is at different times interpreted by all three days.

The above discussion clearly shows that the Day of Return is not only possible, but a reality; and those who reject it have no reason to refute it.

1. Abdullah ibn Saba is a mythical personality, who did not exist outside the imagination of some

story-tellers. See 'Abdullah ibn Saba 'wa asatir ukhra by as-Sayyid Murtada al-Askari of Tehran.

2. ar-Raj'ah (return) means that after the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) and before the Day of Judgment some confirmed friends of Allah and some of His confirmed enemies shall be returned to this world again to live under the rule of the Representative of Allah.

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verses 211-212

Ask the children of Israel how many a clear sign We gave them; and whoever changes the favor of Allah after it has come to him, then surely Allah is severe in requiting (evil) (211). The life of this world is made to seem fair to those who disbelieve, and they mock those who believe; but those who guard (against evil) shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection; and Allah provides with sustenance whom He pleases without measure (212).

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: Ask, the children of Israel. . . severe in requiting (evil):

It reconfirms and emphasizes the threat contained, in (2:209), that Allah shall seize, the sinners, in the manner of the One who is Mighty and Powerful. It says: These Israelites are within your sight and hearing. They were the people to whom Allah gave the Book and the rule and prophethood and territory; and provided them with good things and made them excel other nations. Ask them. how many a clear sign We gave them; and then see from when they started and where they went. They changed the words of Allah from their places; they followed some self Book and His signs invented things in opposition to Allah, His o And all this Was done in revolt after they were given the knowledge., Then Allah punished them with the most severe punishment: They went astray, became disunited, disagreed among themselves; they unlawfully ate the property of their brethren; their power was gone; their happiness vanished; and humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them in this world, and the chastisement of the Hereafter is more humiliating and then they shall not get any help.

This is the tradition of Allah: whoever changes the favor of Allah and uses it wrongfully, Allah surely chastises him and of course Allah is severe in chastisement.

The sentence, whoever changes the favor of Allah ... then surely Allah is severe in requiting gives the general principle and describes the unchangeable habit of Allah, so that the hearers may know

the firm decree of Allah in such cases.

Qur'an: The life . . . make those who believe:

It explains the reason why the Israelites and the people like them went astray. The main reason is that the life of this world seems alluring to them. When materialism allures someone, it encourages him to fulfill the lust and desire of his heart and to satisfy his sensuous appetite; it makes him forget all truth and reality. The only aim of such a man remains to get whatever he can from this world - status, dignity, wealth, beauty, and so forth. He makes use of everything to reach this goal - and 'everything' includes religion. Thus, he misuses religion to gain privilege and distinction. Religion becomes a means of honoring the leaders and the bosses and bestowing on them the prestige befitting their status and place in the world; it encourages the common man to seek nearness to those leaders, not to Allah; it allows them to find ways to seek the favors of these nobles and leaders. This we see in the Muslim ummah today, just as it was seen in the Israelites before.

Those who disbelieve *kufr* (translated here as disbelief,) is apparently used in the Qur'an in its literal meaning, i.e. to hide. In this general meaning it is comprehensive; it includes "disbelief" as well as "hiding the truth". The life of this world is made to seem fair not to the disbelievers only but to them also who hide any religious truth or change any religious favors. Accordingly, such a man also is hider of truth (*kafir*) who has been allured by the beauty of this life, and he also should prepare himself for the severe punishment.

Qur'an: but those who guard (against evil) shall be above them . . . without measure.:

"Those who believe" of the preceding sentence has been changed in this sentence to those who guard themselves (against evil). It is to emphasize that mere belief (*iman*) without *taqwa* (guarding oneself against evil; piety, fear of Allah) is of no use.

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verse 213

Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves; whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those 'who believed to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides

whom He pleases to the straight path. (213)

GENERAL COMMENT

This verse explains why religion was promulgated and mankind obliged to follow it, and why differences occurred in it.

Mankind, having been created with a natural urge to remain together and cooperate with each other, were in the beginning one single group. Then occurred differences about the acquisition of the necessities of life. These differences could only be settled by creating laws to give each one his right and to make him respect the rights of others. Allah has ordained the law and sent it down as religion, accompanied by good tidings of reward for those who obey and a warning of punishment for the offenders. This religion was made perfect by the institution of worship. All this was accomplished by sending the prophets and the apostles.

After that, people differed again - this time about the knowledge of religion, or about matters concerning the beginning and end of mankind. Thus, religious unity was disrupted and various groups appeared on the scene, and their differences contaminated the other aspects of life.

These second differences only occurred because of the revolt of the very people who were given the book, after the fundamentals and characteristics of religion had been fully explained to them and the proof of Allah had been completed for them.

It is clear that there were two differences: First, the difference about worldly gains, which was but natural; second, the difference about matters of religion which was based, not on nature, but on the revolt of mischief-makers. Then Allah guided the believers to the truth about which they differed; and this guidance was done by His Will; and Allah guides whomsoever He pleases to the straight path.

The divine religion is the only means of happiness and felicity for the human species, and it keeps life in order. It creates a balance between various human instincts and urges, and keeps them on the middle path, preventing them from going towards either extreme. Thus, there appears the best system and the highest discipline in the human life both of this world and of the Hereafter, the material as well as the spiritual.

This is an outline of the social and religious history of human beings, as given in this verse. The details may be seen in various verses throughout the Qur'an.

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: Mankind was but one people:

nas translated here as mankind literally means 'men'. Ummah translated here as 'people', means 'a group of men'. Sometimes it is used for only one man, as in the verses: Surely Ibrahim was a (ummatan) people, (devoutly) obedient to Allah (16:120); sometimes for a long period, as in the verse: and remembered after an (ummatin) a long time (12:45) and in the verse: And if We hold back from them the punishment until (ummatin Ma'dudatin) stated period of time (11:8). A fourth usage is for religion, as in the verse: And surely this (ummatukum ummatan wahidah), your religion is one religion and I am your Lord, therefore, fear Me (23:52) and, Surely this your religion is one 'religion' and I am your Lord, therefore worship Me. (21:92) In both these verses, according to some commentators, the word ummah has been used for 'religion'.

The word ummah is derived from amma (he had an aim); thus it is used for a company of people - not every company, but that which has a single aim, a single goal and a single ambition, and that unity of aim unites all the members and makes them one people. That is why it is correct to use it for one man as well as for many; the other usages mentioned above are based on that basic meaning.

Anyhow, the sentence obviously refers to the beginning of humanity, when they were united, and lived a simple life and had simple thoughts. There were no differences or any tug-of-war in matters of life or livelihood, nor was there any disagreement about religion or religious matters.

That at that time there was no difference about matters of life is evident from the next sentence, so Allah sent the prophets ... so that it (the book) might judge between the people in that in which they had differed, as it shows that the prophets were sent and the book was revealed to remove differences, because earlier they were one people. Thus the difference in matters of life occurred after the unity. And the proof that at that time there was no difference about matters of religion is seen in the following sentences, And none differed about it but the very people who were given it . . . revolting among themselves, as it shows that the disagreement about religion was started by those who were given the book, which obviously means that it started after the book was revealed.

Experience also supports this. Mankind is continuously climbing the heights of knowledge and thought and ever progressing along the path of learning and culture, year after year, and generation after generation. Thus civilization goes forward day by day, new ways are found to fulfill even the slightest needs, natural and physical obstacles are removed and ever newer instruments are invented to make life more and more comfortable.

On the other hand, if we retrace our steps, going back towards the early days of humanity, every step will take us to people less and less acquainted with the secrets of life and the mysteries of

nature, till we reach early man who knew almost nothing of the possibilities of life except those facts that were self-evident, and who used only a little imagination to gather his means of livelihood by the simplest methods. His food consisted of plants and meat which he obtained by hunting; he lived in caves, and defended himself with sticks and stones.

It is clear that a people who lived such a primitive life would not become entangled in any considerable disagreement; nor could there occur among them any lasting differences. They were in a way like a flock of sheep, everyone following the others, all remaining together for the purposes of food and abode.

This was in the very beginning. But, as we have described earlier, man had the natural urge to take advantage of others. And although the need to cooperate with each other in gathering

the necessities of life compelled people to remain together, it did not prevent them from quarrelling with, and getting better of, each other. And every day man acquired new skills, and every new experience added to his store of knowledge. Whenever he used a newly-acquired expertise, it opened new avenues of progress and dexterity for him. Also, because of the dictates of nature, some individuals were stronger while others were weaker. Those who were stronger in body or mind tried to reduce others to virtual subjugation, taking more from them than they gave them in return. That was the beginning of the differences, which was only natural as it was based on the natural urge to take advantage of others, although it had been the same urge which had led to the creation of society.

It may seem strange that the same natural urge compelled men to remain together, on one hand, and led them to quarrel and find differences, on the other. But there is nothing objectionable in the conflict between two natural demands, provided there is a third faculty above them to judge and decide, and to create a balance between them. For example, there is hunger which urges man to fill his stomach with whatever he can, even when the digestive system cannot tolerate it. There is a conflict between hunger and the power of digestion, but always there is the mind and reason to judge and decide between these two demands. It gives to each power only that which does not hinder the activities of the other.

The conflict between the two natural urges of marshalling others to one's service and cooperating with others as a single society is of the same category, because, Allah decreed to remove that conflict by sending the prophets and revealing to them the book to decide and judge in the matters of their differences and contentions.

This is the correct interpretation of this verse. Unfortunately, some commentators have interpreted it in various other ways, but none of those interpretations conform to the meaning of the verse.

One of them has said: The verse says that all men were on the right path, because the differences began only when the book was sent down to them, and the followers of the book differed, revolting among themselves.

This man did not realize that the verse describes two conflicts, not one; and we have already explained this. Also he did not pause to think that if all men were already on the right path and there was no difference, then what was the justification of sending the prophets and revealing the book and thus giving them an opportunity to differ among themselves by revolt, and thus creating chaos in the world, sowing the seed of unbelief and sin, debauchery and immorality?

Another one has said: Mankind was one group in the meaning that all had gone astray. Otherwise, Allah would not have said, so Allah sent the prophets ...

This man did not ponder upon the verse with a clear mind. This going astray, to which he referred in this interpretation, has been indicated by Allah in His words, whereupon Allah guided ... those who believed to the truth about which they differed. It means that this difference and going astray had started because of the bad motives of the followers of the book and the scholars of religion after the book was revealed and its signs were clarified for people. If people had already gone astray, if they had already been treading the path of disbelief, hypocrisy, sin and immorality, before the coming of the prophets and the book, how could it be attributed to the followers of the book and the scholars of religion?

A third interpretation: Mankind (nas) in this verse refers to the Israelites only. Allah says somewhere else about them: but they did not differ until after knowledge had come to them, revolting among themselves. (45:17) As the same words have been used in the verse under discussion, it means that the people referred to are the same.

But it is proof which has no validity at all. If in one verse, a virtue or vice is attributed to a certain nation, it does not mean that that characteristic is confined to that nation or is its special characteristic.

Even more worthless is the fourth interpretation: Mankind means Adam; and the verse says that Adam (a.s.) was one group on the right path; then his descendants differed among themselves, so Allah sent the prophets ...

But the context of the whole verse disagrees with such a meaning. It is not possible to accept even a part of this interpretation, let along the whole.

A fifth interpreter said: "Was" (kana) in this sentence should not be taken as a past tense; rather it

stands for "is" and shows a continuously existing reality, as in the words of Allah: and Allah is (kana) Mighty, Wise (48:19). In short, it means that mankind is by nature one group, because people are dictated by nature to remain together, and as cooperation and sociability is their natural urge, they have to live together in a society. But this togetherness breeds difference and conflicts. Therefore, Allah sent the prophets and revealed the book to judge about that difference.

There are three defects in this interpretation:

First: It supposes that sociability and cooperation is the primary natural urge. But it has been explained that it is not so. The primary urge is to take advantage of others and use them for one's own benefit. It is only when a man finds out that others have the same design about him that he comes to a compromise with them, and this "give-and-take" results in cooperation. So this cooperation is based on compromise, not on any natural urge. The Qur'an also goes against that supposition, as has been explained earlier.

Second: The mere fact that man is "social by nature", does not justify sending the prophets and revealing the book, unless it is mentioned that this "natural sociability" leads to conflict and disturbance. In other words, this interpretation makes it necessary to read this verse in this way: "Mankind is but one people (but that oneness breeds conflict) so Allah sent the prophets . . .!". But the said interpreter does not accept that 'conflict' is implied in this sentence.

Third: This interpretation mentions only one conflict. But the verse clearly shows two conflicts - first, before the revelation of the book, when the differences were common to all people (so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed); and, second, after its revelation, which was confined to the religious scholars, and not common to all people (And none differed about it - i.e. about the book - but the very people who were given it . . . revolting among themselves.) Thus there were two differences, one was after receiving the knowledge and based on revolt, the other was not so.

Qur'an: so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners:

Ba'th literally means to revive, to awaken, to bring back to life. Its past tense, ba'atha has been translated here as 'sent down', only to make the meaning clear; otherwise, 'sent down' is the translation of arsala not of ba'atha.

Why did Allah use here the word ba'atha (awakened, revived) here and not arsala (sent down)? The early period of mankind, which is being discussed in this sentence, was a period of quietness and inactivity. And it was more relevant to say that they were awakened and revived than that someone was sent to them.

Perhaps that is also the reason why those representatives of Allah are here referred to as prophets (nabiyyan) and not apostles (mursalin) It has been described in the first volume that the purpose of raising the prophets and revealing the books was to explain the truth to people, and to teach them the realities of their existence, making them aware of the fact that they have been created by their Lord, Allah Who has no colleague or partner in His divinity or power; and that they are to return to Him and then shall be resurrected and brought back to life on a great day; that presently they have halted in a midway station which has no more reality than a sport or play. Having realized this basic fact, they must keep it before their eyes in all situation and all their actions, always bearing *in mind where they have come from, where they are, and what is their destination.

This waking up to the realities of life is more appropriately described by the word nabiyyin (prophets) because naba means "one who has the news (naba)".

Allah sent the prophets: The authority and responsibility for sending the prophets is on Allah alone. It is only He Who sends them. It proves their sinlessness in receiving the revelation and explaining it to the people. (This topic. is described in detail at the end of this commentary).

The prophets were sent as bearers of good tidings and as warners. They brought the good news of the mercy of Allah and His pleasure and paradise for those who believe in Him and guard themselves against evil. And they gave the warning of the chastisement from Allah and His displeasure and Fire, to those who reject the truth and commit sins. The two aspects of prophethood - good tidings and. warnings - are the most effective ways of keeping an average person on right path and making the prophetic mission a success, although some righteous servants of Allah do good and desist from evil only for the sake of their Lord without thinking about any reward or punishment.

Quran: and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed: kitab is on the paradigm of fi'al and means 'the written'. The word generally refers to anything written by pen. But as the covenants and decrees are confirmed through writing, it is not infrequently used for compulsory and obligatory commands, and for every confirmed fact or idea which is irrefutable. And it has been used in this meaning in numerous verses of the Qur'an. The Qur'an itself is called the book (kitab) with this very meaning; otherwise, it is the talk of Allah.

It is said in the Qur'an: (It is) a "book" which We revealed to you, abounding in blessings ... (38:29); Surely, prayer is (compulsory) on the believers (kitabana mawaquta), a timed ordinance. (4:103).

The words, in that in which they had differed show that the meaning is, "Mankind was but one

people, then they different, so Allah sent the prophets . . ."

The definite article "the" (al,) 'the book' (al-kitab) indicates either the genus of book (and, accordingly refer to all divine books revealed to the prophets) or a known (and implied) book. In later case, it would refer to the book of Nuh (a.s.), because Allah says in the Qur'an: He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nuh and that which We have revealed unto you and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and Isa... (42:13). This verse describes the grace and favor of Allah by saying that the shari'ah (Law) sent down to the Muslims combines in itself what was given piecemeal to the previous prophets and over and above it contains many new features revealed to the prophet of Islam. It means that the Law was given only to those great prophets who are named here: Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa and Muhammad (peace be on them all).

Now, the verse under discussion (He sent down with them the book . . .) clearly says that the shari'ah was given in written form. Look at these two verses together and you will see that:-

First: Nuh (a.s.) was given a book containing the Law, and that book is surely referred to in this verse, He sent down with them the book either alone (if "the" is for a known and implied book) or with other divine books (if "the" denotes the genus of the book).

Second: The book of Nuh was the first divine book containing the shari'ah. Had there been any other such book before him it would have contained a Law to judge between the people, and Allah would have mentioned that shari'ah in verse (42:13).

Third: The period referred to in the sentence, Mankind was but one people was the era before the mission of Nuh (a.s.) and his book decided and judged between the people in their differences.

Qur'an: And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves:

It has been explained that it refers to the difference about the matters of religion among the followers of the religion. As the religion is based on the nature of man as created by Allah (Then set your face uprightly for the (right) religion - the nature made by Allah in which He has made men - 30:30), Allah attributed these differences to the revolt of the followers and the scholars of the religion.

The words - but the very people who were given it - indicate the origin of the religious differences about the meaning of the book. It does not say that every one who goes astray or follows a false religion is a rebel, although it is true that he has lost his way. Allah would not accept the excuses of a rebel; but He might accept the entreaties of those who were confused and could not find the

right path. Allah says: The way (to blame) is only against those who do injustice to the people and revolt in the earth unjustly ... (42:42); And others have confessed evil (one); may be Allah will turn to them (in mercy); surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful . . . And others are made to wait Allah's command -whether He will chastise them or whether He will turn (in mercy), to them; And Allah is All-knowing, All-wise (9:102-106); Except the weakened ones from among the men and the women and the children who have not in their power the means nor do they find a way; so these, it may be, Allah will pardon them, and Allah is the Clement, Oft-forgiving (4:98-99)

Moreover, nature may go hand in hand with forgetfulness or doubt, but it cannot with revolt and intentional transgression. That is why the verse uses the words of revolt especially for those who knew the book and for whom the signs were made clear. Allah says: And (as to) those who disbelieve in and reject My signs, they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide. (2:39) There are numerous verses of this meaning in the Qur'an; and in all of them the disbelief has been made conditional on the rejection of the signs of Allah and then it is followed by the threat of punishment.

In short, this sentence shows that the second differences began because of the rebellion of the scholars of the book, after they were given knowledge of it.

Qur'an: whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path:

the truth about which they differed explains the subjects of the differences and that it was the truth with which the book was sent down ("the book with the truth").

At this juncture, Allah guided the believers to the truth in both differences: differences in affairs of this life, and differences in the matters of religion. The guidance of the believers was by His will, because they could not make it binding upon Allah to guide them, for the simple reason that there is none to impose upon Him. It is only He Himself who takes upon Himself whatever He pleases. Therefore, the guidance was by His will; if He were not pleased, He would not have willed and would not have guided.

Accordingly, the sentence, And Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path gives the reason of "by His will". He guided them because it is His discretion to guide whom He pleases, nobody can impose upon Him to guide this or to guide that. And He surely willed to guide the believers to the straight path.

Looking at the verses as a whole, we come to know the following:-

First: The definition of religion: Religion is a way of life which contains the good of this world in a

manner that ensures perfection of the next life - the life that is the real and eternal one near to Allah.

It means that the shari'ah must contain the necessary laws for this worldly life and one's livelihood.

Second: Originally religion was promulgated to remove natural differences; then it was perfected to remove both types of differences; then it was perfected to remove both types of difference - the natural ones and the un-natural ones emanating from the rebellion of religious scholars.

Third: Religion goes on perfecting itself until its laws cover all the possible needs and eventualities of life. When it reaches that stage of perfection it is finalized and no other religion comes after it. Conversely, if a religion is the final one, it must be comprehensive enough to cover 0 eventualities and fulfill all the needs of life. Allah said: Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the prophet. . . (33:40); and We revealed unto you the book, explaining clearly everything . . . (16:89); and most surely it is a mighty book; falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from? behind it ... (41:41-42).

Fourth: Every succeeding shari'ah was more perfect than the preceding one.

Fifth: Why were the prophets sent and the books revealed? In other words, what was the reason for the prophetic mission? Man, by his nature, develops towards differences in matters of life, as much as he progresses towards social cooperation. As it is nature itself which leads to differences, it is incapable of removing them. How can it repel a thing when it is forcefully pulling it towards itself? Therefore, Allah took it upon Himself to remove that conflict; and He sent the prophets with the laws to lead men to their perfection - real perfection which is a part of their creation. Allah says: Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal.) (20:50) It shows that Allah completes the creation of everything and guides it to its perfection. The creation of man is completed when he is guided to his perfection in both lives. Also He says: All do We aid - these as well as those - out of the bounty of your Lord; and the bounty of your Lord is not confined. (17:20). It means that Allah aids out of His bounty everyone who is in need of His aid in his life and existence; He gives him what he deserves. His bounty is neither confined nor limited, so far as Allah is concerned. If there is any limitation, it is from man's side, not from his Creator's.

Obviously, man cannot perfect himself, because it is his own nature which is the case of this defect. As it is nature which leads to the conflict, and as that nature is unable to mend what it has damaged, the reform (if there is to be any) must come from somewhere outside nature - it must come from the Creator; and it came in the form of prophethood guided by divine revelation. The sending of the 'prophets for this reform and removal of conflict has been given the name of ba'th (awakening, revival), and never has this verb been attributed, in the Qur'an, to anyone except

Allah, although the prophetic calls, like everything else, have some connection with their place and time.

Prophethood is a divine (say, if you will, unseen) condition which has the same relation to general human perception and activity as wakefulness has to sleep. The prophet receives the knowledge by which the conflicts and differences of human life can be removed. This perception received from the unseen is called, in the language of the Qur'anic 'revelation'; and the quality and condition of receiving that revelation is called 'prophethood'. Therefore, the reason for initiating the prophetic mission rests on the following factors:-

- (1) Human nature leads man to social cooperation;
- (2) At the same time it creates friction and conflict;
- (3) Nature itself cannot remove that conflict;
- (4) Therefore, a force outside of nature, should intervene to remove that conflict;
- (5) Allah completes creation and in His mercy, has taken it upon Himself to guide everything to its perfection; As a result of that undertaking, He sent prophets and revealed to them the book to reform human society. All these factors are proved by reason and experience.

Never has man desisted from exploiting others to his advantage; never has that exploitation, after action and reaction, failed to create a society; never has any society been free from conflict; never has that conflict been removed without social laws; and never has human wisdom been able to make such laws which could cut away all the roots of conflict. Look at the present world. See the chaos in human society, the degradation of moral values, the never-ending chain of wars,

the destruction of crops and cattle, the fighting which exterminate millions and millions of people, the autocracies, the subjugation of nations, the abasing of the human spirit, the usurping of lives and property; you will find all these and much more. And it is happening in this, the twentieth century, the century of civilization, the age of progress, the era of culture and science. What could have been the situation in the old day - the age of ignorance and darkness?

That the teaching and training of religion, emanating from the prophets and revelation, have the ability to eradicate this conflict is proved by reason and experience.

Reason: Religion calls people to real knowledge, high ethics, and noble deeds. Humanity can reach the highest peak of perfection by following such teachings.

Experience: Islam has proved it during the short period when it had control over Muslim society, as will be explained, God willing, in a proper place.

Sixth: The religion, which has been sent as the last of all religions, proves that humanity has reached the final stage of its completion and perfection. That is why the Qur'an has decreed that prophethood has come to its end with Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). His religion will never be abrogated, and his shari'ah will remain in force till the end of the world. It means that human perfection, individual as well as collective, shall always, remain within the limits of the laws ordained by Islam. There can never arise a situation for which Islam has no guidance.

It is a prophecy of the Qur'an confirmed by the history of humanity in the last fourteen centuries. Mankind has, in this period, progressed tremendously, and reached unimaginable heights in the field of the material and physical sciences. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about his ethics and morality. It has not progressed even one step since that time. Rather, it could be claimed that in this respect it has taken many steps backwards. Thus humanity has not progressed as a whole. It is a lop-sided development. Man has strengthened his body, neglecting his soul, which has become weaker.

It is clear from above that the laws of Islam have as much relevance in this era as they had fourteen centuries ago. And they will not lose their relevancy even in the future.

Some people say: The laws of religion were made for the reform of man and the good of society. If society changes, and climbs further towards the summit of perfection, religion and its law also must change, to stay in step with the changing society. It is no secret that the difference between this age and that when the Qur'an came down and Islamic laws were promulgated is far greater than the difference between the times of Musa and 'Isa (a.s.) and that of the Prophet of Islam. This vast difference demands the abrogation of the laws of Islam, so that other laws, more appropriate to a modern progressive society, can be ordained.

Reply: Religion does not aim only at the material and physical perfection of man. It looks at the human being as a whole, and seeks to make him perfect both physically and spiritually, so that he may attain both material and spiritual bliss. Its deal is the social man who is perfect from the above-mentioned point of view, not a social man who might be perfect in technology and politics but bankrupt in other aspects of humanity. These people looked at societies based on materialism. Matter is always in change, climbing up the ladder of perfection, and the same is true of materialistic societies. These people thought that a society based on religion would also always be subject to change and abrogation. But they over-looked the fundamental difference between the two societies. They forgot that Islam does not aim at a lop-sided development of man; instead, it seeks well-balanced development, where man becomes perfect as a whole, both in body and soul. Before demanding the abrogation of Islam, they should produce an individual or a

society which combines religious tenets and material progress. Then they should say what deficiency has been left therein which should be completed by a new shari'ah, or what weakness is there which needs a new law. Unless and until they produce such a society to point to the supposed defects, they have no justification in claiming that Islam should be abrogated.

Seventh: The prophets (peace be on them all) were sinless and protected from error and sin.

TRADITIONS

al-Baqir (a.s.) said: 'The men before Nuh, were one people, on the creation of Allah, neither rightly guided nor gone astray, then Allah raised the prophets.' [Majma'u 'l-bayan]

There is a tradition from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said about this verse: And it was before Nuh. He was asked whether they were on the right path. He said: "Rather they were astray. When Adam and his good children died, his successor, Shith, was unable to expound the religion of Allah which was followed by Adam and his good children. It was so because Qabil had threatened to kill him as had killed his brother, H5bil, Therefore, Shith lived among them in fear, keeping his religion secret. Their straying increased day by -day -until nobody remained with them on the earth except those who had already passed away. And the successor (of Adam) settled in an island to worship Allah. Then Allah decided to raise the apostles. And if these ignorant ones were asked they would say that He (Allah) had finished the matter;' but they are liars; verily it is thing a bout which Allah decrees every year." Then the Imam recited: Therein every wise affair 'is made distinct. (44:4). (Then he said:) "So Allah decrees what should happen during the year, hardship or abundance or rain or other such things." The narrator asked whether before the prophet they had gone astray or were on the right path. The Imam said: "They were not on guidance. They were on the creation of Allah upon which they were created. There is no change in the creation of Allah. And they were not to be guided until Allah guided them. Do you not hear the words of Ibrahim, Had not my Lord guided me, I would certainly have been of the erring people. (6:77) i.e., forgetful of the covenant." [al 'Ayyashi]

The author says: The words, They were not on guidance. They were on creation of Allah, explain the words they were astray which have been used in the beginning of the tradition. It means that they were not guided in detail to the divine knowledge, but had its rudimentary knowledge. And such a guidance may be termed straying in the meaning of ignorance of details. The first tradition, quoted from Majma u'l-bayan, mentions it in these words: "on the creation of Allah, neither rightly guided nor gone astray."

The last words of this tradition, "forgetful of the covenant" also explain the straying mentioned earlier. Guidance is the remembrance of the covenant in its reality (as is the case with the perfect believers), or the carrying on like those who remember the covenant, even if one oneself does not

remember it in reality (as is the case of most of the believers); and giving the name of guidance to this second group is only because of the mercy of Allah.

Hisham ibn al-Hakam narrates that an atheist came to Abu Abdullah (a.s.), and asked him, "From where did you prove the prophets and apostles?" The Imam said: "When we proved that there is a Creator and Maker who is elevated above us and above all the created things, and that that Creator is wise, and that it is not possible for His creatures to see Him or touch Him; and that He cannot live with them nor they with Him, and He cannot have discussion with them nor they argue with Him; then it is proved that He must have in His creation some envoys to guide the people to their advantage and interest and to that on which depends their existence and the neglect of which brings their destruction. Thus it is proved that there should be some people to enjoin (good) and forbid (evil) on behalf of the (Creator who is) wise and Cognizant of His creation. It all proves that He has his interpreters, and they are the prophets, His chosen ones from among His creation, wise, well-trained in erudition, sent (to the people) with that (wisdom); not like the people in their conditions though they are like them in physique and the make-up of the body; supported by the Wise, the All-knowing with wisdom and proofs - and arguments and evidence, like raising up the dead and healing the blind and the leper. So, the earth of Allah cannot remain empty from a proof (of Allah) with whom should be a sign to show that he is truthful in his words, and it is essential for him to be on justice." [at-Tawhid]

The author says: Evidently, this tradition contains three proofs about three subjects of prophethood:-

First: A reason to prove the necessity of prophethood in general. On deep consideration you will find it in conformity with what we have inferred from the verse under discussion.

Second: The proof that it is necessary that the prophet be supported with miracles. It conforms with what we said about miracles under the verse (2:23) And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it ...

Third: The proof that there should always be a representative of Allah on this earth, be he a prophet or an Imam. And we shall explain this, God willing, in a suitable place.

There is a tradition narrated by 'Utbah al-Laythi from Abu Dharr (May Allah have mercy on him) that he said: I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! How many prophets were there?' The Prophet said: 'One hundred and twenty-four thousand.' I said: 'How many of them were apostles He said: 'Three hundred and thirteen, a large crowd!' I said: 'Who was first of the prophets?' He said: 'Adam' I said: 'Was he an apostle from among the prophets?' He said: 'Yes. Allah made him by His hand (power) and breathed into him of His spirit.' Then the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: 'O Abu Dharr! Four of the prophets were Syrians: Adam, Shith, Ukhnuh i.e. Idris (and he was the first to write with

the pen) and Nuh; and four of them were Arabs: Hud, Salih, Shu'ayb and your prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.); and the first prophet among the children of Israel was Musa, and the last of them was Isa and (between them were) six hundred prophets.' I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! How many books were sent down by Allah?' He said: 'One hundred and four books. Allah sent down fifty books unto Shith, and thirty books unto Idris, and twenty books unto Ibrahim, and He sent down the Torah, and the Injil, and that Zabur, and al-Furqan.' " [al-Khisal and Ma'ani al-akhbar]

The author says: This tradition, and especially its first part describing the number of the prophets and the apostles, is famous, and it has been narrated by Shi'ahs and Sunnis in their books. And as-Saqud has narrated a tradition of the same meaning in al-Khisal and al-Amali, from ar-Rida (a.s.) through his forefathers from the Prophet; and (another tradition) from Zayd ibn 'Ali through his father and grandfather from 'Ali (a.s.); and similar traditions have been reported by Ibn Qawlawayh in Kamilu 'z-ziyarah and by as-Sayyid in al-Iqbdl from as-Sajjad (a.s.) and in al-Basair from al-Baqir (a.s.).

There is a tradition from al-Baqir (a.s.) about the words of Allah: and he was an apostle, a prophet (19:51), that he said: "The prophet is the one who sees in his dream and hears the voice but does not see the angel; and the apostle is the one who hears the voice, and does not see in dreams, and sees the angel." [al-Kafi]

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning. Possibly, their meaning may be inferred from such verses as, therefore, send Thou to Harun. (26:13) This tradition does not say that the apostle means the one to whom the angel of revelation is sent. It simply says that prophethood and apostleship are two ranks, the specialty of the one is seeing in the dream, and of the other is seeing the angel of revelation. Sometimes, both ranks are combined in one person, then the two specialties are found together; and sometimes prophethood is found without apostleship. Therefore, apostleship is more particular than prophethood, in practice, but not in meaning. See for example, the tradition of Abu Dharr, mentioned above, in which he asks, "how many of the prophets were apostles?"

Therefore, it is clear that every apostle is a prophet but not vice versa. This clear explanation provides the answer to the misunderstanding of some people who say that the Holy Prophet of Islam was not the last apostle, though he was the last prophet. Their "argument" is as follows:

Allah says: but he (i.e. Muhammad) is the Apostle of Allah and the last of the prophets. (33:40) The verse says that he was the last of the prophets, but does not say that he was the last of the apostles."

Reply: Prophethood is, in fact, more general and comprehensive than apostleship. When a general

item is negated its particular groups are automatically negated.

And so far as the traditions are concerned they have never said that apostleship can be found without prophethood. As you have seen they clearly say that all apostles were prophets, but not all prophets were apostles:

Abu 'I-Hasan ar-Rida (a.s.) said: The ulu 'l-azm prophets were given this name because they were people of firm determination and (brought a new) law. It was like this: Every prophet coming after Nuh was on his shari'ah and his way, and followed his (Nuh) book upto the time of Ibrahim, the friend (of Allah). And every prophet from the time of Ibrahim was on the sharrah of Ibrahim and his way and followed his book upto the time of Musa. And every prophet from the time of Musa was on the shari'ah of Musa and his way and followed his book upto the time of 'Isa. And every prophet who was in the time of 'Isa and after him, was on the shari'ah of 'Isa and his way and followed his book upto the time of our prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). So, these five are ulu 'l-azm, and they are the best of the prophets and apostles (peace be on them all). And the shari'ah of Muhammad will not be abrogated till the Day of Resurrection. Therefore, anyone who makes a claim to prophethood after him or to bringing a book after the Qur'an, his blood is allowed (i.e. it is allowed to kill him) to anyone who hears this (claim) from him." ['Uy-unu 'l-akhbar]

The author says: A tradition of similar meaning is reported from as-Saqid (a.s.) in Qisasu 'l anbiya

About the verse: Therefore, bear up patiently as did the apostles endowed with fortitude bear up with patience, that the apostles referred to here are Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and 'Isa (peace be on them all). And the meaning of "endowed with fortitude" is that they were the first of all prophets in believing in Allah, and they believed in every prophet who was before them or came after them; and they were determined to remain patient even when they were rejected (by their people) and tormented. [at-Tafsir, al Qummi]

The author says: It has been narrated by Sunni chains from Ibn 'Abbas and Qatadah that the prophets endowed with patience were five: Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa and Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). It is the same as narrated in the traditions of Ahlu I-bayt. There are other views attributed to some Sunni scholars. One said that they were six: Nuh, Ibrahim, Ishaq, Ya'qub, Yusef and Ayyub. Another said that they were the prophets who were given the order to fight in the way of Allah, and thus waged war. Some one said that they were four: Ibrahim, Nuh, Hud, and the fourth was Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). But all these sayings are without any proof.

There is a tradition narrated by ath-Thumali from al-Baqir (a.s.), that he said: "The prophets between Adam and Nuh were concealed, and that is why they were not mentioned in the Qur'an nor were they named therein as were named those prophets who declared themselves (before their people)." [al-'Ayyashi]

The author says: This meaning has been narrated from the Imams of Ahlu l-bayt by numerous chains.

Tafsir of as-Safi quotes from Majmu' u l-bayan a tradition of 'Ali (a.s.) that Allah raised a black prophet whose story He did not reveal to us.

In the first of Nahju 'l-balaghah Ali (a.s.) says, mentioning Adam (a.s.):-

"Then (Allah) sent him down to the place of trial and procreation of progeny. And from his progeny Allah chose prophets and took their pledge for (His) revelation and for carrying (His) message as their trust. In the course of time, many people changed the covenant which Allah had made with them; thus they ignored His right, and took partners along with Him. And Satan turned them away from knowing Him and cut them off from His worship. Then Allah raised among them His apostles, and sent to them His prophets one after another, to exhort the people to fulfill the covenant of His creation; and to remind them of His bounties which were forgotten; and to argue with them by communicating (to them revelation), and to bring out for them the buried (treasures of) wisdom, and to show the signs of His omnipotence: namely, the roof (i.e. sky) which is raised over them, and the floor (i.e. earth) which is placed beneath them, and the means of livelihood that sustain them, and the deaths that make them die, and the ailments that turn them old, and the happenings that successively betake them. And Allah never allowed His creation to remain without a prophet sent (by Him), or a book sent down (from Him), or a binding proof, or a laid-down highway - the apostles who were not discouraged by the smallness of their (followers') number or largeness of their rejecters. Among them was a predecessor who was told the name of his follower, or a follower introduced by his predecessor. In this way, ages passed by, and the times rolled on, and the fathers passed away while the sons took their place, till Allah raised Muhammad in fulfillment of His promise and to finalize His prophethood."

The author says: "In fulfillment of His promise" refers to the promise made by Allah to sending His Apostle, Muhammad; and good tiding of him were brought by 'Isa and other prophets (peace be on them), as Allah says: And the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly. . . (6:115)

There is a tradition narrated by 'Abdullah ibn al-Walid from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said: "Allah said about Musa: And We wrote for him in the tablets admonition from everything . . . (7:145) So, we know that He did not write for Musa everything (but only a portion 'from everything'). And He said quoting 'Isa: so that I may make clear to you part of what you differ in . . . (43:63). And He said to Muhammad (s.a.w.a.): . . . and (will) bring you as a witness against these; and We revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything ... (16:89)" [al-Ayyashi]

The author says: The same meaning has been narrated in Basa'iru 'd-darajat from 'Abdullah ibn al-Walid by two chains.

The words of the Imam, "Allah said about Musa . . ." point out that the words of Allah, in the tablets . . . from every thing explain the immediately following words about the Torah, and clear explanation of all things. If Allah had meant a comprehensive description of every thing, He would not have said, from everything - which refers only to a portion, not to the whole. This "from" shows that the "explanation of everything" means only a partial, not a comprehensive, explanation of everything.

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verse 214

Or do you think that you would enter the Garden while yet the like of those who have passed away before you has not come upon you; distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently, so that the apostle and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allah come? Now, surely the help of Allah is nigh! (214)

COMMENTARY

It has already been mentioned that these verses (from 2:208 to 2:214) are in one context and related to each other.

Qur'an: Or do you think that you would enter the Garden:

It concludes what was described in the previous verse: Religion is a guidance from Allah to lead mankind to what contains their prosperity and happiness in this world and the hereafter; and it is a grace of Allah bestowed upon them. Therefore, it is essential for them to submit themselves to this religion, without following in the footsteps of Satan. They should not create differences in it and should not turn the medicine itself into a disease; they should not change the bounty of Allah into disbelief and ingratitude, by following their lust and desire, and seeking the trinkets of this world and its decorations. If they do so, they will incur the wrath of Allah, as happened in the case of the Israelites when they perverted the bounty of Allah given to them. They must remember that the trial is continuing and the test is in progress. They also will be tested as the previous people were put to test; and no one will get the bliss of religion and nearness to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, except through fortitude and complete submission to His commands.

The first two verses were addressed directly to the believers, then the style was changed, treating them in the third person, finally in this verse they are again addressed in the second person, treating them as present. The fact is that the whole talk is with them and they are the real audience. But the style was changed in the middle verses for some good reasons (for example, those verses contained the topics of chastisement and punishment.) When the purpose was served, once again a direct address was resumed.

The word *am* (or) gives here the meaning of "but". It is made for "or", but the context of the verses gives it the following meaning: Do you intend to devote yourselves solely to what I have told you - to submit to Me, to believe in Me and to remain steadfast on the right path of religion, maintaining unity and cooperation - Or do you not; but think that you would enter the Garden ...

Qur'an: while yet the like of those who have passed away before you has not come to you.

mathal and *mithl* are used for that likeness which creates a picture of the thing for which it is used in the mind of the hearer.

Mathal (adage) is generally used for a saying or story which brings to mind the intended meaning in the shape of an illustrative metaphor, as Allah says: The similitude [*mathal*] I of those who were placed under the Torah then they did not hold it, is as the similitude of the donkey bearing books ... (62: 5) Also, *mathal* is used in the meaning of adjectives, as Allah says: See how they coin comparisons [*amthal*,] for you . . . (25:9) They were using for him (s.a.w.a.) adjectives like insane, bewitching, lying, etc.

In this verse, the word *mathal* is used in the first meaning, because the similitude is explained in the words, distress and affliction befell them. . .

Qur'an: distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently:

When a short reference was made to "the like of those who have passed away before you", the audience became anxious to know what had befallen them. Then Allah described it in detail in these words, distress and affliction befell them ...

Distress (*ba'sa*) is that hardship which befalls a man outside his person, like to property, prestige, family or in the general law and order of the society. Affliction (*darra*) means that hardship which befalls him in his person, like a wound, murder, sickness, etc. *Zalalah* and *zilzal* means an earthquake. Its root is *zalla* which means 'slipped up', 'stumbled'. The root word is repeated in this verb to imply repeated stumbling and slipping up. Anyhow the word is metaphorically used for being agitated and disturbed, and that is why we have translated it "were shaken violently".

Qur'an: so that the apostle and those who believe with him said: When will the help of Allah come?

Apparently it was the saying of the apostle and the believers together. There can be no objection as to why the apostle should utter such words. He might have exclaimed so to seek the help of Allah which He had promised in these verses: And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles, most surely they shall be the assisted ones. (37:171-172) Also He said, Allah has written down: I will most certainly prevail, I and my apostles. (58:21)

Allah says: Until when the apostles despaired and deemed they were indeed told a lie, Our help came to them ... (12:110) We may see that the tone of this verse is far harsher than the verse under discussion.

Qur'an: Now, surely the help of Allah is nigh:

Apparently this is Allah's answer to the call of the apostle and the believers.

It has already been mentioned that the verse proves that the test and trial of the people will continue in this nation also as it did for the previous ones. Also, it shows that if the same actions and attitudes appear again, the same consequences will follow. It is true in the religion also, as historians say that the history repeats itself.

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verse 215

They ask you as to what they should spend Say: Whatever of good you spend, it is for the parents, and the near of kin, and the orphans, and the poor, and the way-farer; and whatever of good you do Allah surely knows it. (215)

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever of good you spend ...

The scholars say that the style of this verse is one of philosophy. The questioners had asked about what they should spend. But that question was foolish, because one does not need divine revelation to know that what is spent is wealth in all its various shapes. Rather, they should have asked: Whom the wealth should be spent for. Therefore, Allah mentioned, instead, the deserving

beneficiaries, which the questioners should have asked in the first place.

It is good reasoning; but those scholars have left out one important point. Even though the verse did not reply to their question directly, it has touched on it, and has hinted at the reply in two places: Whatever of good you spend and whatever of good you do. The verse, therefore, shows that the thing to be spent is wealth, irrespective of its shape and quantity; and that spending it on worthy beneficiaries is a good deed and Allah knows it very well; then it makes them aware that they should rather have asked the Dames of the beneficiaries, and guides them in this respect by giving the list: the parents, the near relatives, the orphans, the poor and the way-farer.

One finds in the commentaries of the Qur'an some strange explanations of this verse:-

One of them says: "what" (ma) in what they should spend was not used by the questioners to enquire about the quiddity and essence of the thing which should be spent, because it is from the terminology of logic, and is not worthy of any literary speech of eloquent style, let alone the Qur'an which is the purest of the Arabic literature. Rather the word "what" was used for "how"; they wanted to know how they should spend their wealth and on whom. Accordingly, the verse answered that question. The reply, therefore, is according to the question, and the reasoning of the scholars of eloquence (given earlier) is out of place.

Someone else went a step further. He said: It is true that "what" is used to ask about the essence; even then the questioners' aim was to ask as to "how" they should spend. It was known that "what" is spent is wealth. As this was well-known, there was no risk of their being misunderstood; the hearer was bound to understand that they wanted to ask about "how". It is like the verse: they said: "Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is, for surely to us all the cows are alike . . ." (2:70) They knew that the cow is an animal having such shape and such characteristics. Therefore, the words what she is could not be taken to mean that they wanted to know its quiddity -its genus and species. The only possible meaning, thus, was that they wanted to know the particulars of that cow so that they might distinguish it from the others. That is why they were given the reply, He (Musa) said: "He (Allah) says, surely she is a cow not made submissive that she should plough the land . . ." (2:71)

Both the commentators seem confused. It is true that ma (what) is not used in language to ask about the quiddity of a thing, according to the terminology of logic - for a definition made up of the nearest genus and species. But it does not mean that it is made for the question about "how". It would be a linguistic mistake for the one who wants to ask, "for whom should I spend?" to say "what should I spend?"

Ma (what) is made so as to ask for the factors which might distinguish one thing from others. The reply may be given by a logical definition using the nearest genus and species, or by describing

such other distinctive characteristics and qualities by which that thing may easily be recognized. The word "what" is, therefore, general and includes the logical term, but is not different from it. And certainly it is not made to ask "how". The question about the cow and its reply (2:70-71) was asked and given correctly according to the language. There was no deviation in either from the real meaning of "what" - the question was about distinguishing factors of a thing.

A third one said: As the quiddity and essence was well-known, there was no alternative but to divert the word "what" to mean "how".

It is a manifest error. That the answer is well-known, is no justification for changing the meaning of a word to mean something quite different.

There is one more strange explanation: The questioners had asked both questions - what should they spend, and where. The Qur'an mentioned only the first question and omitted the second, because the reply pointed to it. What nonsense!

Now, we come back to the verse. There is no doubt that there is here a diversion, in the main reply, from the asked question, to remind the people that the question worthy of asking was "where", not "what", they should spend, because it was no secret that spending is done from wealth and riches.

We find in the Qur'an that it often diverts its speech from one meaning to another, to point out that the new topic is more worthy of attention. It is a style of beauty which is difficult to find in other books. See for example:

And the parable of those who disbelieve is the parable of one who shouts to that which hears not but a call and a cry ... (2:17)

(Here the parable has been diverted to a satire against the idols.)

The likeness of what they spend in the life of this world is as the likeness of a wind in which is intense cold, (that) smote upon the tith of a people who had done injustice to their souls, and destroyed it. (3:117)

(The parable is diverted from the wealth spent to its ultimate forfeiture.)

The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; ... (2:261)

(The parable is diverted from those who spend in the way of Allah to the manifold increase in its reward.)

The day on which neither property will avail nor sons, except him who comes to Allah with a heart free (from evil). (26:88-89)

(Instead of praising the heart, free from evil, the believer is praised who has got that heart, to show the importance of the believer.)

Say: I do not ask you aught of recompense for it, except that he who will, may take the way to his Lord. (25:57)

Glory be to Allah (for freedom) from what they describe except the servants of Allah, the purified ones. (37:159-160) There are many such verses.

Qur'an: and whatever of good you do, Allah surely knows it.: The word spending has been changed here to "doing good"; likewise, in the beginning of the verse "wealth" was changed to "good" ("whatever of good you spend").

This change guides us to two principles:

First: It is very much recommended that one should spend one's wealth on the recognized beneficiaries - it does not matter whether the amount is small or large. But what matters is that the thing spent should be "good", desirable and likeable. Allah says: Never shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love (3:91); O you who believe! Spend (benevolently) out of the good things that you have earned and what We have brought forth for you out of the earth; and do not aim at what is bad that you may spend of it (in charity) while you would not take it yourselves unless you connive at it (2:267)

Second: The spending should not be in a bad manner. The spending should be without reminding the receiver reproachfully of it or injuring his feelings. Allah says: ... then do not follow up what they have spent with obligation (reproach) or injury ...(2:262);

And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared ... (2:219)

TRADITIONS

There is a saying of Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "I did not see any people better than the companions of Muhammad. They did not ask him except thirteen questions till he was taken away (from this world), all of those (questions) are in the Qur'an. Among them are: 'They ask you about the

intoxicants and games of chance'; 'They ask you about the sacred month'; 'They ask you about the orphans'; 'They ask you about the menses'; 'They ask you about the booty'; 'They ask you as to what they should spend'. They never asked but what was of (practical) to them." [ad-Durru 'l-manthur]

It is written in Majmau l-bayan that this verse was revealed about 'Amr ibn al-Jamuh; he was a very old man of great wealth. He said: "O Messenger of Allah! What should I give in charity and to whom?" Then Allah revealed this verse.

The author says: This tradition has also been narrated in ad-Durru l-manthur through Ibn al-Mundhir from Ibn Hayyan. But the scholars have said that this tradition is weak. Apart from the weakness in the chain of narrators, it is not in conformity with the verse, because the verse mentions only one question as to what should be spent, and not on whom.

Similarly, two other traditions reported in that book do not conform with the verse. The first is narrated through Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir from Ibn Jarir that he said: "The believers asked the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) where they should put (i.e. spend) their wealth. So, the verse was revealed: They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: 'Whatever of good you spend . . . ' This, then, is voluntary (non-obligatory) expenditure; and zakat is different from all of it."

The second one is narrated from as-Suddi that he said: The day when this verse was revealed, there was no zakat. It is (about) the spending what one does on one's family and the alms one gives away. Then (the law of) zakat abrogated it.

The author says: It is clear that the relation between the verse of zakat (Take alms out of their wealth - 9:103) and this verse is not of abrogation at all. Or does the word "abrogation" mean something else in their language?

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verses 216-218

Fighting has been prescribed for you, and it is (an object of) dislike to you; and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you; and Allah knows, while you do not know. (216) They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it Say: Fighting in it is a grave matter; and hindering (men) from Allah's way and denying it, and (hindering men from) the Sacred Mosque and turning its people out of it are still graver with Allah, and the mischief is graver than the killing; and they will go on fighting with you so that

they may turn you back from your religion if they can; and whoever of you turns back from his religion, then dies while an unbeliever - these it is whose deeds are forfeited in this world and the hereafter; and they are the inmates of the fire; therein shall they abide. (217) Surely those who believed and those who fled (their home) and strove hard in the way of Allah, these hope for the mercy of Allah; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (218)

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: Fighting has been prescribed for you, and it is (an object of) dislike to you:

It has repeatedly been explained that *kitabah* (writing), which has been translated here as prescription, means an obligatory command, if used in the matter of legislation, and a firm decree, if used in the matter of creation. This verse, therefore, shows that fighting in the way of Allah is compulsory for all believers (as the verse is addressed to them) except those who are exempted by other verses or traditions. For example: There is no blame (in staying behind) on the weak, nor on the sick, nor on those who do not find what they should spend, so long as they are sincere to Allah and His Apostle ... nor on those who when they came to you that you might carry them, you said: I cannot find that on which to carry you . . . (9:91-92)

The verb, *kutiba* (has been written) is in the passive voice, because it is followed by the phrase, and it is (an object of) dislike to you. It was not proper to mention clearly the name of the writer (i.e. Allah) of a writing which was to be an object of dislike to the believers. By not using the active voice, the verse protected the sanctity of the divine name and removed every chance of slight to it.

Kurh (dislike) is the hardship felt by man in his self, naturally or otherwise. *Karh* (compulsion) is the hardship forced upon him by extraneous agencies as when he is forced to do a work which he does not like to do. Allah says: ... it is not lawful for you that you should take women as heritage against (their) will ... (4:19);... so He said to it and to the earth: Come both, willingly or unwillingly ... (4:11)

Why was the ordained fighting to be an object of dislike to the believers? Three explanations have been given for it:-

1) Fighting entails loss of limbs and lives, economic hardship, monetary loss and the deterioration of law and order; goods necessary for life disappear from the market and become scarce; and many other things crop up in society which man dislikes by nature. Allah has praised the believers in His book and said that a group of them were sincere in their faith and successful in their endeavors. But, at the same time, He has admonished another group of them because of their shaky belief and crooked thinking, as may be seen in the verses revealed about the battles of

Badr, Uhud and Khandaq etc. The people addressed by this verse were, therefore, of two types: One, steadfast in their faith, who could not dislike any command of Allah; the other, those who might dislike them, and this second group was more numerous. Therefore, it was quite in order to describe such a mixed group as disliking an order, especially when those disliking it were in the majority.

2) The believers were aware that the unbelievers were well prepared for fighting and had more strength and material support than the Muslims. They, therefore, thought that fighting at that particular time would not be in the interests of the Muslims; hence, the order to fight should be delayed for some other suitable time. This postponement would give them time to increase their manpower, war-material and martial strength. Allah told them in this verse that they were mistaken in this view, because Allah in this affair has a purpose which shall surely be attained; He knows the hidden reality of everything while their knowledge is confined only to the apparent facts.

3) The believers were well-trained by the Qur'an, and, accordingly, they felt clemency towards the creatures of Allah, and mercy and pity had become second nature to them. They did not like fighting with the unbelievers, as it meant that a number of their adversaries would die in disbelief, and the believers were not pleased about that. They would have liked to deal with those adversaries with good humor, and live with them with nobleness and gentleness, inviting them to Islam with good exhortation, hoping that they would come to the right path. They thought that in this way, they would protect themselves from death, and the unbelievers from dying in disbelief and entering into eternal fire.

Allah, in this verse, made it clear that this thought of theirs was not correct. Allah, Who ordained the fighting knew very well that the call of truth would have no effect on those misguided souls who were spiritually a total failure. The true religion could not expect any good from them either in this world or in the next. They were in humanity like a totally degenerated limb which will certainly infect other organs if not removed from the body by a surgical operation.

These are the explanations given for the words of Allah, and it is (an object of) dislike to you. But the first one is the most appropriate, especially if we look at the verses admonishing a group of believers (referred to in the explanation) and keep in view the passive voice of the verb, has been written on you, i.e., has been prescribed for you.

Qur'an: and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you:

It has already been explained that the words like "may be" and "perhaps", when used in divine speech, means "it is hoped". This hope is related not to the speaker (Allah) but to the hearers. In other words, where Allah says: may be it is so it does not mean that He hopes it will be so

(Elevated be He from such uncertainties!); rather it means that the hearers should hope or expect it in this way.

The repetition of "may be" in this sentence and, the following one (and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you) means that the believers disliked fighting and loved peace; so Allah told them that they were mistaken in both. If the sentence is framed without repeating the word "may be" (i.e. 'and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you or love a thing while it is evil for you') it will convey the idea that "your dislike and love have no significance, because such feelings are often misplaced." Such a sentence is addressed to the one who has erred in something, for example, if one dislikes meeting a certain person. But if he has erred in two things - e.g., he dislikes mixing with the people and loves seclusion - then the norms of elocution demand that he should be warned against both tendencies, e.g. 'you are neither justified in your dislike, nor are you right in your love; it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing and it is evil for you; because you do not know the unseen, and, therefore, you cannot find your way towards the hidden realities of any thing.' As the believers, in addition to their dislike of fighting, also loved peace and ease (as is implied in the previous verse: or do you think that you would enter the Garden while yet the like of those who passed away before you has not come upon you). Allah pointed to both mistakes in two separate sentences: it may be that you dislike ... and it may be that you love ...

Qur'an: and Allah knows while you do not know:

This is the final step in making their mistake known to them. Allah has gradually made them realize that they were in manifest error. To begin with, He told them that it was possible that they were mistaken in their dislike of the fighting (it may be that you dislike . . .). Their minds accepted the implication of those two sentences; and thus they were freed from their compound ignorance, as now they felt doubtful about the correctness of their views. When that stage was reached, Allah told them clearly that the order which you dislike, is ordained by Him who is not unaware of the hidden realities of the things, while your views are based on your psyche which knows only that much which it has been allowed by Allah to know. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to leave all such decisions into His hand.

The verse proves that knowledge, in its reality and totality, is Allah's only; and others have no knowledge of their own at all. This reality is explained in many other verses: Allah, surely nothing is hidden from Him ... (3:5), and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases... (2:255). And some explanation about fighting has been given in the verse 2:190, And fight in the way of Allah...

Qur'an: They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it:

The verse contains the prohibition of fighting in the sacred month. Then it goes on to say that disbelief and turning the people of the Sacred Mosque out of it are far graver sins and that the mischief is graver than the killing. These sentences show that there must have occurred some incident which prompted the believers to ask the question, and that there was some killing in that incident, but that killing was not intentional. (See the last verse: Surely those who believed. . . these hope for the mercy of Allah.) All these pointers confirm what has been described in the traditions that some believers had killed an unbeliever unknowingly in the sacred month in a battle, and that the unbelievers had ridiculed the Muslims for it. The incident was that of 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh and his companions.

Qur'an: Say, fighting, in it is a grave matter; and hindering (men) from Allah's way and denying it and (hindering men from) the Sacred Mosque . . . :

"Allah's way" means worship and virtuous actions and especially the pilgrimage (~affl. Apparently the pronoun "it" in "denying it" refers to "Allah's way"; thus it would mean denial in practice, not in faith. And "the Sacred Mosque" is in conjunction with "Allah's way", and means 'hindering from Allah's way and the Sacred Mosque'.

The verse clearly shows that fighting in the sacred month is forbidden.

It has been said that this verse was abrogated by the verse: then slay the idolaters wherever you find them (9:5) But this view is not correct, and some explanation about it have been given in the commentary of the verses of fighting.

Qur'an: and turning its people out of it are still graver with Allah, and the mischief is graver than the killing:

What the idolaters had done - turning the Apostle of Allah and the believers out of the Sacred Mosque (and they were truly the people of the Sacred Mosque) - is far graver than fighting. And the mischief done by them in rebuking the believers and calling them back to disbelief is graver than killing. Therefore, they have no right to reprove the believers for killing when they themselves had committed far graver sins'. So far as the believers are concerned, they still hope for the mercy of Allah, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Qur'an: and they will go on fighting with you so that they may turn you back ... :

hatta means "till"; but here it signifies cause or purpose. That is why it has been translated here as "so that".

Qur'an: and whoever of you turns back ... these it is whose deeds are forfeited . . . and they are

inmates of fire:

It threatens apostates with the forfeiture of their deeds and an eternal abode in the Fire.

TRADITIONS

Ibn Jarir has narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "I was riding (on a camel) behind the Messenger of Allah. He said: 'O Ibn 'Abbas! Be satisfied with what Allah (qaddara) has measured (decreed) for you even if it is against your wishes; because it is so written in the Book of Allah.' I said: 'O Messenger of Allah! And where is it, and I have read the Qur'an?' He said: 'and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you; and Allah knows, while you do not know.' " [ad-Durru 'l manthur]

The author says: This tradition implies that taqdir (measure, decree) is a general word, covering both legislation and creation, and that its meaning varies according to the context. But this tradition does not show that *asa* (may be,) can be used to mean obligation. It has been explained that this word is used in the Qur'an in its literal meaning, and that is "may-be", expectation. Therefore, the opinion expressed by a commentator that wherever the word *asa* has been used in the Qur'an the "may-be" of Allah implies compulsion is not worthy of consideration. Even more strange is the view of another that wherever "may-be" comes in the Qur'an it indicates compulsion (obligation) except in two verses, one in the chapter of at-Tahrlin (Maybe if he divorces you . . .), and the other in the chapter of al-'Isra (It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you ...)

There is a tradition narrated by Ibn Jarir from the chain of as-Suddi: The Messenger of Allah sent a company consisting of seven of his companions, under the command of 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh al-Asadi. The other members were: 'Ammar ibn Yasir Hudhayfah ibn 'Utba ibn Rabi'ah, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, 'Utba ibn Ghazwan as-Sulami (an ally of Bani Nawfal), Sahl ibn

Bayda, 'Amir ibn Fuhayrah and Waqid ibn 'Abdullah al-Yarbu'i (an ally of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab).

The Prophet wrote a letter and gave it to 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh telling him not to read it until he camped at Malal. When 'Abdullah camped at the valley of Malal, he opened the letter. Written in it was: "Proceed till you camp in the valley of Nakhlah." On reading it he told his companions: "Anyone who is ready to die let him proceed (with me) and make his will, because I am making my will and proceeding as ordered by the Messenger of Allah." So he went on, and only Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and 'Utba ibn Ghazwan remained behind because they had lost their camel. And 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh went forward, and lo! they unexpectedly met al-Hakam ibn Kaysan, 'Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah ibn Uthman and 'Amr al-Hadrami. They fought and arrested al-Hakam ibn Kaysan and 'Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah; and al-Mughirah fled away; and 'Amr al-Hadrami was killed by Waqid ibn 'Abdullah. And it was the first booty taken by the companions of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

When they returned to Medina with the two captives and the booty, the polytheists said: "Muhammad thinks that he follows the commands of Allah and he is the first to desecrate the sacred month." Then Allah sent down the verse: They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it. Say: Fighting in it is a grave matter; is not allowed, And what you did, O polytheists! is still graver than killing in the sacred month, because you disbelieved in Allah, and hindered Muhammad from Allah's way; and the mischief, that is polytheism, is graver before Allah than the killing. And this is the saying of Allah, and hindering (men) from Allah's way and denying it. [ad-Durru 'l-manthur]

The author says: The traditions giving this and similar meanings are numerous from Sunni chains. And this meaning is also narrated in Majma'u 'l-bayan; and some traditions say that the company consisted of eight persons, the ninth being their leader.

Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim and al-Bayhaqi have narrated from the chain of Yazid ibn Rawman from 'Urwah, that he said: "The Messenger of Allah sent 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh to Nakhlah, and told him: 'Stay there until you bring to us some news about (the activities and intentions of) the Quraysh.' And he did not order him to fight. And it was in the sacred month. And he (i.e. the Messenger of Allah) wrote for him a letter before informing him about the journey, and told him: 'Go out with your companions; when you have traveled two days, open (this) your letter and look into it and proceed to do what I have ordered you in it. And do not force any of your companions to go with you (against his wishes)' When he traveled for two days, he opened the letter and found in it (the words): 'Proceed further until you camp at Nakhlah, and bring for us whatever information reaches you about the Quraysh.' When he ('Abdullah ibn Jahsh) read the order, he told his companions: 'Hearing and obeying! Whoever among you desires martyrdom, should come with me, for I am proceeding on the order of the Messenger of Allah. And whoever among you dislikes it let him go back, because the Messenger of Allah has forbidden me to compel anyone of you (against his wishes).' The whole group proceeded with him until they reached Najran where Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and 'Utbah ibn Ghazwan lost a camel which they rode alternately. They, therefore, remained behind to search for it; and the others went forward till they camped at Nakhlah. Then passed by them 'Amr al-Hadrami, al-Hakam Ibn Kaysan, 'Uthman and al-Mughirah ibn 'Abdullah; with them was the merchandise which they had brought. from at-Ta'if condiments and oil. When they saw them, Waqid ibn 'Abdullah rose high to show himself to them, and he had shaved his head. When they saw him with shaved head, 'Amr said: 'No harm will befall you from him.' And the companions of the Messenger of Allah consulted with one another about the polytheists; and it was the last day of Jumada 'l-ukhra. They thought:

if we kill them it will be in the sacred month, and if we leave them, they will enter Mecca this night and they will be on guard. At last, they all decided to kill them.

Waqid ibn 'Abdullah at-Tamimi shot an arrow at 'Amr al-Hadrami and killed him. 'Uthman ibn

'Abdullah and al-Hakam ibn Kaysan were captured, and al-Mughirah ran away and they could not catch him. And they took the caravan and came with it to the Messenger of Allah. He told them: 'By God! I had not ordered you to fight in the sacred month.' And he kept the matter of the goods and the captives in suspense and did not accept anything from it. When the Messenger of Allah said to them what he said, they felt ashamed and thought that they had fallen into perdition; and their brethren, the Muslims, upbraided them harshly. When the report of the incident reached the Quraysh, they said: 'Muhammad spilled unlawful blood, and took property, and arrested men and desecrated the sacred month.'" Then Allah sent down the verse: They ask you concerning the sacred month about fighting in it . . . When it was revealed, the Messenger of Allah retained the merchandise and freed the two captives on ransom. The Muslims asked: 'O Messenger of Allah! Do you hope that it will be (counted as) a jihad (religious war) for us? Then Allah revealed the verse: Surely those who believed and those who fled (their home) and strove hard in the way of Allah these hope for the mercy of Allah; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. And they were eight people, and the ninth was their leader, 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh.'" [ad-Durru 'l-manthur]

The author says: There are other traditions showing that this verse: Surely those who believed ... Merciful, was revealed about the group of 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh.

This verse proves that if someone performs an act of obedience, with the intention of coming nearer to Allah, but it turns out to be a mistake, not a good deed, then he is not counted as a sinner because he did it inadvertently. Also, the last sentence of the verse, mentioning the forgiveness of Allah, shows that divine forgiveness covers even those situations where there was no sin or error. Therefore, the use of the word "forgiveness" or its derivatives does not necessarily mean that the recipient of the divine forgiveness had committed a sin.

The traditions imply that "They ask" refers to the Muslims, not the polytheists who ridiculed the Muslims. This view is supported by the tradition of Ibn 'Abbas mentioned under the preceding verse: I did not see any people better than the companions of Muhammad. They did not ask him except thirteen questions till he was taken away (from this world), all of those questions are in the Qur'an. Among them are: They ask you about the intoxicants and games of chance; They ask you about the sacred month . . . Also, the context of the verse supports it, as the words: and they will go on fighting with you. . . . are addressed to the believers.

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They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance, Say: In both of them there is a great sin and

(some) profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit. And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared Thus does Allah make clear to you the signs that you may ponder. (219) About this world and the hereafter. And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: To set right for them (their affairs) is good; and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren; and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer; and if Allah had willed, He would certainly have made it hard for you; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise. (220)

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance.:

According to the language, intoxicant (khamr) is every liquid which is made to intoxicate. The root word, khamr means to "to hide". The liquor is called khamr because it hides reason and does not allow it to discriminate between right and wrong, between good and bad.

From the same root is derived khimar i.e., the veil which covers the head of a women. Khammartu 'l-ina means "I covered the opening of the pot". When yeast is added to dough, they say ikhamarrati 'l-ajin. And the yeast itself is called khamirah because when it is mixed with flour, it covers the flour when it rises and ferments.

The Arabs did not know any alcoholic beverages except those made from grapes, dates and barley. Gradually, new kinds were invented and now its types and kinds are innumerable, with varying grades of intoxication. But all are intoxicant (khamr). Maysir according to the language is gambling. The gambler is called yasir.

The root word, yusr means ease. Gambling was called maysir because by it one might get wealth with ease without going to the trouble of earning and working.

The word maysir was mostly used for a particular method of gambling with arrows. It was also called azlam and aqlam It was played by ten persons in the following manner:

A camel was purchased, slaughtered and divided into twenty four parts. There were ten arrows: each had a separate name and its specified share. Their names (with their shares in brackets) are given hereunder:

Fadhhdh (1); taw'am (2); raqib (3); hils (4); nafis (5); musbil (6); mu'alla The remaining three arrows drawn with the names of the participants; anyone on whose name one of the first seven arrows was drawn took the number of the shares allotted to it; those on whose names the last named three arrows were drawn got nothing and had to pay the price of the camel.

Qur'an: Say: In both of them ... sin is greater than profit:

Sin (ithm) is near to evil (dhanb) in meaning. It means a condition in the thing or in reason which prevents the man from getting the good. In other words, ithm is that evil which brings unhappiness and failure even in other affairs, and disturbs the felicity of life even in other matters.

Clearly, alcoholic drinks and games of chance fit this description.

The health hazards of alcohol have been described in untold numbers of books Written by ancient and modern physicians, in which they have listed the havoc created by it in the stomach, the intestines, the liver, the lungs, the nervous system, the veins and arteries, the heart and the organs of perception, i.e. the eyes, the tongue, etc. The data collected by them show the vast magnitude of the damage to the millions and millions of people who are attacked by a variety of diseases caused by this killing poison.

The social and moral disasters appearing in the wake of addiction to drink are too well-known to need any description. Depravity of character, debauchery, shamelessness, the leakage of secrets, scandals, slanders, destruction and damage to others, crimes, murder - name any immorality, alcohol will lead to it. In short, it nullifies all ethical laws and moral values upon which are based the felicity and bliss of this life and, more particularly, the values of chastity and probity. Who can protect society from a drunkard who does not understand what he says and does not know what he does. Look at the crimes which have wrecked havoc throughout the world and have made human life a misery; search for their causes, and behind almost all of them you will see the hand of alcohol, directly or indirectly manipulating the minds of the criminals.

Nobody can deny the damage inflicted by alcohol upon the mind. Is there any need to describe how it negates the reason, puts the thinking process out of equilibrium and distorts the feelings and perceptions, not only during intoxication, but even afterwards. This damage to the whole system of perception and reason is the biggest sin and disaster of alcohol, from which sprout all other sins and disasters.

Islam, as described earlier, has based its laws on true reason, and has most emphatically forbidden all such actions which hinder the proper functioning of reason. Intoxicants, games of chance, adultery, falsehood and other such sins come in this category. The activities which are most damaging to the faculty of reason are drinking alcohol (among the deeds) and speaking lies (among the words).

These activities which nullify the rule of reason, and especially the politics which is based on alcohol and lies, endanger humanity, and destroy the foundation of happiness. Whenever such a policy bears a fruit, it proves fat more bitter than the previous one. When a burden proves

unbearable, they add on some more weight

And hope that the practice will make the bearer perfect, and would give him more strength! Such endeavours, result in failure; such activities end in loss. This one characteristic of Islam - that it has based its shari'ah on reason and has prohibited all such things which damage it - is enough to place it at the top of all the systems invented by human beings throughout the world.

Human beings, because of their animal tendencies, eagerly run towards the satisfaction of their lust. Lustful activities easily contaminate the environment, in contrast to chastity and piety. It is easy to acquire a bad habit and very difficult to leave it. That is why Allah legislated such laws gradually, and led people to the ultimate goal step by step and sympathetically. One of those widely-spread evils was the drinking of alcohol. And a cursory glance at the four verses revealed about the subject will show how, by easy stages, they were weaned from this bad habit.

First, Allah revealed, Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you say against Allah what you do not know. (7:33)

This verse was revealed in Mecca, and it has clearly forbidden the sin harrama. Now we know that there is sin - great sin even - in alcohol, although at that time Allah did not clarify what sin was. This ambiguity was, perhaps, a sort of compassion; it was as though the shari'ah wanted to overlook that sin of theirs for the time being. The same is the reason for the indirect hint in another verse of the same Meccan period: And of the fruits of the palms and the grapes you obtain from them intoxication and goodly provision (16:67) It separated intoxication from "goodly provision" but stopped short of declaring it as a "bad provision".

Apparently people were not aware that intoxication was a great sin, until the verse was revealed: O you who believe! Do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know (well) what you say ... (4:43)

This verse was revealed at Medina, and it promulgated the partial prohibition of liquor in the best of the times and the best of the places - at the time of prayer in the mosque.

Reason and the context of the verse shows that this verse could not have been revealed after the verses of the chapters of al-Baqarah and al-Ma'idah (which will be described shortly), because those verses promulgate total prohibition. There was no reason why a partial ban should be imposed after a total prohibition. Also, we know that this prohibition was promulgated gradually, and such a case demands proceeding from an easier step to a, more difficult one, and not vice versa.

Then came the verse under discussion. It says that there is in intoxicants and games of chance a great sin and (some) profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit.

This verse, revealed after the above-mentioned verse 4:43, promulgates total prohibition of intoxicants and games of chance. It clearly says that "there is great sin" in these two evils. And verse 7:33, mentioned in the beginning, revealed at Mecca, had clearly prohibited sin.

This explanation exposes the absurdity of a commentator who says that this verse was not clear about the prohibition of liquor. First, let us give you a gist of what he says: -

"This verse of the chapter of al-Baqarah was not clear about the prohibition of alcohol and gambling; the words of Allah that there is great sin in them only show that these are sinful acts, and sin means harm. Even if we say that every harmful thing is prohibited, it does not include those things which are partially harmful and partially beneficial. That is why there was a difference of opinion about alcohol among the companions of the Prophet. Some of them left drinking after the revelation of this verse, while others continued to drink. Perhaps, the drinkers thought that they could easily enjoy its profit safeguarding themselves from its harms. When the ground was thus prepared, Allah revealed the verse of the chapter of al-Ma'idah which totally and clearly prohibits these things: O you believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are an abomination of Satan's handy works; shun it therefore that you may be successful . . . Will you then desist? (5:93-94)"

Now let us look critically at the above argument:

First: A major part of this argument rests on the assumption that sin means harm. But it is wrong. Just because in this verse it is followed by the words, and (some) profit for men, it does not imply that its meaning is "harm" or "loss", i.e. the opposite of "benefit". How can the word "sin" (ithm) be taken to mean "harm" in the verses listed below?: -

And whoever associates anything with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin. (4:48)

And whoever conceals it (i.e. testimony), his heart is surely sinful. (2:283)

Surely I wish that you should bear my sin as well as your own sin. (5:29)

Every man of them shall have what he has earned of sin. (24:11)

And, whoever earns a sin, he earns it only against his own self. (4: 111)

There are many such verses.

Second: The verse did not say that the order was given "because" of the harm inherent in alcohol. It just promulgated the law. There was no justification for the companions to follow their own opinion in this case.

Even if we admit, for the sake of argument, that the verse gives the reason for that order, that reason is not the harm, but the greatness of the harm as compared with the profit. The verse says in clear words, and their sin is greater than their profit. Such a clear declaration leaves no room at all for the exercise of one's own opinion. Opinion has no place in the presence of a clear order of Allah and the Apostle.

Third: Let us suppose, for the time being, that the verse did not clearly say that liquor and gambling were forbidden. But did it not say in clear words that they were great sins? Was not this verse revealed at Medina? Had not verse 7:33, revealed years ago at Mecca, dearly prohibited the sin? What excuse can be offered by those companions who followed their own opinion in opposition to these verses of Mecca and Medina, which taken jointly clearly prohibit alcohol and games of chance?

Verse 7:33 prohibits all sins. And this verse under discussion uses the adjective 'great' (kabir) and 'greater' (akbar) for the sins of alcohol and gambling. In view of this nobody can remain in any doubt that these two evils are the greatest of all sins; nor can there remain any doubt about their absolute prohibition. The Qur'an has termed murder, the hiding of testimony, lying and slander etc. as "sin", but it has not used the adjective "great" for any sin except polytheism (.. and whoever associates anything with Allah, he devises indeed a great sin. - 4:48) and alcohol and games of chance.

In short, there is no doubt that this verse clearly prohibits these two sins.

Lastly the two verses of the chapter al-Ma'idah were revealed: O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork; shun it therefore that you may be successful. Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist? (5:93-94)

The last sentence (Will you then desist?) shows that the Muslims had not desisted from drinking alcohol even after the revelation of the verse of the chapter al-Baqarah under discussion; and that there was a need for such a strong admonition.

This much about liquor. So far as gambling is concerned its social evils and the ruin caused by it in the structure of life are well-known, and need no description. But we shall further explain it in the fifth chapter.

Now we come back to the meaning of the words used in the verse. Sin (ithm) has just now been explained. Greatness (kibr) in volume is as numerousness (kathrah) in number. Their opposite are smallness (sighar) and paucity (qillah) respectively.

These two adjectives are relative ones. When there are two things, one of them may be greater than the other, which then will be called smaller than the first. But the first one which was called "greater" may be smaller than a third one. If there was no comparison, there would be neither the greatness nor the smallness; nor would there be an numerousness or paucity.

Probably people first became aware of greatness when they looked at the size of material things around themselves. Later on they extended this concept to mental visions and ideas. Allah says: Surely it (i.e. hell) is one of the greatest (misfortunes). (74:35); a great (i.e. grievous) word it is that comes out of their mouths. (18:5); great (i.e. hard) to the unbelievers is that which you call them to. (42:13)

'Izam has the same meaning as kibar both denote greatness. Apparently izam is derived from 'azm (bone); as the greatness of the body of an animal or man is related to the size of the skeleton - the bones inside - the word 'azm (bone) was metaphorically used for greatness, and gradually "greatness" became its first meaning.

Naf (profit) is opposite of darar (harm, loss) These words are used for the things which are desired or disliked because of other things; while good and bad are used for the things which are liked or disliked by themselves.

Profits for men: It refers to the monetary gains as well as the amusement and merry-making for which people indulge in these two sins.

Allah used here the plural form (profits); but while comparing it with sin He used the singular form (their sin is greater than their profit). As the comparison was in size, and not in number, there was no reason to use the plural which describes the number, not the size.

Qu'ran: And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever can be spared.

'Afw originally meant 'to go to a thing to get it.' Then, keeping in view various connections and relations, it came to be used for forgiveness, obliteration of footprints and moderation in spending. It is this last meaning which is intended in this verse, and that is why it has been

translated as "whatever can be spared".

In this verse, the reply fits the question in the same way as was explained in the verse 2:215, They ask you to what they should spend. Say: Whatever of good you spend, it is for the parents. . .

Qur'an: Thus does Allah make clear to you the signs that you may 'ponder about this world and the hereafter.

Fi 'd-dunya wa 'l-akhirah literally means "in this and the hereafter". But it does not mean 'you may ponder while you are in this world and in the hereafter'. It refers to the subject upon which men are expected to ponder. That is why we have translated it "may ponder about this world . . ."

The verse exhorts the believers to ponder on the realities and affairs of both the worlds. This world is a place which Allah has created, for you to live in and for you to earn in it what might be beneficial to you in your permanent home, i.e. the hereafter. That is the place where you will return to your Lord and He will give you the recompense for what you did in this world.

This verse urges people to enquire about, and investigate, the realities of existence, the percepts of the beginning and the end and the mysteries of nature; and to think and ponder upon the social concepts, moral and ethical values, and the laws of life governing individuals and groups. In short, man is expected to think about all the knowledge right from his beginning up to his returning to his Lord, as well as all the affairs coming between these points which have any bearing on the happiness and misery of mankind.

This verse also shows that although the Qur'an demands complete obedience from man towards the command of Allah and His Apostle, without any if and but, yet it likes people to ponder on those commands and their philosophy so that they may grasp their realities and, instead of blindly following the laws, may see the light of those brilliant teachings and follow that light to ultimate destination.

Thus Allah does make clear probably means the explanation of the philosophy behind the given laws and commands, and the clarification of the fundamentals of the faith and belief.

Qur'an: And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: "To set right for them (their affairs) is good."

There is a hint, a clear indication even, in this verse that it was revealed to lighten some burden - it allows mingling with the orphans, and then goes on to say: and if Allah had willed, He would certainly have made it hard for you. It shows that prior to this verse the rules concerning the guardianship of the orphans were hard and difficult, which had caused anxiety and Allah among

the Muslims, and which led them to ask the question referred to in the verse.

There were some verses about the orphans, very severe in tone: And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property; this is surely a great crime. (4:2); As for those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and soon they shall enter into burning fire. (4:10) Apparently the verse under discussion was revealed after these verses; and the traditions, which will be quoted later, support this view.

The *ishah* (to set right) is used here as a common noun. It denotes, according to the usage of the Arabic language, really good management, not just a show; and the sentence, and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer, points to this.

Qu'ran: and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren:

This sentence refers to the Islamic concept of the equality of all the believers. This concept nullifies all distinctions which are the basic cause of every mischief which appears in society. It abolishes various types of injustice and rebellion; putting oneself on a high pedestal, treating others as one's slaves, thinking of them as an inferior, and weak species. This abolition of differences creates equilibrium in various social weights; there appears a fine balance between a weak orphan and his powerful guardian, between a rich tycoon and a wretched beggar, and so on. Allah says: The believers are but brethren. (49:10)

Now, the verse under discussion allows the guardian to mingle with the orphan only when it is done like the mingling of two brothers who have equal obligation towards each other. If something is taken from an orphan's property, then something of equal value must be given to him and added to his property.

In this context, this verse runs parallel to the verse mentioned earlier, And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property; this is surely a great crime. (4:2) A comparison between the two verses shows that the verse under discussion has somewhat lessened the burden of the guardians; and the sentence, and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer, also hints at this relaxation of rigor. The meaning is: Now you may mingle with your wards, the orphans (and this is the relaxation of the previous rule); but the mingling should be as of two brother who have equal obligations towards each other. If this condition is fulfilled, then there should be no anxiety and fear on your part. If that mingling is with good intentions, and in order to set their affairs right for them, then it is good; and the reality cannot be hidden from Allah, and He will not reproach you just because you mingled and mixed with the orphans provided you did it for their good, like brethren, and Allah knows the difference between a

mischief-maker and a well-doer.

Qur'an: and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well doer: Here the preposition, from (min) has been used after "knows" (ya'lamu); probably it is a hint that "knows" in this verse has the significance of "distinguishes"; and the sentence means, "Allah distinguishes the mischief-maker from the well-doer."

Anat means difficulty and hardship.

TRADITIONS

'Ali ibn Yaqtin said: "al-Mahdi asked Abu 'l-Hasan al-Kazim (a.s.) about whether intoxicants were prohibited in the Book of Allah because the people know that it is not allowed but do not know that it is prohibited.

"The Imam said: 'But it is prohibited.' He asked: Where in the Book of Allah is it forbidden? O Abu l-Hasan! He replied: 'The word of Allah: Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those, that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice .' (7:33) Then the Imam explained: 'And as for sin, it is intoxicants themselves, because Allah said somewhere else, they ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both of them there is a great sin and (some) profits, for men, and their sin is greater than their profits. " So the sin according to the Book of Allah is intoxicants and games of chance, and their sin is greater than their profit, as Allah has said.'

"al-Mahdi said: 'O Ali ibn Yaqtin! This is the legal decree of the house of Hashim.' I said: 'You spoke the truth, O leader of the faithful! Praise be to Allah who did not take this knowledge out from you, O people of the house!'"

'Ali ibn Yaqtin says: "By God, al-Mahdi could not restrain, himself from saying to me, 'You spoke the truth, O Rafidi [al-Kafi]

The author says: The meaning of this tradition can be understood from the commentary.

There is a tradition narrated from Abu Basir that one of the two Imams (i.e. fifth or sixth - a.s.) said: "Verily Allah made a house for sin, then He made a door for the house, then He made a lock for the door, then He made a key for the lock; and (that) key of sin is intoxicants. [al-Kafi]

There is another tradition from Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.): "The Messenger of Allah said: 'Verily intoxicants are the head of every sin!' " [ibid]

There is a tradition narrated by Isma'il, in which he said: Abu Ja'far (a.s.) went into the Sacred Mosque; some Qurayshites saw him and said: 'He is the god of the people of Iraq.' Someone said: 'If you send one of you to him.' So a young man from among them came to him and asked: 'O Uncle! What is the greatest of the great (sins)?' He said: 'Drinking alcohol.' " [ibid]

There is a tradition narrated by Abu 'I-Bilad, that one of the two Imams (al-Baqir or as-Saqid a.s.) said: "Allah has not been disobeyed with anything more powerful than drinking alcohol. Verily one of them leaves the obligatory prayers, and jumps upon his mother and daughter and sister, and he does not know." [ibid]

"An atheist asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.): 'Why did Allah prohibit alcohol when there is nothing more delicious than it (The Imam said: 'He prohibited it because it is the mother of all wicked things and the head of every evil. There come a time to the drinker of it when he loses his reason, then he does not know his Lord, and leaves no sin but that he commits it . . . [al-Ihtijaj]

The author says: The traditions explain one another and experience and observation support them.

A tradition from Jabir is reported that Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: "The Messenger of Allah cursed ten persons concerning an alcoholic beverage - the one who plants it, the one who guards it, the one who squeezes its juice out, the one who drinks it, the one who serves it, the one who transports it, the one to whom it is transported, the one who sells it, the one who purchases it, and the one who eats its price." [al-Kafi]

Another tradition says that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The Messenger of Allah said: 'Cursed is he, cursed is he who sits at a table where alcohol is drunk.' " [ibid., al-Mahasin]

The author says: The above two traditions are confirmed by the words of Allah, and do not help one another in sin and transgression. (5:3)

as-Saduq reports through his chains, from Abu Amamah that he said: "The Messenger of Allah said: 'There are four persons at whom Allah will not look (with mercy) on the day of resurrection - the one who is disobedient (to his parents), the one who helps a man and then reminds him of it, the one who denies the destiny (decreed by Allah), and the one who habitually drinks alcohol'." [as-Khisal]

Ibnu 'sh-Shaykh has reported in al-Amali, through his chains, from as-Sadiq (a.s.) that the Prophet said: "My Lord, Great is His Glory! has sworn thus: No servant of mine will drink alcohol in this world but that I shall make him drink on the day of resurrection from the boiling water (of hell) as much as he had drunk alcohol; (it would make no difference) whether after that he is punished or

forgiven." The Prophet said: "Verily the one who drinks alcohol shall come on the day of resurrection, with blackened face, blue eyes, a slanting jaw-bone and running saliva, licking his tongue from his back side."

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: "It is an obligation upon Allah (i.e. Allah has made it incumbent upon Himself) that He will make the drinker of alcohol drink what comes out from the vulva of fornicating women. From that vulva will come out pus and thick blood, its heat and stink will offend (even) the inmates of the fire." [at-Tafsir, al-Qummi]

The author says: These traditions may be supported by the word of Allah, Surely the tree of Zaqqum is the food of the sinful, like molten brass; it shall boil in (their) bellies, like the boiling of hot water. Seize him, then drag him down into the midst of Hell; then pour over his head of the torment of the boiling water: Taste (it); you forsooth are the mighty, the honorable! (44:43 -49)

There are numerous traditions with the same meaning as described above.

There is a tradition narrated by al-Washsha that he heard Abu 'I-Hasan (a.s.) saying: "Maysir" is gambling." [al-Kafi]

The author says: Traditions giving this explanation are numerous; and there is no doubt whatsoever about the meaning.

It is reported, under the verse, And they ask you as to what they should spend . . . , that Ibn 'Abbas said: "Verily, some people from the companions, when they were told to spend in the way of Allah, came to the Prophet and said: 'We do not know what this "spending" is which we have been ordered in our properties. So, what should we spend from it?' Then Allah revealed: and they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: 'Whatever can be spared' And before that, one used to spend his wealth until he no longer had anything left to give in alms, and until there remained no property to eat from." [ad-Durru 'l-manthur]

It is narrated from Yahya that he was told that Ma'adh ibn Jabal and Tha'labah came to the Messenger of Allah and said: "O Messenger of Allah! Verily we have our servants and families; what, therefore, should we spend from our properties?" Then Allah revealed: And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: 'Whatever can be spared' , " [ibid.]

It is reported that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word 'afw; which we have translated as "whatever can be spared" that is the middle (course). [ibid., al-Ayyashi]

And it is written that al-Baqir (a.s.) and as-Sadiq (a.s.) said that it is modicum, a sufficiency. And the tradition of Abu Basr interprets it as frugality, thrift. [al-'Ayyashi]

It is reported from as-Sadiq (a.s.) about the verse: And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and (keep) between these the just mean ~25:67) that he said: "This (stage) is after this stage; it is the middle." [ibid]

al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "'awf is what is in excess of the maintenance of the year." [Majma'u 'l-bayan]

The author says: The tradition express the same meanings in different words; and the last one gives an example of awf.

There are innumerable traditions showing the excellence of alms, its ways, place and quantity; some of which shall be quoted in the relevant places, God willing.

There is a tradition from as-Saqid (a.s.) about the verse: And they ask you concerning the orphans ... that he said: "When the verse: (As for) those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly, surely they only swallow fire into their bellies and soon they shall enter burning fire, everyone who had any orphan with him turned him out; and they asked the Messenger of Allah about turning them out. Then Allah revealed: And they ask you concerning the orphans. Say: 'To set right for them (their affairs) is good; and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren; and Allah knows the mischief-maker from the well-doer [at-Tafsir, al-Qummi]

There is a tradition from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: When Allah revealed: And do not approach the property of the orphan except in the best manner . . . (6:153) and those who swallow the property of the orphans unjustly . . . , every one who had an orphan with him went (to his home) and separated his (orphan's) food from his own food and his drink from his own drink; and he put some extra portion in the orphan's food, and kept it reserved for him till he ate it or it deteriorated and he threw it away. This system proved very hard for them, so they mentioned it to the Messenger of Allah. Then Allah revealed: And they ask you concerning the orphans ... and if you mingle with them, they are your brethren ... Then they mixed their food with their own food and their drink with their own drink. [ad-Durru 'l manthur]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated from Sa'id ibn Jubayr, 'Ata and Qatadah.

Volume 3: Surah Baqarah, Verse 221

And do not marry the idolatresses until they believe; and certainly a believing bondswoman is

better than an idolatress, even though she should allure you; and do not give (believing women) in marriage to idolaters until they believe; and certainly a believing bondsman is better than an idolater, even though he should allure you; those invite to the fire, and Allah invites to the garden and to forgiveness by His leave; and makes clear His signs for men, so that they may be mindful. (221)

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: And do not marry the idolatresses until they believe:

Ar-Raghib has said in al-Mufradat: The original meaning of nikah, is 'aqd (the marriage-tie). then it was metaphorically used for sexual intercourse. It is impossible that it could be the other way round, because all the words denoting sexual intercourse are but metaphors; they thought it indecent to mention it, just as they disliked to declare the act itself. It is not possible, for one who does not intend to utter an obscenity, to use the name of an unmentionable act for a decent thing like marriage.

This observation of ar-Raghib very good; but for this reasoning to be valid, the word 'aqd should be taken to mean the marriage-tie, not the formulae of the proposal and acceptance of marriage. The mushrikaat (idolatresses) is the ismu'l-fa'il (active participle, i.e. the noun derived from an infinitive verb denoting its doer, of the verb ishrak which means "to ascribe a partner to Allah"; it is also called polytheism. It is well-known that polytheism may be open or hidden, and these two qualities may be of various degrees and grades. The same is the case with belief and disbelief.

The most open kind of polytheism is to believe that there is more than one god and to take and worship idols and treat them as intercessors before God. Less open is the polytheism of the people of the book, as they deny the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), and, especially their belief that 'Uzayr was the son of God, or Isa was the son of God, and so is their claim that they themselves are sons of God, and His beloved. All this is polytheism, but less manifest than that of the idolaters. More hidden than that is believing that apparent causes independently create their effects; and then relying on these causes.

The most hidden polytheism is the one from which only the chosen servants of Allah, with pure hearts, can escape. And that is to be forgetful of Allah and to divert attention to other than Him.

But there is an important point which must be cleared here. Attributing a verb, adjective or active participle (in its literal sense) to someone is one thing; but using that adjective or active participle as a nomenclature is an entirely different matter. If a believer neglected an obligatory act, it might be said that he denied it or disbelieved in it; but the nomenclature, unbeliever/disbeliever, cannot be used for him. Allah says: and for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon

men (upon) everyone who can afford the journey to it; and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient, independent of the worlds. (3:97) Here the verb, "disbelieves", has been used for him who neglects the pilgrimage, still he is not called an "unbeliever", he is a sinner; and if the adjective "unbeliever" or "disbeliever" is used for him at all, it must be conditional, e.g. "disbeliever in pilgrimage".

The same is the case with all active participles and adjectives used in the Qur'an, like righteous, devout, thankful, purified; and like sinner, unjust, etc. These terms cannot be used as a nomenclature in every place where the verb, adjective or active participle is used.

Accordingly, we cannot use the nomenclature, polytheist, for all those who indulge in hidden or open polytheism. "Idolater" or "polytheist" is a Qur'anic terminology and we should look at the Qur'an to know who is called a polytheist. The Qur'an does not use this term for the Jews or the Christians. Instead it invented for them a new term, "people of the book". And the term "disbeliever" (kafir) is general, covering all those who are outside the pale of Islam.

So far as the term, polytheist or idolater, is concerned, the Qur'an uses it in a context where it is known that the disbelievers, other than the people of the book, are meant. See, for example, the following verse: nose who disbelieved from among the people of the book and the polytheists could not have separated themselves (from the faithful) until there had come to them the clear evidence (98:1); . . . the idolaters are nothing but unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year .(9:28); then slay the idolaters wherever you find them (9:5); How can there be an agreement for the idolaters with Allah and with His Apostle? (9:7); . . . and fight the polytheists all together as they fight you all together ... (9:36) etc.

Now we come to the verse: And they said: Be Jews or Christians, you will be tightly guided. Say: Nay! (We follow) the religion of Ibrahim the upright one, and he was not one of the polytheism (2:135) The last sentence, "he was not one of the polytheists", is not an innuendo against the Jews and the Christians. To know its meaning, let us look at another verse: Ibrahim was not a Jew, nor a Christian; but he was an upright (man), a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists. (3:67). The word "upright (man)" is an adverse allusion to the Jews and the Christians; it exalts Ibrahim above the soulless ritualism of the Jews as well as the dogmatism of the Christians, the materialism of the one and the misguided spiritualism of the other. It says that Ibrahim was on the middle path, neither a Jew nor a Christian. And then it uses the word "a Muslim", and shows that he was purely a Muslim, not ascribing any partner, associate or colleague to Allah; and then it adversely alludes to the polytheists by the words, "he was not one of the polytheists." Likewise, in verse 2:135, the word "the upright one" indirectly hints against the Jews and the Christians who had gone astray; and the sentence, "and he was not one of the polytheists" alludes to the idol-worshippers.

In short, this verse does not refer to the Jews and the Christians as polytheists.

Now we come to some verses where the active participle, polytheist (mushrik) has been used, for other than idol worshippers:

And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating other (with Him). (12:106)

and woe to the polytheists who do not give zakat, and they are unbelievers in the hereafter. (41:6-7)

His (Satan's) power is only over those who befriend him and those who associate others with Him (Allah). (16:100)

These, verses have used the active participle, "polytheists", for those who, for example, befriend Satan and are under his power. Obviously, almost all the believers (except an infinitesimal minority, who are, friends of Allah, and are His truly righteous servants) would come under this definition. But we would not be justified in giving, them the name, "polytheists" because the active participle and the nomenclature are two different things.

This lengthy explanation shows that the apparent meaning of the verse under discussion prohibits marriage with idol-worshipping men and women only; marriage with the people of the book is not included in this verse.

In this context, there are no grounds at all for saying that, this verse abrogated verse 6 of the chapter, of al-Ma'idah; This day have been made lawful for you. (all) good things; and the food of those who were given the book is lawful to you and your food lawful for them; and the chaste (ones) from the believing women and the chaste (ones) from those who were given the book before you (are lawful for you) when you have given them their wage (dower) with chaste intention, not fornicating nor taking them for 'paramours in secret (5:6) Nor, is there any reason for saying that this verse (2:221) joined with the verse. . . and hold not to the ties of marriage of unbelieving women ... (60:10), abrogates verse 5:6. Nor is it correct to say that the verse 5:6 has abrogated the two verses, 2:221 and 60:10.

Why are the above opinions wrong?

It is because:

First: As explained above, the verse under discussion apparently says nothing about marriage with the people of the book, while the verse of the chapter of al-Ma'idah (5:6) is concerned only with marriage with the people of the book. As the subject matters of the two verses are totally

different, there is no question of one of them abrogating the other.

So far as verse 60:10 is concerned, it speaks about not holding ties of marriage with unbelieving women, and at the first glance it appears contradictory to verse 5:6 which allows marriage with chaste women of the people of the book. But a little more thinking will show (as will be explained later on) that this speaks about a man who accepts Islam and his wife remains a disbeliever, then he is forbidden to hold intact the marriage-tie with that woman, while the verse 5:6 speaks about performing a new marriage with a woman who is from the people of the book. The subject matters, therefore, of the two, verses are not the same. Accordingly there arises no question of abrogation at all.

Second: Even if we accept for the time being that verses 2:221 and 60:10 forbid marriage with a Jewess or a Christian woman, the context compels us to believe that they cannot abrogate verse 5:6 which allows that marriage. Verse 5:6 shows some relaxation of the rule and Allah describes it as His grace upon the believers. Such a verse cannot be abrogated. In Islam relaxed rules usually get the upper hand over strict ones. Therefore, if there were any abrogation, verse 5:6 would abrogate verses 2:221 and 60:10, and not vice versa.

Third: The chapter of al-Baqarah (ch. 2) was the first one revealed at Medina soon after Hijrah; and the chapter of al-Mumtahanah (ch. 60) was revealed at Medina before the take-over of Mecca in 8 A.H.: while the chapter of al-Ma'idah (ch. 5) was the last one revealed - it abrogated some previous rules but no rule revealed in it was ever abrogated.

How could the verses revealed before the chapter 5 abrogate the verse of that chapter which was yet to be-revealed? .

Qur'an: and certainly a believing bondswoman is better than an idolatress, even though she should allure you:

The people at that time accorded no dignity to slave-girls and anyone marrying such a woman immediately became an object of scorn. This verse, by qualifying the word "bondswoman" with the adjective "believing" and leaving the word "idolatress" without any condition, emphasizes the principle that a believing woman, even if she is a slave, is better than an idolatress even if she comes from a noble family and is rich and beautiful - the factors which usually attract a man towards a woman.

Someone has said that the word "bondswoman" (amah) here and the word "bondsmen" (amah) in the next sentence, mean slave woman and slave man of Allah - in other words, believing woman and believing man. But this interpretation is far-fetched.

Qur'an: and certainly a believing bondsman is better than an idolater, even though he should allure you:

The same comment as above.

Qur'an: Those invite to the fire, and Allah Invites to the garden and to forgiveness by His leave:

It explains the reason why marriage with idol-worshippers has been prohibited. The idolaters believe in falsehood, walk on the wrong path, and, thus, evil characteristics become firmly-rooted in their psychology. Disbelief and sin look attractive to them and their eyes lose the ability to see the light of truth.. As a result, their whole life becomes an open invitation to follow them to eternal perdition. In short, by their actions and talks they try to allure and entice the believers to the fire of hell.

The believers, on the other hand, proceed on the path of true faith, and live a righteous and virtuous life; and by their good example in words and deeds invite people to the paradise and the Lord's forgiveness by His leave, as He allowed them to call the people into the right path, leading them to eternal bliss - paradise and forgiveness.

Apparently, it would have looked proper to say, "and these (i.e. the believers) invite to the paradise . . . ", as the contrasting sentence says: "those invite to the fire." But Allah used His own name instead of the believers to show that the believers in this invitation, nay, in all their activities and affairs, rely on their Creator and Lord; they are not independent of Allah, their Master. Allah says: . . . and Allah is the Master of the believers. (3:68)

This sentence may be interpreted also in another way: The invitation to the garden and to forgiveness may be a reference to this law itself - the rule forbidding marriage with polytheists is in itself an invitation to paradise and the forgiveness of Allah.

TRADITIONS

It is written about this verse that it was revealed about Marthad ibn Abi Marthad al-Ghanawi. The Messenger of Allah sent him to Mecca to bring some Muslims out; and he was a strong and brave man. A woman, 'Unaq by name, offered him her person, but he refused; they had been friends before the advent of Islam. Then she said: "Well, will you then agree to marry me?" He said: "Not before I seek permission from the Messenger of Allah" When he returned (to Medina), he asked permission to marry her. [Majma'u 'l-bayan]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated in ad-Durru l-manthur from Ibn 'Abbas.

Al-Wahidi has narrated through the chain of as-Suddi from Abu Malik from Ibn 'Abbas about this verse that it was revealed about 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah. He had a black slave-girl; once he became angry and slapped her (on the face). Then he felt frightened, and coming to the Prophet told him the story. The Prophet said: "What is she? O 'Abdullah!" He replied: "She keeps the fast, prays, does wudu properly, and offers testimony that there is no god except Allah and that you are His Messenger." The Prophet said: "O 'Abdullah! She is a believing woman." 'Abdullah said: "By Him Who sent you with truth! I shall surely set her free and then marry her." He did so. Some Muslims ridiculed him and said, "Lo! He married a slave-girl". They thought it better to establish marriage-ties with polytheist men and women, because they were of "honorable" families. Then Allah revealed: and certainly a believing bondswoman is better than an idolatress [ad-Durru 'l-manthur]

Another tradition, quoted in the same book from Muqatil says that she was a bondswoman of Hudhayfah, whom he emancipated and married.

The author says: The above traditions are not contradictory. Maybe there were various such cases, and then the verse was revealed covering all of them.

There are some traditions showing that this verse abrogated verse 5:6, or was abrogated by it. We have shown the absurdity of these views, and we shall discuss those traditions when commenting on verse 5:6

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And they ask you about menstruation. Say it is a discomfort; therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and do not go near them until they have become clean; then when they have cleansed themselves, go in them as Allah has commanded you; surely Allah loves those who purify themselves. (222) Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when you like, and do good beforehand for yourselves; and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him, and give good news to the believers. (223)

COMMENTARY

Qur'an: And they ask you about menstruation. Say: It is a discomfort:

mahid and hayd are verbal infinitives; the Arabs say: hadati 'l-mar'ah when the natural system of

the woman discharges the well-known periodic blood, which has its own special color, etc. and is a peculiarity of women. Its active participle (ismu 'l-fa'il) is used in both masculine and feminine genders, because there is no risk of misunderstanding. They say ha'id and haidah i.e. the woman having monthly period; as they say hamil and hamilah i.e. the pregnant women.

Adha means discomfort and distress. Some people say that it is synonymous with darar (harm, loss). But it is not correct. The opposite of darar (harm, loss) is naf' (benefit, profit); but naf' is not the opposite of adha. Also people say dawaun mudirrun (harmful medicine), but if they said dawa'un mudirrun it would give another meaning; disagreeable or unpleasant medicine. Moreover, the Qur'an says: They shall by no means harm you (lan yadurrukum) but with a distress (adha) (3:111) There would be no sense if you read it as: "they shall by no means harm you but with a harm." In some other verses, also, it is difficult to interpret adha as darar (loss ,harm): Surely (as for) those who annoy (yu'dhuna) Allah and His Apostle . . . (33:57); O my people! Why do you give me trouble (tu'dhunani) and you know indeed that I am Allah's Apostle to you (61:5). Apparently, discomfort (adha) signifies the effect of a disagreeable thing, and there may be times when a situation can be a discomfort as well as a harm or loss.

Menstruation is called adha in the meaning described above - discomfort, distress, disagreeable.

Those who interpret adha as harm, say that the question was about sexual intercourse during the monthly period, and Allah replied that it was harmful. The physicians have said that at that time nature is occupied with cleansing the womb and making it ready for pregnancy, and sexual intercourse in the midst of that would create a disturbance which is harmful to the health.

Qur'an: therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and do not go near them ...

i'tizal means to withdraw, to retire, to avoid mingling. They say 'azalta nasibahu when you separate his share and keep it in a place away from the others' shares.

Qurb (to be near) is the opposite of bu'd (to be far away, distant). It is used with the preposition min (from) and also without any preposition, as in this verse.

Keep aloof from woman during the menstruation means "do not establish sexual relation with them during the passing of blood."

People have had different views and customs about women in their monthly period. The Jews were extremely harsh in this matter. They ostracized such a woman even in food and drink. Her pots were separated, she took her meal apart from others, sat away from all the household, and slept alone. The Torah had ordained very severe rules concerning that period: about the woman

as, well as about those who were unfortunate enough to go near her or even to touch her.

The Christians had no restriction at all about mingling, or even sleeping with them. The pagans of Arabia had no fixed rule. The Arabs of Medina and its neighborhood had adopted some of the Jewish customs, and had thus made the lives of rich women difficult for them. On the other hand some pagans liked to have sexual intercourse with them in the belief that if a woman became pregnant at that time, the child would be cruel and extremely fond of shedding blood - these were admirable qualities for a man among the Bedouins!

Apparently the words of this verse confirm the Jewish custom, but it is not so when we read the next sentence, then when they have cleansed themselves, go in to them as Allah has commanded you, we know that it means 'going in to them from their front'. It means that it was only this act, i.e. sexual intercourse in to their front, which was prohibited by the preceding sentences, and that the words, "keep aloof from them" and "do not go near them" are not used in their literal meaning; rather they are metaphors for sexual relations. Accordingly, this verse prohibits only this one action, and imposes no restriction whatsoever on mingling with them in food, drink, sleep, etc. In short, Islam adopted the middle course between the severe restrictions of the Jews and the free license of the Christians.

The word "menstruation" (mahid) appears in the question, and then again in the answer (keep aloof... during the menstruation) Why has the word been repeated instead of using a pronoun in the answer? It is because there is a difference in meaning of the two words: the first refers to the menstruation, and the second to its period.

Qur'an: until they have become clean; then when they have cleansed themselves, go into them as Allah has commanded you:

Cleanliness taharah and its opposite, uncleanness (najasah), are among the extensively applied concepts in Islam. They have their own comprehensive laws which cover a major part of religious commandments. The two words, because of their very common use, have become al-haqi'qatu 'sh-shari'yah as though they were "originally made to express these religious concepts."

The meaning of cleanliness is known to the whole of mankind inspite of the differences in their languages. It shows that the idea of taharah is well-known to all human beings whatever their origin and period.

Life depends on exploiting material things, and using them to achieve its goal. Man desires whatever he desires only because of its benefit, use and characteristics. The most basic and most comprehensive are the benefits concerned with feeding and reproduction.

Sometimes some changes occur in these material things which cause repulsion; and man wants to throw such things, away. Such changes appear mostly in taste, smell or color. When this change appears, the material becomes unsavory and repulsive. This change is called uncleanliness (najasah). Its opposite is taharah which implies that the thing is still in its original condition of benefit and use, which attracts the man to it.

Cleanliness and uncleanliness are, therefore,, two mutually exclusive qualities of a thing: it has either a quality which makes it lie likeable or another which makes it repulsive.

Man in the beginning must have perceived these qualities within the sphere of the five senses; gradually the concept would have been widened to cover mental and spiritual, subjects, depending on whether those ideas were attractive or repulsive. Thus we come to the concept of taharah and najasah in parentage, character, belief, action and word.

There are four words with nearly the same meaning: nazafah, nazaha, quds and subhan

Nazafah: It is the cleanliness of a thing after it had become unclean. It is exclusively used for the things which may be perceived by one of the five senses.

Nazahah: Its real meaning is "to be far away, distant". Its use for cleanliness is metaphorical - the thing is far from ugliness, uncleanliness.

Quds and subhan are preserved for mental and spiritual subjects.

Near in meaning to najasah are qadharah (filthiness), rijs (dirtiness) and rujz (uncleanliness,)

Qadharah Its real meaning is "to be distant. The verbs and adjectives derived from this verbal infinitive are used for a she-camel which remains aloof from the drove, for an unsocial man who does not mingle with others, for a person isolated from others and for a thing which is disliked. Therefore, its use in the meaning of najasah must be metaphorical because an unclean thing is left and put aside until it is clean again.

Rijs and rijz Their original meaning is fright and aversion. Their use in the meaning of uncleanliness is metaphorical.

Islam has extended the meaning of cleanliness and uncleanliness to cover not only the things perceived by the five senses but also to ideas and thoughts. According to Islam, even general principles and social laws are either clean or unclean. For example, Allah says in this verse, do not go near them until they have become clean ... (Here cleanliness refers to cessation of menstruation, a material cleanliness) Also, He says: And your garments do purify (74:4); ... but He

intends to purify you ... (5:6); These are they whom Allah does not intend to purify their hearts : . (5:41); None shall touch it save the purified ones. (56:79) Some of these verses refer to spiritual purifications and cleanliness.

The Islamic shari'ah treats some unclean things as al-a'yanu 'n-najisah (inherently unclean things). Some of them are the blood, urine, stool and semen of man and of some animals, corpses, dogs and pigs. It has ordered the believers to protect themselves from these things in prayers, food and drink.

Taharah is of two categories: From khabath by which one becomes clean after coming into touch with the above mentioned inherently unclean things; and from hadath which comes through wudu or an obligatory bath as explained in the books of Islamic laws.

It was explained earlier that Islam is the religion of monotheism. This monotheism is the root to which all the branches owe their existence. Now the belief in monotheism is the highest cleanliness before Allah. After that come other fundamentals of faith, and they increase the spiritual purification of man. Then comes ethical righteousness, and the laws of shari'ah made for the good in this world and the hereafter. The verse, quoted above may be explained by keeping this principle in view. Also; it explains the verse of purity, Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O People of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying. (33:33)

Now we return to the explanation of the words used in this verse under discussion: "until they have become clean", i.e. until the blood stops. That is the beginning of the period of cleanliness (tuhr).

Then when they have cleansed themselves, i.e., when they have taken an obligatory bath or at least washed the part of body from where blood comes out.

go into them as Allah has commanded you: This command comes after the order forbidding sexual relation with them; therefore, it signifies only that the restriction is now lifted; in other words, it means that sexual relations with them are allowed after their becoming clean, not that it is obligatory. Go into them is a metaphor for that relation. It is an example of the character building of the Qur'an; as is the phrase, as Allah has commanded you. Sexual relations are generally regarded as an amusement. But the Qur'an draws man's attention to the fact that it is a thing ordered by Allah, the order being ingrained in his nature. We may call it a creative order - an order given not in words, but programmed into our creation and nature. Thus the Qur'an reminds us that it is an action without which the human species cannot survive; such an important function should not be treated as a sport or an amusement; it is one of the fundamental laws of nature.

This verse is similar to the words of Allah: . . . now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has written for you . . . (2:187), and: . . . go into your tilth when you like, and do good beforehand for yourselves . . . (2:223)

Apparently, the order to go into them refers to that "creative order" which is known because Allah has given human beings reproductive organs and has created in them the power and inclination which lead them to reproduce.

Possibly the "command" could be interpreted as a legislative order: that it was obligatory to marry for a sufficient number of people to ensure continuity of the human race. But such a meaning is far-fetched.

Some commentators argue that the words as Allah has commanded you prohibit going into the posterior of the women. But it is the weakest argument; this subject is difficult to prove from this verse. The argument cannot be based on the order, go into them, because, as explained earlier, this order, coming after a prohibition, signifies only the permission to establish sexual contact, it is not an obligatory rule. Therefore, if one were to ignore it one would not be committing an offence. Nor can it be argued on the strength of the words, as Allah has commanded you, because; the command referred to herein is the creative, not the legislative one, as we have explained just now. And even if we accept, for the sake of argument, that it is a legislative order, it would be obligatory for only "a sufficient number of people", as we have explained above. And going against an obligatory order is unlawful only, when that order is personally obligatory on oneself.

Qur'an: Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him) and He loves those who purify themselves:

tawbah (usually translated as repentance) means returning to Allah. Tatahkur means purifying and cleansing oneself; in other words, turning away from dirtiness and returning to the original cleanliness. The meanings of both words come true when one obeys the command of Allah, and especially so in the matters of cleanliness and uncleanness. By doing whatever Allah has told one to do, and abstaining from what He has forbidden, one purifies oneself from the uncleanness of disobedience, and comes back to his Lord. That is why Allah has ended this verse on these words they are, therefore, applied to all the rules mentioned before them 'Keep aloof from the women during the menstruation and go into them, as Allah has commanded you.

The sentences, Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him) and He loves those who purify themselves, are not limited with any qualification or condition. Therefore, they apply to all the grades of cleanliness,, as mentioned, earlier. And the forms mutatahhirin and tawwabin signify great emphasis, These two factors taken together signify that Allah loves all kinds of repentance

(be it by asking for His forgiveness, obeying all His commands or having true faith and belief) and all kinds of purification (be it by washing oneself, doing ablution, taking the obligatory bath, performing good deeds or acquiring true spiritual knowledge). Also, it signifies an increase by number: Allah loves repeated repentance and repeated cleanliness.

Qu'ran: Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when you like:, harth is an infinitive verb, meaning to "to till, to cultivate". It is also used for the land which is tilled or cultivated.

Anna is an adverb meaning "when", "whenever". In this sentence it is synonymous with mata (when) Sometimes It is also used for "where". Allah says: O Maryam! Whence (anna), comes this to you? She said: It is from Allah. (3:36)

If, in the verse under discussion, anna means "where", then its meaning would be, "where you like". If it means, "when", then it means, "when you like". In any case, it gives a sort of freedom to the couple, and that is why we cannot take the words, "so, go into your tilth", to be an obligatory order. No one gives a 'compulsory order and then leaves it in the hands of the doer to do as he likes.

The verse begins with the sentence, Your women are a tilth for You; after this reasoning comes the order, and there also, the word "tilth" is repeated, This emphasis shows that the freedom given to man of going in to the women is either about the place of the intercourse or about its time; but it, is not a freedom of entering anywhere in her body. She is a tilth and that idea must be kept in mind when approaching her.

If the order means, 'so go into your tilth at any place you like', then it is not concerned with the time of intercourse, and has no conflict whatsoever with the previous verse, keep aloof from the women during the' menstruation and do not go near them.. If, on the other hand, it means, so go into your tilth at any time you like, then it shall be limited to the period of, purity from menstruation, because of the previous verse.

Just, to avoid any misunderstanding, it is necessary to point out that this verse could not have. abrogated the verse of menstruation - no matter, whichever of the two was revealed first: The verse of menstruation gives two reasons why sexual relation in that period is forbidden - and both reasons are still valid, inspite of the verse of tilth. First, it says that menstruation is a discomfort and it continues to be a discomfort. Second, it shows that this order was given to avoid dirtiness and to remain clean, and Allah always loves those who remain clean, and pure; so much so that He counts keeping them cleansed as one of His graces upon them; Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He intends to purify you and that He may complete His favor on you ...(5:6). Such a language cannot be abrogated by a verse like that of tilth. Why? Because this verse says that your women are your tilth, so come into your tilth when you like. Now, the reason for this

putative "concession" was present even when the prohibition was ordained. If it could not stop its promulgation, how can it cause its abrogation after it had already been firmly established? Second, the verse of tilth ends on the words, "and do good beforehand for yourselves, and fear Allah, and know that you will meet Him." Such an ending would be out of place if the verse (of tilth) contained a concession.

The meaning of the verse is as follows: Women are to humanity as tilth is to an individual. Agricultural land is needed to preserve the seed and to produce food, so that the human race may continue to exist. Likewise, women are needed for the continuity of humanity. According to the system created by Allah, the woman's womb is the place where a child is made and develops from a microscopic sperm to a human being. As the original place of that sperm is the body of man, He created between the man and the woman a love and compassion and an attraction which excites the man to seek the woman.

As the creative purpose of this mutual attraction is to pave the way for the continuity of the human race, there was no reason why it should be confined to one place and not another, or one time and not another, as long as it helped in achieving that goal and did not hinder any other obligatory work.

This explanation shows the relevance of the words do good before hand for yourselves, coming after the verse of tilth.

Someone has written that the verse of tilth gives permission to remove the male organ from the woman just before ejaculation. Such an interpretation is patently absurd. No less absurd is the view that the words, do good beforehand mean saying . . . bismi'llah . . . (by the name of Allah) before intercourse.

Qur'an: and do good beforehand for yourselves; and fear Allah, and know that you are to meet Him, and give good news to the believers.

Obviously, these words addressed to males, or both males and females, are a sort of encouragement to keep the human species alive through marriage and reproduction, But is not an end in itself. Mankind and its continuity is desired only for the continuity of the religion of Allah, the dominance of monotheism and the divine worship through piety. Allah says: And I did not create the firm and the human beings except that they should worship Me. (51:56) When He commands them to do anything concerning their life in this world, it is done only to make it easier for them to worship their Lord; it is not done with the aim of encouraging them to submerge themselves in sexual desire and worldly attractions.

No doubt the apparent meaning of do good beforehand for yourselves is "reproduce and bring

into this world new souls to replace those who are dying every day"; but it is not the final goal: the real aim is to keep the remembrance of Allah going on, by producing righteous people who will do good deeds, the recompense and reward of which will reach their forefathers who were instrumental in bringing those good-doers into the world. Allah says: ... and We write down what they have sent before and their footprints ... (36:12)

This leads us to believe that the real meaning of do good beforehand for yourselves is 'send good deeds beforehand for the day of resurrection'. Allah says: . . . the day when man shall see what his two hands have sent before . . . (78:40); . . . and whatever of good you send on beforehand for yourselves you will find it with Allah ... (73:20)

This verse under discussion (and do good beforehand for yourselves, and fear Allah, and know. that you are to meet Him ...) is similar to verse 59:18: O you who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for tomorrow and fear Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do.

In short, the meaning of these sentences is as follows:-

and do good beforehand for yourselves: Send on good deeds beforehand for the day of resurrection. Producing children and training them to be righteous servants of Allah and good members of the society is one of those good deeds.

and fear Allah: taqwa (fear of Allah, piety) consists of going into the tilth as commanded by Allah, neither exceeding the limits imposed by Him, neglecting the divine ordinance, nor committing unlawful acts.

and know that you are to meet Him. The order, in fact, means 'fear Allah whom you have to meet on the day of resurrection, lest your reckoning be severe'. The same is the significance of verse 59:18, mentioned earlier which says: and fear Allah; surely Allah is aware of what you do. It is not uncommon to use the verb "to know" for the meaning "to be on guard", "to safeguard" and "to look out". Allah says: . . . and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart ... (8:24); it means, 'be afraid of His intervention between you and your hearts.'

and give good news to the believers. Good deeds and fear of the day of reckoning are the chief characteristics of faith. Therefore, the talk was ended by giving good news to the believers. For this very reason, verse 59:18 began with the words: O you who believe.

TRADITIONS

Ahmad, 'Abd ibn Hamid, ad-Darimi, Muslim, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasai, Ibn Majah, Abu

Ya'la, Ibn al-Mundhir; Abu Hatim, an-Nahhas (in an-Nasikh), Abu Hayyan, and al Bayhaqi (in his as-Sunan) have narrated from Anas: ... The Jews, when a woman of their house was in monthly period, turned her out of the house; they did not eat with her; did not drink with her, nor did they Eve with her in the same house. The Messenger of Allah was asked concerning this matter. Then Allah sent down the verse: And they, ask you about menstruation, Say: It is a discomfort; therefore, keep aloof from the women during the menstruation ... The Messenger of Allah, therefore, said: 'Remain with them in the (same) houses, and do everything except sexual intercourse.' This report reached the Jews, and they said, 'This man does not want to leave anything to our customs without going against it.' Usayd ibn al-Hudayr and 'Abbad ibn Bishr came and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! The Jews are saying so and so. Should we not now establish sexual relations also with them?' On hearing it the face of the Messenger of Allah changed and we thought that he had become angry with them. Then they went out; and at the same moment some milk was brought to the Messenger of Allah as a present; so he sent it behind them and made them drink it. Thus they knew that he was not angry with them." [ad-Durru 'l manthur]

It is reported from as-Sadiq about the verse, And they ask you about menstruation that the man who asked it was Thabit ibn ad-Dahdah. [ibid]

The author says: The same thing has been narrated also from Maqatil.

There is a tradition that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said about the word of Allah, go into them as Allah has commanded you: It is about seeking a child; therefore seek a child from where Allah has commanded you. [at-Tahdhib]

as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked: "What can the husband of a menstruating woman get from her?" He said: "Everything except the front part itself." [al-Kafi]

Another tradition is reported from the same Imam about the woman whose blood stops at the end of her usual period. The Imam said: "If her husband is overcome by sexual desire, then he should order her to wash her front part, then he may touch her, if he so wishes, before she takes her obligatory bath." Other tradition adds: "And the bath is preferable to me." [ibid]

The author says: There are numerous traditions of the same meaning. The word used in the Qur'an is recited hatta yathurna (till they have become clean); and it refers to the stopping of blood. Therefore, the Qur'an and these traditions support each other.

It is said that the difference between the two words, yathurna (they have become clean) and yatataharna (they have cleansed themselves) is that the second form implies doing something by one's own choice; therefore, it would mean taking the bath; but the first does not imply any choice; thus it would refer to the stopping of blood.

Accordingly, sexual intercourse is prohibited until they have become clean, i.e., until the blood stops. As soon as the blood stops, relations are again allowed.

When they have cleansed themselves go into them: If the cleansing refers to washing it would mean that the washing, as described in this tradition, is sunnah (commendable); and if it means taking the obligatory bath, then the verse would imply that it is commendable (sunnah) to go into them after they have taken their obligatory bath, as the above tradition says, 11 and bath is preferable to me". But in no case does this verse implies that going into them after stoppage of blood and before the bath is prohibited, because the moment of prohibition lasts until the blood stops.

There is a tradition about the words of Allah, Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves, that as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "The people used to cleanse themselves (after defecation) with cotton and stones etc. Then was instituted cleansing with water, and it is a good habit. Therefore, the Messenger of Allah ordered it and did it. Then Allah sent down in His Book: Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves. [al-Kafi]

The author says: There are numerous traditions with this meaning, and it is said in some of them that the first man to cleanse himself with water was Bara ibn Azib; then this verse was revealed and the custom established.

There is a tradition in the same book from Salam ibn al-Mustanir that he said: "I was with Abu Jarir (a.s.) when Himran ibn A'yun entered and asked him concerning some things. When Himran wanted to stand up (and go back), he told Abu Ja'far (a.s.): 'I wish to inform you - May Allah prolong your life and may He grant us the benefit of your presence - that we come to you; and before we go out from your presence, our hearts become soft, our souls think no more about this world, and we disdain the wealth which people have in their hands. Then we go away from your presence, and when we mingle with people and traders, we (again) love this world.' Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: 'It is these hearts; at one time they become hard, at another, soft.' Then the Imam continued: 'Surely, the companions of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) once told him: "O Messenger of Allah! We are afraid of hypocrisy (appearing) in ourselves." He asked: "And why do you feel so?" They said: "When we are in your presence and you remind us (of Allah) and invite us (to piety), we become afraid (of the displeasure of Allah), and we forget the world and forsake it, so much so that we (seem to) see the hereafter and the garden and the fire; this all is so long as we are in your presence. But as soon as we come out of your presence, and enter these (our) houses, and feel the scent of our children and see our families, our condition changes almost completely, as though we had no conviction of anything. Do you fear that it is hypocrisy on our part?" Then the Messenger of Allah told them: "Not at all. Surely, these steps are of Satan who wants to attract

you towards this world. By Allah If you continued in that condition which you have just described, you would indeed shake hands with the angels, and would walk upon the water. And had it not been that you commit sins and then seek pardon from Allah, He would certainly create (another) creation who would commit sins and then ask forgiveness of Allah, so that Allah would forgive them. Verily the believer is seduced, (but is also) often-returning (to Allah)." Have you not heard the words of Allah: Surely Allah loves those who turn much (to Him), and He loves those who purify themselves. And Allah says: And that ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him ... (11:3)' "

The author says: A similar tradition has been reported by al-Ayyashi in his at-Tafsir

The words of the Prophet, "if you continued in that condition . . ." point to the position of wilayah (friendship of Allah) which means keeping aloof from the world and fixing the eyes on to what is with Allah. We have explained it partly under verse 2:156.

His words, "And had it not been that you commit sins . . . allude to a mystery of the divine decree. And we shall talk about it under verse 15:21 (And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure) and other such verses.

The words, "Have you not heard. . .are of Abu Ja'far (a.s.) and are addressed to Himran. These words interpret tawbah and taharah as returning to Allah by desisting from wrong and removing the filth of sins from the soul and the trust of mistakes from the heart. It is an example of deducing a conclusion by looking at a verse from one level while at another level a new result (but never in conflict with the first) may be obtained. For example, the verse, None shall touch it save the purified ones (56:79) proves at one level that none has the knowledge of the Book except the sinless members of the family of the, Prophet, while, on other level, it declares that touching the writing of the Qu'ran without doing wudu or taking the bath is prohibited.

Creation progresses, taking from the treasures that are with Allah, until it reaches the last level of maqadir (the measures, decrees) Allah says: And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure. (15:21)

Likewise, the, decrees do not come down to us except after passing through various stages of reality. This subject will be further explained under the verse, He it is Who has revealed the Book to you; some of its verses are decisive ... (3:7)

From above, it may be understood that the verse under discussion, at one level refers to returning the soul and heart to Allah by cleansing them from the dirt of sins (as mentioned just above), and, at another level, obliges one to take the bath; and at this level these two words would mean returning the body towards Allah by removing uncleanness.

This explains also the tradition of the Imam: "Allah sent down to Ibrahim (a.s.) uprightness (hanifiyyah) and it is cleanliness (taharah,). And it is ten things - five in the head, and five in the body. That which is in the head is: trimming the moustache, keeping the beard, cutting the hair, cleansing the teeth, and picking the teeth; and that which is in the body is: removing the hair from the body, circumcision, cutting the nails, taking bath after janabah (i.e. after sexual intercourse or ejaculation during sleep), and cleansing by water after an evacuation of the bowel. This is the pure uprightness brought by Ibrahim; it was not abrogated, nor will it be abrogated up to the day of resurrection. ..al-Qummi. There are many traditions showing that the above things are a part of cleanliness. Some of them say: Indeed nurah (hair removing paste) is a purifier.

There is a tradition about the words of Allah: Your women are a tilth for you . . . narrated by Mu'ammār ibn Khallād that Abu l-Hasan ar-Rida (a.s.) told him: "What do you say about going into the women in their posterior? I said: 'I have been told that the people of Medina have no objection about it.' He said: 'Verily the Jews said that if a man comes (into her) from her behind, his child (regulating from that intercourse) will be cross-eyed. Therefore, Allah revealed: Your women are tilth for You, so go into your filth from where you like, that is, from their behind.'" [al-Ayyashi]

There is in the same book a tradition from as-Saqid (a.s.) that he said about this verse: "From her front and from her behind (but) in the vagina".

Another tradition in the same book reports that Abu Basir asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about a man who enters into the posterior of his wife. The Imam expressed his abhorance of it and said: "Beware of the anus of women." Then he said: "Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth as you like" only means "whenever you like".

The same book narrates from al-Fath ibn Yazid al-Jurjani that he wrote same question to ar-Rida (a.s.); and the same reply came: "You asked about the man who enters into a woman in her posterior; the woman is a plaything; she should not, be hurt, and she is a tilth as Allah has said."

The Author says: There are numerous traditions with this meaning narrated from the Imam of Ahlu l-bayt (a.s.) in al-Kafi, at-Tahdhib, and Tafsirs of al-'Ayyashi and al-Qummi. All of them show that the verse of tilth only proves that intercourse should be into the front part. Of course, there is a tradition in Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi narrated by 'Abdullah ibn Abi Ya'fur in which he says: "I asked Abu 'Abdillah (a.s.) about going into women in their posterior; he said: "There is no haram in it"; then he recited the verse: Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when (as) you like.

But, apparently the meaning of "going into women in their posterior" means entering into vagina from behind; and the verse quoted supports this meaning, as has been seen in the tradition of

Mu'ammarr ibn Khalldd, mentioned above.

Ibn 'Asakir has narrated a tradition from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah that he said: "The Ansar (of Medina) used to go into their women lying down; and the Quraysh (of Mecca) used various postures. A Qurayshite man married a woman from Ansar and wanted to sleep with her (in his own way). She said: except in the way it should be done. The case was reported to the Messenger of Allah; so Allah revealed: so go into your tilth when (as) you like. That is, in any posture, standing, sitting or lying down, but it should be into the same passage." [ad-Durru 'l manthur]

The author says: This meaning is narrated with numerous chains from various Companions, giving the same reason for its revelation. And the tradition of ar-Rida (a.s.) has already been quoted giving the same meaning. The words in this last tradition, "in one passage" allude to the rule that intercourse should be, in the front part only. There are numerous traditions showing that, going into their posterior is prohibited; the tradition are from numerous chains through numerous companions from the Prophet,

Even those traditions narrated by our Imams of Ahlu 'l-bayt. which show that entering into their posterior is allowed but with the utmost abhorrence do not offer the verse of tilth as their proof, They argue on the basis of verse 15:71, which quotes Lut as saying: "He said: 'These are my daughters if you are to do (aught)'." Here Lut, (a.s.) offered his daughters to them, knowing well that they did not enter into the front part. And this was not abrogated by any Qur'anic verse. We shall talk about it there. Here it is enough to say that the verse of tilth has no relevance to this topic.

But, even according to the Sunni traditions, the ruling is not unanimous. It has been narrated from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Malik ibn Anas, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and others that they did not see any hAllah in that practice and they used the verse of tilth as their proof. Ibn 'Umar goes so far as to say that it was revealed specifically to legalise this practice.

It is reported on the authority of ad-Dar Qutni (in al-Ghara'ib. of Malik) through his chain to Nafi' that he said: "Ibn 'Umar told me, 'Keep the Qur'an before me, O Nafi'! Then he recited until he reached the verse, Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when you like. He asked me: 'Do you know, about whom this verse was revealed?' I replied: 'No!' He said: 'It was revealed about a man from Ansar who entered into the posterior of his woman; so people thought it a grave matter. Then Allah revealed: Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when you like.' I said: 'From her back side into her front part?' He said: 'No. But into her back side itself.' [ad-Durru 'l-manthur]

The author says: This meaning has been narrated from Ibn 'Umar With numerous chains. Ibn 'l-Barr has said: "The tradition with this meaning from Ibn 'Umar is sahih (correct) well-known and

famous."

Ibn Rahwayh, Abu Ya'la, Ibn Jarir, at-Tahawi (in his Mushkilu 'l-athar) and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated with good chains from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that a man entered into the posterior of his woman; people thought it bad of him; then the verse of tilth was revealed. [ad-Durru l-manthur]

al-Khatib has narrated in the "narrators of Malik" from Abu Sulayman al-Jawzjani that he said: "I asked Malik ibn Anas about intercourse with lawful women into their posterior. He told me: 'Just now I have washed my head (i.e. taken a bath) after (doing) it.' " [ibid]

at-Tahawi has narrated from the chain of Asbagh ibn al-Faraj from. 'Abdullah ibn al-Qasim that he said: "I did not find anyone whom I follow in my religion who was doubtful about its legality, (meaning, entering into the backside of the women). Then he read: Your women are a tilth for you. Then he asked. 'So what is more clear than this. " [ibid].

There is a tradition in as-Sunan of Abu Dawud, from 'Ibn Abbas that he said: "Surely Ibn 'Umar, May' Allah forgive him, fell into error (in interpreting the verse of tilth, in this way). The fact is that there were some tribes of Medina, and they were idolworshippers, residing with some tribes of the Jews, and they were the people of the Book. And these Medinites thought that the Jews were superior than them in knowledge, and they, therefore, followed them in many of their customs. And those people of the Book did not go to the women but one posture only (i.e. lying down), and that was most comfortable to the Woman. And these tribes of Ansar of Medina adopted this method from them. Now these Qurayshite used very strange postures; and they enjoyed keeping them in various position - lying down, facing them or entering from their backside. When the emigrants came to Medina, one of them married a woman from Ansar and started doing like this with her. She complained of it to him and said:

'We were doing it in one way, you do like that or keep away from me.' This news spread, till it reached the Messenger of Allah. Then Allah revealed the verse: Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your tilth when you like. It means, facing them, from their back side or lying down, meaning in the place of child (i.e. in the place where conception may take place)."

The author says: as-Suyuti has narrated it through other chains also, from Mujahid from Ibn 'Abbas.

It is reported in the same book: Ibn 'Abdi 'l-Hakam has narrated that ash-Shafi'i argued with Muhammad ibn al-Hasan on this subject. Ibn al-Hasan argued that "the tilth can be in the front part only." ash-Shafi'i said: "Then doing it anywhere except in the front part will be prohibited?" He agreed. He (ash-Shafi'i) said: "Do you think, if he did with her between her thighs or in the folds of her belly, is there any tilth in it?" He replied: "No!" He asked: "Will it then be unlawful?"

He said: "No!" ash-Shafi'i said: "Then why do you bring an argument which you yourselves do not believe in?"

It is reported in the same book: Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi 'I-Hatim have narrated from Sa'id ibn Jubayr that he said: "Mujahid and I were sitting with Ibn Abbas when a man came to him and said: 'Will you not satisfy me about the verse of menstruation? He replied: 'Surely! Recite it.' He recited: And they ask-you about menstruation ... go into them as Allah has commanded you. Ibn 'Abbas said: 'From where the blood was coming, you are ordered to go into the same place.' The man said: 'Then what about the verse: Your women are a tilth for you, so go into your her when you like?' He replied: 'O Woe unto thee! Is there any tilth in the posterior? If what you say were correct then the verse of menstruation would be abrogated, because if that place was not open (because of blood) you would go into this (other) place! But his verse means "whenever you like" in the night or day!

The author says: The last argument is defective. The verse of menstruation only says that in that period going into the front part of the women is prohibited. If, allegedly, the verse of tilth allows going into their posterior, it would cover a new subject, and there would be no conflict between it and the verse of menstruation. So, there would be no question of either abrogating the other. Moreover, we have already explained that the verse of tilth does not say that going into women in their posterior is allowed. Of course, some traditions narrated from Ibn 'Abbas argue that the words, "go into them as Allah has commanded you", prove that going into women in their posterior is forbidden. But we have already explained that it is the most defective argument, because the verse only says that entering into their front part is prohibited so long as they have not become clean. It says nothing about other matters; and the verse of tilth also says nothing except that one may go into one's tilth at any time,

This subject is from Islamic law; we have dealt here with only that side of it which was relevant to the subject of at-Tafsir