

applied to both 'earlier' and 'later' generations in the following words: **ثَلَاثَةٌ** مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ (many from the first generations, and many from the later ones...56:39-40)

The question now is: Who are 'earlier generations' and 'later generations'? In this connection, two views of the commentators have been recorded: The first view is that 'earlier generations' include all the creation of Allah from the time of 'Ādam **عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ** to the time just prior to the advent of the 'Holy Prophet **ﷺ**'. And 'later generations' include all the creation of Allah from the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet to the Doomsday. This interpretation is recorded by Ibn Abi Hatīm [with a chain of transmitters] from Mujāhid and Ḥasan Baṣrī. Ibn Jarīr has preferred this interpretation. This interpretation has also been adopted in the Bayān-ul-Qur'ān. This is supported by the Prophetic Tradition transmitted on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir **رضي الله عنه**. Ibn 'Asākir reports the Tradition [with his chain of transmitters] thus: "When the first pair of verses regarding 'the Foremost' was revealed stating that they will comprise 'many from the first generations, and of a small number from the later ones, **ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَقَلِيلٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ**, [56:13-14], Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb **رضي الله عنه** enquired: 'O Messenger of Allah, will there be a larger number of 'the Foremost' from among the earlier generations and a small number from amongst us?' For about a year, no revelation in this connection came down. A year later, verses [39] and [40] **ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ** "many from the first generations, and many from the later ones." were revealed. The Messenger of Allah **ﷺ** called Sayyidnā 'Umar **رضي الله عنه** and said to him:

إِسْمَعْ يَا عُمَرُ مَا قَدْ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ثَلَاثَةً مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَثَلَاثَةً مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ الْإِوَانَ مِنْ آدَمَ إِلَى ثَلَاثَةٍ
وَأُمَّتِي ثَلَاثَةٌ. (الحديث) - ابن كثير.

"O 'Umar, listen to what Allah has revealed many from the first generations, and many from the later ones). Behold! From 'Ādam to me is one *thullah* (throng) and my Ummah is another *thullah*' (throng)."

The theme of this Tradition is supported by the Tradition recorded by Imām Aḥmad and Ibn Abī Ḥatīm **رضي الله تعالى عنهم** on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah **رضي الله عنه** that when verses [13] and [14] were revealed, the Companions **رضي الله عنهم** found this painful, because they understood them to mean that the foremost believers from earlier nations are more numerous

than those of this Ummah. As a result, verses [39] and [40] were revealed and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stated 'I hope that you will comprise a quarter of the inmates of Paradise, a third of the inmates of Paradise. Rather, you are a half of the inmates of Paradise, and will have a share in the other half.' (Ibn Kathīr) Thus, collectively, majority of the inmates of Paradise will be the followers of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. However, a question arises about both these Traditions. The question is that verse 40 relates to the People of the Right, while verse 13 was about the Foremost. Then, how can verse 40 remove the concern of the Companions about verse 13?

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī resolves the problem thus: The noble Companions, in general, and Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ in particular, were saddened by the verse 13 presumably because they thought that the proportion of the later generations in the 'People of the Right' will be the same as it is in the Foremost, and thus the later generations will be small in number even among the 'People of the Right'. From this point of view, they thought their number in relation to all the inmates of Paradise, put together, will be very small. But when verses [39] and [40] were revealed, the point was clarified that collectively the majority of the inmates of Paradise will be the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ even though the collective number of later generations in the category of 'the Foremost' may be smaller as compared to the previous nations, especially since a large number of the previous nations will comprise the Prophets. In relation to them, it does not matter if the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are fewer.

However, Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān, Qurtubī, Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, Mazharī and others prefer another interpretation: 'the earlier generations' and 'the later generations' imply, according to them, the earlier and the latter followers of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ own Ummah. 'Earlier generations', in their view, are the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and their pupils, who are termed in a Ḥadīth as '*khair-ul-qurūn*' (the best generation), and 'later generations' include all those who came after them.

As for the Ḥadīth narrated by Jābir ؓ quoted above from Ibn Kathīr, in support of the first interpretation, Ibn Kathīr himself has expressed his reservation about its chain of transmitters. He writes *وَلَكِنْ فِي إِسْنَادِهِ نَظَرٌ* "In its chain of transmission, there is some defect." In support of his own interpretation, he quotes verses relating to Ummah of the Holy Prophet

ﷺ being the best of nations, as for instance كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ "You are the best of nations...". (3:110) Therefore, it is not possible that the foremost believers from earlier nations are more numerous than those of this Ummah. Thus ثُلَّةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ 'many from the earlier generations' refers to the earlier generation of this Ummah and قَلِيلٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ 'of a small number from the later generations' refers to the later generation of this Ummah from whom a small number will be included in the category of the 'Foremost'.

In support of this view, Ibn Kathīr has cited the statement of Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī, as recorded by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, to the effect that he recited the Verse 10 about 'the Foremost' and said, 'They have predeceased, but O Allah! make us from amongst the People of the Right hand'. In another statement, Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī is reported to have said in explanation of Verse 13: ثُلَّةٌ مِّمَّنْ مَضَىٰ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ 'Those foremost Faith are all from this Ummah'. Likewise, Muḥammad Ibn Sirin said in connection with Verse 13 and 14: 'The scholars stated and hoped that they (the Foremost of earlier and later generations) will all be from amongst this Ummah.'

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī puts forward the following Prophetic Ḥadīth with a good chain of transmitters in support of the second interpretation:

أَخْرَجَ مُسَدَّدٌ فِي مُسْنَدِهِ وَابْنُ الْمُنْذِرِ وَالطَّبْرَانِيُّ وَابْنُ مَرْدُوَيْهِ بِسَنَدٍ حَسَنٍ عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي قَوْلِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ ثُلَّةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَثُلَّةٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ قَالَ هُمَا جَمِيعًا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ.

"Musaddad in his Musnad, Ibn-ul-Mundhir, Ṭabarānī and Ibn Marduyah report with a good chain on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Bakrah ﷺ that, while interpreting verses [39] and [40] (Many from the earlier generations and of a small number from the later ones), the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "They are both from this Ummah."

Many Scholars of Ḥadīth report another Prophetic Tradition with a weak chain on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ also. The wordings are: هُمَا جَمِيعًا مِنْ أُمَّتِي "They [the earlier and the later generations] are from my Ummah." From this point of view, verse [7] of this Chapter كُنْتُمْ أَرْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً "and you will be (divided into) three categories. [7]" addresses the Ummah of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and all three categories will be from this Ummah.

Mazharī has held the first interpretation as improbable, because according to the clear text of the Qur'an, this Ummah is the best and most honoured of all nations. Therefore, it is inconceivable that the foremost believers from earlier nations should be more numerous than those of this Ummah. The higher rank of this Ummah vis-a-vis the other nations is proved by the express texts of the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'anic verse [3:110] reads: **كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ** "You are the best Ummah raised for the good of mankind...". Verse [3:110] reads: **لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا** "...so that you should be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger a witness to you." Tirmidhī, Ibn Majah and Darimi have recorded a narration on the authority of Sayyidnā Bahz Ibn Ḥakīm رضي الله عنه in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

أَنْتُمْ تَتِمُّونَ سَبْعِينَ أُمَّةً أَنْتُمْ أَحْيَرُهَا وَأَكْرَمُهَا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى

"You are complement to the seventy nations of the days of yore.
You are the choicest one and the most honourable one in the sight of Allah."

Imām Bukhārī narrates a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: "Will it please you if you are a quarter of the inmates of Paradise?" The Companions replied: "Yes, indeed, it would please us." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنِّي لَأَرْجُو أَنْ تَكُونُوا نِصْفَ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ

"By Him in Whose control is my life! I hope that you will comprise a half of the inmates of Paradise." (Mazharī)

Tirmidhī, Ḥakīm and Baihaqī report on the authority of Sayyidnā Buraidah رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ مِائَةٌ وَعِشْرُونَ صَفًّا ثَمَانُونَ مِنْهَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ وَأَرْبَعُونَ مِنْ سَائِرِ الْأُمَمِ

"The inmates of Paradise will be ranged in 120 ranks: eighty of them will be from this Ummah, and forty from the rest of the nations." (Tirmidhī has rated this tradition as 'Ḥasan' and Ḥakīm as 'ṣaḥīḥ'.)

The ratio between this Ummah and other communities in Paradise is given differently at different times, ranging between one third, one quarter, a half and two-thirds. There is no conflict in the ratios mentioned on different occasions. That was based on the estimation of the Holy

Prophet ﷺ which has been increasing at different times.

The reward of As-Sabiqun

عَلَى سُرُرٍ مَّوْضُونَةٍ ([They will be sitting] on thrones woven with gold...56:15)
The word مَوْضُونَةٌ *mawdunah*, according to Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, as recorded by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Baihaqi and others, means 'fabric woven or inwrought with gold thread'.

وَلَدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ (...by Immortal boys...56:17) meaning that the boys will never grow up, get old or change in shape. The preferred opinion is that the youths of Paradise, like the fair damsels of Paradise, will have been born in Paradise. They will be the servants of the inmates of Paradise. Ḥadīth narratives indicate that there will be thousands of such servants for each of the inmates of Paradise.

بِأَكْوَابٍ وَأَبَارِيقٍ وَكَأْسٍ مِّن مَّعِينٍ (with bowls and jugs and a goblet of pure wine...56:18). The word *akwāb*, plural of *kūb*, refers to 'cups or glasses used for drinking'. The word *abāriq*, plural of *ibriq*, refers to 'jugs with sprouts'. The word *ka*'s refers to 'a wine glass'. The word *ma'īn* refers to the fact that the glasses will contain wine drawn from a flowing spring.

لَا يَصَدُّعُونَ عَنْهَا (from which they will neither suffer headache ...56:19). The Arabic verb is derived from *sudā'* which means 'headache'. When worldly wine is taken in large quantity, it gives the drinker excruciating headache and makes him feel dizzy. The Heavenly wine is free from such harmful effects.

لَا يَنْزِفُونَ (... , nor will they be intoxicated...56:19). The Arabic verb is derived from *nazf*, the root-meaning of which being 'the well became empty, all the water having been taken out of it.' Here it means 'the spring of his brain or mind or senses became exhausted.'

وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (and the meat of birds that they desire....56:21). It is recorded in a Prophetic Tradition that the inmates of Paradise will get meat of whatever birds they desire, as and when they desire it.

The Reward of Those on the Right

وَأَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ (As for the People of the right, How (lucky) are the People of the Right!...56:27). The People of the Right are initially the God-fearing and the righteous believers. Sinful believers will also join the People of the Right, some through the sheer grace of Allah, and others

will be forgiven through the intercession of a prophet or a friend of Allah. Some sinful believers will be punished for their sins, but after serving their punishment, they too will be purified and cleansed of the dross of their sins, after which they will join the People of the Right, because the fire of the Hell is not, in fact, a punishment; it is rather a way to cleanse him from the dross of his sins. (Maẓharī)

فِي سِدْرٍ مَّخْضُودٍ (..amid lote-trees with no thorns - 58:28). The word *sidr* refers to 'lote-tree' and *makhḍūd* refers to 'a tree having its thorns removed'. It also means 'a tree having the branches bent because of abundance of its fruit'. Unlike the lote-trees of this world, the Heavenly lote-trees have a different description. Their fruits will be as large as the clay jugs, and their taste cannot be compared to those found in this world, (as described in a Ḥadīth).

طَلْحٍ مَّنضُودٍ (and the trees of *tulh*, having layers one upon the other - 28:29). The word *ṭalḥ* refers to 'banana tree' and *mandūd* means 'clustered', fruits piled on top of each other as in a bunch of bananas.

ظِلِّ مَمْدُودٍ (and a shade, spread all over...56:30). The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥain, that in Paradise there is a tree so large that a rider may travel for a hundred years under its shade, but would not be able to pass it.

وَمَاءٍ مَّسْكُوبٍ (...and water, poured forth...56:31) This means the water will be flowing constantly on the surface of the ground.

وَفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ (and a lot of fruits...56:32). The word *Kathīrah* [abounding] has two senses: [1] there will be plenty of fruits; and [2] there will be an uncountable variety and kinds of fruits.

لَا مَقْطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ (neither interrupted [in any season], nor prohibited ...56:33) The word *maqṭū'ah* means the fruits the supply of which is cut off at the end of the season. In this world most fruits are seasonal; some bear in summer, some in winter and others in rainy season. Once the season of the fruit is over, it ceases to be available. However, the supply of the fruits of Paradise never runs out in any season. Rather they will always be available for those who want to eat from them. Whenever these fruits are desired, they will be available and easy to grasp by Allah's power. The word *mamnū'ah* (prohibited) means that in this world there are

caretakers appointed to look after the gardens, who stop and prohibit people from picking the fruits, but in the gardens of Paradise there will be no such hindrance. The inmates will be able to pick them whenever they wish.

وَفُرُشٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ (...and mattresses of high quality...56:34). The word *fūrūsh* is the plural of *firāsh* which means 'bed, couch, mattress'. The word *marfū'ah* lexically means 'upraised, elevated'. The couches could be upraised or elevated for one of several reasons: [1] because the place itself is high; [2] because the mattresses will not be on the ground, but on the thrones or beds; or [3] because the couches themselves will be thick (and of high quality). Some exegetes have taken the word '*fūrūsh*' in the sense of 'women', because it is one of the meaning of '*firāsh*' is referred as *firash*, as in the Prophetic Tradition *أَلَوْلَدٌ لِلْفِرَاشِ* 'The child belongs to the *firash*'. The word *firāsh* refers to 'wife'. This is corroborated by the characteristics of the women of Paradise described in the forthcoming verses. In this case, the word *marfū'ah* would mean 'high-ranking'.

إِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَاهُنَّ إِنشَاءً (Surely We have created those [females] a fresh creation...56:35) The word *insha'* means 'to create'. The pronoun *هُنَّ* *hunna* refers to the women of Paradise, although there is no mention of them in the immediately preceding verses. However, they have been mentioned in connection with 'the Foremost' in distantly foregoing verses [22-23]. If the word *firāsh* in the foregoing verse (34) refers to the women of Paradise, the antecedent of the pronoun is quite obvious. Likewise, the mention of beds, couches, thrones and other delightful items gives the pronoun the context to refer to women. The meaning of the verse is: 'We have created the Paradisiacal women in a special way, that is, the houris are created without being born biologically, and the women of this world who will enter the Paradise will also be reshaped in a way that the women who were ugly, dark-coloured or old in this world will be made beautiful, young and graceful.' It is recorded in Tirmidhī and Baihaqī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said in explanation of Verse 35 that the women who were old, blear eyed, with gray hair and ugly features in the world will be made beautiful and young in this new creation. Baihaqi also reports from Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضي الله عنها that an old lady asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to pray to Allah that she may enter Paradise. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said in a humorous

way: لَا تَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ عَجُوزٌ "Old ladies will not enter Paradise." Hearing this the old lady got very sad, and according to some narrations, started weeping. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then explained that she would not be old when she would enter Paradise; she would be transformed into a young beautiful woman. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse 35. [Maḏharī]

أَبْكَارًا (...virgins... - 56:36). The word *abkārān*, being the plural of *bikr*, means 'virgins'. The sense is the creation of the maidens of Paradise will be of such a nature that, even after every sexual intercourse, they will remain like virgins.

عُرُبًا (...amorous to their husbands,...56:37). The word '*urub*, is the plural of '*arūbah*. This refers to a woman who loves her husband passionately and is his beloved.

أَتْرَابٍ (...matching them in age...56:37) The word *atrāb* is the plural of *tirb*, meaning 'a person of equal age who played together with his mate in dust'. The verse means that men and women will be made of equal ages in Paradise. Some narrations report that they will be about thirty-three years old. [Maḏharī]

ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ (many from the earlier generations, and many from the later ones....56:39-40) In connection with *sābiqūn*, (the Foremost) two views of the commentators were quoted earlier as to the identity of 'the earlier' and the 'later' generations. If 'the earlier' refers to the generations from 'Ādam عليه السلام to the period just prior to the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and 'the later generations' refers to the 'Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ till the Day of Judgment, as some of the commentators have opined, then the verses would mean: 'the People of the Right' will constitute a 'large party' of believers and the righteous from all the previous communities combined together, while there will be a 'large party' from the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ alone. In this case, it is a great honor for the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that, despite the short period they lived in this world, they could be compared to all the previous communities who were headed by hundreds of thousands of Prophets. Besides, the words 'many from the later generations' has the scope of being larger in number than the 'many from the earlier generations'.

If we go by the second view of the commentators, who say that both

'earlier' and 'later' generations are from the *ummah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, then even the later generations of this *ummah* will not be totally deprived of 'the Foremost', though their number in later generations will be less. As for the People of the Right, their number will be large in both 'earlier' and 'later' generations. This fact is proved by a Ḥadīth reported by Bukhārī and Muslim from Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, 'A group of my 'Ummah will always remain on the truth and dominant, unharmed by those who fail to support them and those who defy them, until the Last Hour begins.'

Verses 57-74

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَاتُمُنُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ ءَأَنْتُمْ
تَخْلُقُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا
نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُبَدِّلَ أَمْثَالَكُمْ وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ النَّشْأَةَ الْأُولَىٰ فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾
أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ءَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾
لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلْتُمْ تَفَكَّهُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ إِنَّا لَمَغْرُمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾
بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾
ءَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ
أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِي تُورُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ ءَأَنْتُمْ
أَنْشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنشِئُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَاهَا تَذَكِّرَةً
وَمَتَاعًا لِلْمُقْوِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٤﴾

We have created you; then why do you not appreciate it as true? [57] So, tell Me about the semen you drop (in the wombs): [58] Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator? [59] We have appointed (the times of) death among you, and We cannot be frustrated [60] from replacing you with others like you, and creating you (afresh) in that (form) which you do not know. [61] And you certainly know the first creation; then why do you

not take lesson? [62] Well, tell Me about that (seed) which you sow: [63] Is it you who grow it, or are We the One who grows? [64] If We so will, We can certainly make it crumbled, and you will remain wondering, [65] (and saying,) "We are laden with debt, [66] rather we are totally deprived." [67] Again, tell Me about the water you drink: [68] Is it you who have brought it down from the clouds, or are We the One who sends (it) down? [69] If We so will, We can make it bitter in taste. So why do you not offer gratitude? [70] Now tell Me about the fire you kindle: [71] Is it you who have originated its tree, or are We the Originator? [72] We have made it a reminder (of Our infinite power, and of the fire of hell) and a benefit for travelers in deserts. [73] So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent. [74]

Proof of the occurrence of the Day of Resurrection

Thus far the Sūrah dealt with three categories of people on the Plain of Ḥashr (Gathering.) The verses so far described the reward and punishment of these three groups. The current set of verses warn the deviant skeptics and atheists who completely deny the Day of Judgement and life after death, or set up partners to Allah in His worship. The verses purport to tear down the curtain of negligence and ignorance that has kept man in the dark. Whatever exists, or is coming into existence at the present time, or will come into existence in the future in this cosmic world is as a result of the creative power of Allah. He brings them into existence, retains them and makes them subservient to man. The apparent causes of these events act as veils over Reality. Had these veils been removed and man is able to witness the creation of these things directly without the mediation of these apparent causes, he will be forced to believe in Allah. However, Allah has made this world a venue of test. Therefore, whatever comes into existence comes under the veils of causes.

Allah has, with His encompassing power and consummate wisdom, created a strong connection or relation between 'causes' and 'effects'. Wherever and whenever a secondary cause occurs, the effect necessarily follows. A casual observer assigns to every 'effect' a 'secondary or extrinsic cause', thus straying into the philosophy of 'causes' and 'effects'. Man does not seem to realize that the whole system of cause and effect ends with Allah. He is the First or Primary or Intrinsic Cause or Cause of all causes [*musabbib-ul-asbāb*]. It was explained earlier in Sūrah An-Najm that a

natural order of cause and effect pervades the entire universe. Every cause, which is not itself primary, is traceable to some other cause, and this to another and so on. But as the series of cause and effect in our finite world cannot be indefinite, it must terminate at some point. The Final Cause is, therefore, the Author of the universe. It is this Final Cause towards which the present verses call our attention.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ. أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَتَمُنُونَ. ءَأَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ، أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ (We have created you; then why do you not appreciate it as true? So, tell Me about the semen you drop [in the wombs]: Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator?...57-59). With verse 57 begins a series of arguments in support of Allah's Oneness and His power to raise the dead. The first argument in the current verse is taken from the very subtle and wonderful phenomenon of man's birth, starting with a drop of semen and developing into a full-fledged human being – the crown of all creation. Humans stop at thinking that male-female cohabitation in the process of their creation is the ultimate or real cause. Therefore, the Qur'ān poses the question to them in verse [58]: أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَتَمُنُونَ. ءَأَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ، أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ 'So, tell Me about the semen you drop [in the wombs]: Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator? In other words, a male plays a very insignificant biological role in the birth of a child in that he delivers a drop of microscopic semen in the womb of a female to combine with the microscopic ovum. Once this is done, it goes through several stages of growth and development without anyone, besides Allah, knowing what is happening. Eventually it forms into a foetus with a bone-structure. The skeleton is then clothed with flesh and skin. The soul is infused into it and the little universe [microcosm] comes into being with various systems: The nutritive and digestive system, the blood and the circulatory system, a system of human senses [sight, touch, smell, hearing and taste] and communication and the ability to think and understand. Man thus becomes a moving factory, and in none of these biological processes he has any say.

Neither of the parents [especially the mother in whose womb all this is taking place] knows whether the child is a boy or a girl, until it is born. The question is: Who creates the child in the womb of the mother, creation after creation, within three darknesses [ie the darkness of belly, the darkness of womb and the darkness of amniotic membrane]? Who made it beautiful, gave it the power of hearing and sight? Who bestowed on it the

faculty of thinking and comprehension? Only mentally blind person will fail to exclaim: "Blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators!"

The forthcoming verses [60 and 61]

نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُبَدِّلَ أَمْثَالَكُمْ
وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

"We have appointed (the times of) death among you, and We cannot be frustrated from replacing you with others like you, and creating you [afresh] in that [form] which you do not know....56:60-61."

'Death' is the end of all physical life. This is the eternal law of Allah from which there is no escape. Allah pre-determines the time of human death. Man has no choice in the matter of death which frees the human soul from the fetters and shackles of its physical habitat. Allah has pre-designated a particular point in time up to which he could live. But one should not remain lulled into a fancy that he would continue to enjoy power and his free will. Allah has the power to eliminate him any time, and create another people in his place. This is the import of the words, "نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُبَدِّلَ أَمْثَالَكُمْ" "We have appointed (the times of) death among you, and We cannot be frustrated from replacing you with others like you," The concluding part of verse [61] وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ "...and creating you (afresh) in that (form) which you do not know" implies that 'Allah has the power to reshape you in a form unknown to you at the moment.' It may happen either by one's turning into dust after death, or by his being metamorphosed into an animal shape as it happened in the past nations, some turned into monkeys and others into swine by way of punishment. It is also possible that they might be transformed into stones or minerals.

Creation of Plants, Sending down of Rain and Creation of Fire are Proof of Allah's Oneness

After referring to the birth of man from very insignificant beginning, the Sūrah, from verse [63] onwards, proceeds to give a brief account of things upon which man's life on earth depends. There are three principal things upon which man's life in this world depends - food, water and fire. The first thing is food to which verse [63] refers.

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَتَّحِرُونَ (Well, tell Me about that [seed] which you sow:...56:63) In the matter of human creation, man was lost in the secondary or extrinsic causes and lost sight of his Real Creator and Master, the Primary or Intrinsic Cause of his creation. This unawareness was unveiled in a particular way. In a similar style, the reality of his source of nourishment is explicated. Allah poses the question to man: 'Indeed you till the land and plant the seeds but who causes them to sprout and grow - you or Allah?' When considered carefully, we will come up with the answer that the farmer or tiller has a very limited role to play. He ploughs the land and fertilizes the soil with manure, and thus softens it so that if the seed germinates, it will not be hampered by the hard ground. All of man's efforts move around this point. Once the plant sprouts, he takes care of it in that direction. But man is not the primary cause of the shoots pushing forth from the seed nor can he claim that he made the plant or tree. Therefore, we go back to the fundamental question: Who caused the seed lying under heaps and heaps of sand to germinate and come out to the surface of the earth so beautifully, comprising untold benefits? There can be only one answer to this question: The All-Encompassing Power and the Most Wonderful creation of the Master Creator of the universe.

Next to food, water is the most important thing upon which human life depends for its sustenance. Here too the Qur'an, in its inimitable style, poses the question: 'Have you considered the water you drink? Did you send it down from the clouds, or did We send it?' The answer is obvious: 'Allah'. Fire plays a most important part in the life of man. Much of his physical comfort depends upon it. [It is a thing of great utility. In this mechanistic age life is inconceivable without the use of fire. No industry, trade or travel is possible without it.] The Qur'an again, in its unique and unparalleled style, poses the question: 'Have you considered the fire you kindle? Did you make its timber to grow, or did We make it?' Here too the answer is obvious: 'Allah'. Of course, in both instances the Qur'anic answers are elaborate.

The last answer is summarized thus in verse [73] نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَاهَا تَذَكُّرًا وَرَمَاقًا "We have made it a reminder [of Our infinite power, and of the fire of hell] and a benefit for travelers in deserts....56:73) The word *muqwīn* is derived from the infinitive *iqwā'* and it comes from the root-word *qiwā'* which means 'waste, barren land, ruin or desert'. Thus the word *muqwī*

means 'a traveler or a wayfarer of a desert who alights to prepare his meals'. The verse purports to say that all these creations are the result of Allah's power and wisdom.

﴿فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ﴾ (So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent...56:74) The logical and rational conclusion of the above considerations should be for man to believe in the All-Encompassing Divine Power and in His Oneness, and declare the Purity of the Great Lord; for that is the way to express His gratitude.

Verses 75 - 96

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِمَوَاقِعِ النُّجُومِ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِنَّهُ لَقَسَمٌ لَّو تَعْلَمُونَ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧٦﴾
 إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ فِي كِتَابٍ مَّكْنُونٍ ﴿٧٨﴾ لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا
 الْمُطَهَّرُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ أَفَبِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ
 أَنْتُمْ مُّذْهِبُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَتَجْعَلُونَ رِزْقَكُمْ أَنَّكُمْ تُكذِّبُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَلَوْلَا
 إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلُقُومَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ
 إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ
 ﴿٨٦﴾ تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾ فَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ
 ﴿٨٨﴾ فَرُوحٌ وَرِيحَانٌ ۖ وَجَنَّاتٍ نَّعِيمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ
 أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٩٠﴾ فَسَلَامٌ لَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٩١﴾ وَأَمَّا
 إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكذِّبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٩٢﴾ فَنُزُلٌ مِّن حَمِيمٍ ﴿٩٣﴾
 وَتَصْلِيَةٌ جَاحِمٍ ﴿٩٤﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ ﴿٩٥﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ
 رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٩٦﴾

So, I swear by the setting places of the stars, [75] – and indeed it is a great oath, if you are to appreciate – [76] it is surely the Noble Qur'an, [77] (recorded already) in a protected book (i.e. the Preserved Tablet) [78] that is not touched except by the purified ones (the angels). [79] – a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. [80] Is it this

discourse that you take lightly, [81] and take your denial as your livelihood? [82] So why (do you) not (interfere) when the soul (of a dying person) reaches the throat, [83] and you are watching? [84] And We are closer to him than you, but you do not perceive. [85] So, if you are not going to be recompensed (in the Hereafter for your deeds), then why do you not [86] bring the soul back, if you are truthful? [87] So, in case he (the dying person) is from among those blessed with nearness, [88] then (for him) there is comfort and fragrance and garden of bliss. [89] And in case he is from among the People of the Right, [90] then, (it will be said to him,) " Peace is for you, being one of the People of the Right." [91] But if he is one of the deniers, the astray, [92] then (for him) there is entertainment from boiling water, [93] and burning in the Hell. [94] Indeed this is certainty in its true sense. [95] So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent. [96]

Sequencing of Arguments

Preceding verses put forward rational arguments, in support of life after death, by inviting attention to Allah's infinite power. The current verses are meant to prove this fact by giving an authoritative reference, that is, the Qur'ān.

Allah swears to the Greatness of the Qur'ān

فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِمَوَاقِعِ النُّجُومِ (So, I swear by the setting places of the stars...56:75) The words أَقْسِمُ 'I swear' are prefixed in the text by the particle لَا *lā* [no] which is not translated in the text, because it is idiomatically prefixed to 'oath', as for example لَا وَاللَّهِ *lā wallāh* [No, by Allah]. In pre-Islamic Arabic, we come across the idiomatic oath لَا وَأَبِيكَ *lā wa-abīk* [No, by your father]. Some lexicologists say that the particle *lā* is added only as an idiomatic expression [*zā'idah*] which carries no sense, and others say that when the refutation of an addressee's hypothesis is intended, لَا *lā* is used to signify that the assumption of the addressee is not correct, but the right thing is that which follows.

The word مَوَاقِعِ *mawāqī'* is the plural of مَوْقِعٍ *mawq'* and refers to the points where or times when the stars set. Here, like in Sūrah An-Najm وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ "By the star when it goes down to set, [1]", the oath of stars is qualified by their setting-time. The wisdom underlying this is that when the stars set, their function seems to have been cut off from the horizon,

and we witness effects of their vanishing. This is the proof of their perishability and dependence on Divine power.

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ فِي كِتَابٍ مَكْنُونٍ. لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (It is surely the Noble Qur'an (recorded already) in a protected book [i.e. the Preserved Tablet] that is not touched except by the purified ones [the angels]....77-79) Verses [75-76] constituted oath and the current set of verses is the subject of the oath [jawāb-ul-qasam]. The Qur'an is a noble and glorious Book. The verse refutes the assumption of the pagans that this Book has been forged by a human being or that [God forbid!] it is a speech inspired by the devil.

The phrase كِتَابٍ مَكْنُونٍ 'a protected book' refers to *lawḥ mahfūz* [i.e. the Preserved Tablet]. لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (that is not touched except by the purified ones ...56:79). Two issues require clarification here. The commentators have different views about them, because the structure of verse 78 and 79 has two possibilities grammatically: The first possibility is that the phrase 'that is not touched except by the purified ones' is the qualification of the Preserved Tablet referred to in the previous verse. In this case, 'the purified ones' can refer only to angels, and the phrase 'not touched' cannot be taken in its literal sense of physical touch; it would rather mean 'being aware of'. The sense of the verse would be that no one is aware of the Preserved Tablet and its contents except the purified angels. (Qurtubī) This interpretation is adopted in Bayān-ul-Qur'an as well. The second possibility is that the phrase 'that is not touched except by the purified ones' is taken as a qualification of the Qur'an referred to in the previous verse. In this case the word Qur'an would refer to the scrolls or scripts in which it is written, and 'not touched', will remain in its literal sense of referring to physical touch by hand etc. The sense would be that the Script of the Qur'an is not touched by anyone except by the purified angels who bring revelation to the Prophet ﷺ. Since this interpretation does not need to take the word 'touch' in its figurative sense, Qurtubī and some other commentators have preferred this interpretation. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى says, 'The best interpretation of verse [77 and 78] I have ever heard is what is mentioned in Sūrah 'Abas (80) verses [13-16]: فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ (It is [recorded] in those scripts [of the Preserved Tablet] that are honoured, exalted, purified, in the hands of those scribes who are honourable, righteous.)

The second issue that requires consideration in this verse is what is meant by the phrase 'the purified ones'. A large group of the Companions, their followers and leading authorities on Qur'ānic commentary think that the referent of 'the pure ones' are the angels who are purified of the dross and adulteration of sins, and who are innocent. This is the view of Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه, Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه and of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى has also adopted this view .

Some of the commentators think that Qur'ān refers to the copy of the Holy Book that is in our hands, and the referent of the word '*muṭahharūn*' ('purified ones) are people free from minor impurity and major impurity. Minor impurity means to be without *wuḍū'* and minor impurity can be cleansed by making *wuḍū'* or *tayammum* [cleaning with dust]. Major impurity refers to the state of impurity which is caused by sexual intercourse, lustful discharge of semen during sleep, and menstrual and postpartum discharges. *Ghusl* (having bath) is the only means of achieving purity from this state. This interpretation is placed on the text by 'Aṭā', Ṭā'ūs, Sālīm and Muḥammad Bāqir رحمهم الله تعالى . In this case, although verse "that is not touched except by the purified ones...56:79) is a declarative sentence, it is in fact used in the sense of prohibiting human beings to touch the Qur'ān without being free from the minor and major impurities: The person who wishes to touch the Qur'ān needs to be purified of the visible as well as the invisible impurities by taking *wuḍū'*, *tayammum* or *ghusl*, as required. Qurṭubī and Maḏharī prefer this interpretation.

In the incident of Sayyidnā 'Umar's رضي الله عنه embracing Islam, we come across the part of the story where he asked his sister to give him the pages of the Qur'ān, she recited verse [79] of this Sūrah, refused to give him the pages and said 'only the pure ones can touch it'. As a result, he was forced to take a bath, and then recite the contents of the pages. This incident also lends support to the last interpretation. The versions of the Tradition that prohibit the impure people from touching the Qur'ān are put forward by some authorities to argue in favour of the last interpretation.

However, since Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Anas رضي الله عنه and others have a different view about the interpretation of this verse, as mentioned above, many scholars did not base the prohibition of touching the Qur'ān without ablution on verse [79]. Rather, the prohibition is established by

the following Traditions:

Imām Mālik cites, as evidence, the Holy Prophet's letter in his Muwatta' which he wrote to 'Amr Ibn Hazm. It contains the following statement: لَا يَمَسُّ الْقُرْآنَ إِلَّا طَاهِرٌ "Only a clean one may touch the Qur'an". Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī gives the following references: Musnad of 'Abdurrazzāq, Ibn Abī Dāwūd and Ibn-ul-Mundhīr, Ṭabarānī and Ibn Mardūyah record a Tradition on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: لَا يَمَسُّ الْقُرْآنَ إِلَّا طَاهِرٌ (Only a clean one may touch the Qur'an.)

Some Rulings about touching the Holy Qur'an

(1) On the basis of the foregoing Prophetic Aḥādīth, the overwhelming majority of the 'Ummah and the four major schools concur that 'purity' is a condition for the permissibility of touching the Holy Qur'an and it is not allowed to touch it in a state of impurity. It means that before touching the Holy Qur'an, one must make sure that no *najāsah* (i.e. things declared by Sharī'ah as filth) is attached to one's hand, and that he or she is in the state of *wuḍū'* and is not in the state of *Janābah* (the state in which it is obligatory to take bath.) The divergence of interpretation referred to earlier is only in connection with whether or not verse [79] can be the basis of such a prohibition. Some jurists think that the verse as well as the relevant Traditions bear the same sense, hence they use them as supportive of each other in evidence of their ruling. Others, on account of divergence of interpretation among the Companions, exercised precaution in using the Qur'anic text as evidence in support of their ruling. But because of the Traditions, they ruled that touching the Qur'an without ablutions is impermissible. In sum, there are no differences in their rulings. The differences are only in supportive evidence of these rulings.

(2) If the Qur'an is in a cover which is sewn or permanently attached to it in some way, it is not permitted - according to the four major schools - for an unclean person to touch it without ablutions. If however the Qur'an is covered in something that is not permanently attached to it, an unclean person may, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, touch it without ablutions. However, according to Imāms Mālik and Shāfi'ī, an unclean person is not permitted to touch it before taking ablutions. [Maḥzarī]

(3) If a person is wearing a garment, it is not lawful for him to touch the Qur'an with his sleeves or skirt if he is unclean. However, he may touch it with a handkerchief or a sheet. [Mazharī]

(4) Scholars have ruled it which is proved by this very verse with grater force that a person in the state of *janābah* (sexual defilement) and a woman in the state of menstruation or postpartum bleeding cannot recite it, even from memory until bath has been taken, because if it is obligatory to honour the written letters of the Holy Qur'an by touching them only in the state of purity, its spoken words deserve the same honour with greater importance. The requirement of this honour should have been that even in the state of minor impurity a person should not be allowed to recite the Holy Qur'an. But Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī رضي الله عنه report that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited the Qur'an without *wuḍū'*. On this basis, the jurists have ruled that it is permissible to recite it without *wuḍū'*. (But in the case of major impurity the rule will remain intact.). [Mazharī]

أَفَبِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَنْتُمْ مُدْهِنُونَ (Is it this discourse that you take lightly,...56:81)
The word مُدْهِنُونَ *mudhinun* is the plural of *mudhin*, being the active participle from إِدْهَانَ *idhan*, which literally means 'to apply or rub oil on the body'. When oil is applied or rubbed on the body, the muscles are relaxed, and parts of the body become soft and supple. By extension, the word is employed in the sense of showing flexibility and softness on inappropriate occasions. Hence, it is used in the sense of hypocrisy. In the current verse the word is used in the sense of hypocrisy and rejection of Allah's verses carelessly.

فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلُقُومَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ
وَلَكِنْ لَا تَبْصُرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

(So why [do you] not [interfere] when the soul [of a dying person] reaches the throat, and you are watching? And We are closer to him than you, but you do not perceive. So, if you are not going to be recompensed [in the Hereafter for your deeds], then why do you not bring the soul back, if you are truthful?...56:83-87)

The preceding verses proved two facts through rational arguments and by swearing an oath by the falling stars: [1] that the Holy Qur'an is

the word of Allah. Neither Jinn nor devil can ever tamper with it. Everything it contains is the truth; and [2] one of the most fundamental articles of faith enshrined in the Qur'ān is the Day of Resurrection and Reckoning. Towards the end of the passage, it is mentioned that the infidels and idolaters, in spite of clear arguments and evidence, reject life after death.

Their denial of Resurrection by the unbelievers, in a way, amounts to a claim that their lives and souls are under their own control, and they have a say in the matter of life and death. In order to refute this assumption, the above verses give the example of a dying person. When the soul reaches his throat, all of his near and dear ones look at him and express their desire that he may live longer, but none of them is able to intervene and save his life. All the people around him seem absolutely helpless. However, Allah is nearer to the dying person than the people around him even though they are unable to see Him. In other words, that is, He is nearer to him in terms of knowledge and power. He is fully aware of the person's inner and outer conditions and has complete control over him.

In short, it is not within people's power to get together and save a soul or life. Allah is nearer to a dying person than his soul or life. Allah has pre-designated a particular time for the soul to be separated from the body. None can avert it. In view of this graphic picture, the disbelievers are reminded that if they think that they cannot be resurrected after death, and they are too strong to come under Allah's grasp, then they must restore the soul when it has reached the throat and is about to depart from the body or it has already departed and died. If it is not possible to do any of these, how illogical or irrational it is for man to think that he can escape the Divine grasp and reject life after death!

فَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (So, in case he [the dying person] is from among those blessed with nearness...56:88). In the foregoing verses, it was made clear that one day the present world will come to an end. It was also testified that at the time of death the near and dear ones, friends and relatives, and doctors all stand helplessly around the dying person. Likewise, resurrection, reckoning, and reward and punishment, after account of deeds, are all a reality and certainty of the highest degree. At the commencement of the Sūrah, it was mentioned that there will be

three categories of the people in regard to their reward or punishment. The gist of this subject is again summarized here. If the dying person is among the Foremost believers, he will experience comfort, fragrance of happiness and a Garden of bliss. If he is not from the Foremost, but from the People of the Right hand, i.e. from the general body of believers, he will also experience the bounties and pleasures of Paradise. But if he is one of the People of the Left hand, the deniers and the deviant ones, then he will be in the blazing fire of Hell where he will be served with boiling water to drink.

At the end of this subject the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ (Indeed this is certainty in its true sense...56:95). None of the reward or punishment mentioned in the preceding verses is refutable because they are a dead certainty that has no room for any doubt or suspicion.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (So, proclaim the purity of the name of your Lord, the Magnificent...56:96). The Sūrah concludes with an imperative addressed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to pronounce the *tasbiḥ* of His Lord. This includes all kinds of *tasbiḥāt* (rememberances)- within *ṣalāh* and outside *ṣalāh*. *Ṣalāh* itself is sometimes referred to as *tasbiḥ*. Thus this verse enjoins to keep up the regular performance of *ṣalāh*.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Wāqī'ah
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd

(The Iron)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 29 verses and 4 sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الْحَكِیْمُ ﴿۱﴾ لَهُ
مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ يُحِیْ وَيُمِیْتُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَىْءٍ
قَدِیْرٌ ﴿۲﴾ هُوَ الْاَوَّلُ وَالْاٰخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ
عَلِیْمٌ ﴿۳﴾ هُوَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ فِی سِتَّةِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ
اَسْتَوٰی عَلٰی الْعَرْشِ ۗ یَعْلَمُ مَا یَلِیْجُ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَمَا یَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا
یَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاۗءِ وَمَا یَعْرُجُ فِیْهَا ۗ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ اَیْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِیْرٌ ﴿۴﴾ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ وَاِلٰی اللّٰهِ
تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿۵﴾ یُوَلِّجُ اللَّیْلَ فِی النَّهَارِ وَیُوَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِی اللَّیْلِ ۗ
وَهُوَ عَلِیْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿۶﴾

Allah's purity has been proclaimed by all that is in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. [1] To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and brings death, and He is Powerful to do every thing. [2] He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is All-Knowing about every thing. [3] He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He positioned

Himself on the Throne. He knows whatever goes into the earth and whatever comes out therefrom, and whatever descends from the sky, and whatever ascends thereto. And He is with you wherever you are, and Allah is watchful of whatever you do. [4] To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and to Allah all matters are returned. [5] He makes the night enter into the day, and makes the day enter into the night, and He is All-Knowing about whatever lies in the hearts. [6]

Some of the Merits of Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd

It is recorded in Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Nasa'ī that Sayyidnā 'Irbāq Ibn Sāriyah رضي الله عنه said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to recite Al-Musabbihat before he went to sleep and said: "In them there is a verse that is more meritorious than a thousand verses." The collective name of the series Al-Musabbihāt refers to the following five Sūrahs: [1] Al-Ḥadīd; [2] Al-Ḥashr; [3] Aṣ-Ṣaff; [4] Jumu'ah; and [5] At-Taghābun. Having cited this Ḥadīth, Ibn Kathīr says that the best verse referred to in Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd is verse [3] **هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ** (He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is All-Knowing about every thing....57:3) Among the five Sūrahs, the first three, namely Al-Ḥadīd, Al-Ḥashr and Aṣ-Ṣaff commence with the past perfect tense '*sabbaha*' [purity has been proclaimed] whilst the last two, namely Al-Jumu'ah and Al-Taghābun commence with the imperfect tense *yusabbiḥu* [purity is proclaimed]. This implies that the purity of Allah should be declared at all times, the past, the present and the future. [Mazharī]

Remedy for Diabolical Whisperings

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said that if the Satan casts an evil scruple in anyone's heart, and thus causes skepticism about Allah and the religion of truth, he should softly recite the following verse [3]: **هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ** (He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden and He is All-Knowing about every thing.)

What is meant by Allah's being First and Last, and Manifest and Hidden? There are more than ten different interpretations of these attributes, and they are not contradictory. The scope is wide enough to accommodate all interpretations. The meaning of the attribute *al-awwal* [the First] is more or less fixed, signifying that ontologically there was

nothing before Allah, and that He created everything and He is the First Cause of all existent things. The attribute *Al-'ākhīr* [the Last] means that He will exist even after everything will perish, as the following verse testifies: 'كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ' (Everything has to perish except His Countenance... [28:88]) It should be noted that death or perishing covers two possibilities, either actual death or potential death. Therefore the verse means that all existent creatures will either actually perish on the Day of Judgment, or they may not actually perish, but potentially they could perish. They have the inherent capacity for death and destruction. Thus despite their being existent they may still be described as *ḥālik* or *fānī* [perishing]. As for instance. Paradise and Hell, and the righteous or unrighteous inmates entering them will not actually perish, but potentially they have the inherent capacity to perish. Only the Supreme Being of Allah is such that neither non-existence has ever occurred to Him, nor can death overtake Him. Thus Allah is *Al-'Ākhīr* [the Last].

Imām Ghazālī رحمه الله تعالى has another explanation. He interprets the attribute 'Ākhīr [the Last] from the point of view of *ma'rīfah* [Knowledge] in the sense that knowing Allah Ta'ālā is the ultimate goal which man hopes to achieve. He moves in the direction of this goal, passing on the way through all the different stages and stations until he attains the Divine Knowledge. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī].

The attribute *Az-zāhīr* [the Manifest] signifies a Being whose manifestation is superior to everything. Since 'manifestation' is an offshoot of 'existence', and the Existence of Allah is First and superior to all existent entities, the Divine Manifestation surpasses the manifestation of all other beings. Nothing in this universe is more manifest than Him. The manifestation of His wisdom and His power is visible in every particle of this world.

The attribute *Al-bāṭīn* [the Hidden] means that the accurate nature and essence of Allah's Being is hidden in the sense that the Divine Essence [*dhāt*] is beyond human perception. No intellect or thought can ever reach the accurate and Intrinsic Essence of Allah.

اے برتر از قیاس و گمان و خیال و وهم
وزهرچہ دیدہ ایم شنیدہ ایم وخواندہ ایم

He is far beyond any hypothesis, any guess, any, assumption, any imagination,

And who is far beyond whatever we have ever seen, heard or read about.

اے برون از جملہ قال وقیل من
خاک بر فرق من و تمثیل من

He is beyond all our discussions and debates.

Whatever example I cite to explain Him is no more than a sheer failure.

﴿...And He is with you wherever you are, ...57:4﴾ No man is able to comprehend the essential nature of Allah's company or His being with us, though it is absolutely true that He is with us, because no man can exist or do any work without it. The Divine Will [*mashiyyah*] and power is necessary for everything. Therefore, Allah is with every human being in every situation, at every place. Allah knows best!

Verses 7 - 11

اٰمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهِ وَاَنْفِقُوۡا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُّسْتَخْلِفِيْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ
اٰمِنُوۡا مِنْكُمْ وَاَنْفَقُوۡا لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ
وَالرَّسُوْلِ يَدْعُوْكُمْ لِتُؤْمِنُوۡا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ اَخَذَ مِيْثَاقَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ عَلٰى عَبْدِهٖ اٰيٰتٍ اٰبِيْنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ
الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُمْ لَرَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٩﴾ وَمَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا
تُنْفِقُوۡا فِى سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلِلّٰهِ مِيْرٰثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا يَسْتَوِي
مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ
الَّذِيْنَ اَنْفَقُوۡا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَقَاتَلُوۡا ؕ وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿١٠﴾ مَّنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا
فَيُضِعُّهُ لَهٗ وَاَلَهٗ اَجْرٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿١١﴾

Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend out of that (wealth) in which He has appointed you as

deputies.¹ So, for those of you who have believed and spent (in Allah's way), there is a big reward. [7] And what is wrong with you that you do not believe in Allah, while the Messenger invites you to believe in your Lord, and He has taken your covenant, if you are believers? [8] He is the One who reveals clear verses to His slave, so that He brings you out from layers of darkness towards the light. And to you, indeed, Allah is Very-Kind, Very-Merciful. [9] And what is wrong with you that you should not spend in the way of Allah, while to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth? Those who spent before the Conquest (of Makkah), and fought (in Allah's way), are not at par (with others). Those are much greater in rank than those who spent later and fought, though Allah has promised the good (reward) for each. And Allah is well aware of what you do. [10] Who is the one who advances a loan, a good loan, to Allah so that He multiplies it for him, and he may have a noble reward? [11]

Ordering Faith

وَقَدْ أَخَذَ مِيثَاقَكُمْ (...and He has taken your covenant ...57:8) This could refer to the covenant taken in 'azal' (pre-eternity). According to verses 172-174 of Sūrah Al-A'raf, Allah gathered all the souls even before they took the form of their existence, and took the covenant of 'alast' [the pre-eternal covenant]. He asked them: أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ("Am I not your Lord?")

[1] The original word used in the text is '*mustakhlafin*' which has two meanings: 'deputies' and 'successors'. Taken in the first meaning, the verse indicates that the wealth held by human beings originally belongs to Allah, but He has made them His deputies or representatives to use it according to His directions. Although He has allowed them to use it for their own benefit, it should always be subject to the rules prescribed by Him in Shari'ah. Once it is believed that one is not the absolute owner of this wealth, it should not be difficult for him to spend according to the command of its absolute Owner. This is the interpretation of the verse according to the majority of commentators. However, some other exegetes have taken the word '*mustakhlafin*' in the sense of 'successors'. In this case the verse reminds us that whatever wealth we have in our hands today has reached us from other people who owned it before us. We have succeeded them in its ownership, and ultimately it will be passed on to some others through any mode of transfer including inheritance. All kinds of wealth are thus in transit, moving from one person to another. Therefore, one should not hesitate in spending it in Allah's way, because it has to be passed on to some others in any case. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

They replied: بلى (Of course You are, we affirm). Another possibility is that this covenant could refer to the pledge taken from the previous prophets and their followers to believe in the final Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and support him. This covenant is mentioned by the Holy Qur'an in the following words:

ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ، قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ.

"...then comes to you a messenger verifying what is with you; you shall have to believe in him and you shall have to support him. He said: 'Do you affirm and accept my covenant in this respect?' They said: 'We affirm.' He said: 'Then, bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses.'" (3:81)

إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ (...if you are believers - 57:8). A question may arise here: In the earlier part of this very verse [8], the infidels and idolaters were reprimanded in the following words, "And what is wrong with you that you do not believe in Allah" This goes to show that the addressees of this phrase are 'non-believers', then how is it appropriate to say 'if you are believers'?

The answer to this question is that the unbelievers did not deny the existence of the Creator. In point of fact, they claimed to believe in God, and thus they used to say مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَى (We only worship them [the idols] that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position....39:3) In this context, the concluding phrase of verse [8] implies that 'If your claim [that you believe in God] is true, then go about the perfect and right way in "believing in God" which is not only to believe in God but also to believe in His Messenger.

وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ (...while to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth?...57:10) The word *mīrāth* [inheritance, heritage] is the process by which the assets of a deceased person pass to the living heirs and beneficiaries. This transfer of ownership takes place automatically by virtue of the law of Shari'ah; the deceased has no choice in the matter. On this occasion, Allah has described the ownership of heaven and earth by the expression *mīrāth* [inheritance, heritage] presumably because all those assets deemed to be owned by men will ultimately return to Allah, no matter whether men like it or not. Although

the Real Owner and Master of the heavens and the earth is Allah, He transferred part-ownership of things to man by His grace, but on the Day of Judgment, even this outward and partial ownership will no longer remain in the hands of anyone. At that stage, all sorts of ownership, apparent and real, outward and inward, will belong to none but Allah. Therefore, if those who are apparently owners of some wealth today spend it in Allah's way, they will receive its compensation in the Hereafter, and thus anything spent in the way of Allah will become the eternal property of the spender.

It is recorded in Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها that one day a goat was slaughtered. Most of it was distributed among other people, except for a foreleg. The Holy Prophet ﷺ wanted to know from her whether any part of it was spared from distribution. She said 'yes, a foreleg'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The entire goat is spared, except this foreleg." He meant that the entire goat was spent in the way of Allah and thus it was spared for their benefit in the Hereafter, because it would remain with Allah for compensation. On the contrary, there would be no compensation for the foreleg that had been kept for later use, because that would perish here. [Mazharī]

لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ (...Those who spent before the Conquest [of Makkah], and fought [in Allah's way], are not at par [with others]. ...10) It means that there are two types of people who spend wealth in the way of Allah: [1] those who embraced Islam before the victory of Makkah and, being believers, spent their wealth in the cause of Allah; [2] those who participated in *jihād* after the conquest of Makkah and spent their wealth in Allah's way. The two types are not equal in the sight of Allah. They differ in status and reward. The first category is described as higher in status and reward than the second category who will receive reward commensurate with their status.

Conquest of Makkah: The Dividing Line in Determining the Status of the noble Companions رضي الله عنهم

The verse declares the Conquest of Makkah as the dividing line in determining the status of the two categories of the noble Companions, presumably because the political conditions of Makkah before the Conquest were very bleak and difficult for Muslims. In terms of extrinsic causes, the survival of Muslims was threatened and their progress was

doubted. The people at large could not rule out the possibility that, like other movements, Islam would soon erode and suffer a natural attrition or death. Wise men of the world would not join a movement where there was a fear of defeat or annihilation. They wait for results. When the movement shows signs of success, they join it. Some people, though think that it is the truth, do not pluck courage to join it for fear of persecution and on account of their own weaknesses. But when the courageous and determined people are convinced about the veracity of a theory or belief system, they accept it instantly. They do not bother about victory or defeat, and smaller or larger membership of the movement does not concern them.

The people, who embraced Islam before conquest of Makkah, were witnessing the small number and political weakness of the Muslims and the consequent hardships. Muslims were very small in number and they were weak, on account of which the pagans persecuted them. Especially in the early days of Islam, disclosing one's faith in Islam would amount to losing his life, hearth and home. It is obvious that those who put their lives at stake by embracing Islam in such circumstances, and offered their lives and wealth for the help of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and for the service of Islam had such a high level of sincerity in their faith and practice that no other people can be compared to them.

Gradually, conditions changed. Muslims grew in power, so much so that eventually Makkah was conquered, after which Islam spread tremendously throughout the Arab world, people embraced the religion of Allah en masse [as the Qur'ān says: *يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا* (...people entering Allah's [approved] religion in multitudes) [110:2] This happened because many people were convinced of the veracity of Islam, but reluctant to embrace it publicly on account of their own weaknesses, owing to the might and power of the opposition and for fear of their persecution. These hurdles were now out of their way, and they started entering the fold of Islam in multitudes.

Although such people too are shown respect and honour by this verse, and forgiveness and mercy is promised to them, it has been made clear that their status cannot be equal to those who, due to their unshaken faith and resolute courage, declared their Islam despite all apprehensions of extreme hardships and persecution, and offered themselves to Islam in

very difficult times.

Allah promises Paradise and Forgiveness to all Noble Ṣaḥābah ﷺ

In the current set of verses, a distinction is drawn between the different categories of the noble Ṣaḥābah (Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ), but towards the end of verse 10 it is declared that **كُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَى** (...though Allah has promised the good [reward] for each ...57:10). The word *ḥusnā* [good reward] means that the promise of Paradise and forgiveness extends to all the noble Companions, whether they spent and fought before or after the Conquest. This includes almost the entire concourse of Companions, because it is hardly conceivable that, despite being Muslims, some of them might have not spent anything in Allah's way or not participated against the hostile foes of Islam. Thus the Qur'ānic proclamation of Paradise and forgiveness is for the general body of Companions.

Ibn Ḥazm **رحمه الله تعالى** says that the meaning of verse [10] becomes even clearer when we append to it verses [101-102] of Sūrah Al-Anbiyā': **الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ. لَا يَسْمَعُونَ حَسِيسَهَا وَهُمْ فِي مَا اشْتَهَتْ أَنفُسُهُمْ خَالِدُونَ** (Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it (i.e. from the Hell). They will not hear the slightest of its sound, and they will remain forever in what their selves desire.) [21:101-102].

The verses under comment contain the phrase **كُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَى** (...though Allah has promised the good (reward) for each ...[57:10] In verses [21:101-102], Allah Ta'ālā proclaims that those who have received the good news of reward [*al-ḥusnā*] will be kept far away from Hell. The Qur'ān thus guarantees that all the Companions, whether from the first category or from the second one, are immune from Hell. Even if someone from them would commit a sin, he will not persist in it, but he will either repent from it, or will be forgiven for it because of the blessed company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ he enjoyed, his help offered to him, the good deeds he performed and many services he rendered to Islam. Therefore, he would not leave this world unless his sins would be forgiven and his account of deeds would have been clear. It is also possible that worldly calamities would serve as an expiation to wipe out his shortcomings or painful experience in the grave or '*Alam-ul-barzakh* will expiate his

faults.

There are Traditions that report torment for some of the noble Companions, but that does not refer to the torture of the Hereafter or punishment of the Hell. It refers to the chastisement of the grave or *'Alam-ul-barzakh*. It would not be far-fetched to assume that if a Companion committed a sin and did not find an opportunity to repent and cleanse himself, he would be purified by infliction of the grave, so that no chastisement will be inflicted on him in the Hereafter.

The Status of the Noble Ṣaḥābah in the light of Qur'ān and Sunnah, not in terms of Historical Narratives

The Noble Ṣaḥābah are not like the general body of the Muslim Community. They are a medium between the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the general body of the Muslim Community. Without them neither the Qur'ān nor its meaning or the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ can reach the Ummah. Therefore, they enjoy a special status in Islam. The status of the blessed Companions cannot be recognized by the historical narrations that are a mixture of right and wrong. It is rather recognized in the light of Qur'ān and Sunnah.

If any of them slips up, in most cases it would not exceed a *khata'* *ijtihādī* or error in judgement, not a sin or willful transgression of law. In fact, according to the clear text of a Prophetic Tradition, if a *mujtahid* were to slip up or err in his judgement, he still receives one reward. Even if they committed a sin, it would be counted as nil in view of their life-long righteous deeds, and supporting the Holy Prophet ﷺ and Islam. The reverence and awe of Allah was engrossed in their hearts to such a high degree that they would shudder at the very thought of ordinary sins and would repent forthwith. As a result, they would inflict punishment on themselves. Some would tie themselves to the column of the mosque, and as long as they are not certain that their sins would be forgiven they would remain tied.

In addition, each one of them performed so many righteous deeds that they could expiate for their sins. Moreover, Allah has announced a general amnesty for their sins in this and other verses. He not only pardoned their sins, but also proclaimed رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ (Allah is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. 98:8). It is

absolutely forbidden to speak ill of them or taunt them or revile them because of their mutual differences and disagreements. According to a Prophetic Tradition, doing so is incurring Allah's curse and putting one's own faith in jeopardy.

Nowadays, on the basis of false and weak historical narratives some writers have made the noble and blessed Companions the target of taunts and reproach. First of all, the basis on which the historical narratives are founded are unreliable and questionable. Even if it is taken for granted that they have some historical substance, they are clearly in conflict with Qur'an and Sunnah. Hence, they must be refuted in the strongest terms possible. The original statement stands: The noble and blessed Companions are forgiven and pardoned.

Unanimous Belief of the Ummah regarding the Noble Ṣaḥābah

It is obligatory on Muslims to show respect and honour to all the Companions, to love them and praise them. It is likewise imperative to observe silence regarding their mutual differences and disagreements. It is compulsory to abstain from making any of them the target of accusations and reproach. All texts of Islamic beliefs make plain this consensual belief of the Ummah. Imām Aḥmad رحمه الله تعالى has written a monograph on the subject which reached us on the authority of Iṣṭakhri. A section of it partly reads:

لَا يَجُوزُ لِأَحَدٍ أَنْ يَذْكُرَ شَيْئًا مِّنْ مَّسَاوِيهِمْ وَلَا يَطْعُنَ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ بِعَيْبٍ وَلَا نَقْصٍ فَمَنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ وَجَبَ تَأْدِيْبُهُ.

"It is not lawful for anyone to speak ill of the Companions, or cast aspersions against them, or find fault with them. Whoever does so should be punished." [Sharḥ-ul-'Aqīdah Al-Wasīṭiyyah, known as Ad-Durrah Al-Mudī'ah]

Ibn Taimiyyah in his As-Ṣārim-ul-Maslūl has cited many verses of the Qur'an and Prophetic Traditions regarding the virtues and characteristics of the noble Companions, after which he concludes:

وَهَذَا مِمَّا لَا نَعْلَمُ فِيهِ خِلَافًا بَيْنَ أَهْلِ الْفَقْهِ وَالْعِلْمِ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَالتَّابِعِينَ لَهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ وَسَائِرِ أَهْلِ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ فَإِنَّهُمْ مُجْمَعُونَ عَلَى أَنَّ الْوَاجِبَ الشَّنَاءُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَالْإِسْتِغْفَارُ لَهُمْ وَالتَّرْحُمُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَالتَّرْضِيُّ عَنْهُمْ وَاعْتِقَادُ مَحَبَّتِهِمْ وَمَوَالَاتِهِمْ وَعَقُوبَةُ مَنْ أَسَاءَ فِيهِمْ الْقَوْلَ.

"As far as we know, there is no difference of opinion in this issue among the scholars and the jurists from Companions and their followers, and the Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jama'ah. There is consensus of the Ummah that it is imperative to praise the Companions, to seek forgiveness for them, to remember them with compassion and pleasure, and to express love and friendship for them. Anyone who dishonours them should be punished."

Ibn Taimiyyah confirms, in Sharḥ-ul-'Aqīdah Al-Wāsiṭiyyah, the consensual belief of the *Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jama'ah* of the entire Ummah of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ relating to the mutual disagreement of the Companions:

وَيُمْسِكُونَ عَمَّا شَجَرَ بَيْنَ الصَّحَابَةِ وَيَقُولُونَ هَذِهِ الْأَثَارُ الْمَرْوِيَّةُ فِي مَسَاوِيهِمْ مِنْهَا مَا هُوَ كَذِبٌ وَمِنْهَا مَا يَزِيدُ فِيهَا وَنَقِصَ وَغَيْرَ وَجْهِهِ، وَالصَّحِيحُ مِنْهُ هُمْ فِيهِ مَعْدُورُونَ إِمَّا مُجْتَهِدُونَ مُصِيبُونَ وَإِمَّا مُجْتَهِدُونَ مُخْطِئُونَ، وَهُمْ مَعَ ذَلِكَ لَا يَعْتَقِدُونَ أَنَّ كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَ الصَّحَابَةِ مَعْصُومٌ مِنْ كِبَائِرِ الْإِثْمِ وَصَغَائِرِهِ بَلْ يَجُوزُ عَلَيْهِمُ الذُّنُوبُ فِي الْجُمْلَةِ وَلَهُمْ مِنَ الْفَضَائِلِ وَالسَّوَابِقِ مَا يُوجِبُ مَغْفِرَةً مَا يُصْدِرُ مِنْهُمْ حَتَّى أَنْتَهُمْ يُغْفَرُ لَهُمْ مِنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ مَا لَا يُغْفَرُ لِمَنْ بَعْدَهُمْ.

"*Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jama'ah* observe silence relating to matters in which the noble Companions mutually disagreed. According to them, the position of the narratives that find fault with them may be summarized as follows: Some of them are absolutely false whilst others have been distorted or perverted. Reports that are authentic have a plausible explanation, (because they did what they did on the basis of '*ijtihad*' which Sharī'ah recognizes). If they reached the right conclusion (by exercising reasoning), they would be rewarded doubly; and if they arrived at an incorrect conclusion (by exerting effort to derive the law on an issue by expending all the available means of interpreting at the jurist's disposal and by taking into account all the legal evidences related to the issue,) they are still excused (and deserve a single reward). Despite this situation, the Ummah does not believe that every Companion is innocent, infallible or sinless. In fact, it is possible for them to commit sins - major or minor, but their virtues and great services to Islam are such that they demand forgiveness. The scope of their forgiveness and pardon would be so wide that the later members of the Ummah would not have such a wide scope."

A detailed account of the status of the sahabah is given in Sūrah Al-Fath under verse [29]. I have written a book entitled *maqām-e-ṣaḥābah*

in which I have collected relevant Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic Traditions pertaining to the status of the Companions. This book has already been published. The Ummah is unanimous on the point that all the blessed Companions are impartial, unbiased, reliable and worthy of confidence. The book deals elaborately with their disagreements and the civil wars that took place among them. It deals with the status of the historical narratives and their true place in critical study. Some of these issues to the degree necessary have been included in the commentary of Sūrah Muḥammad and Sūrah Al-Faṭḥ. Please refer to the relevant sections there. Allah's help is sought and on Him is our reliance!

Verses 12 - 19

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَ
بِأَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرَانِكُمْ الْيَوْمَ جَنَّتْ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَلِيدِينَ
فِيهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٢﴾ يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتُ
لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ ۗ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ
فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا ۗ فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُم بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ
وَوَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ ﴿١٣﴾ يُنَادُونَهُمْ أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ ۗ قَالُوا
بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْأَمَانِيُّ
حَتَّىٰ جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَغَرَّكُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ ﴿١٤﴾ فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُؤْخَذُ
مِنْكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَلَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۗ مَأْوَانِكُمُ النَّارُ ۗ هِيَ مَوْلَاكُمْ ۗ
وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٥﴾ أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ
لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۗ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ
مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَسِقُونَ
﴿١٦﴾ اِعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۗ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ إِنَّ الْمُصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ

قَرَضًا حَسَنًا يُضَعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ
 وَرُسُلِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ۖ وَالشَّهَادَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ لَهُمْ
 أَجْرُهُمْ وَنُورُهُمْ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
 الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٩﴾

On the Day when you will see the believing men and the believing women, their light proceeding in front of them and to their right hands, (it will be said to them,) "Good news for you today! Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to live therein for ever! That is the great achievement, [12] the Day when the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believe, "Wait for us, so that we may have a share from your light.", it will be said (to them), "Go back to your rear, and search for light." Then a wall will be placed between them, which will have a gate. In its inner side, there will be the divine mercy, while towards its outer side, there will be the divine punishment. [13] They (the hypocrites) will call out to them (the believers), "Were we not with you?" They will say, "Yes, (you were,) but you led your souls to a wrong way, and kept waiting (for an evil end to the Muslims), and remained in doubt, and were deluded by fancies, until Allah's command came to pass, and you were deceived about Allah by the Big Deceiver (Iblīs). [14] So, no ransom will be accepted from you today, nor from those who disbelieved (openly). Your abode is the Fire, and it is an evil end." [15] Has the time not yet come for those who believe that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and for the truth that has descended (through revelation)? And they must not be like those to whom the Book was given before, but a long period passed on them (in which they did not repent), therefore their hearts became hard, while many of them were sinners. [16] Know well that Allah revives the land after its death. We have made the signs clear for you, so that you may understand. [17] Surely those men who give *ṣadaqah* (charity) and those women who give *ṣadaqah* and have advanced a good loan to Allah, for them it will be multiplied, and for them there is a noble reward. [18] And those who believed in Allah and His Messengers, it is they who are the *ṣiddīqs* (the most righteous after prophets) and the *shuhadā'*

(martyrs) in the sight of your Lord. For them shall be their reward and their light. And those who disbelieved and rejected Our verses – those are the people of the Hell. [19]

The Believers will be awarded Light on the Day of Resurrection

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ (On the Day when you will see the believing men and the believing women, their light proceeding in front of them and to their right hands,....57:12) 'The day' refers to the 'Day of Resurrection'. The fact of 'light running before them' will take place just prior to people's passing over the bridge of *sirat*. The details are given in a Tradition reported by Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhilī رضي الله عنه. Ibn Kathīr has cited it on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim. The Tradition is lengthy. It recounts that Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhilī رضي الله عنه attended a funeral in Damascus. When it was over, he reminded people about death, the grave, the Resurrection and the Hereafter. A few of the statements are reproduced below in translation:

"Then you will be transferred from the graves to the plane of gathering where there will be different stages and spots to stand or wait. Then there will come a stage when some faces will brighten up and others will be darkened by the Divine command. Then there will come a stage when people - believers and non-believers - all will assemble on the Plane of Gathering. An intense darkness will prevail and nobody will be able to see anything. Thereafter light will be distributed. (Another report of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, reported by Ibn Kathīr, which he narrates on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه says that each believer will receive the light commensurate with his deeds; some will have light as large as a mountain, some as a date tree, some as big as the height of a man. The least among them will have a light as big as his index finger; it will lit at times and extinguished at other times.) Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhilī رضي الله عنه then went on to say that the hypocrites and the infidels would not receive any light. The Holy Qur'an exemplifies it thus:

أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُجِّيٍّ يَعْشِبُهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكِدْ يَرُهَا وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُّورٍ

'or their deeds are like layers of darkness in a vast deep sea overwhelmed by a wave, above which there is another wave—layers of darkness, one above the other. When one puts forth his hand, he can hardly see it. And the one to whom Allah does not give light can have no light at all.' (24:40)

From this narration, it is learnt that the infidels and the hypocrites

will be deprived of the light from the very beginning point where Allah will distribute light to the believing men and women after the intensely dark spot. But Ṭabṛānī reports a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Allah will send light to every believer at the bridge, and also to every hypocrite, but when the hypocrites reach the bridge, their light will be snatched away." (Ibn Kathīr)

This shows that the hypocrites will initially receive light, but when they reach the bridge, they will be deprived of it. Be that as it may, whether they will be deprived of light initially or it will extinguished later on after receiving it at an earlier stage, they will plead to the believers: 'Please wait for us! Let us take advantage of your light, because we were with you in the world when we performed *ṣalāh*, paid *zakāh*, performed *Hajj* and even participated in *jihād* expeditions?' The request will be declined. The rejoinder to this plea is forthcoming in full details. It is in keeping with the characteristic of the hypocrites that they should first be shown the light, then it should be extinguished to leave them in total darkness, just as they behaved deceitfully in the world, as the Qur‘ān states:

يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ

Surely, the hypocrites [try to] deceive Allah while He is the One who leaves them in deception ... [4:142]

Imām Baghawī says that 'deception' here means that first the light will be sent to them, but it will be snatched away from them just in the nick of time when they will be needing it most crucially. At that crucial moment, the believers too will fear lest their light should be snatched away. As a result, they would implore thus:

يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَى بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا نُورَنَا، وَأَغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.

"...on the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him. Their light will run before them and to their right hands. They will say, "Our Lord, perfect for us our light, and forgive us. Indeed you are powerful over every thing." [66:8] (Mazḥarī)

Muslim, Aḥmad and Darquṭnī record on the authority of Sayyidnā Jabir Ibn ‘Abdullah the Prophetic Ḥadīth that at first, light will be given

to both believers and hypocrites, but when the latter would reach the bridge, it will be snatched away from the hypocrites.

Mazḥarī reconciles the two versions thus: There are two types of hypocrites, one of whom appeared in the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This type will be treated like the infidels. The non-believers will not receive light from the very outset. Likewise, the hypocrites of the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be deprived of the light from the very outset. The second type of hypocrites appeared after the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but they cannot be so called in the true sense of the word because revelation ended with the departure of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and without definitive evidence on the basis of revelation no one can be labeled, identified or classified as a *munāfiq* [hypocrite]. The *munāfiq* manifests the form of a man of faith in his outward practice, but his inner dimension is completely devoid of faith and belief. There is no way of knowing this for common people. However, Allah is fully aware of his inner and outer dimensions. He will treat each one accordingly. The *munāfiqs* will be shown the light in the beginning, but when they would arrive at the bridge, their light will be put out and they will be groping in total darkness.

In this category of *munāfiqs* fall those people of this Ummah who distort the Qur'an and Ḥadīth twisting their meanings to suit their own purposes. We seek Allah's refuge from it.

Causes of Light and Darkness on the Plane of Gathering

Tafsīr Mazḥarī, on this occasion, has, on the basis of Qur'an and Ḥadīth, described the causes of light and darkness on the Plane of Gathering. Below, we reproduce those causes the knowledge of which is more important than pure academic research, in the hope that Allah will grant us light:

[1] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Give glad tidings to those who go to the mosque in the darkness of night that they will receive perfect light on the Day of Judgment." (Reported by Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī from Buraidah ؓ, and Ibn Mājah from Anas ؓ. This Ḥadīth is also reported by Sahl Ibn Sa'd, Zaid Ibn Harithah, Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Umar, Harithah Ibn Wahb, Abū 'Umamah, Abu-ad-Dardā', Abū Mūsā, Abū Hurairah, 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين)

[2] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ حَافِظَ عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُ نُورًا وَبُرْهَانًا وَنَجَاةٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يُحَافِظْ عَلَيْهَا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ نُورًا وَلَا بُرْهَانًا وَلَا نَجَاةٌ وَكَانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَعَ قَارُونَ وَهَامَانَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ.

"He who takes care of his five daily prayers [that is, performs them regularly fulfilling all their essentials], it will serve as light, proof and salvation for him on the Day of Judgement. He who fails to take care of it, there will be no light, nor proof or salvation for him on the Day of Judgement. The latter will be in the company of Qārūn, Hāmān and Fir'aun."

(Reported by Aḥmad and Ṭabarānī from Ibn 'Umar ﷺ)

[3] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever recites Sūrah Al-Kahf, there will be so much of light for him on the Day of Judgement that it will spread from his place to Makkah." In another narration, "Whoever recites Sūrah Al-Kahf on a Friday, light will extend from his feet to the heights of the heaven on the Day of Judgment." (Reported by Ṭabarānī from Abū Sa'īd ﷺ)

[4] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever recites just a single verse of the Qur'ān, it will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement." (Reported by Aḥmad from Abū Hurairah ﷺ)

[5] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever sends *ṣalāh* (*durūd*) to me, it shall be the cause of light on the Bridge of Ṣirāt." (Reported by Dailamī from Abū Hurairah ﷺ)

[6] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said when detailing the rules of Ḥajj: "The hair, that falls on the ground at the time of shaving it when coming out of the state of *iḥrām*, will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement" (Ṭabarānī from 'Ubādah Ibn samit ﷺ)

[7] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Stoning the *jamarāt* in Minā will be a light on the Day of Judgement." (Musnad of Bazzār from Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ)

[8] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He whose hair turns gray in Islam, it will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement." (Ṭabarānī, with a good chain, from Abū Hurairah ﷺ)

[9] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He who shoots even one arrow in

Allah's way while fighting in *jihād*, it will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement." (Bazzār with a good chain from Abū Hurairah ﷺ)

[10] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He who remembers Allah in the marketplace will receive light for every strand of hair on the Day of Judgement." (Baihaqī in *Shu'ab-ul-Īmān* with an interrupted chain from Ibn 'Umar ﷺ)

[11] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He who alleviates the calamity of a Muslim, Allah will create two compartments of light for him at the bridge which will brighten up a whole world. No one besides Allah knows its number." (Ṭabarānī from Abū Hurairah ﷺ)

[12] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *يَا أَيُّكُمْ وَالظُّلْمَ فَإِنَّهُ هُوَ الظُّلْمَةُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ* said: "Beware of *ẓulm* [injustice] because that will yield *ẓulumāt* [layers of darkness] on the Day of Judgement." (Bukhārī and Muslim from Ibn 'Umar ﷺ, Muslim from Jābir ﷺ and Ḥakim from Abū Hurairah ﷺ and Ibn 'Umar, and Ṭabarānī from Ibn Ziyad ﷺ).

يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَسِمِ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ (...the Day when the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believe, "Wait for us, so that we may have a share from your light...(57:13) The meaning is self-evident.

قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا (...it will be said [to them], "Go back to your rear, and search for light57:13) This reply will be given by either the believers, or by the angels. [Ibn 'Abbās and Qatādah]

فَضْرَبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ طَبَائِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ (...Then a wall will be placed between them, which will have a gate. In its inner side, there will be the Divine mercy, while towards its outer side, there will be the Divine punishment...57:13). Having received the reply from either the believers or the angels, the hypocrites will return to the place where the light was distributed. They will find nothing there, so they will attempt to go back to the believers but in the meantime a wall will be set up between the hypocrites and the believers. As a result, the hypocrites will be separated from the believers and will not be able to reach them. They will be left in complete darkness. On the side of the believers there will be Allah's mercy while on the side of the hypocrites there will be chastisement.

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī cites Ibn Zaid's view that this wall refers to A'rāf,

which will be a barrier between the believers and the hypocrites. Other commentators express the view that the wall is not the barrier of A'raf, but it is some other wall or barrier. The door in the wall could serve one of two purposes: [1] It will be a way through which the believers and the hypocrites will communicate with one another; or [2] all the believers will pass through this door and then sealed off permanently.

Special Note

In the matter of light, the infidels are not mentioned anywhere, because in their case there is no question of having such a light. The hypocrites are, however, mentioned and there are two narrations concerning them: [1] That they will not receive light at all from the outset; or [2] They will receive it at first, but when they arrive at the Bridge of *Ṣirāt*, it will be extinguished. A wall will be erected as a barrier between them and the believers. This goes to show that only the believers will cross the Bridge of *Ṣirāt* from above the Hell. The infidels and pagans will not pass through the Bridge. They will be pushed into the Fire direct through the doors of Hell. The sinful believers, who will be kept in the Hell for a while to be cleansed of their sins, will fall into the Hell while crossing the Bridge. The rest of the believers will cross the bridge safely and enter Paradise, as explicitly stated by Shah 'Abdul-Qādir Dehlawī رحمه الله تعالى and supported by Durr. Allah knows best!

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ (Has the time not yet come for those who believe that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and for the truth that has descended [through revelation]?...57:16) The phrase *khushū'-ul-qalb* means 'for the heart to soften; to be receptive to advice; to be obedient; to submit'. [Ibn Kathīr] In the Qur'ānic context, it implies 'a complete willingness to yield to the Divine injunctions, or the Divine imperatives and prohibitions without allowing any laxity in following them. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

This verse admonishes the believers. Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه reports that some of the believers were found to be lacking in firmness, and somewhat laziness was felt in their practices. So this verse was revealed. Imām A'mash رحمه الله تعالى said: After settling down in Madīnah, the blessed Companions experienced socio-economic comfort and prosperity; as a result some of them relaxed in exerting their efforts to do good works as they used to do previously. Thus this verse was revealed.

[Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه's narration also carries the additional information that this admonitory verse was revealed thirteen years after the revelation had started. [Recorded by Ibn Abī Ḥatīm] Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه narrates that this admonitory verse was revealed four years after they had embraced Islam to administer this mild reproof. Allah knows best!

In any case, the Muslims are cautioned in this verse that they should prepare themselves to turn to Allah totally and completely, and act upon the teachings of their religion. All actions revolve around *khushū'-ul-qalb* Sayyidnā Shaddād Ibn Aws رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "The first thing that will be taken away from the people will be their humility or humbleness [*khushū'*]." [Ibn Kathīr]

Is every Believer a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'?

"وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ وَالشُّهَدَاءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ" And those who believed in Allah and His messengers, it is they who are the *ṣiddīqs* [the most righteous] and the *shuhadā'* (martyrs) in the sight of your Lord.57:19) This verse indicates that every 'believer' is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'. On the basis of this verse Qatādah and 'Amr Ibn Maimūn maintain that anyone who believes in Allah and His Messenger is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'. Ibn Jarīr reports that Sayyidnā Bara' Ibn 'Āzib رضي الله عنه narrates that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "مُؤْمِنُوا أُمَّتِي شُهَدَاءُ" "The believers of my Ummah are all Shahīds (martyrs)." In support of this, he recited the current verse.

Ibn Abī Ḥatīm reports that Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that one day some of the Companions had gathered around him, and he stated "Each one of you is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'". This startled them and they exclaimed: "What are you saying, Abū Hurairah?" He replied: "If you do not believe me, then read the present verse [19] وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ وَالشُّهَدَاءُ"

However, another verse of the Qur'ān seems to be against this concept. It is the verse [4:69]: فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ (And those who obey Allah and the Messenger are with those whom Allah has blessed, namely, the Prophets, the Ṣiddiqīn, the

Shuhadā' and the righteous...) This indicates that not every believer is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd' because in addition to the Prophets, the general body of Muslims comprise three categories of believers who are specially mentioned: [1] the Ṣiddīqin; [2] the Shuhadā'; and [3] the righteous. It would appear that the three categories are distinctly different. Otherwise, there would have been no need to mention them separately. Therefore, some scholars believe that the 'Ṣiddīqin' and the 'Shuhadā'' in fact constitute the highest and most sublime categories bearing the supreme attributes. Here all believers are referred to as 'Ṣiddīq' and 'Shahīd' in the sense that every believer is in some degree included in the group of 'Ṣiddīqin' and 'Shuhadā''. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī states that it is appropriate to believe that the verse under comment refers to people who have perfect faith and perform deeds of righteousness. Otherwise, people who are believers but indulge in deeds that are not in keeping with the dictates of their faith can hardly be called 'Ṣiddīq' or 'Shahīd'.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: *اللَّعَانُونَ لَا يَكُونُونَ شُهَدَاءَ* (The cursers cannot be 'Shuhadā'). This Tradition supports the notion. Sayyidnā 'Umar Al-Fārūq ؓ once said to the people: "What is the matter with you? You see someone defaming people, you neither stop him nor do you raise your eyebrows about it! They replied: 'We are afraid of his violent tongue. If we tell him something, he will also attack our honour.' Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ made a rejoinder 'if that is the case, then you cannot be 'Shuhadā''. Ibn Athīr cited this narration and said: 'This means that such coward people will not be among the 'Shuhadā' who will bear witness against the communities of the previous Prophets.' [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]. Maḥzarī states that the word *الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا* 'believers' in verse [19] refers only to the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who reposed their faith in Allah and His Messenger, saw him and had the pleasure of his company. As such, the restrictive phrase, *هُمُ الصِّدِّيقُونَ* 'it is they who are the Ṣiddīqs.' in Verse [19] indicate that the status of Ṣiddīq is limited or restricted to the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Mujaddid Alf Thānī states that all the noble Companions had a share in the noble qualities of prophet-hood. Any Companion who saw him in a state of faith even for a short time is absorbed and drowned in such qualities of perfection. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Verses 20 - 21

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ وِزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ
 فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ ۖ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ
 فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا ۗ وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ۗ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ
 مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ ۗ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ ﴿٢٠﴾
 سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۗ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ
 مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢١﴾

Know well that the worldly life is but a play and an amusement, and a show of beauty, and exchange of boastful claims between you, and a competition of increase in riches and children. (All this is) like a rain, the vegetation of which attracts the farmers, then it withers, and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes straw. And in the Hereafter there is a severe punishment (for the disbelievers), and forgiveness from Allah and (Allah's) pleasure (for the believers and the righteous). And the worldly life is nothing but a material of delusion. [20] Compete each other in proceeding towards forgiveness from your Lord, and to Paradise the width of which is like the width of the sky and the earth. It has been prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers. That is the bounty of Allah that He gives to whomever He wills, and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty. [21]

The Life of this World is Fleeting Enjoyment

The preceding verses described the conditions of the inmates of Paradise and those of the inhabitants of Hell, which will materialize in the Hereafter and will be permanent and eternal. Since the basic cause for one's deprivation of the bounties of the Hereafter and his being seized by the divine punishment is his involvement in the temporary pleasures of this worldly life that tempt him to forget the life to come, the verse under comment describes the reality of the worldly life and its being unreliable. The verse depicts the involvements of a human being that he

cheerfully enjoys from the inception of his life up to its end. The verse summarizes these involvements in the same order in which they occur. From the inception to the end of his life, man leads his life in the following order: *la'ib* [play], *lahw* [amusement], *zīnah* [show of beauty], *tafākhur* [exchange of boastful claims] and *takāthur* [competition of increase in riches and children].

The word *la'ib* (play) refers to a play that has no purpose at all, like the movements of little children. The *lahw* [amusement or pastime] is a game or sport meant initially for amusement and enjoyment, but it may serve also some other subsidiary purpose like physical exercise. It includes all the sports of the bigger children such as playing with a ball or swimming or target-shooting. Prophetic Traditions have termed swimming and target-shooting as good sports. The early stage of one's life is spent in play and amusement. Then comes a stage in his youth when man wants to adorn his body and dress and to show their beauty, which is described in the verse as '*zīnah*'. Then comes a stage in which man is tempted to prove his superiority over his mates and to make boastful claims. In old age, a keen competition and rivalry sets in to amass wealth and multiply children.

When man goes through a particular phase of life, he feels satisfied with it. But when that phase is over, he realizes its absurdity and hollowness and takes to the next phase of life. For example, a child is most fascinated with his phase of life and regards the stage of *la'ib* (play) the goal of his life. Should someone snatch one of his toys, he feels as much aggrieved as a big man is grieved by his valuable wealth and property being usurped. However, when he grows a little bigger, he realizes the things he deemed to be the goal of his life were nothing but some useless and absurd activities. The same thing happens in one's youth when he is attracted by adorned beauties. In old age, man gathers wealth and multiplies children. Power, prestige, pride and position are his capital goods and investments to wield dominance in life. The Qur'ān reminds him that this phase too will pass away. The next stage is *barzakh* [grave] followed by the Day of Resurrection. Man needs to think about those stages or phases of life because they are really eternal without an end. Allah has described the fleeting enjoyment of this world in such an order that the appropriate parable given in verse [20] follows naturally.

كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ، ثُمَّ يَهْبِجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُضْفَرًا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا (...[All this is] like a rain, the vegetation of which attracts the farmers, then it withers, and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes straw....57:20) The word *ghaiṭh* means 'rain'. The word *kuffar*, being the plural of *kāfir*, is generally used as opposed to *mu'minin* [believers], in the sense of non-believers, but its literal sense carries the meaning of 'farmers' also. Some scholars have taken the word here in this literal sense, explicating that the farmers are happy to see the vegetation that grows in the aftermath of rain. Other commentators have taken the word *kuffar* in its popular sense of non-believers, explaining the verse to mean that the non-believers are attracted by the greenery. This explanation may be criticized on the ground that being happy with the greenery is not confined to non-believers, but also the believers admire the lush vegetation when it abounds in vigorous growth. The commentators have appraised the criticism thus: There is a world of difference between the happiness and admiration of a believer and that of a non-believer. A believer's pleasure is directed towards Allah. He believes that everything is the outcome of Allah's power, wisdom and mercy. He does not make it the goal of his life; he gives up the cherished and precious things of this mortal world in consideration for the higher, eternal things of the life yet to come in the Hereafter. That is the goal of his life he worries about. Therefore, any believer who fulfills the requirements of his faith is not attracted, even by the biggest wealth in this world as a *kāfir* does. That is why the attraction by the vegetation is attributed to a non-believer.

In short, the parable means that in the wake of rain vegetation of all sorts grows, and it pleases the farmers, especially the non-believers. But the vegetation soon turns yellow in colour, after being fresh and green. After that, the green fades away and become scattered particles of dust. This is example of mankind in this life. They are young and strong in the beginning. In this stage of life, they look youthful and handsome. Gradually, old age overcomes them which does away with all their beauty and freshness until they die and become dust. This parable indicates the end of this life, while in contrast, the Hereafter is surely coming, the significance of which is given in the following words:

وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ۖ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ

(...And in the Hereafter there is a severe punishment [for the disbelievers], and forgiveness from Allah and

[Allah's] pleasure [for the believers and the righteous] ...57:20). In the Hereafter the people will certainly have to face one of two things: [1] severe punishment for the non-believers; and [2] forgiveness of Allah, His mercy and His good pleasure. Punishment has been mentioned here first, because the preceding verses described the behavior of the infidels that they are over-absorbed in worldly pleasures, the outcome of which is also severe chastisement. As opposed to this outcome, two things have been laid down for the believers: [1] Divine forgiveness; and [2] Divine pleasure. This indicates that forgiveness of sins is though a boon that saves one from the punishment, yet in addition to being saved from the punishment, he will attain Paradise and its eternal favors. This will be the manifestation of Divine pleasure.

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ (And the worldly life is nothing but a material of delusion....57:20) The current phrase states concisely the reality of this world. Having seen and understood all that has been explained in the foregoing verses about the transitory nature of this world, sound and intelligent people can come to only one conclusion: that is, the life of this world is a material of delusion; it is not a capital that may be useful in odd times. Therefore, after knowing the reality of the worldly life and the punishment of the Hereafter, a reasonable man should not be over-involved in worldly pleasures, and should be eager to obtain the bounties of the Hereafter. This is what the next verses say.

سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ (Compete each other in proceeding towards forgiveness from your Lord and to Paradise, the width of which is like the width of the sky and the earth ...57:21) The competition or race referred to in this verse may have either of the two meanings: [1] No one has a guarantee for the continuance of his life, health and strength. One should not procrastinate, delay, defer, or put off performing righteous deeds for future, because the time might not come on account of illness, any inability or even death. One should race against inability, weakness and death, so that one may accumulate the treasure of good deeds that may lead one to Paradise before such disabilities may arrive and stop one from the good deeds. [2] Another meaning may be to compete with one another in good deeds, as Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه advises: "Be among the first ones to go to the mosque and the last ones to come out." Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه advises: "Go forward to be in the first

line of *jihād*." Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه states: "Try to be present for the first *takbīr* of the congregational prayer." [Rūḥ]

The verse under comment defines that Paradise will be as wide as the heaven and the earth. A similar verse occurs in Sūrah Al-‘Imrān [3:133] where the word '*skies*' is plural, whereas here the word '*sama*' (sky) is singular, from which we gather that both the words, the singular as well as the plural, refer to all the seven heavens, meaning if the vastness of the seven heavens and the earth are put together, that will be the width of Paradise. Obviously, the length of anything is greater than its breadth. This shows that the length of Paradise is greater than the length of the seven heavens and earth. Sometimes the word width or breadth is used in the general sense of 'vastness' irrespective of its length. In both cases, the purport of the verse is to describe that Paradise is very vast, so vast that it can accommodate the entire heavens and the earth in its vastness .

ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (That is the bounty of Allah that He gives to whomever He wills, and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty...57:21) The foregoing verse enjoined upon us to march forth and compete each other in marching to Paradise and its bounties. This could give rise to the thought that Paradise and its eternal pleasures and delights are the direct result of our actions. This verse clarifies the point that good actions are not necessarily the sufficient cause for the attainment of Paradise. Man's life-long actions cannot be an adequate price even for the bounties he has received in this world, let alone the everlasting bounties of Paradise and its eternal blessings. Anyone who enters Paradise will do so out of Allah's grace and mercy, as is mentioned in a Prophetic Ḥadīth, recorded in Ṣaḥīḥain on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه who reports that the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: "No one will attain salvation by means of his actions only." The Companions enquired: "Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "No, not even I will attain Paradise because of my actions, unless Allah bestows His grace and compassion on me." [Maḥzarī]

Verses 22 - 24

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّنْ

قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَاهَا ۗ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ
مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ
﴿٢٣﴾ ۗ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٢٤﴾

No calamity befalls the earth or your own selves, but it is (pre-destined) in a Book before We bring it into being, Indeed it is easy for Allah. [22] so that you may neither grieve on what has escaped you, nor over-exult on what He has given you. And Allah does not love any self-admirer, over-proud, [23] those who are miserly and bid others to be miserly. And whoever turns away, then Allah is the All-Independent, the Ever-Praised. [24]

Factors affecting Mankind are duly measured and destined

There are two sets of factors that make man unmindful of Allah and the Hereafter: [1] wealth, comfort and other luxuries of this world; one's over-involvement in such luxuries makes him neglectful of Allah. The previous verses have warned against it. [2] calamities, problems and other hardships that cause one to be hopeless and in turn neglectful towards Allah. The current set of verses deal with this second cause of negligence.

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَاهَا (No calamity befalls the earth or your own selves, but it is [pre-destined] in a Book before We bring it into being ...57:22) The expression 'Book' refers to 'Preserved Tablet [*lawḥ mahfūz*]' and the verse means that Allah had measured and decided the destiny of all things even before He created them. The expression 'No affliction befalls in the earth' refers to famine, earthquake, destruction of crops, loss in business, loss of wealth and property and loss of friends and loved ones. The expression 'in yourselves' refers to illnesses of all sorts, all kinds of wounds, hurt and injury.

Patience and Gratitude

لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ (...so that you may neither grieve on what has escaped you, nor over-exult on what He has given you ...57:23) This means that Allah has informed us of His encompassing knowledge, recording all things before they occur and creating all things in due measure known to Him, so that we may know that what has met us

would never have missed us, and what has missed us would never have met us. Therefore, we are commanded not to over-grieve on the good things we have missed, nor to over-exult on the comforts or wealth we enjoyed in this life, and in turn be neglectful about Allah and the Hereafter. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه says that it is man's natural disposition that certain things cheer him up and other things make him miserable, whereas the true position should have been as follows: When any misery befalls him, he should endure it with patience and earn reward in the Hereafter, and when he experiences joy, he should experience it with gratitude to Allah and earn reward in the Hereafter. [Reported by Ḥakīm who rates it as *ṣaḥīḥ*. See Rūḥ]

وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ (...And Allah does not love any self-admirer, over-proud...57:23) The expression "does not love" in fact implies that Allah 'hates' those who become proud of the bounties they enjoy in this world. But instead of using the word 'hates' the expression 'does not love' is perhaps an indication that an intelligent person should consider about all his actions whether or not the intended act is dear to Allah. This is the reason why the verse uses the phrase 'does not love'.

Verse 25

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ
النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۖ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ
وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

We have indeed sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that people may uphold justice. And We sent down iron in which there is strong power, and benefits for the people; and (We did it) so that Allah knows the one who helps Him and His messengers without seeing (Him). Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty. [25]

Establishing Justice: The Real Purpose of sending Prophets and Divine Books

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۖ
وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ

We have indeed sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that people may uphold justice. And We sent down iron in which there is strong power, and benefits for the people; and [We did it] so that Allah knows the one who helps Him and His messengers without seeing [Him]. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty (57:25)

The word *bayyināt* means 'clear' or 'evident' things. It could also mean 'clear injunctions'. It may refer to 'miracles, clear proofs and evidences of Prophet-hood and Messenger-ship. [Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Ḥayyān]. After *bayyināt*, the mention sending down the Book supports the last interpretation, that is, *bayyināt* refers to 'miracles and proofs' and that 'the Book' sets out details of injunctions. In addition to the Book, another thing has been mentioned, which is *mīzān* [Balance or Scale]. Originally, this word refers to an instrument of weighing. Besides the customary balance, there are other kinds of instruments that are invented from time to time to weigh and measure other things. For example, nowadays we have instruments with which to weigh and measure 'light', 'wind' and other things. All these instruments will fall under the category of '*mīzān* [Balance]

This verse speaks of sending down 'the Balance' like 'the Book'. The notion of the Book coming down from the heaven and reaching the prophets through the agency of the angels is quite understandable. But it is not clear what it means for the Balance to come down. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, Mazḥarī and others have explained that 'the coming down of Balance' refers to the Divine laws that were revealed pertaining to the use of the Balance and administration of justice. Qurṭubī explains that it was the Book that was sent down, the Balance has been merely appended to the same verb but connoting the sense of inventing and placing. This is quite common in Arabic language and literature. Thus this sentence in full will read as follows: *أَنْزَلْنَا الْكِتَابَ وَوَضَعْنَا الْمِيزَانَ* (We sent down the Book and placed the Scale.) The readers may compare this verse with verse [7] of Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān *وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ* (And He raised the sky high, and placed the scale...55:7) where Scale is said to have been set up or placed.

Some Traditions narrate that a balance was actually sent down from the heavens to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and he was enjoined to weigh with it and fulfill the rights of people. Allah knows best!

Alongside 'the Book ' and 'the Balance', a third thing was sent down, that is, 'the iron'. The verb 'sent down' in relation to the iron stands for 'created' because it was not sent down from the heaven. There are other occasions where the verb *anzala* [He sent down] is used in the sense of *khalaqa* [He created], as for instance in this verse وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَنِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ (He sent down to you of the cattle eight couples...39:6) In this verse, the verb *anzala* [He sent down] is unanimously used in the sense of *khalaqa* [He created]. This expression is adopted to indicate that everything in this world is 'sent down from the heaven' in the sense that everything that exists in the world was recorded in the Preserved Tablet long before it came into existence. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

According to the verse, 'iron' serves two purposes: [1] it represent power and holds the hostile opponents in great awe, and may compel the rebellious people to abide by Divine laws and system of justice. [2] it also holds great benefits for man. In other words, iron is a thing of common utility as it is used on a large scale in various industries. It is indispensable for the invention of every device, machine, mechanical apparatus, contrivance, and there is some iron in almost everything man innovates. No contrivance is possible without iron.

Special Note [1]

The fundamental purpose of sending the Prophets, revealing the divine books and erecting the Balance is mentioned as follows: لِيُقِيمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ (so that people may uphold justice...57:25) After that a third element is introduced: the creation of 'iron'. This, in fact, complements the same basic purpose of 'administration of justice' because the Prophets and the Divine Books set forth clear and sound arguments to establish justice. If the defiant group fails to establish it, it is warned about punishment in the Hereafter. The 'Balance' sets up the parameters within which justice should operate. If the defiant group obdurately refuses to accept the parameters of justice and is left free to go about violating them, he will not allow justice to be established. In this case, the higher authority of the state will have no choice but to take up arms against them.

Special Note [2]

Another point of consideration here is that the Holy Qur'ān has set forth two factors as fundamental to the establishment of justice: [1] the Book; and [2] the Balance. The Book sets forth the Divine rights and the

human rights, and the need to fulfil them; it prohibits their violation. The Balance lays down the system which maintains just equilibrium in human social relations. The purpose of revealing these two factors is **لِيَقُومَ** **النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ** (so that people may uphold justice...57:25) The factor of 'iron' has been mentioned last. This indicates that in the establishment of justice iron may be used only as a last resort, not as the first step. The real purpose of improving human society and establishing justice among them is to improve them in intellectual development and growth. The government may not exert its might and power to achieve the purpose of developing them intellectually. It may use it, only as the ultimate option, if they stand in the way of justice. The main thing is to cultivate the minds of the people by educating them.

وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ (...and [We did it] so that Allah knows the one who helps Him and His messengers without seeing ...57:25) Here the conjunction 'and', according to Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, explains that this subjunctive phrase is conjoined to another subjunctive phrase that is understood in the context: **لِيَنْفَعَهُمْ** (so that it may benefit them) in their trade and industry; so that Allah may legally and outwardly know who will assist Him and His Messenger by carrying weapons of war made of iron and fight *jihād* in defence of His religion'. The restrictive adverbs 'legally and outwardly' have been added because Allah knows everything pre-eternally as He pre-recorded them in the Book of Decrees, and when man performs the action, it is recorded in his Account Book by the angels. In this way, its legal manifestation becomes plainly apparent.

Verses 26- 29

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ
فَمِنْهُمْ مُهْتَدٍ ۚ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَسِقُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم
بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ ۗ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي
قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً ۗ وَرَهَابِيَّةَ ۙ ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا
عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا ۚ فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ ۚ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَسِقُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ
نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ لَيْلًا يَعْلَمُ أَهْلُ
الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا يَفْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ
يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٩﴾

And we have indeed sent Nuḥ and Ibrāhīm, and kept the Book and prophet-hood (continuing) in their progeny. So, some of those (to whom they were sent) were on the right path, and many of them were sinners. [26] Then We made Our messengers follow them one after the other, then We sent after them 'Īsā, the son of Maryam (Jesus, son of Mary), and gave him the Injīl, and placed tenderness and mercy in the hearts of his followers. As for monasticism, it was invented by them; We did not ordain it for them, but (they adopted it) to seek Allah's pleasure, then could not observe it as was due. So We gave those of them who believed their reward. And many of them are sinners. [27] O those who believe, fear Allah, and believe in His Messenger, and He will give you two shares (of reward) out of His mercy, and will make for you a light whereby you will walk, and will forgive you, And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [28] so that the People of the Book may know that they have no power over any thing from Allah's bounty, and that bounty is in Allah's hand; He gives it to whom He wills, and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty. [29]

Many of the Nations of the Prophets were Rebellious

In the preceding verses it was mentioned that in order to give guidance to the world and to establish justice therein, Allah sent His Messengers and revealed to them the divine books and set up Balance. The current verses give specific names of some of those Divine Messengers. Among them, Prophet Nuḥ عليه السلام stands first in the list, because he is second 'Ādam عليه السلام in the sense that all human beings after the Deluge were from his progeny. Then the Prophet Ibrāhīm Khalīl-ullāh عليه السلام is mentioned as he is the father of the prophets and recognized as an ideal for all the divine religions. It has been made plain here that all the Prophets and Messengers sent after these two prophets were from their offspring. Out of many branches of the progeny of

Nuḥ عليه السلام, the branch singled out for prophet-hood was that of Prophet Ibrāhīm Khalīl-ullah عليه السلام. After specific mention of these two Prophets, the whole chain of prophets is referred to by the words, *ثُمَّ فَقَيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا*, "Then We made Our messengers follow them one after the other". Lastly, 'Īsā عليه السلام has been specifically mentioned, as he was the last among the Israelite prophets. Then the Last of all prophets Sayyidnā Muḥammad عليه السلام and his Shari'ah has a pointed reference in the next verse.

The special characteristics of the disciples of Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام are given in part of verse 27 as follows: *وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً* (...and placed tenderness and mercy in the hearts of his followers) In other words, Allah inculcated two qualities in the hearts of the followers of Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام and his Divine Book Injīl [Gospel]: [1] tenderness and [2] mercy. As a result, they showed tenderness and compassion to one another. Or it could mean that they showed tenderness and kindness to the entire creation of Allah.

Generally, the two words *ra'fah* (tenderness) and *rahmah* (mercy) are treated as synonyms or near-synonyms, but since they are employed here in opposition to each other, some lexicologists explained that the word *ra'fah* is stronger in degree than the word *rahmah*. Others have explained that there are two requirements of tenderness and mercy. The word *ra'fah* means to alleviate the calamity of someone, while the word *rahmah* means to give to someone what he needs. In short, *ra'fah* is concerned with repelling harm and *rahmah* is concerned with deriving benefit. As 'repelling harm' is normally prior to 'deriving benefit', *ra'fah* takes precedence over *rahmah* when the two words are expressed simultaneously.

On this occasion, 'tenderness' and 'mercy' are mentioned as the special characteristics of the disciples [*Howāriyyūn*] of the Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام. Similarly, some characteristics of the blessed Companions of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad عليه السلام are given in Sūrah Al-Faṭḥ, one of which is *رُحَمَاءُ* (...compassionate among themselves...48:29). But another characteristic of them is given before this as: *أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ* (...hard against the disbelievers ...48:29). The reason for this difference seems to be that there were no laws pertaining to *jihād* against the non-believers in the Shari'ah of the Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام. Therefore, there was no occasion for them to be hard against the disbelievers. Allah knows best!

Monasticism: An Analysis

وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا (...As for monasticism, it was invented by them;). The word *rahbāniyyah* (monasticism) is attributed to *ruhban*. The words *rāhib* (singular) and *ruhban* (plural) mean 'the one who fears'. After Prophet ʿĪsā ﷺ, transgression became common. In particular, the kings and the leaders publicly defied the laws of the Gospel. When the scholars and the righteous people among them attempted to stop them from doing evil deeds, they were put to death. Those that remained, felt that they would not be able to stop them, nor did they have the power of resistance. If they lived in society, there was every likelihood that their religion too would be destroyed. Therefore, they took upon themselves in earnest that they would give up all pleasures and comforts of this life including the legitimate ones. Thus they avoided marriage, abandoned any activity to earn livelihood and any effort to build homes, and took to jungles, mountains and caves, or took to nomadic life in order to protect their religion and follow their religious duties freely and completely. They did all this out of fear of God. Therefore, they were referred to as *rāhib* or *ruhban*. Their practice is referred to as *rahbāniyyah*.

As the Christians introduced monasticism under forced circumstances in order to protect their faith, it was not reproachable in its origin. But once anyone has imposed anything on himself, it becomes binding on him, and its violation is a sin. For example, making a vow for an act of worship is not obligatory. But if a person were to vow to do an act of worship or abstain from a lawful thing, it becomes binding on him in Shariʿah to maintain the vow; its violation becomes a sin. Some of the Christian monks invented monasticism with the best of intentions, but there were others who could not endure the hardships of monastic life and soon succumbed to the pursuit of material gains and physical pleasures when the general body of people believed in them, offered them gifts and oblations. History bears ample testimony to the fact that the monks who detested the system of marriage indulged in indecent acts and fornication. (The free intermingling of men and women in monasteries turned those places into centres of evil.)

The current verse denounces the practice of the monks who imposed monasticism upon themselves, and once they had imposed it, they should have observed its requirements which they did not.