

injustice, if any, can be made only through justice. On the other hand alongwith this course of action, comes the instruction that revenge is, though permissible, yet observing patience (*ṣabr*) and forgiving is better.

This verse also tells us that for an oppressed person who goes about complaining to people about the injustice done to him or her, this will not be included under backbiting *ghībah*, which is *ḥarām* (forbidden) - because it is the oppressor who has given the victim the opportunity to complain. Thus, the Holy Qur'ān has, on the one hand, allowed the oppressed person to use the option of 'even retaliation' against the injustice. On the other hand, by teaching the oppressed to practice high morals and to forgive and forget, and by focusing before him the the great gain of the life-to-come, the victim of injustice has been persuaded to do a little sacrifice in this matter of his legitimate right and take no revenge for the injustice inflicted. The Holy Qur'ān says:

إِنْ تَبَدَّلَا خَيْرًا أَوْ تَحْفَظُوا أَوْ تَعْفُوا عَنْ سُوءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا قَدِيرًا

If you do good openly or keep it secret or overlook an evil deed, then, Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful - 4:149

It means: If you do a good deed openly or do it secretly or forgive any injustice or evil done by someone, then, this is better, because Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful. Primarily, this verse is concerned with the forgiving of injustice but, by also mentioning the doing of what is good, openly or secretly, the hint given is that this act of overlooking and forgiving is great and anyone who elects to do it shall become deserving of the mercy and forgiveness from Almighty Allah.

Towards the end of the verse, by saying *فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا قَدِيرًا* (Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful), it has been made clear that Allah is powerful in the absolute sense. He can punish whomsoever He wills, yet He is All-Forgiving. Now, a human being, who does not have much of power or choice, were to think of taking revenge, it is quite possible that he may just not have the capability to do that. Therefore, for such a person, overlooking and forgiving is far more desirable

This is the principle which the Holy Qur'ān enunciates to eradicate injustice and reform the society. The counsel, befitting of the Sustainer of everything, does, on the one hand permit retaliation in an equal

measure, thus upholding justice. On the other hand, it exhorts the aggrieved party to forgive and forgo. The result is what has been described in Qur'an at another place:

فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

"You will see that he with whom you had enmity has become your closest friend" (41:34).

Court decisions and taking of revenge for injustices do play a role in checking injustice. The fact, however, is that the parties to the dispute are usually left saddled with long term grievances and feelings of abhorrence against each other which can result in further disputes in the future. The impeccable lesson in morality, given by Holy Qur'an, results in patch up among quarrelling parties such that even old enmities change into close and lasting friendships.

Now, we move on to verses 150, 151 and 152 where the Holy Qur'an has given the clear verdict that anyone who believes in Allah but does not believe in His messengers, or believes in some of them and does not believe in some others is not a believer in the sight of Allah. He is, rather, an open and avowed disbeliever for whom there is no road to salvation in the Hereafter. Let us examine this aspect of the verses concerned in some detail.

Salvation depends on Islam

This clear verdict of the Holy Qur'an has exposed the rudderless and crooked ways of those who, in an effort to appear tolerant in dealings with peoples of other faiths, would like to present their religion and religious beliefs as gifts on a platter. By doing so, they wish to tell - despite and contrary to the clear injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunnah - people of other faiths that Muslims do not think that salvation depends on Islam alone and a Jew could keep to his or her creed and a Christian to his or hers and yet, both could look forward to salvation; though, they deny all prophets or at least some of them, for which reason this verse has declared them to be the kind of disbelievers who are destined for Hell.

There is no doubt about the fact that Islam stands unmatched in its attitude to non-Muslims in matters of justice and fairness, sympathy and goodwill, favour and tolerance. But, good favours can be

made within the limits of one's rights and possessions. Religious principles and articles of faith are not our property which we could donate or present to somebody. Of course, Islam is generous and benevolent in its teachings of tolerance and good treatment with non-Muslims, but it is also equally cautious and firm in the defence of its frontiers. It maintains its essential approach of all possible sympathy and maximum tolerance with non-Muslims, but, at the same time, Islam absolves itself decisively from all forms of disbelief and customs woven around it, declaring Muslims as a people distinct from non-Muslims - and yet, it provides full protection to their national hallmarks. In short, Islam prefers to keep not only the acts of worship Muslims perform distinct from those of others, but also its way of life in a society, the examples of which abound in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Had Islam believed in the possibility of salvation through every religion or community, it would have had no right to lay so much stress on spreading the message (*Tablīgh*) of Islam, almost to the limit of staking property and life for it. This would have been wrong in principle and quite contrary to dictates of reason. In fact, by accepting such a premise, the very coming of the noble Prophet, may the blessings of Allah and peace be upon him, and the revelation of the glorious Qur'ān, is rendered, God forbid, redundant. And, lest we miss, the entire *Jihād* carried out by the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the rightly-guided Caliphs رضى الله عنهم اجمعين becomes meaningless, rather reduced to nothing but the lust for more land.

In this case, some people have fallen victims to doubt by a misreading of verse 62 in Sūrah al-Baqarah which is cited below:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّبِيَّةَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Surely, those who believed in Allah, and those who happened to be Jews and Christians, and the Sabaeans - whosoever believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and does good deeds - they have their reward with their Lord. And there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.

Since, in this verse, rather than giving the full detail of what constitutes faith, only belief in Allah and in the Last Day has been considered sufficient, those who try to understand the Qur'ān through

an incomplete study have misunderstood the whole idea. They assumed that simply believing in Allah and the Last Day is enough for salvation and that believing in prophets is no condition for it.' Thus, they failed to understand that the Qur'an has its own terminology in which Belief in Allah, in order to be acceptable, has to be in conjunction with Belief in the Prophet. Otherwise, even the Satan admits that there is a God and that He is One. The Holy Qur'an has itself clarified the real issue in the following words:

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ
فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ .

So, if they believe in the like of what you believe in, they have certainly found the right path. And if they turn away, they are nothing but in antagonism. Then Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

(2:137)

In other words, we can say that their faith will be valid and trustworthy only when they have the same faith as common Muslims do, a faith in which Belief in the Prophet is indispensably necessary with Belief in Allah. Otherwise, if they do not do that, let it be understood that they are the ones who wish to create dissension. After that, for them, Allah will be sufficient on your behalf, and He is the One who hears everything and He is the One who knows everything.

As for the verses under discussion, it has been clearly declared that anyone who rejects even one of the prophets of Allah is an avowed disbeliever (*kāfir*) and a recipient of the punishment of Hell. So, let us remember that Belief in Allah, in order to be valid, has to be with Belief in the Prophet. If the Belief in the Prophet is not there, even referring to Belief in Allah as such will not be correct.

In the concluding verse (15:22), it has been reaffirmed that salvation in the Hereafter is the lot of those who believe in Him and in all of His prophets as well. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ الْقُرْآنَ يَفَسِّرُ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا

One part of the Qur'an explains the other.

It is not permissible for anyone to explain the Qur'an in any way

contrary to the *Tafsīr* of the Qur'an itself.

Verses 153 - 154

يَسْأَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ تَنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فَقَدْ سَأَلُوا مُوسَىٰ أَكْبَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَقَالُوا أَرَنَا اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصُّعْقَةُ بِظُلْمِهِمْ ۗ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنْ ذَلِكَ ۗ وَآتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ سُلْطَانًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٥٣﴾
 وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّورَ بِمِثْقَالِهِمْ وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوا فِي السَّبْتِ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿١٥٤﴾

The People of the Book ask you to bring down upon them a Book from the heaven. No wonder, (because) they have already asked Musa something greater than that when they said, "Make us see Allah openly." So, the thunderbolt took them for the wrong they did. Later, they took to themselves the calf even after the clear signs had come to them. Then, We forgave them, and gave Musā an open authority. [153] And We raised the (Mount of) Ṭūr high over them for binding them to the pledge, and We said to them, "Do not transgress in (the matter of) the Sabbath." And We took from them a firm pledge. [154]

Some previous verses censured Jews for their mistrustfulness in matters of faith. In the present verses too, there appears a long list of some of their other evil doings and, because of these ugly problems with them, mention has been made of their punishment. This strain continues in many more verses coming later.

Commentary

Some Jewish chiefs came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and demanded that he bring down a book from the heaven similar to that which came to Musā عليه السلام all written from there: If so, they would believe him. They had made this demand not because they wished to believe with all their heart on this condition. It was just a device to drag and stall. In fact, because of their chronic urge to take an oppo-

site stand, they were given to offering one or the other excuse all the time. By revealing this verse, Almighty Allah made the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم become aware of the real state of affairs. This was to give him comfort and peace of mind against the doings of a people who are used to harassing the prophets of Allah. They would go to unbelievable limits of audacity by going as far as committing outrage against Almighty Allah. Their forefathers had gone even beyond them by demanding something more grave: "Make us see Allah openly." Upon this audacity of theirs, came a thunderbolt from the heaven and destroyed them. Then, it was despite being fully cognizant of clear signs and proofs of Allah being One and free of any partners in His Divinity, they stooped lowest of the low by taking a calf as their object of worship bypassing their own genuine Creator. But, Allah still remained forbearing, otherwise the occasion demanded that they be eliminated. Then, Allah gave His prophet, Sayyidnā Mūsā, peace be upon him, authority and power. Then, there came an occasion when these people had flatly refused to acknowledge the canonical law of the Torah whereupon Allah raised the Mount of Tūr high suspending over them, thus threatening and forcing them to acknowledge the Law of Torah or otherwise they were to be mashed under the mountain. Allah had also told them to enter the gate of the city of Eliah humbly filled with fervour to obey Him. Allah had also asked them to catch fish on the day of Sabbath which was a command from Him and which was not to be transgressed. And Allah had taken a solemn pledge from them, but it so turned out that they contravened every single command one after the other breaking the solemn pledge with Allah. So, Allah too put disgrace on them in the mortal life of the world and they will have to undergo the worst punishment in the Hereafter as well.

Verses 155 - 159

فِيمَا نَقَضْتُمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفَّرْتُمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَتْلْتُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ
 بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ
 فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَكُفَّرْتُمْ وَعَوْلَيْتُمْ عَلَىٰ مَرِّمَ
 بُهْتَانًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ

مَرِيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ
 وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا
 اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا ﴿١٥٧﴾ اَبَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ
 اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَإِنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ
 قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا ﴿١٥٩﴾

So, (they met their fate) for breaking their pledge, and for their disbelief in the verses of Allah, and for their slaying of the prophets unjustly, and for their saying, "Our hearts are sealed" - rather, Allah has set a seal over them for their disbelief. So, they do not believe but a little [155] - and for their disbelief and for what they said against Maryam as a grim imputation, [156] and for their saying, "We have certainly killed the Masīḥ 'Īsā (Jesus) the son of Maryam, the Messenger of Allah." And they did not kill him, and they did not crucify him, but they were deluded by resemblance. And those who disputed in this matter are certainly in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, but they follow whims. And it is certain that they did not kill him, [157] but Allah lifted him towards Himself. And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise. [158] And there is not one among the People of the Book but shall certainly believe in him (Jesus) before he (Jesus) dies, and on the Day of Doom, he shall be a witness against them.

[159]

Like the earlier verses, the censure of Jews continues through the present ones. As a thematically coherent subject, their false ideas have also been refuted which have been discussed in detail in the following commentary.

Commentary

In the verse *يُعِيسِي اِيَّيْ مُتَوَقِّئِكَ وَرَافِعَكَ اِلَيَّْ* ("O 'Īsā, I am to take you in full and lift you towards Me... 3:55) appearing in Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān, Almighty Allah had made five promises in connection with foiling the Jewish plans against Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and protecting him from their hostile intentions. A detailed explanation of these has been given earlier on that occasion in Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān. One of the promises made

there was that the Jews will not be allowed to have their way with their intention to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . Instead of that, Allah will lift him towards Him.

In the present verses (157-158) of Sūrah al-Nisā', it has been made explicit that they did not kill nor crucify Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام , rather, what actually happened was that they were deluded by resemblance.

How were the Jews 'deluded by resemblance?'

While explaining the words of the Qur'ān: وَلَكِنْ مَثَلَهُمْ (but they were deluded by resemblance), master exegete, Ḍahḥāk says: It so transpired that, following the intention of Jews to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام his disciples assembled at a given place. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام joined them there. It was Iblīs who gave the address of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام to the execution squad standing ready for the mission. Four thousand men surrounded the suspected house. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام said to his disciples : 'Is one of you willing to go out and be killed and then be in Paradise with me?' One of them offered to do so. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام gave him his shirt and head-cover. Then, cast on him was the resemblance of Jesus and as soon as he came out, the Jews, believing him to be Jesus, caught him and crucified him, and Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was lifted. (Qurtubī)

According to some reports, the Jews had sent a person known to Arabs as Teetlanoos to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . He did not find Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام in the house for he was already lifted by Allah towards Himself. So, when this person came out of the house, he had been made to resemble the looks of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . The Jews took him to be Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . Thus, they took away their own man and killed him. (Mazharī)

There is room for whichever of the situations came to pass - the Holy Qur'ān has not determined any particular situation. Therefore, Allah alone knows what really happened. However, this sentence of the Holy Qur'ān seen with other exegetical reports does yield the common factor that the Jews and Christians were subjected to compelling delusion. The event as it took shape remained hidden from them, though they did advance all sorts of claims based on their conjectures which only landed them into mutual differences. This is what the Holy Qur'ān points out to in the following words:

وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ اِخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا

And those who disputed in this matter are certainly in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, but they follow whims.

It means that they do not have certitude based on any true knowledge. The diverse claims put forward by those who have differed in the case of Masīh عليه السلام are simply based on doubt and conjecture. The truth of the matter is that they certainly did not kill Masīh عليه السلام, rather Allah lifted him towards Himself.

According to some other reports, when some of them woke up to what had happened, they said, 'We seem to have killed our own man, for the man we have put to death resembles Masīh عليه السلام in face only but not in the rest of the body. Now, if this man we have killed is Masīh عليه السلام where, then, is our man? And if this is our man where, then, is Masīh عليه السلام?'

Verse 158, part of which was referred to immediately earlier, ends at: وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا : (And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise) carrying a significant message. It means that the planning of Jews to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was insignificant as matched against the Power of Allah who has taken it upon Himself to protect Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. Might and mastery are His domain. If materialists in their single-track isolation, remain incapable of understanding the reality of the 'lifting off' of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, that is their own limitation. As for Allah, He is All-Wise - everything He does is based on wisdom and fitness to whatever end is desired.

Then comes the finale of the subject in verse 159 beginning with the words: وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ (And there is not one among the People of the Book but shall certainly believe in him {Jesus} before he {Jesus} dies, and on the Day of Doom, he shall be a witness against them). It means: Though, at this time, so blinded by malice and envy are these people that they are unable to see reality as it is, hold false ideas about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and, in addition to that, they are denying the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ yet, a time is to come when their eyes will open up and they will realize that all their notions about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā

Muḥammad ﷺ were totally false.

One explanation of this verse (159), which appears in Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, is that the pronoun in the Qur'ānic word *مَوْتِهِ* (*mawtihi*: his death) be attributed to the People of the Book. The verse, in that sense, would mean that those Jews, when they see a glimpse of *Barzakh* (the state between death and resurrection) moments before their death, they will readily believe in the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام though, their believing at that point of time will be of no use to them, very much useless like the believing of Pharaoh which he did while drowning.

The second *tafsīr* (explanation) which has been adopted by a large number of *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn* (the Companions and their Successors) and which also has the support of authentic *Hadīth* maintains that the pronoun in the word '*mawtihi*' refers back to Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام and, in that light, the verse means that the People of the Book of this time, be they Jews or Christians, do not believe in Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام in the real sense. The Jews just do not accept him as a prophet, rather, they accuse him of being, God forbid, a liar and imposter! As for the Christians, some of them despite claiming to believe in him, reached a level of ignorance which, like the Jews, led them to accept that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was crucified and killed. Then, there were others among them who, in their excess of belief, went out of the limits when they took him to be God and Son of God - but, says the verse of the Qur'ān, though they do not believe in the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام at this time as they should; but the time will come, close to the Day of Doom, when he will reappear on this earth and all Peoples of the Book will believe in him genuinely and authentically. All Christians will become Muslims holding true beliefs. The hostile among the Jews will be killed, the rest will become Muslims. That will be the time when *Kufr* will be banished from the world along with whatever forms it may have. Islam will finally reign supreme on the earth.

Reproduced below is a report from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه:

عن أبي هريرة عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: لينزلن ابن مريم
حكما عدلا فليقتلن الدجال، وليقتلن الخنزير، وليكسرن الصليب وتكون

السجدة واحدة لله رب العلمين. ثم قال ابو هريرة : واقروا ان شئتم " وَإِنْ
مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ " قال ابو هريرة: " قبل موت
عيسى " يعيدها ثلث مرات .

"The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The son of Maryam shall definitely reappear as a just ruler. He will kill the Anti-Christ and the swine. He will break the Cross and worship shall be made for Allah alone, the one Lord of all the worlds. Then, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah said: Read, if you wish, the verse of the Qur'an - (159) وَإِنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ - which mentions that not one person from out of the People of the Book will remain without having believed in Sayyidnā 'Īsā before his death. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, then, said with stress: 'Before the death of 'Īsā عليه السلام' and he repeated it three times. (Qurtubī)

This *Tafsīr* (explanation) of the verse under reference stands proved from a highly venerated Companion such as Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه on the added strength of sound chain of narrators. This report establishes that the Qur'ānic words: قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ (before his death) mean 'before the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and which explicitly determines that this verse is related to the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام close to the *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday).

As based on this *tafsīr*, this verse is a conclusive evidence that the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has not yet come to pass. In fact, when he is sent down from the heaven close to *Qiyāmah* and the wise considerations of Almighty Allah working behind his coming reach their ultimate fruition, it will be only then that his death will occur on this very earth.

This is also supported by the following verse of Sūrah al-Zukhruf (43:61): وَإِنَّهُ لَعَلَمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرْنَ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُون (that is, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a sign of the Doomsday. So, do not doubt it and listen to what I say.) A larger number of commentators has said that the pronoun in the Qur'ānic word إِنَّهُ at this point refers back to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and it means that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a sign of *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday). From here we learn that this verse reports the coming of the Masīh عليه السلام, that is, he will appear close to the *Qiyāmah* and his appearance will be one of the signs of it.

Also worth attention is yet another reading of the Qur'ānic word لَعْلَمٌ (la'ilmun) in this verse (43:61) which is: لَعْلَمٌ (la'alamun). According to this reading the meaning becomes all the more clear because the word عِلْمٌ ('alam) with the *fatha* of *lām* means 'sign or symbol.' The following *tafsir* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه lends added support to this view: خروج عيسى عليه السلام قال: "رَأَيْتُمْ لَعْلَمٌ لِلسَّاعَةِ" قال: "خروج عيسى عليه السلام" عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنه فى قوله تعالى: "رَأَيْتُمْ لَعْلَمٌ لِلسَّاعَةِ" - 43:61 - Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas reported that it refers to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who will come before the *Qiyāmah* (Ibn Kathīr)

In short, if we combine the statement: '*Qabla mawtihī*' (Before his death - 4:159) with the authentic ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and its explanation, the truth that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is alive and that he will reappear close to the Doomsday and overcome the Jews stands proved conclusively. Similarly, this view also becomes certain through the words: رَأَيْتُمْ لَعْلَمٌ لِلسَّاعَةِ : 'Surely, he (Sayyidnā 'Īsā) is a sign of the Doomsday,' as explained by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه .

The master commentator, Ibn Kathīr, while explaining the verse: رَأَيْتُمْ لَعْلَمٌ لِلسَّاعَةِ cited above, has said:

وقد تواترت الاحاديث عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم انه اخبر بنزول عيسى عليه السلام قبل يوم القيمة اماما عادلا (ابن كثير)

"The sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this connection have been reported through *tawātur* (in an uninterrupted succession) that he has conveyed the tidings of the coming of 'Īsā عليه السلام in this world before the Day of Doom as a just ruler. (Ibn Kathīr)

These narrations appearing in an uninterrupted succession (*mutawātir*) were collected by my teacher and a great servant of Islam, Maulānā Muḥammad Anwar Shāh al-Kashmirī. These were more than a hundred in number. This humble writer compiled this collection in Arabic and it was published way back under the title: التصريح بما تواتر فى نزول المسيح as proposed by my respected teacher. Recently, a major Syrian scholar, Al-'Allāmah 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah has published from the city of Beirut a deluxe edition of this work with additional explanations and notes.

The belief in the coming of 'Isā عليه السلام towards the later times is absolute and unanimous as held by the Muslims and the denier of which goes out of the pale of Islam

This subject has become clear enough from the discussion of verses in this part of the commentary. A more comprehensive treatment of the subject has already appeared in the commentary on Sūrah 'Al-Imrān which may be consulted. The discussions there also include answers to doubts raised by some so-called modernists of our time in order to hurt the credibility of this article of Muslim faith. Only Allah can guide whomsoever He wills.

Verses 160 - 161

فَيُظْلِمُ مَنِ الدِّينِ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبَاتٍ أُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ
وَبَصَدَّهِمْ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ كَثِيرًا ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَأَخَذَهُمُ الرِّبَا وَقَدْ
نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلِهِمْ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ
مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٦١﴾

So, for the transgression of those who became Jews, We prohibited for them good things which were made lawful for them earlier and for their preventing (people) frequently from the way of Allah, [160] and for their taking *riba* (usury or interest) while they were forbidden from it, and for their eating up of the properties of the people by false means. And We have prepared, for the disbelievers among them, a painful punishment. [161]

Mentioned earlier through several verses were the wrongdoings of Jews and the punishment they would get for doing so. The present verses talk about some other vices of theirs and mention yet another kind of punishment as well. This punishment will, obviously, visit them on the Day of Judgment. But, right here in this present world, the outcome will be that they will find many things already lawful for them made unlawful as a measure of punishment.

Commentary

In the Shari'ah brought by the Holy Prophet Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa صلى الله عليه وسلم there are some things too, known as *haram* or

unlawful, but these were forbidden because of one or the other physical or spiritual harm they bring. This was contrary to what happened with the Jews - the good things forbidden to them had no physical or spiritual harm in them, instead, these were forbidden to them as the punishment of their acts of transgression and disobedience.

Verse 162

لَكِنَّ الرِّسْخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَالْمُقِيمِينَ الصَّلَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أُولَئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٦٢﴾

But those well-grounded in knowledge among them and the believers, believe in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you, and, of course, those observing the Ṣalāh and paying the Zakāh and those believing in Allāh and the Last Day. To them we shall give a great reward. [162]

The previous verses referred to Jews who adhered to their disbelief and obstinately continued practising what was blame-worthy. The present verse now cites those who were, no doubt, from among the People of the Book, but, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came with his mission and they found in him, fully and unmistakably, all qualities the Last among Prophets عليهم السلام was supposed to have according to the prophesies of their Scriptures, they believed in him - like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām, Usayd and Tha'labah, may Allāh be pleased with them all. The words of praise in this verse are for these blessed souls.

Commentary

The great reward promised to those referred to here is because of their qualities of faith and righteous deeds. As far as salvation as such is concerned that depends on the correction of essentials of doctrinal matters - of course, subject to the condition, that one's life ends with the blessing of faith ('Īmān).

Verses 163 - 169

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
 وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ
 وَعِيسَىٰ يٰأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ
 زَبُورًا ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ
 نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكْلِيمًا ﴿١٦٤﴾ رُسُلًا
 مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ
 الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٦٥﴾ لَكِنِ اللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَا
 أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنْزَلَهُ بِعِلْمِهِ وَالْمَلَكُ يَشْهَدُونَ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ
 شَهِيدًا ﴿١٦٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَدْ
 ضَلُّوا ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٦٧﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ
 اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا ﴿١٦٨﴾ إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ
 خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿١٦٩﴾

Surely, We have revealed to you as We have revealed to Nūḥ (Noah) and to the prophets after him; and We have revealed to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Ishāq, Ya'qūb and their children, and to 'Isā, Ayyūb, Yūnus, Ḥārūn and Sulaymān. And We have given Zabūr to Dāwūd. ¹ [163]

And, (We have sent down) some Messengers We have already told you about, and some other Messengers We did not tell you about and Allah has spoken to Mūsā verbally [164] - Messengers giving good tidings and warning so that people may have no plea against Allah

1. These are the names of the prophets Biblically spelt respectively as follows:

Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Israel, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon and David.

Zabur is the name of the Book revealed to David, Biblically known as the Psalms.

after the Messengers (have come). And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise. [165]

But Allah bears witness (to your prophethood) through what He has revealed to you, (and) revealed it with His knowledge. And the angels too, bear witness. And Allah is sufficient as witness. [166]

Surely, those who disbelieved and prevented (people) from the way of Allah have gone far astray. [167] Surely, those who disbelieved and transgressed, Allah is not going to forgive them nor lead them to a way [168] - other than the way of *Jahannam* where they are to remain for ever. And that, for Allah, is easy. [169]

If we refer back to Verse 153: *يَسْأَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ* (The People of the Book ask you ...), it will be noticed that a silly question asked by the Jews was responded to in the mode of reproach. Here, in the present verse, the same question is being proved false in a different manner. It takes up their condition which they place before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that is, they would believe in him if he brings before them a Book, all written up, from the heavens. They are being asked to realize that they do not make such demands before believing in the great prophets mentioned in the verse, prophets they too accept. Keeping this in view, it is necessary that they keep to the line of argument they use in favour of these great prophets, that is, they accept them on the basis of their miracles. As for miracles, Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has his miracles as well, therefore, there is no reason why they cannot step forward and believe in him too. But, the truth of the matter is that the demand they are making is no quest for truth. On the contrary, it is rooted in prejudice and hostility.

Then comes a delineation of the wisdom behind the sending of prophets and an address to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم assuring him that Allah and His angels are witnesses to his prophethood and those who do not believe in him do nothing but ruin their own end. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Commentary

Verse 163 begins with the words: *إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ* : 'Surely, We have revealed to you as We have revealed to Nūḥ (Noah)

and to the prophets after him ...' It tells us clearly that *Waḥy* (revelation) is a command of Allah, unique and unimitable, and His message sent to prophets; and that Almighty Allah sent His *Waḥy* to Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم just as it was sent to the past prophets; and that whoever believed in the *Waḥy* sent to past prophets must believe in this too; and that whoever rejects this becomes so to say, a rejecter of all those revelations.

The reason for striking a similarity between Sayyidnā Nūḥ and those who came after him is probably that the *Waḥy* at the time of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was at an initial stage which reached its perfection with the prophethood of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. It can be said that the first state was an state of educational initiation while by the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام that state reached a stage of development under which people could be tested with the incentive of reward for the obedient and the warning of punishment for the disobedient. Thus, it was from Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام himself that the chain of great prophets began and it was from his time too that the first punishment descended on those who transgressed against Divine revelation.

In short, punishment would not descend upon people for their hostility against Divine commandments and prophetic teachings. They were considered rather excusable and allowed to learn in due time through good counsel. Once religious education became fully widespread and people were left with no hidden reason to avoid following the dictates of Divine will, punishment did descend upon the disobedient ones. The Great Flood came during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام followed by different kinds of punishment visiting disbelievers during the times of prophets Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ, Sayyidnā Shu'ayb and many others, may peace be on them all. Thus, by likening the *Waḥy* which came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the *Waḥy* of Sayyidnā Nūḥ and of those who came after him, full warning has been served on the People of the Book and on the disbelievers of Makkah that anyone who will not believe in the *Waḥy* (that is, The Qur'ān) of the Last of the Prophets will deserve the greatest punishment.

(Exegetical notes of Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī)

Before we move to the next verse, it would be useful to keep in

mind that the personal presence of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, whose name appears first in this verse, was a miracle by itself. He was blessed with an age of nine hundred and fifty years. He had lost none of his teeth and had no streaks of white hair on his head and had faced no deficiency in his physical strength - yet, he spent his whole life time braving the pain inflicted by his people on him with matching patience and fortitude. (Maḏhari)

In verse 164 which opens with the words: 'وَرَسُولًا قَدْ قَضَيْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ' And, (We have sent down) some Messengers We have already told you about ...', after a brief mention of prophets who appeared after Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, a special citation has been made of the greatest prophets from among them. The purpose is to tell us that they are all prophets and Wahy comes to prophets via different modes. It could be an angel with a message. It could also be a written Book. Sometimes Almighty Allah talks directly to His Messenger. In short, when Wahy comes, no matter in what mode or manner it does, acting in accordance with it becomes obligatory. Therefore, the saying of Jews that they would believe only if there comes to them a written Book like the Torah, otherwise they would not, is to say the least, being short on sense and tall on disbelief.

As reported by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Almighty Allah has sent one hundred and twenty four thousand prophets out of which three hundred and thirteen were Sharī'ah-bearing Messengers of Allah.' (Qurtubī)

Then comes verse 165: 'وَرَسُولًا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ' (-- Messengers giving good tidings and warning...) which succinctly tells that Almighty Allah consistently sent messengers to convey good tidings to all believers and to warn all disbelievers so that there remains no room for the excuse that they did not know the will of God and His Messengers -- had they known about it, they would have certainly followed it! Now, that Almighty Allah has sent messengers with miracles and His messengers have shown the straight path of truth, the option of not accepting the true faith cannot be accepted from anyone under any pretext or excuse. Such is the nature of Divine Revelation. Wahy is an absolute argument, final, conclusive and disarming. No argument stands operative against it. In fact, all arguments lie surrendered

under its weight. And this is the wisdom of Allah and His *modus operandi*.

It has been narrated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that a group of Jews came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . He said to them: Surely, you do know that I am a true messenger of Allah? They refused to accept that whereupon came the following verse (166): لَكِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ 'But Allah bears witness (to your prophethood) through what He has revealed to you ...' The verse addressed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم declares that Allah is a witness to his prophethood through the miraculous Qur'an, a perfect message from out of His Knowledge. The Book has been revealed to him with full realization that he is deserving of it, and the angels too join in the testimony. After the very witnessing of the All-Knowing, All-Aware Allah, there is nothing left to argue about.

The text, after having confirmed the veracity of the glorious Qur'an and the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , turns to those who still deny them, conceal his character traits and circumstantial indicators of his appearance present in the Torah and, sordidly enough, try to keep others away from the true faith by bringing out before them things which are not there or things which have been jumbled together to distort the truth. For such people, there shall be no forgiveness and no guidance either. Thus, it becomes very clear that guidance or the ability to find the straight path depends on following the Holy Prophet ﷺ and straying away, whatever be its nature, is nothing but hostility towards him. This, then, comprehensively refutes all erroneous ideas of the Jews.

Verse 170

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الرَّسُولُ بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَآمِنُوا خَيْرًا
لَكُمْ وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ
اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٧٠﴾

O men, the Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord. So, believe. That is good for you. And if you disbelieve, then, to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and the earth. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-

Wise. [170]

After answering the objections raised by the Jews and confirming the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā, صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Qur'an carries the message of Allah to all human beings wherever they may be as they are its direct addressees in this verse. The essence of the message is: Your salvation lies nowhere but in your belief in the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم so, believe and prosper.

As for those who choose to disbelieve, they lose everything while Allah loses nothing. With His limitless domain and power, who can conceive of bringing any loss or harm to Him? This is something the disbelievers should worry about. Let them be certain that Allah knows everything about their believing and disbelieving and let not the delay or decrease in punishment in this world put them on the wrong foot for He is All-Wise too and does what His wisdom allows to prevail.

Verse 171

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا
 الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ
 أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا
 ثَلَاثَةً إِنْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ
 لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ
 وَكِيلًا ﴿١٧١﴾

O people of the Book, be not excessive in your Faith and do not say about Allah anything but the truth. The Masīḥ 'Isā, the son of Maryam, is only a Messenger of Allah and His word He delivered to Maryam, and a spirit from Him. So, believe in Allah and His Messengers. And do not say "Three". Stop it. That is good for you. Allah is the only One God. He is far too pure to have a son. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is enough to trust in.

[171]

Jews were the addressees in previous verses which provided details of how astray they had gone. The present verses address the

Christians and refute their doctrinal position as related to God and Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام .

Commentary

The word: *كَلِمَتُهُ*: *Kalimatuh* used in this verse tells us that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is the 'word' of Allah. Commentators have given different meanings of this expression:

1. Imām al-Ghazzālī has said that two factors operate in the birth of a child: One is the sperm, the other is the saying of the word *كُنْ* or 'be' by Almighty Allah after which the child comes to exist. Since the first factor is out of question in the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام , therefore, it was by attribution to the second factor that he was called *كَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ* (the word of Allah). It means that he came into existence solely through the word: *كُنْ* (be) without the mediacy of material means. In this case, the statement which follows immediately, that is, *أَنفَخَهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ عَلَيْهَا* would mean that Almighty Allah delivered this word to Maryam عليها السلام as a result of which the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام came to be.

2. Some have said that the expression: *كَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ* (the word of Allah) has been used in the sense of: *بَشَارَةُ اللَّهِ* (the glad tiding of Allah) and it refers to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . It will be recalled that the glad tiding of the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام given to Maryam عليها السلام by Almighty Allah through the angels carries the expression: *Kalimah* or word: *إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ لِمَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ* (When the angels said, "O Maryam, Allah gives you the good news of a word ... 3:45).

3. Some have said that *kalimah* (word) has been used here in the sense of 'ayah or sign, as it has appeared elsewhere in the same sense: *وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا* 'She (Maryam) testified to the word of her Lord as true.' (66:12)

Let us now consider the statement: *وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ* (... and a spirit from Him.) in this verse. Worth attention here are two aspects of our probe. Firstly, why has Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام been referred to as *rūḥ* or spirit? Secondly, since by saying 'from Him' the spirit has been attributed to Almighty Allah, what, then, would be the sense of such an attribution?

In this connection, several exegetical stances of commentators have been reported. Their gist is being given below:

1. Some of them explain it on the basis of lexical usage. They say

that, according to the rule of 'urf or recognized customary practice, the word 'rūḥ' or 'spirit' is used in the sense of 'essence' to enhance the effect of pristine purity in something. Since the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was totally unrelated to the mediation of any father and he was the outcome of nothing but the will of Allah, in His supreme majesty, and a result of the word: كُنْ (kun: be), therefore, he was blessed with the most perfect degree of purity. This is the reason why he was called 'a spirit' or 'essence' as admitted by recognized practice. As for the attribution to Allah, it is there to hold him in esteem. This is like attributing *Masajid* (mosques) to Allah in order to enhance the respect in which they are held. Hence, the expression: *Masajidullāh* or the Mosques of Allah. Or, the Holy Ka'bah, by attributing it to Allah, is called: *Baytullāh* or the House of Allah. Or, by attributing someone religiously observing and worshipfully obedient to Allah, he is called: 'Abd Allah' or the servant or slave of Allah. Thus, it is in accord with this formulation that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been referred to in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl in the wordings: أَشْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ (carried His servant) (17:1) where the attribution to Allah reflects honour given to him.

2. Some commentators have said that the purpose behind the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was that he should infuse spiritual life into the dead hearts of people and make them alive once again (familiar as born-again Christians in the West). Since he was the cause of spiritual life very much like the spirit is the cause of physical life, therefore, it was in this light that he was called a spirit. In fact, this word has been used for the Holy Qur'an as well: وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا (and thus We have revealed to you a spirit of Our Command - 42:52) because the Holy Qur'an too blesses people with spiritual life.

3. Some others have said that *rūḥ* (spirit) is also used in the sense of secret. Since Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was, because of his unusual birth, a sign and secret of Allah, therefore, he was called: *Rūḥullāh* (the spirit of Allah).

4. Some say that the adjunct is understood here since the statement was to be read as: دُورُوحٍ مِنْهُ (the possessor of a spirit from Him). However, since all rational beings are equal as the possessors of a spirit, the distinction of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was made manifest when Almighty Allah turned his attribution towards Himself.

5. According to yet another exegetical view, the word: *Rūh* has been used in the sense of *nafkh* or the blowing of breath. Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام had, as commanded by Allah, blown his breath on the collar of Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام and that became the conception. Since only a blow of breath had caused the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام as a miracle, therefore, he was called: *Rūhullāh* or the spirit of Allah. Another verse of the Holy Qur'an: *فَنفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا* (then, We blew Our spirit in her - 21:91) points out in this direction.

In addition to these, several other probabilities have also been suggested. However, none of these come to mean that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a part of Allah or a divine person on the basis of which it could be suggested that this very spirit we are talking about has manifested itself in the human form of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام.

A telling repartee

'Allāmah Al-Ālūsī, the author of the famous *Tafsīr Rūh al-Ma'ānī* has reported an episode from the court of Caliph Ḥarūn al-Rashīd where a Christian physician entered into a debate against the scholar 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Wāqidī challenging him that his Book (the Qur'an) has a particular word which indicates that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a part of Allah. And as a proof, he read out the verse (171) which carries the words: *رُوحٌ مِنْهُ* (a spirit from Him). 'Allāmah al-Wāqidī came up with a rejoinder and recited another verse (45:13) of the Qur'an: *وَسَخَّرَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِنْهُ* (The meaning of the verse is that everything that there is in the heavens and the earth is *from the same Allah* where the word - *minhu*: from Him - serves to attribute everything to Allah) and said: 'If *رُوحٌ مِنْهُ* (*rūhim-minhu*: a spirit from Him) means, as you think, that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a part of Allah, then, the verse I have just recited would mean that every thing in the heavens and the earth is also a part of Allah?' Thus, silenced, the Christian physician chose to become a Muslim.

The Qur'an and the doctrine of Trinity

Reflected in the statement of the Qur'an: *وَلَا تُدْرِكُوهُ لَئِنْ سَأَلْتُمْ عَنِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ مَا يَكُنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ اِلَّا بِحُكْمِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِیْنَ* (And do not say "Three") is the state of the major sects among Christians in which they were divided at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an. The doctrine of Trinity they adhered to was based on three separate principles. One sect maintained that Masīḥ is God and it is God Himself

who has appeared in the world in the form of Masīḥ. The second sect believed that Masīḥ is the son of God while the third sect claimed unity in trinity - the father, the son and Mary. Even this group was split in two. The second group said that the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥul-Quds*) and not Sayyidah Maryam (Mary) was the third person (hypostasis). So, these people acknowledged Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام as the third of the three. Therefore, all the three sects have been addressed, separately and jointly in the Holy Qur'ān whereby the Christians have been clearly told that there is just one truth and that truth is that Masīḥ عليه السلام is a human being born to Maryam عليها السلام, and a true Messenger of God. Whatever is said beyond that is all false and ineffectual - whether it be loaded with the excess of under-estimation, as believed by the Jews, viz., God forbid, he was an imposter and fabricator: or, be a case of the excess of over-estimation as believed by the Christians, viz., God forbid, he is God or the son of God or the third of the three.

In many of its verses, the Holy Qur'ān has, on the one hand, pointed out to the strayings of the Christians and Jews while, on the other, it has focused brightly on the exalted station of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام in the sight of Almighty Allah so that the true path of moderation could emerge clearly from out of the mazes of excess and deficiency.

Those interested in detailed information about various aspects of Christian beliefs vis-a-vis the veracity of Islam may wish to study the world-famous book, *Izhārul-Ḥaqq* by Maulānā Raḥmatullāh Kīrānawī. This original work in Arabic has been translated and published by Dārul-Uloom, Karachi, Pakistan in three volumes with detailed annotations.¹

Towards the end of the verse, it was declared: *لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا* (To him belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is enough to trust in.). The drive of the meaning is: When everything has been created by Him, when everything falls under the domain of His mastery and when everyone is a servant of

1. An English translation of this work has been recently completed by Maulānā Muḥammad Wali Raazi, son of Ḥaḍrat Mufti Muḥammad Shafi رحمه الله and is presently under the process of publication under the auspices of the translator himself.

Allah, who and how could anyone become His partner or associate or son? The fact is that Almighty Allah is the dispenser of all our needs and the sole caretaker of everyone's wants - He is universally and perennially sufficient, all by Himself. He needs nobody. How, then, could He need to have a partner or son?

To sum up, we can say that no created being has the ability or qualification to become His partner, nor does His most sacred Being have the room or need for it. This much is enough to tell us that suggesting a partner to God or ascribing a son to Him can be accomplished by none but the one who is deprived of faith and reason both.

Excess in Faith

Let us now go back to the opening statement of the verse: لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ . In this verse, the People of the Book have been asked not to indulge in excess in matters relating to their Faith. Lexically, the Qur'ānic word: الغلو : *al-Ghuluww* means to cross the limits or transgress. In *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ says:

الغلو في الدين هو مجاوزة حدالحق فيه

Excess in Faith is crossing the limit set therein.

The People of the Book, that is, the Jews and the Christians were both made addressees of this injunction because excess in Faith is the common factor between them. Both groups have fallen victims to nothing but excess in matters of Faith. The Christians committed excess in believing and honouring Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام when they went on to the extreme of taking him to be God or son of God or the third God. As for Jews, they committed excess in disbelieving and rejecting him - not simply that they did not accept him even as a prophet, they were audacious enough to, God forbid, impute a false accusation to his revered mother, Sayyidah Maryam عليه السلام and to cast a slur against her parentage.

Since the disastrous deviation of Jews and Christians in matters of Faith was a common scene of the time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ specially instructed his community to be very careful about it. According to a report from Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه appearing in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

لاتطرونى كما اطرت النصارى عيسى بن مريم، فانما انا عبد، فقولوا:
 "عبد الله ورسوله"

Do not exaggerate in my praise as was done by Christians in the case of 'Īsa son of Maryam عليه السلام . Beware, I am only a servant. So, call me a servant of Allah and His messenger. (This narration has also been reported by al-Bukhārī and Ibn al-Madīnī rating it as sound and authentically reported)

In brief, the sense of what he said is: I am one with everyone in being a servant of Allah and a human being. The highest rank I have is that I am a Messenger of Allah. Raising it higher to the limit that you go about taking me as partner in the attributes of Almighty Allah is excess and I do not want you to fall into this excess like the Christians. This excess in Faith practiced by the Jews and Christians did not remain limited to prophets only. Once used to it, they extended this attitude of theirs to the apostles, followers and deputies of the prophets. They had already assigned Godhood to their prophet, now they invested the followers of the prophet with immunity from sin. While doing so, they did not even take the trouble of investigating and making sure if such followers were genuine followers of the prophet and who correctly and firmly adhered to his teachings, or they were no more than hereditary religious scholars and guides. This resulted in the emergence of a leadership which was astray in itself and could do nothing but keep adding to the strayings of others. So, they ruined their Faith by practicing it erroneously from within. The Holy Qur'ān has described this very condition of these people in the verse: *اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَابَهُمْ* (that is, these people took their religious leaders as objects of worship, other than Allah). It means that they had already been excessive in making their prophet a God, then, they started worshipping later-day religious leaders in the name of following the prophet!

The lesson to be learnt is that excess in Faith is a dangerous attitude which has destroyed the Faiths of earlier religious communities all in the fair name of Faith. So serious were the implications that our noble master devised perfect defences to keep his community safe against this terrible epidemic.

It appears in *Hadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه on the occasion of Hajj that he should go and collect pebbles which he could use to throw at the *Jamarāt*. He returned with average-sized pebbles and presented them to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who liked them very much and said twice: *بِئْتِلُونِ، بِئْتِلُونِ* (like these, like these) which means that one should do his or her *ramy* at *Jamarāt* using average-sized pebbles like these. Then, he said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوفَ فِي الدِّينِ، فَإِنَّمَا هَلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِالْغُلُوفِ فِي دِينِهِمْ

It is your duty to avoid excess in Faith for communities before you were destroyed because of being excessive in their Faith.

Important Rules of Guidance

Some important rules come out from this ḥadīth:

1. The *masnūn* limit placed on pebbles thrown at the *Jamarāt* during the Hajj is that they should be average in size, neither too small nor too big. Throwing big rocks is included under excess in Faith.

2. The legal limit of everything is what the Holy Prophet ﷺ has left determined by his word and deed. Going beyond this limit is *ghuluww*, excess in Faith.

3. Precisely defined, excess in Faith is the crossing of the *masnūn* limit set for doing something.

The Limits of Materialism

The greed for worldly wealth and luxury beyond the level of need is considered blameworthy in Islam. Instructions to observe restraint against such urges are profusely spread out in the Qur'an. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while prohibiting attachment to worldly life greedily, has set its proper limits by his word and deed. He declared marriage to be his way and persuaded others to follow his example. He explained the many-faceted blessings of having children. To live nicely and wisely with the family and to fulfill the rights of everyone properly were things he prescribed as obligatory. To work for one's family and earn a good living was what he called an obligation after the obligation (فريضة بعد الفريضة). He laid stress on people to engage in business, agriculture, industry and labour. The establishment of an Islamic state and government and the promotion of a system governed

by Islam was something he declared to be part of the mandate of prophethood. Thus, by acting in accordance with it, he went on to establish a state system throughout the Arabian peninsula which was later extended to other parts of the world in the East and the West. All this shows that being engaged in these pursuits within the limits of need is not counted as gross love of the material nor as greed and avarice.

The Jews and Christians did not realize the truth of the matter and got themselves involved in monasticism. The Holy Qur'an has refuted this uncalled for involvement of theirs by saying:

وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا

It means that they took to ways of monasticism which were not prescribed for them by Allah except that they were to seek the pleasure of Allah. Then, they failed to fulfill the conditions of what they had themselves imposed. (57:27)

The Limits of Sunnah and Bid'ah

By his word and deed, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, in everything such as religious acts of worship and social transactions and dealings, demarcated the limits of moderation. Any deviation from these limits, whether it be in falling behind or in pushing ahead of them, is forbidden for it leads a believer astray from the right path. It was for this reason that he has very emphatically blocked the incursion of *bid'āt*: بدعات (self-promoted innovations in established religion) and *muḥdathāt*: محدثات (the embracing of everything appearing recent and novel in a given time as if a part of established religion which, in our time, are introduced under the fancy garbs of recension and modernity). Let us, therefore, remember what he said:

كُلُّ بَدْعَةٍ ضَالَّةٌ، وَكُلُّ ضَالَّةٍ فِي النَّارِ

"Every *Bid'ah* is straying and every straying ends in *Jahannam*."

The word *Bid'ah* used in the ḥadīth refers to everything (assumed to be a part of religion) which is not there in the word and deed of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم clearly or through hint. Ḥaḍrat Shāh Waliyullah has said that Islam condemns *Bid'ah* as a serious offence

because it opens the doors to alteration in religion. This is what happened with earlier religious communities. They added up things on their own to what their Book said and their prophet taught. Then came another generation, and the generations that followed, each adding its share to the original. Finally, everything got so mixed up that it became impossible to identify the true religion as distinct from the additions introduced by its adherents.

In his famous book, *Hujjatullāh al-Bālighah*, he has also given details of circumstances under which efforts have been made all over the world to inject alterations in the religion of Islam. He has also pointed out to the concern shown by the Shari'ah of Islam which has installed defensive mechanisms on all such doors of incursion so that there remains no single outlet through which this disease could hit the Muslim community in epidemic proportions.

The Moderate Course in honouring and following religious leaders

One such cause referred to above is the practice of excess in Faith (غلو فى الدين). Two factors distinctly contribute to the emergence of this attitude: Firstly, the desire to undertake deep investigations unnecessarily or to be involved in far-fetched interpretations; and secondly, the choice of a hardened stance. It is a matter of great regret that, despite so much elaborations made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and active restrictions placed by the Shari'ah of Islam, the Muslim community is suffering fatally from this very disease of excess. Its fallout can be distinctly noticed in all departments of our Faith. Out of these, the field most affected is that of religious leaders where the question is: Whom to follow?

Stretching between two extremes, a group of Muslims has gone far out by holding that there is no such thing as a religious leader or teacher or *'Alim* or *Shaykh*. They would say: 'The Book of Allah is sufficient for us. If they understand the Book of Allah so do we - *مَنْ رَجَالَ رَجُلٌ* - *رَجَالٌ* - They are men, so are we.' The result was that every ambitious pseudo-intellectual - unlettered in Arabic and uninitiated into the facts of and insights into the Qur'an and unfamiliar with the exegetical clarifications given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - considered it sufficient to look at translations of the Qur'an and be hoisted as a

scholar of the Qur'ān! How can a *tafsīr* or explanation of the Qur'ān which has been authentically reported from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or from his direct disciples, the noble Companions, be ever ignored or bypassed? But, such is the breed of these dabblers in the discipline that they would dismiss anything in favour of their brain wave and still have the temerity to tie it with the Qur'ān. Although, had a book without a teacher been enough, Almighty Allah had the power to make written copies of the book become available for people at their homes - there was, then, no need to send a prophet to teach. A little reflection would reveal that this is not something peculiar to the Book of Allah. No one can, by simply looking at the translation of any book in the arts and sciences, become an expert in those fields. We have yet to find a physician who became a physician through a familiarity with translations of medical books. No engineer became an engineer by browsing through engineering texts. Even the study of common books on sewing and cooking has not made anyone succeed as a master tailor or chef. So, the truth lies elsewhere - the system needs the elements of teaching and learning under a teacher. This is all too established for everyone. But, it is indeed sad to see that the Qur'an and Sunnah alone, of all things around us, have been taken so casually as not to need any teacher. Thus, a fairly large group of educated people drifted down in the direction of serious deficiency when they took the lone study of the Qur'ān as all sufficient and totally dispensed of with the need to consult the exegesis and interpretation of early scholars, and to be guided by them.

On the other side of the extreme, a large group of Muslims got involved in a kind of excess which goaded them to take just about anyone as their religious guide almost blindly, and blindly it was that they started following them. They never took the trouble of finding out whether or not the person they were taking as guide came up to the standard of high intellectual achievement, corresponding personal behaviour, concern for the good of people and the genuine sense of responsibility before Allah. They did not even care to apply a much simpler test by looking at the kind of teaching such a person was imparting and making sure that it was not against the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

The Ideal Solution

The Shari'ah of Islam has wisely shielded Muslims from falling into the trap of excess. The middle course in between the two extremes it has suggested is: Learn the Book of Allah (*Kitābullah*) from the Men of Allah (*Rijālullah*) and recognize the Men of Allah from the Book of Allah. In other words, one should first recognize those who are engaged in learning and communicating the true knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah through the all too well-known teachings of these twin sources of Islamic Faith. Once this is settled, no intricate problem relating to Qur'an and Sunnah will ever bother you - if you give precedence to their explanation above your own opinion, and follow them.

Verses 172 - 173

لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ
 الْمُقَرَّبُونَ وَمَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ
 إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٧٢﴾ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
 فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ؕ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْتَنْكَفُوا
 وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۖ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ
 اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٧٣﴾

The Masīh (Jesus) shall never spurn being a slave of Allah, nor shall the angels, the close ones. And whoever spurns His worship and shows arrogance -- then, He shall gather all of them before Himself. [172] As for those who believe and do good deeds, He shall give them their reward in full, and give them more out of His grace. But, to those who spurn and show arrogance, He shall give a painful punishment, and they shall find for themselves not a friend other than Allah nor a helper. [173]

From the affirmation of Allah's absolute purity and the refutation of assumed Godhood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام earlier, the text now moves to further strengthen the argument by showing that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام would himself confess to being a servant of Allah and so will the angels (which includes Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام alleged to be a person of Trinity). Then, follows the warning for those who choose to

retract in distaste and the good news for those who believe and are good in deeds for they will be rewarded for their belief and deeds with many more added graces from Allah.

Commentary

The Honour of being a servant of Allah

Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī, in his comments on the opening statement of Verse 172: **لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ** (The Masīḥ shall never spurn being a slave of Allah, nor shall the angels, the close ones), says that so it is because being a servant of Allah, being devoted to His worship and being obedient to His will and command, is an honour by itself and certainly a nobility of the highest class. Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام and the close angels are the best testifiers to the worth and value of this blessing. How could they spurn an honour like that? Quite contrary to this, the worst disgrace and dishonour there can be imagined lies in worshipping someone other than Allah. This is what the Christians did when they took Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام as the son of Allah and the object of their worship. Similar was the case with disbelievers who took angels as daughters of Allah and started worshipping them alongwith their idols. So, for them, there is punishment, and disgrace. (Notes in Tafsīr Usmānī)

Verses 174 - 175

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٧٤﴾ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِهِ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِي رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمًا ﴿١٧٥﴾

O men, a proof has come to you from your Lord and We have sent down to you a vivid light. [174] Now those who believe in Allah and hold on to Him - He shall admit them into Mercy from Him, and Grace, and shall lead them to Himself through a straight path. [175]

After a refutation of beliefs held by Christians, specially those which ascribe Godhood to Jesus, alongwith the promise of reward for those who acknowledge the truth and punishment for those who insist on denying, the text turns to a universal address praising the blessed status and mission of His Messenger who taught what was the truth

revealed to him, who conveyed the truth of the Qur'an admirably, and also those who believed in and testified to the truth of the Book and the Messenger.

What is *Burhān*?

The word, *Burhān*, appearing in verse 174: **فَدَجَّاجًا كُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ** (a proof has come to you from your Lord) lexically means 'proof'. It refers to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was referred to as 'Burhān' in consideration of his blessed person, his noble morals, his miracles and his being the very recipient of the revelation of the Book of Allah. All these are open proofs of his prophethood beyond which there remains no need for any other proof. Thus, in summation, his person is, in itself, proof personified.

As for the word, *Nūr* in: **وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُبِينًا** (and We have sent down to you a vivid light) (174), it refers to the Holy Qur'an (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) which also seems to be the case in Verse 15 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5): **فَدَجَّاجًا كُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ: نُورًا وَكِتَابًا مُبِينًا** (There has come to you from Allah a light and clear Book). In the explanatory translation of Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī in Bayān al-Qur'an, the rendering of this verse appears as: 'There has come to you from Allah a light and (which is) a clear Book (that is) the Qur'an.' In this verse, what has been first identified as '*Nūr*' (light) has later been called '*kitabum-mubīn*' (clear Book). Let there be no doubt at this point that the conjunction demands dissimilarity, therefore, *Nūr* (light) and *Kitāb* (book) cannot be one and the same thing. The answer is that dissimilarity in expression is sufficient, even though the meanings are the same. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

And if '*Nūr*' (light) is taken as referring to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and '*Kitāb*' (the Book) to the Holy Qur'an - that will also be correct (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). But, this does not go on to prove that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was *Nūr* or light in the literal sense, therefore, it is not against his being physically human.

Verse 176

يَسْتَفْتُونَكَ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِي الْكَلَالَةِ إِنْ أَمْرُوا هَلَكَ
 لَيْسَ لَهُ وَاكِدٌ وَكَأَنَّ أَخْتًا فَلَهَا نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَا إِنْ
 لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهَا وَاكِدٌ فَإِنْ كَانَتَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا الثُّلُثُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ
 وَإِنْ كَانُوا إِخْوَةً رِجَالًا وَنِسَاءً فَلِلذَكَرِ مِثْلُ حِظِّ الْأُنثِيَيْنِ

يَبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَضْلُوا وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾

They seek a ruling from you. Say, "Allah gives you the ruling concerning *Kalalah*.¹ If a person dies having no son, but he does have a sister, then, she gets one half of what he leaves. And he will inherit her if she has no child. And if they are two (sisters), they get two third of what he leaves. And if they are brothers and sisters, both male and female, then, the male gets a share equal to that of two females." Allah explains to you lest you should go astray. And Allah is fully aware of everything. [176]

A little after the beginning of Sūrah al-Nisā', there appeared some injunctions relating to inheritance. Then, after a considerable gap, the text returned to the injunction of inheritance alongwith others. Now, at the end of the Sūrah, the text reverts to the subject once again. Perhaps the wisdom behind this scattering of the subject at three different places could be the consideration of prevailing injustice in matters of inheritance before the advent of Islam. By taking it up in the beginning, then in the middle, and finally in the end, it was hoped that the addressees would be gradually alerted to the need of justice in this area and would thus be enabled to show their maximum concern.

Summary of the Rulings given²

The verse (176) was revealed in answer to the question posed by some Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم regarding the inheritance of a *Kalalah*. *Kalalah* means a person who dies leaving neither children nor parents. The verse has clarified that the property left by a *Kalalah* shall be distributed in the following manner:

(1) If the *Kalalah* has left one real sister, or one half sister from father's side,³ then, after settling the preferential rights (such as debts, wills, burial expenses) she will get one half of the property. The other

1. *Kalalah*: A person who has no ascendent or descendent at the time of his death.

2. This summary is based on the خلاصه تفسیر given in the original, without translating it word-by-word. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

3. As for a half sister from mother's side, her share has already been mentioned in 4:12 as being one sixth if she is alone. And if there are two or more such sisters or brothers, they will share one third of the property equally. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

half will be given to the heirs falling in the category of 'Aṣḥābāt. If no heir from the category of 'Aṣḥābāt is alive, then this half, too, will be given back to the sister of the deceased (meaning thereby that she will secure the whole property).

(2) If the sister referred to in para (1) above dies, and leaves no children, and her brother is alive, then he will get the whole property left by her.

(3) If a *Kalālah*, male or female, dies and leaves two or more sisters, either real sisters or half-sisters from father's side then they shall get two thirds of the property left by the *Kalālah*. The remaining one third will be given to 'Aṣḥābāt, if any, and in the absence of 'Aṣḥābāt this one third will also be given to the sisters who will distribute their share among themselves equally.

(4) If a *Kalālah* leaves behind a combination of brothers and sisters (either real or from father's side only), then the whole property, after satisfying the preferential rights, shall be distributed between them on the principle that every brother will get twice the share of every sister.

Important Notes

1. The cause of revelation and the injunction of *Kalālah* described in the verse beginning with: *يَسْتَفْتُونَكَ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِي الْكَلَالَةِ* (They seek a ruling from you. Say, "Allah gives you the ruling concerning *kalālah*") provides us with information on certain important aspects. To be noted first is a comparison between two examples given earlier in the text. In verse 170: *وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ* (And if you disbelieve, then, to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and the earth), there was the condition of disbelievers. Then came a similar statement in Verse 174: *قَالِمَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِهِ* (Now those who believe in Allah and hold on to Him) which presented the model of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. These two parallel but divergent states of the believers and the disbelievers were brought into focus so that people can fully understand how astray and evil were those who turned away from the revelation (*wahy*) and how true and virtuous were those who followed it.

2. Subsequent to observations made above, it also becomes obvious

that the People of the Book did something terrible when they made the abomination of suggesting a partner and son in the purest conceivable divinity of Almighty Allah an article of their faith. They also went as far as taking a blatant position against the Divine revelation.

Quite contrary to this is the life style of the noble Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him. Not to say much about their consistent concern for the fundamentals of Faith and the most devoted performance of acts of worship, they would be equally inquisitive and eager to find out their obligations in matters subsidiary and commonplace such as those of inheritance and marriage. They would wait for *Waḥy*, the command of Allah through revelation and they would look for guidance from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in everything they did. Though, it is easier to do your own bidding under the dictate of reason or desire, yet they did not elect to be ruled by their personal desire or reason. If they did not understand something at a given time, they would return to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to recheck until they were satisfied. Here are two sets of people, so different and so apart!

3. This also tells us that our noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would not give a decision on his own without the guiding command of *Waḥy* (revelation). If there was no standing guidance revealed through *Waḥy* present in a certain case, he would put his decision on hold and wait for the coming of *Waḥy*. When it did, he gave his verdict. In addition to that, there is a subtle hint here in the direction of the wisdom behind the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān. If the whole Book was revealed all at one fixed time as demanded by the People of the Book, it would have not carried the same benefits as there are in the fact that the Qur'ān was revealed as needed and when appropriate, all functionally spaced out. This modality accommodated the requirements of addressees who could ask a question out of some necessity and be answered through the recited revelation (*al-Waḥy al-Matluww*). An example of this methodology appears right here in the present verse while others appear at several other occasions in the Qur'ān. No doubt, this form is far beneficial, but the core of its distinction lies elsewhere. That is because of the most refined sublimity of men and women of faith who turn to Allah in remembrance and are honoured by being

addressed by their most exalted Creator. This is indeed a great honour never granted to any other community. Certainly no grace is greater than the grace granted by Allah, the ultimate dispenser. Now, any verse of the Qur'ān which was revealed in the favour of or in answer to the question of a particular Companion is treasured as a testament of his virtues. And a *Wahy* which came favouring the position taken by one of them on the occasion of some matter causing difference of opinion, is sufficient to keep the name and merit of that Companion alive right upto the Day of Doom.

Thus, by referring to the question and answer regarding *Kalālah*, hint has been given towards similar questions and answers elsewhere.

(Exegetical notes, Tafsīr 'Usmānī
by Maulanā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī)

Praised be Allah. Sūrah al-Nisā' ends here

وَاللَّهُ الْحَمْدُ أَوَّلُهُ وَأَخِرُهُ

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