

# MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

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**Volume 2**

(Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, Al-Nisā')

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والعاقبة للمتقين، والصلاة والسلام على سيد المرسلين،  
وعلى آله واصحابه اجمعين، وعلى كل من تبعهم  
باحسان الى يوم الدين

## PREFACE

by

Justice Maulānā Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī

It is a matter of honour and privilege for me to present the second volume of Ma'ariful-Qur'an. The first volume was welcomed by the readers from all over the world and the stock of first edition came to an end within a very short period. It shows the great interest and enthusiasm of the readers towards an authentic and detailed commentary of the Holy Qur'an. At the same time there was an increasing demand that the remaining volumes should be published as soon as possible. It was by the grace of Allah that we were able to complete the second and third volumes almost simultaneously and we hope that the third volume will also appear soon after the present one, *inshallah*.

As I have explained in my introduction to the first volume, the translation of the first volume was a combined effort of Professor Muḥammad Ḥasan Askari and Professor Muḥammad Shamīm. The present volume is exclusively translated by the latter, however, the whole manuscript has been revised and edited by me. I am extremely grateful to Prof. Muḥammad Shamīm who, not only undertook the work with his usual sense of commitment and objectivity but also accepted the amendments suggested by me during my revision. The translation of the Qur'anic texts is a joint effort of three members of the committee formed for the purpose, namely, Prof. Muḥammad

Shamim, Muhammad Wali Raazi and myself.

I am also grateful to those who wrote letters of appreciation about the first volume or honoured us with their valuable suggestions. All of them were a great source of encouragement for all of us.

Acknowledgments are also due to Mr. Yousuf Noor and Mr. Ishaque Noor whose invaluable support to the project made it easier for us to expedite the work. May Allah bless all of them with His best reward both here and in the Hereafter.

I hope this volume will also be appreciated by the readers. May Allah bless this effort with his approval and make it beneficial for the *Ummah*.

**Muhammad Taqi Usmani**

Darul-Uloom, Karachi-14

27 Muharram 1419

24 May 1998

# TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter	English Transliteration
ا	الف -- Alif	a
ب	باء -- bā	b
ت	تاء -- tā	t
ث	ثاء -- thā	th
ج	جيم -- jim	j
ح	حاء -- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء -- khā	kh
د	دال -- dāl	d
ذ	ذال -- dhal	dh
ر	راء -- rā	r
ز	زاي -- za	z
س	سين -- sīn	s
ش	شين -- shīn	sh
ص	صاد -- ṣad	ṣ
ض	ضاد -- ḍad	ḍ
ط	طاء -- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء -- ḏā	ḏ
ع	عين -- 'ayn	'
غ	غين -- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء -- fa	f
ق	قاف -- qaf	q
ك	كاف -- kaf	k
ل	لام -- lām	l
م	ميم -- mīm	m
ن	نون -- nūn	n
ه	هاء -- hā	h
و	واو -- waw	w
ء	همزة -- Hamzah	'
ي	ياء -- yā	y

## Short Vowels

: Fathah	a
: Kasrah	i
: Dammah	u

## Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ي	: Maddah Ya	ī
و	: Maddah Waw	ū

## Diphthongs

اي	: Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او	: Alif and Waw	aw (also au in some cases)

## Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān

Verses 1-6

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ﴿١﴾ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ  
 الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ  
 ﴿٢﴾ مِنْ قَبْلُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
 بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انتِقَامٍ ﴿٣﴾ إِنَّ  
 اللَّهَ لَا يَخْفَى عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٤﴾ هُوَ  
 الَّذِي يَصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ  
 الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٥﴾

With the name of Allah

the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

**Alif Lām Mim.** [1] Allah: There is no god but He, the Alive, the All-Sustaining. [2] He has revealed to you the Book with the truth confirming what has been before it, and sent down the Torah and Injil<sup>1</sup>[3] (the Evangile) earlier to give guidance to mankind, and sent down the *Furqān* (the Criterion of right and wrong). Surely, those who have rejected the verses of Allah, for them there is severe punishment. And Allah is Mighty, Lord of Retribution. [4] Surely, Allah is such that nothing is hidden from Him, either in the earth or in the heaven. [5] He is the one who shapes you in the wombs as He likes. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise. [6]

1. Whenever the Holy Qur'an speaks of the 'Torah and the Injil' it refers to the original books revealed to the prophets Moses and Jesus عليهما السلام. This should not, therefore, be confused with the present Old and New testaments.

This is the first section of Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān, the third Sūrah of the Holy Qur'an. It will be recalled that at the end of the Sūrah Al-Fāṭihah a prayer for guidance to the straight path was made. After that, by beginning the Sūrah Al-Baqarah with *ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ* (This Book which has no doubt in it), it was pointed out that the prayer made in Sūrah Al-Fāṭihah for guidance to the straight path has been accepted and Allah Almighty has sent down this Qur'an which provides guidance to the straight path. Then came many injunctions of the Islamic law taken up briefly or in details. As a corollary to this, frequent mention was made of the hostility of the disbelievers and the need to confront them. Towards the end, this sequence was concluded with *وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ* (Help us, then, against disbelieving people) - in the mode of prayer. Since the prayer was made in order that Muslims could confront and prevail over the disbelievers, it was in consonance with that prayer that, in the following Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān, the text deals with the modalities of dealing with disbelievers, as well as, with the need to carry out *Jihād* against them, verbally and physically. This is, so to speak, an elaboration and extension of *وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ* (Help us, then, against disbelieving people).

### A Summary of Meanings

These first five verses of Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān explain the doctrine of *Tauhid*, the Oneness of Allah, which is the basic point of difference between Islam and other religions and between a disbeliever and a true Muslim. Those who believe in the Oneness of Allah (and in all His prophets - عليهم السلام) are Muslims and those who do not so believe are known as disbelievers or non-Muslims. The first verse of this section presents a rational proof of the Oneness of Allah; the second verse, the reported proof<sup>1</sup>, followed by an answer to some doubts nursed by disbelievers towards the later part.

The first word, *Alif Lam Mim* (الم) at the head of the first verse belongs to the special set of words used by the Qur'an which are words of hidden meaning and are known as *Mutashābihāt*, the real meaning of

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1. In the terminology of Islamic theology, a proof based on rational argument is called rational proof while a proof based on a verse of divine book or on a declaration made by an authority or a report narrated by a trustworthy person is called a reported proof.

which is a secret between Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the details of which appear a little later in the section. In the words الله لا إله إلا هو (Allah: there is no god but He) which follow immediately, the doctrine of the Oneness of Allah has been put forth as a categorical declaration. It means that there is absolutely nothing worthy of worship other than Allah.

Then come the words . . . الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ (the Alive, the All-Sustaining) which lay out a rational proof of the Oneness of Allah. The essence of the argument is that worship means to present oneself before somebody in utter submission and humility. It, therefore, requires that the one who is being worshipped must occupy the highest point of honour and power and who has to be most perfect from all angles. From this it is obvious that anything which cannot sustain its own being, rather is dependent upon somebody else for its very existence, could hardly claim to have any honour or power in its own right. Therefore, it is crystal clear that all things in this world which have no power to come into being by themselves, nor can they sustain it - be they idols carved in stone, or water, or trees, or angels and apostles - none of them is worthy of worship. The only Being worthy of worship is the One who has always been Alive and Present and shall always live and sustain. Such a Being is none but Allah; there is none worthy of worship but Him.

Versé 3 which follows carries the reported proof of the Oneness of Allah. Briefly stated, it means that the principle of *Tauhīd* as described in the Holy Qur'an is not something peculiar to the Qur'an or the Prophet of Islam. On the contrary, Allah Almighty has sent Scriptures such as the Torah and the Injīl, and His prophets, in earlier times. And this was they all professed and this was they all brought as the message. When the Qur'an came, it simply confirmed their truth. It did not present any new claim which could pose problems for people in its understanding or acceptance.

The last two verses further fortify the doctrine of *Tauhīd* on the ground that the attributes of encompassing knowledge and unlimited power are strong proofs of His being the One who possesses the eternal and all-encompassing knowledge and whose power controls everything, and that He is the only One who rightly deserves to be wor-

shipped. Any one having imperfect knowledge and limited power cannot be entrusted with this exalted station.

### ***Tauḥīd* a consistent belief preached by all prophets**

Verse 2 gives a reported proof in some detail. The agreement of a large number of people on a certain principle from the very beginning of humanity may be taken as a natural proof of its reality, if they belong to different times and places, having no means of communicating with each other.

Keeping this in view, we see that Sayyidna Ādam عليه السلام was the first prophet who presented the message of *Tauḥīd* before human beings. That the message would remain effective after him through his progeny is not difficult to conceive. But, after a passage of time when the ways of the progeny of Sayyidna Ādam عليه السلام shifted away from the original message, there comes Sayyidna Nūḥ عليه السلام (Noah) who calls people towards the same principle. After a long passage of time, Sayyidna Ibrāhīm, Ismā'il, Ishāq and Yāqūb عليهم السلام born in Iraq and Syria rise with the same call. Then follow Sayyidna Mūsā, Hārūn and other prophets in that order who all subscribe to the same principle of *Tauḥīd* and invite people to the same. Then, after another long passage of time, Sayyidna 'Īsā rises with the same call. In the end, it is Sayyidna Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم who graces the world with the common call of all prophets.

This is the golden chain of prophets from Sayyidna Ādam to the Last of the Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم upto whose time some one hundred and twenty four thousand blessed prophets were born in different periods, speaking different languages, living in different countries. All of them told and taught the same truth. Most of them did not even have the chance to meet each other. They were in an age when, communication through writing was not in vogue, which could make it possible for one prophet to have access to the books and writings of another and might help him to pick up the call of the earlier prophets as his own. Instead, what happened is that everyone from among them appeared centuries apart from each other, and had no source of information about other prophets, except the revelation received by him from Allah Almighty. The consensus of such a large group of persons consisting of not less than one hundred and twenty four thousand men of

different times and places may be enough for establishing the principle, even regardless of their intrinsic trustworthiness. But when one looks at the personal qualities of the noble prophets, and at the highest possible standards of truth and justice set by them, one has to believe that their message is true and their call authentic.

It is narrated in some *aḥādīth* that some Christians came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and engaged him in a conversation about religion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, by the will of Allah, presented these two verses as arguments confirming the Oneness of Allah. The Christians had no answer to refute them.

Lastly, while referring to the absolute power and wisdom of Allah Almighty, verse 6 invites one's attention to the fact that Allah shapes all men and women in the wombs of their mothers according to His supreme wisdom which has created billions of men and women with clear distinguishable features establishing the identity of each individual distinct from all others. He is, therefore, the only One who should be worshipped.

#### Verse 7

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ  
الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ  
فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا  
يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ - وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ  
كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٧﴾

He is the One who has revealed to you the Book. A number of its verses are *Muḥkamāt* (of established meaning) - and those are the principal verses of the Book - and others, *Mutashābihāt* (whose definite meanings are unknown). Now those who have crookedness in their hearts go after such part of it as is *mutashābih* seeking (to create) discord and searching for its interpretation while no one knows its interpretation except Allah. And those well-grounded in knowledge say: "We believe therein; all is from our Lord." And only the men of understanding do observe the advice. [7]

Moving from the affirmation of the principle of Allah's Oneness, the text now answers some doubts raised against it. As stated briefly a little earlier, this verse was revealed in a specific background. Once a group of Christians came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and started talking about religion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم refuted their doctrine of Trinity in details and proved the Oneness of Allah with reference to the eternal existence, the perfect power, the all-encompassing knowledge and the most unique creativity of Allah Almighty who had to be One and indivisible. The Christians had to accept these premises and once *Tauhīd* was proved, the converse, that is, the belief in Trinity was also proved untenable. The Christians then expressed their doubts about some words of the Holy Qur'an in which Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام i.e. Jesus Christ has been called '*Rūhullāh*' (the Spirit of Allah) or '*Kalimatullāh*' (the Word of Allah), which according to them led to prove that Sayyidnā 'Īsā had a share in the divinity of Allah.

Through this verse, Allah Almighty has put an end to these doubts by saying that such expressions are in the category of *Mutashābihāt* where the outward meaning is not intended; they are, rather, a secret between Allah and His Messenger, the reality of which cannot become manifest to others for whom it is not even appropriate to go about determining the possible meanings of these words. One has to have faith in them by believing that whatever Allah Almighty has elected to mean through them is the truth. It is not permissible to dig deeper and mount further researches in this direction.

### Meaning of محكم : *Muḥkam* and متشابه : *Mutashābih*

Allah Almighty has, by mentioning محكمات : *Muḥkamāt* and متشابهات : *Mutashābihāt* right there in the beginning, pointed out towards a general principle which, if understood, could eradicate many doubts and disputes. The principle is that the Holy Qur'an has two kinds of verses; one is known as the *Muḥkamāt* (of established meaning) and the other as the *Mutashābihāt* (whose definite meanings are unknown).

*Muḥkamāt* is the name of verses the meaning of which is open and clear to one who knows the rules of Arabic grammar fairly well. But when the meanings and explanations of particular verses are not clear to such a person, then, such verses are called the *Mutashābihāt*. (Mazhari, v.2)

Allah Almighty has called the first kind of verses, that is, the *Muḥkamāt* - أم الكتاب : 'Umm al-Kitāb' (which has been translated literally as 'mother verses') meaning thereby that such verses are the very root and essence of all teachings, and the meanings and explanations of which are free of doubt or ambiguity.

Since the exact intention of the second kind of verses, that is, the *Mutashābihāt*, remains ambiguous and uncertain, therefore, the correct method of their interpretation would be to harmonize them with the first kind, that is, the *Muḥkamāt*. Then, the rule is that any interpretation of the *Mutashābihāt* which goes against the first kind should be rejected absolutely and only that interpretation should be given credence which is not against the verses of established meaning (*Muḥkamāt*). For example, the Holy Qur'ān has clarified the position of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام (Jesus Christ) by saying إِنَّهُ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ (he is nothing but a servant upon whom We have bestowed Our blessing-43:59), or as elsewhere in the Qur'ān, by إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ (the example of 'Īsā before Allah is like that of Ādam whom He created from clay - 3:59).

These and several other verses like them show it clearly that Sayyidnā 'Īsā Masīh, عليه السلام, is a chosen servant of Allah created by Him. Therefore, the claim of Christians investing him with godhood and sonship is not correct.

Now, if someone closes his eyes towards all these verses which have an established meaning and unnecessarily coils with the expressions, كلمة الله (the Word of Allah) and روح منه (a spirit from Him) and their likes from the category of *Mutashābihāt* (verses whose definite meanings cannot be ascertained) and starts deducing from them meanings which are against the *Muḥkamāt* of Qur'ān and other consistent statements, then, that would be a simple case of going astray and being obstinate.

The real meanings of *Mutashābihāt* are known to Allah alone. It is He who, in His mercy and favour, informs anyone He chooses of whatever part of the unknown He wills. Therefore, it is not correct to try and impose a certain meaning based on one's personal opinion.

The purpose of the statement, فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زُرُوعٌ now those who have

crookedness in their hearts...' is that people who are gentle in nature do not go about investigating much about *Mutashābihāt*. Instead, they accept these verses and simply believe in them taking these as the true Word of Allah. They realise that He, due to some wise consideration of His, did not reveal to us their meaning. This approach is, indeed, the safest and the most cautious. But, quite contrary to this, there still are people with crookedness in their hearts. They, with eyes closed, go on investigating and deliberating on *Mutashābihāt* to justify meanings that suit their fancies so that they can lead people astray. For such people, stern warnings have appeared in the Qur'an and *Hadīth*.

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: When you see people busy investigating into the *Mutashābihāt*, stay away from them because these are the same people Allah has talked about (in the Qur'an). (Bukhari, v.2)

In another *hadīth*, he said: I have three apprehensions about my people (*ummah*): (1) That they become wealthy and start to envy each other resulting in rifts and bloodshed; (2) that the Book of Allah is trifled with (that is, even the uninitiated and ignorant claim its perfect understanding through translations) and that which is not supposed to be understood (*Mutashābihāt*) becomes the very object of deliberations and investigations although Allah alone is the One who knows their meaning; (3) that they allow their knowledge, once it has increased, go to waste by forsaking efforts to increase it further. (Ibn Kathīr with reference to Tabarāni)

Who are the ones 'well grounded' in knowledge as identified towards the end of the verse: *وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يُعْتَرُونَ أُمَّتًا بِهِ*? Muslims scholars have offered different explanations in this connection. The weightier position is that the reference here is to *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah*, the main body of Muslims who give credence only to that interpretation and explanation of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah which has been authentically reported from the blessed Companions, the righteous generations following them and upon which there is the consensus of the Muslim community, and who believe that the *Muḥkamāt* (verses of established meaning) of Qur'an are its axis and centre, and who, humbly confessing their limitations of knowledge and insight, leave to Al-

lah the real meanings of *Mutashābihāt* which are beyond their comprehension and conceptualization. They are never proud of their knowledge, howsoever perfect it may be, nor of the strength of their faith. Instead of that, they constantly pray to Allah seeking steadfastness from Him, and His grace and mercy. They do not have mischief-prone temperaments which would instigate them to follow *Mutashābihāt* alone as the object of their intellectual pursuit. They take both, the *Muḥkamāt* and the *Mutashābihāt*, to be the truth because they firmly believe that both kinds of verses have emanated from one single source. But, the need to find out the meanings of the *Muḥkamāt* was, of course, useful and essential for us. This Allah Almighty has not kept secret. The meanings of such verses have been made very open and clear. Since Allah Almighty has elected not to disclose the meanings of *Mutashābihāt* to us due to some wise consideration of His, it is simply not necessary for us to find it out. That we believe in them as they are is quite sufficient. (Abridged from Mazhari)

#### Verses 8 - 9

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً  
 إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٨﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ  
 فِيهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿٩﴾

"Our Lord, do not let our hearts go crooked after You have given us guidance, and bestow upon us mercy from Your own. Surely, You, and You alone, are the Bestower. [8] Our Lord, You are going to assemble all the people on a day in which there is no doubt. Verily, Allah does not go back on His promise." [9]

#### Sequence

The previous verse mentioned 'those well-grounded in knowledge' who, in spite of their excellent knowledge, were not proud of their excellence. Instead of that, they elected to have faith in what comes from their Lord. The present verse mentions yet another excellence of theirs - that they pray for steadfastness on the right path, not for any worldly gains, but for salvation in the life-to-come.

#### Commentary

The first verse (8) shows us that guidance and straying are from

Allah alone. When Allah intends to guide someone, He makes his heart tilt towards what is good and right; and when He decides to let someone go astray, He turns his heart away from the straight path.

This is just as it was said in a *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ : There is no heart which is not there in between the two of Allah's fingers - He makes it firm on the truth as long as He wills, and turns it away from the truth when He wills.

He is Allah, absolute in power. He does what He wills. Therefore, those who are concerned about how to remain firm in their faith, they go to the source - requesting and praying Allah for steadfastness. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم always used to pray for it as it appears in a *ḥadīth*: يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ بَيِّتْ قُلُوبَنَا عَلَى دِينِكَ (O reverser of hearts, make our hearts firm on the faith chosen by You). (Mazhari)

#### Verses 10 - 12

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ  
 اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ وَقُودُ النَّارِ ﴿١٠﴾ كَذَّابٌ إِلٍ فِرْعَوْنَ  
 وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَآخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ  
 شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١١﴾ قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَتْغَلِبُونَ وَتَحْشُرُونَ  
 إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وَيُسَسِّ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٢﴾

"Surely, those who disbelieve, their wealth and their children shall not at all suffice them a bit against Allah. And those are the fuel of the Fire [10] - a case similar to that of the House of Pharaoh and those before them. They denied our signs. So, Allah caught them for their sins. And Allah is severe at punishment. [11] Say to those who disbelieve: "You shall soon be overcome and gathered into Hell. And it is an evil bed to rest." [12]

#### Sequence

The text now shifts from the verbal confrontation with disbelievers on the warnings about the coming physical encounter as pointed out in verse 12 - 'You shall soon be overcome (by Muslims)' - while the verses earlier (10 and 11) serve as the introduction.

**Commentary**

Some readers of verse 12: قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سُنُغْلُونَ, just cited, above may have some doubt about disbelievers being overcome because this is not the case with all disbelievers of the world. But, this doubt is unfounded as the disbelievers referred to here are the disbelievers and Jews of that particular time - from among whom, the pagans were overcome when killed or taken prisoners, and the Jews were overcome through killing or imprisonment as well as through *Jizya* and extradition. Therefore, this 'overcoming' of disbelievers mentioned in the verse simply does not refer to disbelievers universally.

**Verses 13**

قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فِي فِتْنَتِي الثَّقَاتِ فَبِتَّةٍ تَقَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
وَأُخْرَى كَافِرَةٌ يَرَوْنَهُمْ مِثْلَيْهِمْ رَأَى الْعَيْنُ وَاللَّهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصْرِهِ  
مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿١٣﴾

"There was a sign for you in the two groups who faced each other: One group fighting in the way of Allah, and the other disbelieving, seeing themselves as twice of them, with open eyes. And Allah gives strength with His help to whomsoever He wills. Indeed, there is a lesson therein for those who have eyes." [13]

**Sequence**

In the previous verses, the disbelievers were informed that they will be overcome. Now, cited in this verse is an example of how the prophecy has been fulfilled.

**Commentary**

This verse refers to the Battle of Badr in which the disbelievers had about 1000 men, 700 camels and 100 horses, while the Muslim *mujāhidīn* were just over 300, having a total of 70 camels, 2 horses, 6 armours and 8 swords. The encounter was certainly strange as each combating group saw the opponent being twice its own numbers. The sighting of so many Muslims inspired awe in the hearts of the disbelievers, while Muslims who saw the disbelievers as twice of them turned to Allah more fervently. They had hopes of Allah's help, and ultimate victory, because they had placed their total trust in Allah, were

steadfast and sincerely believed in the promise of Allah revealed to them in the following words:

إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ

If there be among you a hundred patient ones, they shall overcome two hundred. (8:66)

If the actual number of disbelievers which was three times more than their own were to be realized by Muslims, they may have been overawed. This state of sighting the numbers of the other group as twice its own was at a particular time. At another time each of the two combating groups felt the other one as low in numbers, as it would appear later in Sūrah al-Anfāl.

To sum up, it can be safely said that making a small group of people with very little to fight against a much stronger group and score a victory, as prophecied in Makkah, is an unusual event full of lessons for the observant and the discerning.

#### Verses 14 - 17

زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ  
 الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ  
 وَالْحَرْثِ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَالِ  
 ﴿١٤﴾ قُلْ أَوْفَيْتُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذَلِكَ لِّلَّذِينَ آتَقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ  
 جَنَّتْ تَحْرِيٍّ مِّنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ  
 وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿١٥﴾ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ  
 رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَمْنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٦﴾  
 الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَنِيتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ  
 بِالْأَسْحَارِ ﴿١٧﴾

It has been made attractive for people to love the desires; that is, the women, the children, the hoarded heaps of gold and silver, the branded horses, the cattle and the tillage. That is an enjoyment of the worldly life. And with Allah lies the beauty of the final resort. [14]

Say: "Shall I tell you what is far better than that? For those who fear (Allah), there are with their Lord gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live for ever, and wives purified, and approval from Allah. And Allah is watchful over His servants"[15] - those who say: "Our Lord, surely we have believed, so forgive us our sins and save us from the punishment of the Fire" [16] (and those who are) the patient, the truthful and the devout, who spend (in Allah's way) and who seek forgiveness in pre-dawn hours." [17]

### Sequence

That the hostility of disbelievers should be countered with *Jihad* against them was the theme in several previous verses. Now, in these verses the text explains the reason why the disbelievers indulge in hostility against Islam and Muslims. The reason for this and for all evil deeds is, in fact, the love of the worldly life. There are all sorts of people who line up against the truth - some driven by greed for wealth or power, some goaded by lust and some in defence of false ancestral customs. All this is just to grab a share in the temporal enjoyments of the present life which has been described in these verses.

### Commentary

#### The limits of one's love for worldly enjoyments

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيئَةٍ. It means that the love of *dunya* (worldly life or worldly enjoyments) is the main source of all errors. The first verse here names some of the most desired things and says that they have been made to look attractive and therefore, people go after them enticed by their glamour brushing aside any concerns for the life to come, if there be any.

It will be noted that things named here are the center of attraction for human beings, out of which, women come first and then the children. For whatever man goes about procuring is because of the needs of his family - wife and children - to share it with him. Then come other forms of wealth and possessions - gold, silver, cattle and tillage - which attract people secondarily.

Why has man been made in a way that he is temperamentally attracted to these things? The answer is that Allah has done so in His ultimate wisdom. Let us consider:

1. If man was not naturally inclined to and even enamoured with these things, all worldly business would have gone topsy-turvy. Why would someone sweat on farms and fields? Why would a wage-earner or an entrepreneur burn themselves out in an industry, or a businessman would put his capital and labour in buying and selling things? The secret was that the people of the world were made to grow and survive through this instinctive love for such things whereby they would go about collecting and preserving these. The worker goes out to earn some money. The well-to-do goes out to hire a worker for his job. The trader brings forth his best merchandise for display waiting for a customer to earn something from. A customer goes to the shopping mall to buy things he needs to live or be happy with. If we think about it, we shall realize that it was the love for what is desirable in this mortal world which brought them out of their homes, and in this silent process, gave the world a strong and ongoing social system.

There is yet another element of wisdom behind it. If man had no liking for the blessings he finds in the mortal world, he would obviously have no taste or desire for blessings promised in the world to come. That being the case, why would he ever take the trouble of doing what is good and thus become deserving of Paradise, and not doing what is evil and thus become safe from Hell?

There is still another element of wisdom which is more significant for consideration here. Is it not that man, with love for these things in his heart, has been put to a test as to who becomes engrossed in the enjoyments of the present life and forgets the life to come, and who comes to realize the real and temporal nature of these things, shows concern for them only in proportion to his needs, and then channels all his efforts into deeds that would make his next life good and safe? The wisdom behind the adornment of such things has been pointed out elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an itself:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

We made whatever there is on the earth its adornment so that  
We can test as to who among them acts best. (18:7)

The verse cited above clearly shows that the glamourizing of such desirable things is an act of God based on many wise considerations:

However, as for verses where such glamourization of things has been attributed to Satan - for example, زَيْنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (the Satan has made their deeds look attractive to them - 8:48; 16:63; 27:24; 29:38.) - there the reference is to things that are evil, religiously and rationally; or, the reference is to a false sense of adornment which is evil because it transgresses the limits set by Allah. Otherwise, it is not absolutely bad to adorn the lawful things. In fact, there may be a few benefits in doing so. Therefore, this act of placing attraction in things in some verses has been attributed to Allah, as stated above.

Let us summarize our discussion so far and see how it works for us in our practical life. We now know that Allah created, in His grace and wisdom, all good things of life in this world, made them look attractive and - worthy of man's effort to acquire them so that man can be tested. This is one of Allah's many acts of wisdom to see whether the man gets swayed by the glamour of the fleeting enjoyment of things, or remembers the Creator of these things, or the man forgets the very Creator of his own being as well. Aided by this realization, does man make these things a medium through which to know and love Allah; or, is it that he would elect to get totally lost in the love for these known transitory things, and forget all about the real Master and Creator before Whom he must appear on the Last Day and account for whatever he did.

On the one hand is a person who has the best of both worlds. He enjoys the blessings of the present life and uses its means for success in the life to come. For him, the enjoyments of the mortal world did not become a road-block; rather, they proved to be the milestones which led him safely into a prosperous Hereafter. But, for the other person these very things became the causes that led him to squander his chance of having a good life in the Hereafter, and also became the very cause of perennial punishment. Frankly, if we were to look a little deeper, we would realize that these things become a sort of punishment for him right here in this world as well. For such people, the Holy Qur'an says:

فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

So, their wealth and children should not attract you. Allah wants to punish them with these in this lowly life - 9:55.

Thus, the lesson is that we can seek good things of life with moderation and even store them in accordance with our genuine needs. In this lies the ultimate good of this life and the life to come. Using them in prohibited ways, or indulging in them so excessively that one forgets the post-death reality of *Ākhirah* is nothing but self-destruction. The poet-sage, Maulānā Rūmī has illustrated this very eloquently when he said;

آب اندر زیر کشتی پستی است  
آب در کشتی هلاک کشتی است

He says that things of this world with which we surround ourselves are like water, and the heart of man is like a boat in it. As long as the water remains beneath and around the boat, it is good and helpful, and certainly guarantees the very purpose of its being there. But, if water gets into the boat, it makes the boat capsize and destroys all that was in it. Similarly, man's wealth and possessions are means of convenience for his role in this world and in the life to come - provided that they do not enter into his heart, sit there, and kill it in the process. Therefore, the verse under discussion, immediately after mentioning some specially desirable things of the world, presents the essential guideline for human beings by saying:

ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَاٰبِ

That is an enjoyment of the worldly life. And with Allah lies the beauty of the final resort. (3:14)

In other words, it means that all these things are there simply to serve a purpose in man's mortal life in the present world and certainly not to have him fall in love with things for their own sake, for the real beauty of the experience lies in one's ultimate resort with Allah in blissful eternity enjoying what would never perish, diminish or weaken.

In the second verse that follows (15), the same subject has been further cleared by saying:

قُلْ اَوْفَيْتُكُمْ بِحَيْثُ مِّنْ ذٰلِكُمْ لِلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّتْ حَبْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا  
الْاَنْهَارُ خَالِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَاَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ بِصِيْرٍ بِالْعِبَادِ

Say: "Shall I not tell you what is far better than that? For

those who fear Allah, there are with their Lord gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they shall live for ever, and wives purified, and approval from Allah. And Allah is watchful over His servants."

Here, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who is being asked to tell those who become obsessed with imperfect and perishable blessings they find in the present life that he is in a position to lead them on to far better blessings. These shall be the lot of those who fear Allah and are obedient to Him. These blessings are, 'gardens beneath which rivers flow, wives purified and favours from Allah' - the last being the ultimate man can and should aspire for.

It will be recalled that in the preceding verse (14), the total count of blessings that infatuate man was given as six - women, children, heaps of gold and silver, fine horses, cattle and tillage. As compared to that, only three blessings of the Hereafter, that is, the gardens of Paradise, wives purified and the approval from Allah have been identified. Out of the rest, children were not mentioned because man loves children during his life in the world as children help and strengthen him in what he does and through them his name lives on. But, in the Hereafter he would not need such help, nor would he 'die' in which case he may have to look for an heir. Apart from this, whoever has children would have them all in the Paradise. Whoever has no children in the mortal world would, to begin with, just not have the desire to have them in the Paradise. Should someone desire that he may have children, Allah Almighty would bless him with children. According to a *ḥadīth* in *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhi*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'If a dweller of Paradise wishes to have children, the process of pregnancy, birth and growth of the child will be completed in no time and he would have what he wished for.'

Similarly, gold and silver were not mentioned in relation to the Paradise because gold and silver are needed in the mortal world as material things are bought against them or anything else one needs can be procured through them. In the Hereafter, there will be just no need to buy anything or sell anything or pay for anything. Instead of that, whatever the dweller of Paradise needs will be instantly provided. Incidentally, the Paradise itself is not without gold and silver.

Some sayings of the Prophet ﷺ mention that some places of Paradise will have bricks of gold and silver masoned one after the other. However, in view of the uniqueness of that life, gold and silver were not considered worth mentioning.

Now the horses. In the world of our experience, horses help cover distances. In the other world, there is no travel and no riding but, sound *ḥadīth* reports do prove that fine horses will be presented before the dwellers of Paradise on Fridays which they will ride to go and meet friends and relatives. As is evident, horses were not worth mentioning in this context, which is also true about cattles and farms and their produce. The services they provide have already been provided in the Paradise by Allah Almighty without their medium.

However, should there be someone there who for some unnecessary reason wishes to try farming, he will have his wish granted. As it appears in some reports in al-Ṭabarānī, everything needed for farming will be assembled instantly for such a person. Thereafter the whole process of ploughing, seeding, ripening and cutting will be accomplished in no time and he will have what he wished for before him. So, among the blessings of the *Ākhirah*, the mention of 'wives purified' was considered sufficient because the Holy Qur'an has another promise for the people of Paradise: **وَلَهُمْ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ** (And for them there is what they wish for). After such a comprehensive declaration, there remains no need to individually mention any particular blessing. Those that have been mentioned are blessings already there without any need to ask for these.

The last and most important blessing mentioned is the approval of Allah Almighty - something one cannot easily conceptualize - after which there is no danger of displeasure from Allah. According to a *ḥadīth*, when the people of Paradise would have settled down there, happy and content without having any desire remaining unfulfilled, Allah Almighty will speak to them asking if they are happy and if they need anything. They will say: Our Lord, You have given us everything, what else could we ever need. Allah Almighty would say: Now I give you the greatest of all blessings - you all have My approval that I will never be displeased with you, and nearness for ever.

Since the danger of Allah's displeasure does not exist in Paradise,

there is also no danger that the blessings of Paradise will ever be taken back or reduced.

It is the very subject of these verses that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has summarized in the following *ḥadīth*:

"الدنيا ملعونة و ملعون ما فيها إلا ما ابتغى به وجه الله" وفي رواية "إلا ذكر الله وما والاها أو عالماً أو متعلماً"

'Wordly life is cursed and cursed is what is in there, except what is used to seek the pleasure of Allah'. According to another narration: '... except the *Dhikr* (Remembrance) of Allah and what Allah likes and except '*Ālim* (religious scholar) and *Tālib 'ilm* (student in religion).'

This *ḥadīth* has been reported by Ibn Mājah and al-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه .

#### Verses 18 - 19

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَانِمًا  
بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٨﴾ إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ  
اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ  
مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ  
سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٩﴾

Allah bears witness that there is no god but He - and (so do) the angels and the men of knowledge - being the One who maintains equity. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise. [18]

Truly, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And those who have been given the Book did not differ (among themselves) except after the knowledge had come to them, (and all this) due to envy against each other. And whoever denies the verses of Allah, then, Allah is swift at reckoning. [19]

The subject of *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) which began with the opening of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān reappears in the first verse in a very special manner. Out of the three witnesses mentioned here, the evidence

of Allah Almighty is in a figurative sense. It means that the being and the attributes of Allah and the manifestations of His power and creativity all over are open signs of His Oneness. Then there are the Messengers and Books sent by Allah, all confirming that truth. The second testimony mentioned is that of angels who are close to Allah. They carry out His instructions and bear testimony (knowing and seeing) that Allah alone is worthy of worship.

The third witness is that of the men of knowledge. This expression, *ulul-'ilm*, means the blessed prophets and men who have the knowledge of Islam. Imām al-Ghazālī and Ibn Kathīr find this a matter of great honour for 'Ulamā for Allah has mentioned their witness along with His, and that of angels. It is also possible that the term, *ulul-'ilm* (the men of knowledge) may, in an absolute sense, be referring to those who, by conducting an inquiry based on sound intellectual principles, or by deliberating into this universe, could acquire the knowledge of the unity of Allah Almighty - even if they are not 'ālim or 'men of knowledge' in the traditional sense, whose knowledge is acquired under a formal discipline from Islam's own original sources. The next verse (19) clearly settles that the only faith (*dīn*) acceptable to Allah is Islam. Thus, totally excluding any other faith or religion as acceptable to Allah, the verse completes the subject of Allah's Oneness, any opposition to which is doomed.

### Related considerations

#### Merits of the verse meaning "Allah bears witness"

The verse beginning with شَهِدَ اللَّهُ: *'shahidal-lāhu'* has a special elegance. Imām al-Baghawī, the renowned *mufasssir* reports that two leading Jewish scholars came to Madinah from Syria. With the township of Madīnah before them, they started talking to each other about the looks of the place which matched the prophecy in Torah that the last of the prophets would be living here. Later, they came to know that someone very pious lives here and whom people refer to as the prophet. They went to see the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Their very first sight of him reminded them of all attributes which Torah had predicted he would have. They presented themselves before him and said: "You are Muḥammad?" He said: "Yes." Again, they said: "You are Aḥmad?" He said: "Yes, I am Muḥammad, and Aḥmad." Then they said:

"We are going to ask you a question. If you answer it correctly, we shall embrace Islam." He said: "Go ahead and ask." They asked: "Which is the greatest witness in the Book of Allah?" This verse of '*shahādah*' (witness) was revealed as an answer to this question. He recited it for them. Both of them embraced Islam immediately.

According to a *ḥadīth* in the Musnad of Aḥmad, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse in 'Arafat, he said right after that:

وَأَنَا عَلَى ذَلِكَ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ يَا رَبِّ

And to that, O my Lord, I too am a witness. (Ibn Kathīr)

And a narration from Imām al-A'mash says: Whoever recites this verse and then says: وَأَنَا عَلَى ذَلِكَ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ يَا رَبِّ (And to that, O my Lord, I too am a witness), Allah Almighty will say to the angels on the Last Day: 'My servant has made a promise while I am the Foremost to keep a promise when I make it, so let my servant be admitted into Paradise.' (Ibn Kathīr)

Another *ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Abū Ayyub al-Anṣārī رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Whoever recites *Ayah al-Kursī* (2:255) and the *Ayah* شَهَادَةُ اللَّهِ : *Shahidal-lāhu* (3:18) and قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكُ قُلُوبِ النَّاسِ : *Qulil-lāhumma mālik al-mulki* upto بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ : *bighairi hisāb* (3:26,27), Allah Almighty will forgive all his sins, admit him to Paradise and take care of seventy (i.e. plenty) of his needs, the simplest of these being his forgiveness.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to Dailamī)

### ***Dīn* and Islam: An Explanation of the Two words:**

The word, *Dīn* (دين) has more than one meaning in the Arabic language, one of them being 'the way'. In the terminology of the Qur'an, the word, *Dīn* is used to stand for principles and injunctions which are common to all prophets from Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the last of the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa صلى الله عليه وسلم. The words, '*shari'ah*' (شريعة) or '*al-minḥāj*' (المنهاج) or the word, '*madhhab*' (مذهب) from among the later-day terms, are used to cover subsidiary injunctions, which have been different during different ages and different communities. The Holy Qur'an says:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا

Allah made you follow the same religion with which He bound

Nūḥ (and other prophets) - 42:13.

This tells us that the *dīn* of all our blessed prophets was one and the same, that is, belief in the most perfect Being and Attributes of Allah, in His being free of all shortcomings and that He alone is worthy of worship, believing in this from the depth of one's heart and confirming it verbally; belief in the Day of Judgement, in the final reckoning of deeds, the reward and the punishment and in Paradise and Hell and in every prophet and messenger sent by Him and in all commands and injunctions brought by them, believing all this in one's heart and confirming such belief verbally as well.

Now the real meaning of the word, *Islam* is to submit oneself to Allah and be obedient to His commands. Given this meaning, those who believed in the prophets and messengers of their time and were obedient to the commands of Allah they brought to them, were all entitled to be called Muslims, and their religion was Islam. It was in this sense of the word that Sayyidnā Nūḥ said: وَأَمَرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (I have been commanded that I be from among the Muslims - 10:72) and therefore, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام described himself and his community as Muslims when he said: رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِكَ أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ (Our Lord, make us Muslims, the submitting ones to Thee, and from our progeny a community of Muslims submitting to Thee - 2:128). And it was in this very sense of the word that the disciples of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام said: وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّنا مُسْلِمُونَ (And bear witness that we are Muslims - 3:52)

Sometimes this word is applied particularly to the *dīn* and *sharī'ah*, the religion and the law brought finally by the last among the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم. This law abrogated all previous ways in religion and this shall sustain right through the Day of Judgment. Given this meaning of the word *Islam*, it becomes particular to the religion brought by the prophet of Islam and to the large community of his followers. In a well-known *ḥadīth* of Jibra'īl, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has explained Islam in this very manner.

The word, 'Al-Islam' as it appears in the verse here carries the likelihood of both meanings. If the first meaning is taken, it would mean that the only religion acceptable with Allah is Islam, that is, becoming obedient in complete submission to the commands of Allah, believing

in all prophets of all times and in whatever commandments they brought, by acting accordingly. Although, the religion brought by Ḥaḍrat Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has not been specially identified here, yet, in persuance of the general rule, once the last among the line of prophets had been sent, the belief and practice of all injunctions he brought becomes binding, and inclusive under this rule. As such, the outcome will be that the religion acceptable during the period of Sayyidnā Nūḥ was what he brought; during the period of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm, what he brought. Similarly, the Islam of the period of Sayyidnā Mūsā was what came in the form of the tablets of Torah and the teachings of Moses and the Islam of the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā was what came as Injīl and the teachings of Jesus, عليهم السلام. At the end of this chain of prophets, the Islam of the period of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, the last among the prophets, shall be what took shape on the pattern given by the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Now if we take the second meaning of *Islam*, that is, the Shari'ah the way and law brought by the last of the prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, the verse would come to mean that in this period of time only that religion of Islam which is true to the teachings of the noble prophet ﷺ is the one acceptable. No doubt, previous religions too, during their age of currency, were known as Islam, but they are now abrogated. So, the end-result is the same both ways, that is, during the age of every prophet, the religion acceptable in the sight of Allah is that particular Islam which conforms to the revelation and teachings credited to that prophet. No religion, other than this, even if it be a previously abrogated one, is acceptable and certainly not deserving of being called "Islam" at a later stage. The Shari'ah of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm was the Islam of his times. When the time of Sayyidnā Mūsā came, the abrogated laws of that code did not remain the Islam of his time. Similarly, any laws of Moses abrogated during the time of Sayyidnā 'Īsā were not to be labelled as Islam any more. It is exactly like this when laws and injunctions of previous religious codes were abrogated during the time of the Last of the prophets ﷺ, they no more remained valid as Islam. Therefore, whatever meaning of Islam is taken, general or particular, in relation to the community being addressed by the Holy Qur'ān, the outcome of both is nothing but that, following the appearance of the noble Prophet ﷺ, the only religion which shall be deserving of the

name, *Islam*, will be the one that conforms to the Qur'ān and the teachings of the blessed recipient of revelations and that alone shall be acceptable in the sight of Allah. Since no other religion is acceptable to Allah, it cannot become a source of salvation either. This subject has appeared in the Holy Qur'ān in many verses separately. The exact words used in one such verse are: وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ that is, whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him (and what is done under its dictates shall be wasted).

### Salvation in our times depends on Islam:

#### Even good deeds and morals from a non-Muslim are not acceptable.

These verses have very clearly hit at the root of the atheistic approach which endeavours to bracket Islam and disbelief (*kufr*) on the same footing in the name of tolerance preached by Islam, thereby claiming that every faith of the world - Judaism, Christianity, even paganism - can each become the source of salvation, on condition that its followers perform good deeds and observe good morals. This, in reality is a veiled attempt to demolish a principle of Islam and to prove that Islam is nothing of substance. It is something limpid and imaginary which could be moulded to fit into whatever religion one chooses, even if it is *kufr* or disbelief! The verses of the Holy Qur'ān, those appearing here and a large number of others, have very explicitly stressed that the light and darkness cannot be the same. Similarly, it is grossly absurd and impossible that Allah would like disobedience to and rebellion against Him just as He likes obedience and submission. Whoever denies even one basic principle of Islam, he is, without any shadow of doubt, a rebel to Allah and the enemy of His Messengers, no matter how impressing he may appear in his other deeds and formal morality. Salvation in the Hereafter depends, first of all, on obedience to Allah and His Messenger. Whoever remains deprived of it, not one of his deeds is credible. The Holy Qur'ān says for such people:

فَلَا نَقِيْمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وِزْرًا

We shall not assign weight to their deeds on the Day of Judgement - 18:105.

In verse 19: وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ اُولُو الْكِتَابِ اِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بِنُبُوْنِهِمْ, after declaring that 'the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam', the text moves on

to explain why the people of the Book went about disputing the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and challenging Islam as false. They did this, not because they had any doubts in this connection for they knew the truth of the matter through their own scriptures, but because they were scared of losing their ground against Muslims. So, it was their malice towards Muslims, their love for power and influence and their arrogant self-image as traditional leaders which drove them to these altercations.

Finally, it was said: وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ that is, 'whoever denies the verses of Allah (as the people of the Book did), then, Allah is swift at reckoning'. The swiftness of this reckoning can be well imagined as it starts initially soon after death when man passes into the state known as 'barzakh'. But the detailed accounting for one's deeds shall take place on the Day of Judgement when he will have to account for his doings in the minutest detail. Then, the penchant for disputing truth will be exposed. The people who denied the truth will discover their worth and the punishment it calls for shall become known to them.

### Verse 20

فَإِنْ حَاجُّوكَ فَقُلْ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ ط وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ  
 أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَالْأُمِّيِّينَ أَأَسْلَمْتُمْ ط فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُوا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا  
 وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلْغُ ط وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٢٠﴾

Then, if they argue with you, say: "I have submitted myself to Allah, and (so did) those who have followed me." And say to those who have been given the Book, and to the unlettered: "Do you submit?" If they submit, they will be on the right path. And if they turn back, then you have only to convey. And Allah is watchful over His servants. [20]

The Sūrah began with the confirmation of Divine Oneness and the refutation of Trinity. Answered here are argumentations in which the disbelievers and deniers among the people of the Book persist - even after the truth of Islam has been proved conclusively. The advice against such ongoing and unnecessary disputations is that the acceptance or rejection of disputers should be of no use to a believer who

simply has to declare that he and those with him have entered the fold of Islam being in no doubt about its truth. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was entrusted with the mission of calling the people of the Book, the Jews and Christians, and the disbelievers of Arabia to submit to Allah and embrace Islam which will be for their own good for they will be on the right path. In case they continue to maintain their hostile attitude, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted here by saying that his duty is only limited to conveying the message of Allah and His commandments. That the message does not seem to get across to them, as they elect to reject rather than accept, should really not be a matter of concern for him. This is something Allah will take care of in His own way for He is in full sight of what His servants are doing.

### Verses 21 - 22

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيْنَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ  
 وَيَقْتُلُونَ الَّذِينَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْقِسْطِ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ  
 أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢١﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَبِطَتِ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ  
 وَمَالُهُمْ مِنْ نَّصْرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

**Surely, those who disbelieve the verses of Allah and slay the prophets unjustly and, from people, slay those who bid justice, to them give tidings of a painful punishment. [21] Those are the ones whose deeds have gone waste in this world, and in the Hereafter, and for them there are no helpers. [22]**

In the earlier part of the Sūrah, the text mostly beamed at the Christians. In verse 20, 'those who have been given the Book' includes both Christians and Jews. Now, verses 21-22 here, talk about some of the unusual doings of Jews. Rūh al-Ma'ānī while commenting on this verse reports a *ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as narrated by Ibn Abī Ḥatīm. While explaining this verse, he said that Banī Isrā'īl slew forty three prophets at one and the same time. One hundred and seventy pious elders stood up asking them to uphold justice. They slew them as well on the same day. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

In verse 21, 'those who disbelieve the verses of Allah' refers to Jews who did not believe in the Injīl and the Qur'ān. 'Slay the prophets

unjustly' means that they know that they are doing so without justice. 'Those who bid justice' are people who teach moderation in deeds and morals.

Because of this whole set of their terrible deeds, verse 22 says that all their good deeds have gone waste both here and there, and when they are punished, they will find no one to assist them.

### Verses 23 - 25

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى كِتَابِ  
 اللَّهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾  
 ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَنْ نَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۖ وَغَرَّهُمْ  
 فِي دِينِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جَمَعْنَهُمْ لِيَوْمِ  
 لَأَرْبَبَ فِيهِ ۚ وَوَفَيْتُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ ۖ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

﴿٢٥﴾

Did you not see those who have been given a share from the Book? They are invited to the Book of Allah in order that it may decide between them. Then, a group from them goes back turning their faces away. [23] That is because they have said: "The Fire shall not touch us except for a few days." And deceived they are in their faith by what they have been forging. [24] Then, how (will it be) when We gather them on a day in which there is no doubt, and everybody will be paid, in full, for what he has earned. And they shall not be wronged.[25]

While dealing with the subject of Jews, as in verses 21-22, the text goes on to censure a particular claim of theirs in the present verse. The address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the reference is to the Torah given to the Jews who would have found it enough for them if they were really looking forward to guidance. But they elect to be indifferent because they say and believe that the fire of Hell will not touch them except for a few days, after which, according to their supposition, they would be forgiven. This, it has been said, is self-deception caused by what they have been forging for themselves like

their belief that they were the progeny of prophets and therefore, they will escape punishment in the fire of Hell.

Jews contended that they had worshipped the calf for 40 days and so they will incur punishment, if any, for the same period only.

#### Verses 26 - 27

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمَلِكِ تُؤْتِي الْمَلِكَ مِنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمَلِكَ مِنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

Say: "O Allah, O Lord of the Kingdom, You give kingdom to whom You will, and take kingdom away from whom You will; and You bestow honour on whom You will, and bring disgrace to whom You will. In your hand lies the good. You are surely powerful over everything. [26] You make the night enter into the day, and make the day enter into the night; and You bring the living out from the dead, and bring the dead out from the living, and You give to whom You will without measure." [27]

In these verses, Muslims have been taught and prompted to make a particular prayer which, in a subtle way, gives an indication that they are going to overpower disbelievers. This has its proof in the background in which these verses were revealed. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم promised that Byzantine and Persia will be taken, the hypocrites and the Jews laughed at the idea. Thereupon, this verse was revealed. <sup>1</sup>

#### Commentary

##### The background of Revelation:

##### An episode from the Battle of Khandaq

The recurring defeat of the disbelievers of Makkah at Badr and Uhud and their general failure to register any gains in their hostility

1. Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from al-Wahidī, from Ibn 'Abbās and Anas رضي الله عنهم

against Muslims coupled with the growing strength of Muslims and the rise of Islam had made them very nervous, almost reckless. The whole thing ended up in a conspiracy. The disbelievers of Arabia, the Jews and the Christians all joined in a united front against Muslims and resolved to attack Madīnah and fight a conclusive battle. This they did, determined to eradicate Islam and Muslims from the face of the earth. The battle is called 'al-Aḥzāb' in the Qur'ān, and 'Khandaq' in history, because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had decided in consultation with his Companions that a *khandaq* or trench be dug around parts of Madīnah to block the unhindered attack of the enemy during this battle.

According to narrations in al-Baihaqī, Abū Nu'aim and Ibn Khuzaimah, when the task of digging the trench was entrusted to the Islamic army, the plan was to allot the digging of a forty hand-span long trench to a group of ten men each. This trench was several miles long and fairly deep and wide, so that the enemy would find it impossible to cross over. Then, the digging had to be completed in the shortest possible time which made the noble Companions put in whatever time and energy they had in this effort, so much so that they found it difficult to leave the job and take time for even the most pressing of their needs. They were working non-stop on hungry stomachs. Surely, a modern army engineering service with its latest equipment would have not found this kind of job any easier to handle. Here, it was the power of faith which made the completion of this difficult assignment possible.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was taking part in this digging operation as an individual like everybody else. By chance, the diggers came upon a huge rock in a certain part of the trench. Those who were assigned to dig that part of the trench tried their best to break it apart but they became helpless and gave up. They asked Sayyidnā Ṣalman al-Fārisī رضى الله عنه to go to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, tell him about the problem and seek his instructions in this connection. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم immediately came at the spot, took the pickaxe in his blessed hands and struck at the rock. The rock was shattered into pieces and from it rose a streak of light which illuminated the area far and wide. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'In this light, I see the palaces and buildings of Hirah in the country of Persia.

He struck again and a second beam of light rose. He said: 'In this light, I was shown the red palaces and buildings of the Byzantians.' When he struck the third time and the flame beamed its light around, he said: 'In this I was shown the great palaces of San'a in Yemen.' Then, he said: 'I share the good news given by Jibra'īl with you that my community of Muslims will prevail over all these countries.'

When the hypocrites of Madīnah heard about it, they found an occasion to ridicule Muslims - 'just look at these people, here they are all scared of the enemy, digging trenches without eating and resting, not knowing for sure if their own lives will be safe, yet they are dreaming of running over Persia, Byzantine and Yemen!' It was in answer to a people so unfair and unjust that Allah Almighty revealed the verse:

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Say: "O Allah, O Lord of the Kingdom, You give kingdom to whom You will, and take kingdom away from whom You will; and You bestow honour on whom You will, and bring disgrace to whom You will. In Your hand lies the good. You are surely powerful over everything." (3 : 26)

Appearing in the form of a prayer, this verse so eloquently brings into focus the most perfect power of Allah as it manifests itself in the rise and fall of nations and in the revolutions that rock countries. At the same time it gives a hint that the prophecy made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ will come to pass and Persia and Byzantine will fall to Muslims. Here, enemies of Islam have been warned that they have not learnt their lesson from the rise and fall of past wielders of power for they judge events and personalities from the material angle while the truth is that all powers and governments of the world are in the hands of the most pristine power of Allah, the One in whose hands lies all honour and disgrace. There is no doubt that He is capable of making the poor and the meek sit on thrones and wrest power from kings and monarchs. Why then, should it be difficult for him to choose these ragged believers digging trenches to rule over Persia, Syria, Iraq and Yemen?

**Things usually considered bad may ultimately prove not to be that bad:**

Towards the end of the verse, the expression *بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ* translated as

'in Your hand lies the good' needs some explanation. It will be noticed that in the earlier part of the verse both giving and taking of power and bestowing of honour and bringing of disgrace were mentioned side by side. It would have seemed in keeping with the occasion if the word, 'sharr' (evil) would have been coupled with 'khair' (good). But, the text elects to use the word, 'khair' (good) alone and thereby points out to something real and significant in human affairs. The point worth noting is that a person or a people may regard something as unwelcome, and it may even be so for that particular person or people, but looked at from the wider angle of the whole community of nations, it may not be really evil. The Arab poet, *Mutanabbi* has put it very succinctly when he said:

مَصَائِبُ قَوْمٍ عِنْدَ قَوْمٍ فَوَائِدُ

The calamities of one group are the gains of another.

In short, the evil of things we regard as evil is partial. Looked at from its relationship to the Creator of the Universe and the Lord of all there is, and viewed in the perspective of the totality of the world of our experience, nothing is really evil or bad as such. So given the wisdom, the power and the consideration of the created universe as a whole, everything is good, 'khair' as the verse sees sufficient to say.

The second verse (27) demonstrates that Allah controls all spaces and heavenly bodies and employs the sun and the moon to make the days longer than nights and the nights longer than the days at His will and command.

Mentioned after that is His unrivalled power of 'bringing the living out from the dead' such as, a chick from an egg, or a human infant from the sperm, or a tree from a seed and of 'bringing the dead out from the living' such as eggs from birds and beasts, sperm from humans or fruit from trees and dried grain from plants.

If we were to take 'the living' and 'the dead' in a broad and general sense, this will become inclusive of the learned and the ignorant, the perfect and the imperfect and the believer and the disbeliever (the Muslim and the *Kāfir*). It only goes to show that Allah's perfect power exercises absolute control over all phenomena, both physical and spiritual, through which He can make a Muslim out of a *Kāfir*, a perfect

believer out of a staunch disbeliever, a scholar out of an ignorant person - if He so wills. And if He so wills, He can let a believer turn into a disbeliever or a rustic into a scholar. He brought Ibrāhīm out of an idol-worshipper. He let the son of Prophet Nūḥ remain an infidel. Strange but true, the son of an 'ālim (scholar) can remain illiterate and the son of someone illiterate can become an 'ālim.

A discerning reader will not fail to notice the eloquent order in which Allah's most perfect power that reigns and runs the universe from the cosmos to the soul of man has been demonstrated so effectively.

### The special merit of this verse:

Imām al-Baghawī reports a *ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he said: It is Allah's promise that anyone who recites, after every Ṣalāh, the Sūrah al-Fatīḥah, Āyah al-Kursī, two verses of 'Āl-'Imrān, that is رَبِّهِمْ مَالِكُ الْمَلِكِ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (2:18) and the present verse from رَبِّهِمْ مَالِكُ الْمَلِكِ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (26-27), He will make his abode in Paradise, and have him placed in the Sacred Enclosure, and bless him with His mercy seventy times every day, and fulfil seventy of his needs, and protect him against every envier and enemy and make him prevail over them.

### Verses 28 - 30

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ نَفْسَهُ وَيُحَذِّرْكُمْ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ إِنْ تَخَفُوا مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ أَوْ تُبْدُوهُ يُعَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ وَيَعْلَمَ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحَضَّرًا شَيْئًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدَّلُو أَنْ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهَا أَمَدًا بِعِيدًا وَيُحَذِّرْكُمْ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٣٠﴾

The believers must not take the disbelievers as friends instead of the believers. And whoever does that has no relation with Allah whatsoever, unless you guard

yourselves against an apprehension from them. And Allah warns you of Himself and to Allah is the return. [28] Say: "Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah will know it." And He knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is powerful over everything. [29] On the day, when everybody shall find brought before him whatever good he did and whatever evil he did, he will wish that there were a long distance between him and that (day). And Allah warns you of Himself. And Allah is compassionate to (His) servants. [30]

### Commentary

In these verses, Muslims have been instructed not to take disbelievers as their friends. Those who act against this instruction have been sternly warned: Those who take them as friends will find that their bond of love and friendship with Allah has been cut off. Any emotionally involved friendship that comes from the heart is absolutely forbidden (*Ḥaram*). However, a formal friendship at the level of mutual dealings is, no doubt, permissible; but, that too is not favoured if unnecessary.

Verses dealing with this subject have appeared at many places in the Holy Qur'an with varying shades of meaning. It was said in Sūrah al-Mumtahinah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ

O those who believe, do not take My enemy and your enemy as friends having love for them. (60:1)

Then, towards the end it was said:

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْهُ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

And whoever from among you does this he has gone astray from the right path. (60:1)

Elsewhere it was said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ

O those who believe, do not take Jews or Christians as friends (for) they are friends among themselves. And whoever has friendship with them, he is one of them. (5:51)

And it appears in Sūrah al-Mujādalah:

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ  
كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ

You shall not find those who believe in Allah and in the Here-  
after having friendship with those who have enmity with Al-  
lah and His messenger, even though they may be their fathers  
or sons or brothers or members of their tribe. (58:22)

### Relations with disbelievers

In verses cited above and in many other verses of the Holy Qur'an, Muslims have been strongly prevented from '*Muwālat*' with non-Muslims, that is, from indulging in relations based on love and friendship. Looking at these clear instructions, non-Muslims who are not aware of the true intention and application of this rule start thinking that the religion of Muslims does not seem to have any place for toleration or bilateral relations or even common courtesy.

On the other hand, there are a large number of verses from the Holy Qur'an, the words and acts of the noble Prophet ﷺ, the practice of the rightly-guided *Khulafā'* and other revered Companions, which bring to light injunctions and actual modes of dealing with non-Muslims by way of favour, compassion, generosity, sympathy and concern, which has little or no parallel in world history. A superficial look on these different attitudes may sense a sort of contradiction therein. But, this feeling is a result of only a cursory study of the true teachings of the Qur'an. If we collect all verses of the Qur'an, relating to this subject which appear at several different places and study them all together, we shall find nothing which could bother non-Muslims nor shall there remain any doubt of contradiction in the text of the Qur'an and Ḥadīth. With this need in view, given below is a full explanation of this point which will, hopefully, bring forth the distinction between various shades of friendship and the reality behind each of them. In addition to this, we shall also get to know what levels of friendship are permissible or impermissible and also the reasons why a certain level has been disallowed.

The truth of the matter is that there are different degrees or steps or levels in relations between two persons or groups. The first degree

of such relations comes from the heart, that of affection and love involving intense emotional commitment. This is called *Muwālat* or close friendship. This sort of friendship is restricted to true Muslims. A Muslim is not permitted to have this kind of relationship with a non-Muslim.

The second degree is that of *Muwāsāt*, which means relationship based on sympathy, kindness and concern. It includes charitable help and support, condolence and consolation and any well-meaning attitude of wishing well. Barring disbelievers who are at war with Muslims, this kind of relationship is permissible with all other non-Muslims. A detailed explanation of this approach has appeared in Sūrah al-Mumtahinah (60:8) :

لَا يَنْهَىٰكُمْ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِمَا تِلْكَ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُواكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ

Allah does not forbid you from treating those who do not fight you on your faith, nor have they driven you out of your homes, with benevolence and equity.

The third degree is that of *Mudārāt* which means relations based on customary cordiality, adequacy in courtesy, pleasant and friendly behaviour and mannerly politeness. This too is permissible with all non-Muslims, specially so, when the objective is to present them with some beneficial aspect of the Faith, or when they are guests, or the purpose is to stay safe from any possible harm coming through them. The words, *إِلَّا أَنْ تَقْرَأُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً*, (unless you guard yourselves against an apprehension from them) appearing in this verse mean this degree of *Mudārāt* which, in other words, means that *Muwālat* or friendship with disbelievers is not permissible except when you are in a situation where you want to defend yourself against them. Since *Mudārāt* or sympathetic relations somewhat resemble *Muwālat* or friendship, it was exempted from the category of *Muwālat*. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

The fourth degree is that of *Mu'āmalāt* or dealings. It means dealings and transactions in business or employment or wages or industry or technology. These too are permissible with non-Muslims, except when such dealings harm the general body of Muslims. The continued practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the rightly-guided *Khulafā'*

and other Companions prove it so. It is on this basis that Muslim jurists have prohibited the sale of arms to disbelievers who are at war with Muslims. However, trade and activities allied to it have been permitted. Also allowed is having them as employees or being employed in their plants and institutions.

To sum up, as for the four degrees of relations with non-Muslims, we now know that friendship which binds a Muslim in very close ties with non-Muslims is not permissible under any condition. Relations based on benevolence, humane interest and concern are permitted with all but the belligerent ones. Similarly, politeness and friendly treatment is also permissible when the purpose is to entertain a guest, convey Islamic teachings to non-Muslims or to stay safe against being hurt or harmed by them.

Now, let us look at what our noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who graced this world as the universal mercy, did for non-Muslims. He demonstrated such compassion, generosity and politeness while dealing with them that it would be difficult to find its example in the world history. When Makkah was in the grip of famine, he personally went out to help his enemies who had made him leave his home town. Then, came the conquest of Makkah. All these enemies fell under his power and control. He set all of them free saying: لَا تَنْزِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ الْيَوْمَ which means - 'Not only that you are being given amnesty this day, we are not censuring you at all for your past tyranny against us either.' When non-Muslim prisoners of war were presented before him, he treated them with such tenderness which many cannot claim to have done even in respect of their children. The disbelievers inflicted on him all sorts of injuries and pain but he never raised his hand in revenge. He did not even wish ill of them. A delegation from the tribe of Banū Thaqīf who had not embraced Islam upto that time came to visit him. They were given the honour of staying in the Mosque of the Prophet, a place regarded by Muslims as most honourable.

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه gave stipends and allowances to needy non-Muslim *dhimmi's*, an elegant conduct the examples of which are spread all over in the accounts of dealings credited to the rightly-guided *Khulafā'* and the noble Companions. Let us bear in mind that all these were in one or the other form of *Mu'wāsāt* (concern)

or *Mudārāt* (cordiality) or *Mu'āmalāt* (dealings). It had nothing to do with *Muwālāt* or close and intimate friendship which had been forbidden.

The aforesaid explanations clarify two things: firstly, Islam teaches its adherents all possible tolerance, decency and benevolence while dealing with non-Muslims; secondly, the superficial contradiction sensed with regard to the verse forbidding friendship with non-Muslims stands removed.

However, there is a possible question which still remains unanswered. The question is: 'Why has the Qur'an chosen to so strongly block close friendship with disbelievers, so much so that it has not allowed it in favour of any disbeliever under any condition? What is the wisdom behind it? One of the reasons, a particular one, is that Islam does not see man existing in this world like common animals or jungle trees and blades of grass which sprout, grow, flourish and die and that is the end of it. Instead of that, man's life in this world is a purposeful life. All stages and phases of his life, that is, his eating, drinking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, even his living and dying, all revolve around a central purpose. As long as what he does conforms to this purpose, all he does is correct and sound. If these are against that purpose, then, they are all wrong. The poet-sage Rūmī said it so well:

زندگی از بهر ذکر و بندگی ست  
بے عبادت زندگی شرمندگی ست

The purpose of life is to remember the Creator and serve Him well

Life without that devotion is nothing but shame

In his view and in the view of all right-minded people, when man abandons this purpose, he does not remain the human being he was created to be:

آنچه می بینی خلاف آدم اند  
نیستند آدم غلاف آدم اند

What you see is a crowd of anti-men

They are not men, they are just the shell of men

The Holy Qur'an has made human beings declare this purpose as their solemn creed in the following words: *قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ*

(My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds." (6:162)

Now, when it stands established that the purpose of man's life is to obey and worship Allah, the Lord of the worlds, everything else including all affairs of life in this world -- business, government, politics, personal and social relations -- must invariably follow this purpose. It follows, therefore, that those who are against this purpose are the worst enemies of man. Since Satan is the foremost in this enmity, the Holy Qur'an says: إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا. (Surely, Satan is your enemy, so take him as enemy. 35:6).

Thus, those who follow the alluring dictates of the Satan and oppose the injunctions of Allah brought by the blessed prophets عليهم السلام can hardly be the kind of people to deserve deep love and friendship based on close ties and any degree of intimacy. It is just not possible for a person who has a definite purpose in life, and who has all his friendships and enmities, agreements and disagreements subservient to this central purpose, to do something like this. The same subject has been stated in a *hadīth* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: مَنْ أَحَبَّ لِلَّهِ وَأَبْغَضَ لِلَّهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَكْمَلَ إِيمَانَهُ. (Whoever loves for the sake of Allah and hates for the sake of Allah alone, has perfected his faith) (Bukhārī and Muslim). From here we know that 'Imān or faith remains incomplete unless man subordinates his love and friendship and his hatred and enmity to Allah Almighty. Therefore, any deep emotional commitment by a true Muslim in the known forms of love and friendship has to be exclusively for one who is with him all the way in the pursuit of this noble purpose and certainly obedient to what his Lord has commanded him to do. This is why the Holy Qur'an has, in verses cited at the beginning of the commentary, said that the one who maintains relations based on deep love and friendship with disbelievers is one of them.

The last verse (30) says that 'Allah warns you of Himself' lest you should indulge in friendship with disbelievers for the sake of fleeting interests and objectives and thus invite the anger of Allah. And since close friendship (*Muwālat*) relates to the heart and the affairs of the heart are known to none but Allah, it is possible that a person may actually be intensely in love for and friendship with disbelievers, but