



CHAPTER 5

Al-Mā'idah: The Food

(REVEALED AT MADĪNAH: 16 sections; 120 verses)

The name of this chapter is taken from the mention of a demand for *food* — “the daily bread” — on the part of the followers of Jesus Christ, to which reference is made towards the end of this chapter. The chapter deals with the Christians in particular and the adoption of this name might be with a view to express the Christian love of the dainties of this life.

This chapter stands in almost the same relation to the last as the 3rd to the 2nd. Thus, while the 4th chapter deals chiefly with the hypocrites, the 5th deals with those who had assumed open enmity to Islām, being interspersed here and there with directions for the Muslims. Again, while the 4th chapter deals with the question of Jewish disobedience, this gives prominence to the Christian transgressions due to their inordinate worldly love, this distinction being made plain in the concluding portions of the two chapters.

The chapter opens with an exhortation to the Muslims to remain true to their obligations. This injunction is followed by certain details relating to the performance of the pilgrimage, to foods, and to social relations with other people and by the announcement that Religion was made perfect in Islām. The second section, which calls attention to the duty of uprightness, is, as it were, a caution against laying too much stress upon details of the law to the utter neglect of the inner qualities which make the real man. The third section speaks of the covenants made with the Jews and the Christians, and of the violation of their covenant by the Christians in assigning a Divine dignity to a mere mortal. The fourth section takes up the Jewish violation of the covenant, at the very outset of their national life, and points out the evil consequences of their disobedience. The fifth section, opening with a lesson to the Jews in Cain's aggression, plainly points towards the end to the punishment of the Jews who were now engaged in making war upon the Prophet, and the subject of the punishment of similar offences is continued in the sixth section. The seventh speaks of the relation of the Quranic revelation to previous revelations, and points out that this final revelation is really the fulfilment and perfection of all those revelations. The eighth section warns the Muslims of the hostile attitude of the Jews and the Christians and those who apostatize, the subject being continued in the ninth, which speaks of their mockery of the Muslim religion. The tenth introduces the subject of Christian deviation from the truth, while the eleventh shows that the Qur'ān is not unjust to them on account of their enmity towards Islām, valuing the meekness of monks and priests among them, and recognizing their nearness to Islām in contrast with the Jews and the polytheists. The three sections that follow are specially addressed to the believers, while hinting at Christian disregard of the middle course and of their aggression against the Muslims. The twelfth section, while warning the Muslims on the one hand of such practices as monkery, which required a man to deprive himself even of lawful things, cautions them on the other against the use of impure drugs, such as intoxicating liquors, and the acquisition of property by illegal means, such as gambling, the

two besetting sins of Christian nations, and requires obedience and regard of duty to be made the main principle of action. The thirteenth section lays stress on the security of the Ka'bah, containing a prophetic allusion to the designs of powerful Christian nations. The fourteenth section, containing further directions for the Muslims, lays special stress on the gravity of the sin of polytheism, which had led the Christians farthest away from the truth, notwithstanding their proximity to Islām. The two concluding sections of the chapter deal with the Christian religion more plainly. Attention is drawn in the fifteenth to the Christian love of this life and their being subjected to an unprecedented punishment as a result of their materialistic tendencies. The sixteenth, which is the last section, contains a plain condemnation of the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus out of the mouth of that prophet himself, and makes it clear that this doctrine found way into the Christian religion after his death and gives hope of their finally finding protection in Islām.

A consideration of the topics dealt with in this chapter and the opinions of different authorities, lead us to the almost certain conclusion that this chapter follows in the order of revelation, as it does in arrangement, the last chapter, and the main portion of it was revealed within 5–7 Hijrah. The tendency of some Christian critics to ascribe verses condemning certain Jewish or Christian doctrines to a period when political relations with these people became strained is to be deprecated, for, as a matter of fact, the Qur'ān did not deny the good in these religions at any time, nor did it ever approve of their errors. For instance, it is in an early Makkan revelation that we find the Christian doctrine of the sonship of Jesus condemned in the severest terms (19:88–92), while it is here, in a late Madinah revelation, that we find the Christians praised on account of their meekness.

There is, however, one verse in this chapter which belongs to a much later period than the main portion of the chapter, the date of the revelation of which can be fixed with certainty. It is the third verse, and it speaks of the perfection of religion in Islām. Of its revelation in the Holy Prophet's last pilgrimage to Makkah in the year 10 A.H. there is not the least doubt, and, further, there is the clearest testimony that it was revealed on the 9th *Dhu-l-Hijjah* in that year, when the Holy Prophet was on the plain of 'Arafāt (B. 2:32).

SECTION 1: Perfection of Religion in Islām

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 O you who believe, fulfil the obligations.^a The cattle quadrupeds are allowed to you except that which is recited to you, not violating the prohibition against game when you are on the pilgrimage.^b Surely Allāh orders what He pleases.

2 O you who believe, violate not the signs of Allāh,^a nor the Sacred Month, nor the offerings, nor the victims with garlands,^b nor those repairing to the Sacred House seeking the grace and pleasure of their Lord. And when you are free from pilgrimage obligations, then hunt. And let not

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ أُحِلَّتْ لَكُم بَهِيمَةُ الْأَنْعَامِ إِلَّا مَا يُنْتَلَى عَلَيْكُمْ غَيْرَ مُجِبِّي السَّيِّئِ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيدُ ①

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَجِدُوا شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْفَلَاحِيذَ وَلَا آيَاتِ الْبَيْتِ الْحَرَامِ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّن سَرِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوا وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ

1a. Respect for all *covenants, contracts, agreements, leagues, treaties, and engagements*, all of which are included in the significance of the word 'uqud (sing. 'aqd, a tie) (LL), and also of all Divine ordinances given for the welfare of the individual and society, is the very first necessity of social relations. The word includes *the covenants imposed by God as well as the mutual agreements made by men* (LL). Thus respect for law, religious as well as temporal, is taught here.

1b. The prohibition of game during pilgrimage is mentioned in connection with the security of the Ka'bah in section 13, so that even wild animals are secure during the time; see 95a. The words *except that which is recited to you* relate to the prohibited foods mentioned already in 2:173, 6:145, 16:115, and detailed further in v. 3 here.

2a. *Sha'air* is plural of *sha'irah* which means a *sign* (R). It is derived from *sha'ara* meaning *he knew* a thing, and by *sha'a'ir* Allāh are therefore meant *matters through which the knowledge of Allāh is obtained*. According to IJ, it signifies *all duties imposed by God on man* and thus includes all Divine ordinances, obligations, commandments and prohibitions. Ḥasan says *sha'a'ir* Allāh means *din Allāh or the religion of Allāh*. Rites and ceremonies in connection with the pilgrimage and places where these ceremonies are performed are also known by this name. Hence the Ṣafā and the Marwah are also called *sha'a'ir* Allāh in 2:158.

2b. *Hady* is plural of *hadyah*, and means *what is driven* (to Makkah), and *qalā'id* is plural of *qilādah*, meaning *a necklace or what is put upon the neck of an animal* that is brought as an offering to Makkah for sacrifice (LA, LL), and hence also the *animal which is made to wear a garland*. The word *qalā'id* as a description of such animals is used to intensify respect for them, because they bear a clear mark showing that they are meant to be sacrificed. It should be noted that only camels are made to wear garlands, while *hady* includes all kinds of animals brought as offering.

hatred of a people — because they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque — incite you to transgress. And help one another in righteousness and piety, and help not one another in sin and aggression,^c and keep your duty to Allāh. Surely Allāh is Severe in requiting (evil).

3 Forbidden to you is that which dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that on which any other name than that of Allāh has been invoked, and the strangled (animal), and that beaten to death, and that killed by a fall, and that killed by goring with the horn, and that which wild beasts have eaten — except what you slaughter;^a and that which is sacrificed on stones set up^b (for idols), and that you seek to divide by arrows;^c that is a transgression. This

شَنَّانُ قَوْمٍ أَنْ صَدَّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ
الْحَرَامِ أَنْ تَعْتَدُوا وَمَوْتًا وَعَلَى الْيَدِ
وَالْقَوْمِ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ
وَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ۝

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالْدَّمُ وَ لَحْمُ
الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أَهَلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَفَقَةُ
وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ
وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ
وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَفْسِمُوا
بِالْأَنْزَالِ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَيَسْقَطَ الْيَوْمَ يُكَيِّسُ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ
وَاحْشَوْنَ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ

2c. The principle laid down here as to uprightness of conduct in dealing even with those whom one hates is laudable, and the international code of the modern world stands sorely in need of such a principle of uprightness. Requiring equal treatment for all nations — for those whom we hate and for those whom we love — Islām alone can serve as an international law.

3a. The exception may apply to all the five classes. The infinitive noun *tadhkiyah* means *causing the natural heat to pass forth*. Technically, it indicates a particular mode of slaughtering (R, LL); and the meaning is that if an animal partly eaten by wild beasts is found while yet alive, and is slaughtered in the proper manner, its flesh is allowed.

3b. According to Ibn Juraj, these were certain stones which were set up around the Ka'bah, over or near which it was customary to kill animals as offerings to certain idols, their blood being sprinkled and flesh laid on the stones (Rz).

3c. *Istaqsamtu-hū* means, according to R, *I asked him to divide*, and he adds: "Then it is used to signify *dividing*". If this significance be adopted, the *azlām* (lit. *arrows without a head and without a feather*) would mean the headless arrows of the game of hazard. The Arabs played with such arrows for division of the flesh of a slaughtered camel bought on credit (LL). This significance is favoured by the context, for it prohibits dividing flesh of slaughtered animals by means of certain arrows with which was played the game of chance called *maisir*. A comparison with 6:145, where slaying in other than Allāh's name is called a transgression, as here dividing by arrows is called a transgression, also shows this to be the correct significance. Probably animals devoted to idols were divided by arrows when slain. According to others, however, *istaqsama* means *he sought to know what was allotted to him* by means of the *azlām*. When one of

day have those who disbelieve despaired of your religion, so fear them not, and fear Me. This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islām as a religion.^d But whoever is compelled by hunger, not inclining wilfully to sin, then surely Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful.

4 They ask thee as to what is allowed them. Say: The good things are allowed to you, and what you have taught the beasts and birds of prey, training them to hunt — you teach them of what Allāh has taught you; so eat of that which they catch for you and mention the name of Allāh over it; and keep your duty to Allāh. Surely Allāh is Swift in reckoning.^a

5 This day (all) good things are made lawful for you. And the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is law-

وَأَسْنَتُ عَلَيْهِمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمْ
الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا قَمِنَ اضْطَرَّ فِي
مَخْصَصَةٍ غَيْرِ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِتْمِاقِكَ
اللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ③

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ قُلْ أُحِلَّ
لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَمَا عَلَّمْتُم مِّنَ الْجَوَارِحِ
مُكَلِّبِينَ تَعْلَمُونَ نَهْنٍ مِّمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللَّهُ
فَكُلُوا مِمَّا أَمْسَكَنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ وَادْكُرُوا اسْمَ
اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ طَرَاتِ اللَّهُ
سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ④

أَلْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ
الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَلَلٌ لَّكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ
حَلَلٌ لَهُمْ وَالْمَحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

them desired to make a journey, or to get married, or to perform some other important affair, he drew out arrows, on one of which was written "My Lord has commanded me", on a second, "My Lord has forbidden me", while a third arrow was blank. He did or refrained from doing the desired thing according to the arrow which came forth, repeating the operation if a blank arrow came out (Rz).

3d. External testimony as to the late revelation of this verse has already been quoted in the introductory note to this chapter. The very subject-matter of the verse shows that it must have been revealed towards the close of the Holy Prophet's life, and hence it is held by all authorities that no precept was revealed after this. The Prophet died eighty-one or eighty-two days after its revelation (Rz). This verse is a clear testimony to the perfection of religion in Islām, no such claim being made by any other book or religion. Just before Muḥammad, Jesus had said: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:12, 13). The Prophet Muḥammad was thus the last of the prophets, because religion being perfected, no prophet was needed after him.

4a. Game killed by means of beasts and birds of prey taught to hunt is allowed. When, however, the beast or the bird is sent after the prey, the name of Allāh should be mentioned. Game killed by an arrow or by a shot is allowed, subject to the same condition. In either case, if the game is not killed before it falls into the hands of the hunter, it should be slaughtered; if it is already killed, it is lawful in that condition.

ful for them.^a And so are the chaste from among the believing women and the chaste from among those who have been given the Book before you,^b when you give them their dowries, taking (them) in marriage, not fornicating nor taking them for paramours in secret. And whoever denies faith,^c his work indeed is vain; and in the Hereafter he is of the losers.

وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ
مُحْصَنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسْفِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي
أَخْدَانٍ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ
حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ
الْخَاسِرِينَ ٥

SECTION 2: Duty of Uprightness

6 O you who believe, when you rise up for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ
فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ

5a. The question arises here whether the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful even when that food includes what is expressly unlawful according to the Holy Qur'ān. The answer to this question must be given in the negative. A thing which is clearly prohibited cannot become lawful because it is offered by a Jew or a Christian. According to I'Ab by *ṭa'ām* is here meant *dhabīḥah* (B. 72:22). Thus animals slaughtered by the Jews or the Christians are allowed when slaughtered in the name of God. When an animal is not slaughtered in the name of God, it is prohibited according to some while others allow it. See further 6:121a where I quote B. 72:22, according to which the animal slaughtered by the People of the Book is disallowed only when the slaughterer is heard mentioning other than Allāh's name.

5b. Both the Jewish and the Christian laws do not compare well with the Islamic law in this respect. In Islām intermarriages with idol-worshippers are totally prohibited (2:221), but in the case of a people whose religion is based on a revealed book, in which category fall almost all the nations of the world, the taking of their women in marriage is expressly allowed. The giving away of Muslim women in marriage to followers of other religions is not, however, expressly mentioned, and practice from the earliest times is against it. Indeed, while women belonging to other religions would be happy in a Muslim household, because of the status and rights which Islām confers on women, Muslim women in an alien household would be in a condition of distress, because they would lose the rights which they enjoy in Muslim society. It may be added that the law here given is not limited to the Jews and the Christians, but includes the followers of all religions based on revelation. Hence the law was extended to the Persians by the companions of the Holy Prophet. As for the Jewish law, see Deut. 7:3: "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son". Paul follows the Jewish law: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14).

5c. The *denial of faith* is variously explained. Some think it means *denial of Allāh*; others, *denial of the unity of Allāh*; while still others think that *faith* stands for *the revelation of the Qur'ān*.

wipe your heads, and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. And if you are under an obligation,^{6a} then wash (yourselves). And if you are sick or on a journey, or one of you comes from the privy, or you have had contact with women and you cannot find water, betake yourselves to pure earth and wipe your faces and your hands therewith. Allāh desires not to place a burden on you but He wishes to purify you, and that He may complete His favour on you, so that you may give thanks.

7 And remember Allāh's favour on you and His covenant with which He bound you when you said: We have heard and we obey.^{6a} And keep your duty to Allāh. Surely Allāh knows what is in the breasts.

8 O you who believe, be upright for Allāh, bearers of witness with justice; and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just; that is nearer to observance of duty. And keep your duty to Allāh. Surely Allāh is Aware of what you do.

9 Allāh has promised to those who believe and do good deeds: For them is forgiveness and a mighty reward.

10 And those who disbelieve and reject Our messages, such are the companions of the flaming fire.

وَأَمْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى
الْعُقَبَيْنِ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا وَإِنْ
كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ
مِّنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ
تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا
فَأَمْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ
مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ
وَلَكِنْ لِيُزِيلَ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُنِيعَ نِعْمَتَهُ
عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥﴾

وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيثَاقَهُ
الَّذِي وَاتَّقْتُمْ بِهِ إِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا
وَاطَعْنَا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ
بِدَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٦﴾

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ
شُهَدَاءَ بِلِقَا قِسْطٍ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَا
نُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ آلَا تَعْرَلُوا طَاعِدُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ
لِلْعَقُولِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٨﴾

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا
أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٩﴾

6a. I.e., under an obligation to perform a total ablution; see 4:43b.

7a. The reference in the covenant is generally supposed to be to the oath of fidelity taken by the Madinites at 'Aqabah, but some have taken it to be the acceptance of the law of Islām, others consider it to be the evidence of human nature spoken of in 7:172, while still others understand by it the swearing of the allegiance at Hudaibiyah (IJ), which is also referred to in 48:10, 18.

11 O you who believe, remember Allāh's favour on you when a people had determined to stretch out their hands against you, but He withheld their hands from you; and keep your duty to Allāh. And on Allāh let the believers rely.^a

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ أُنِيبُوا سُبُطًا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾

SECTION 3: Christian Violation of the Covenant

12 And certainly Allāh made a covenant with the Children of Israel, and We raised up among them twelve chieftains.^a And Allāh said: Surely I am with you. If you keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and believe in My messengers and assist them and offer to Allāh a goodly gift, I will certainly cover your evil deeds, and cause you to enter Gardens wherein rivers flow. But whoever among you disbelieves after that, he indeed strays from the right way.^b

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ فَمَنْ تَلَا فَعَدَا ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿١٢﴾

13 But on account of their breaking their covenant We cursed them and hardened their hearts. They alter the words from their places and neglect a portion of that whereof they were reminded. And thou wilt always dis-

فِيمَا نَقُضُوا مِنْهُمْ وَعَٰمَلْنَاهُمْ قُلُوبَهُمْ قَسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَٰضِعِهِ ۗ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ ۗ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَٰبِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا

11a. The occasions on which the enemies of Islām endeavoured to take away the life of the Prophet or to exterminate the Muslims are too numerous to mention here. The commentators, however, think that there is special reference to the attempt made by the Banī Naqir on the life of the Holy Prophet.

12a. It is strange to find Rodwell adding a note here that the Prophet “invented these twelve leaders of tribes”, whereas they are clearly mentioned by name in Num. 1:5–15, and in the 16th verse they are called *princes of the tribes of their fathers*; while in the 44th verse we have: “And the princes of Israel, being twelve men”. And further, in Num. 13:3–15 we again read of twelve *heads* of the Children of Israel having been sent to search the land of Canaan.

12b. The land was described by Joshua and Caleb as “a land which floweth with milk and honey” (Num. 14:8).

cover treachery in them excepting a few of them — so pardon them and forgive. Surely Allāh loves those who do good (to others).

14 And with those who say, We are Christians, We made a covenant,^a but they neglected a portion of that whereof they were reminded so We stirred up enmity and hatred among them to the day of Resurrection. And Allāh will soon inform them of what they did.^b

15 O People of the Book, indeed Our Messenger has come to you, making clear to you much of that which you concealed of the Book and passing over much.^a Indeed, there has come to you from Allāh, a Light and a clear Book,^b

16 Whereby Allāh guides such as follow His pleasure into the ways of

قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَأَعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصْرَىٰ أَخَذْنَا
مِيثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ
فَاغْرَبْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى
يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللَّهُ
بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا
بَيِّنَاتٍ لَّكُمْ كِتَابًا كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ
مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُوا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ
مِّنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٦﴾

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رَاضٍ وَكَافٍ
سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ

14a. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come" (John 16:12, 13). The kingdom of God so often spoken of in the Gospel is no other than the spiritual kingdom established by the Holy Prophet, the Gospel being in fact only the good news of his advent.

14b. The prophecy that there shall always be hatred and enmity between the various Christian peoples has proved true in all ages, and never more clearly than in our own day. They will find peace only when they accept Islām.

15a. There were many truths which the Jews and the Christians had lost, their scriptures not having remained free from corruption, and many which were to be met with in their books but which they did not act upon. Some of these which were of permanent value were revealed in the Holy Qur'ān, but others — referred to in *passing over much* — had been given to them to suit only the requirements of the time when they were given and were not now needed. Or, the reference may be to the prophecies of the advent of the Holy Prophet, for the Qur'ān refers to only very few of them.

15b. Two things are here spoken of as having come from Allāh, a Light and a clear Book. The Light is the Prophet, and the Book, the Qur'ān. The Prophet is the greatest spiritual Light which ever dawned upon this earth. Hence he is called a light-giving sun: "O Prophet, surely We have sent thee as a witness, and a bearer of good news and a warner, and as an inviter to Allāh by His permission, and as a light-giving sun" (33:45, 46).

peace, and brings them out of darkness into light by His will, and guides them to the right path.

إِلَى النُّورِ يَأْتِيهِمْ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ⑨

17 They indeed disbelieve who say: Surely, Allāh — He is the Messiah, son of Mary. Say; Who then could control anything as against Allāh when He wished to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother and all those on the earth?^a And Allāh's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them. He creates what He pleases. And Allāh is Possessor of power over all things.

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قُلْ مَنْ يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ وَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ⑩

18 And the Jews and the Christians say: We are the sons of Allāh and His beloved ones. Say: Why does He then chastise you for your sins?^a Nay, you are mortals from among those whom He has created. He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases.^b And Allāh's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, and to Him is the eventual coming.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى نَحْنُ أَبْنَاءُ اللَّهِ وَأَحِبَّاؤُهُ قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ بِذُنُوبِكُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ مِمَّنْ خَلَقَ يَعْزِمُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ ⑪

17a. The meaning is that Jesus Christ and his mother Mary, and all those who were then on the earth, tasted equally of death; hence Jesus Christ was an ordinary human being and not God, for if he had been God he would not have died. *In* sometimes signifies *idh* or *when* (Mgh-LL), and this is the significance here. It is a mistake to take it as referring to the future, for with Jesus Christ is mentioned Mary and the whole generation then living, and their meeting death was undoubtedly a thing of the past.

18a. In the Gospels it is said; "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). The Christians think they are the people spoken of here. The Jews considered themselves as the favourite nation, because they thought they were the only nation chosen by God for the gift of Divine revelation, to the exclusion of all other nations of the world. Thus they considered themselves friends of God. They are told that their sins were so great that they were punished for them even in this life. How could people sunk so deep in sins be friends of God or sons of God?

18b. It is in accordance with Divine laws that forgiveness and punishment are exercised, and the alleged atonement of Christ had brought about no change in that law.

19 O People of the Book, indeed Our Messenger has come to you explaining to you after a cessation of the messengers,^a lest you say: There came not to us a bearer of good news nor a warner. So indeed a bearer of good news and a warner has come to you. And Allāh is Possessor of power over all things.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ
لَكُمْ عَلَى فُرْقَةٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا
مَا جَاءَنَا مِن بَشِيرٍ وَلَا نَذِيرٍ فَقَدْ
جَاءَكُمْ بَشِيرٌ وَنَذِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

SECTION 4: Israelites' Violation of the Covenant

20 And when Moses said to his people: O my people, remember the favour of Allāh to you when He raised prophets among you and made you kings and gave you what He gave not to any other of the nations.^a

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يُقَوْمِ ادْكُرُوا
نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ
وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مُلُوكًا وَأَنْتُمْ كَمَا تَكُونُونَ
أَحَادًا مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

21 O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allāh has ordained for you and turn not your backs, for then you will turn back losers.

يَقَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي
كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَلَى
أَذْبَانِكُمْ فَتَقِيلُوا حُيُورِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

19a. Several centuries had elapsed since the appearance of any prophet in any country when the great Arabian Prophet made his appearance. No nation in the world claims the appearance of any messenger in it between the advent of Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. The world was, as it were, preparing itself for the advent of the greatest of all prophets, who was to be a messenger to all the nations of the world. Hence the cessation of prophecy among all people. The name of *Khālid* is mentioned by some people, but there is no authentic *ḥadīth* to this effect, nor any historical evidence showing that any prophet of that name had appeared after Jesus. On the other hand, there is an authentic *ḥadīth* according to which the Holy Prophet said, speaking of Jesus Christ: "There has been no prophet between him and me" (B. 21:48).

20a. There is no anachronism here. The Israelites are here told that two favours had been bestowed upon them: (1) prophets were raised among them; (2) they were made kings. The reference need not be to the earlier history of the Israelites, but to their history as dating from the time of Moses, for the advent of Moses had brought about an entire change both in their spiritual and political status. Not only had two prophets, Moses and Aaron, already appeared among them, but with the Mosaic law was laid down the basis of a dispensation which gave them promise of numerous prophets appearing among them. And politically they had no doubt already emerged as an independent nation, being masters of themselves and no more slaves of their Egyptian masters. They had already acquired kingship, but the words as well contain a clear prophetic reference to their future career as a ruling nation. Spiritual dominance combined with political supremacy was manifestly a favour which was not bestowed upon any of the other contemporary nations.

22 They said: O Moses, therein are a powerful people, and we shall not enter it until they go out from it; if they go out from it, then surely we will enter.^a

قَالُوا يَمُوسَى إِنَّ فِيهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِينَ
وَإِنَّا لَنْ نَدْخُلَهَا حَتَّىٰ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا
فَإِن يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِنَّا دُخُلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

23 Two men of those who feared, on whom Allāh had bestowed a favour, said: Enter upon them by the gate, for when you enter it you will surely be victorious; and put your trust in Allāh, if you are believers.^a

قَالَ رَجُلَانِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَعْمَ
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمَا ادْخُلُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَابَ فَإِذَا
دَخَلْتُمُوهُ فَآخِذُوا بِعُلْبُونِ ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ
فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

24 They said: O Moses, we will never enter it so long as they are in it; go therefore thou and thy Lord, and fight; surely here we sit.

قَالُوا يَمُوسَى إِنَّا لَنْ نَدْخُلَهَا أَبَدًا
مَّا دَامُوا فِيهَا فَادْهَبْ أَنتَ وَرَبُّكَ
فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هُنَا قَاعِدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

25 He said: My Lord, I have control of none but my own self and my brother; so distinguish between us and the transgressing people.

قَالَ سَرَبْتُ إِلَيَّ لَا أَمْلِكُ إِلَّا نَفْسِي وَآخِي
فَأَمُرُقُ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

26 He said: It will surely be forbidden to them for forty years — they will wander about in the land. So grieve not for the transgressing people.^a

قَالَ فَإِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَرْبَعِينَ
سَنَةً ۖ يَتِيهُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ فَلَا
تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

SECTION 5: Cain and Abel – murderous plots against the Prophet

27 And relate to them with truth the story of the two sons of Adam,

وَاقْصِلْ عَلَيْهِمُ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ

22a. "All the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature" (Num. 13:32). For the murmurings of the Israelites and their refusal to go against the enemy, see Num. 14:1–4.

23a. "And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh ... spoke unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying ... If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land ... their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us, fear them not" (Num. 14:6–9).

26a. "Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it" (Num. 14:23). The forty years spoken of here represent the life of that generation.

when they offered an offering, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other. He said: I will certainly kill thee. (The other) said: Allāh accepts only from the dutiful.^a

28 If thou stretch out thy hand against me to kill me I shall not stretch out my hand against thee to kill thee. Surely I fear Allāh, the Lord of the worlds:

29 I would rather that thou shouldst bear the sin against me and thine own sin,^a thus thou wouldst be of the companions of the Fire; and that is the recompense of the unjust.

30 At length his mind made it easy for him to kill his brother, so he killed him; so he became one of the losers.

31 Then Allāh sent a crow scratching the ground to show him how to cover the dead body of his brother.^a He said: Woe is me! Am I not able to be as this crow and cover the dead body of my brother? So he became of those who regret.

قَرَابًا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقْبَلُ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَكَمْ
يُتَقَبَّلُ مِنَ الْآخَرِ ط قَالَ لَا قُتِلْتُكَ ط
قَالَ إِنَّمَا يُتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾

لَوْ لِي سَطَطْتُ لِي يَدَكَ لَتَقْتُلَنِي مَا أَنَا
بِمَسِطٍ يَدِي إِلَيْكَ لَا قُتِلْتُكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ
اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبْؤَأَ بِإِشْيِي وَإِشْمِكَ
فَتَكُونُ مِنَ أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ وَذَلِكَ
جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ
فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ
فِي سَعْيِهِ كَيْفَ يُوَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ ط قَالَ
يُؤْيَلِنِي أَمْحَرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَذَا
الْغُرَابِ فَأُوَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِي ط فَأَصْبَحَ
مِنَ النَّادِمِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

27a. The reference is apparently to the story of Cain and Abel. Compare Gen. 4:3–12. Some commentators are, however, of opinion that the reference is to two men from among the Israelites, because every man may be spoken of as a son of Adam (Rz). But the whole story may be taken allegorically to refer to the Jewish plots against the Holy Prophet, where the Israelites may be taken for the aggressive and sinful brother and the Ishmaelites, as represented by the Holy Prophet, for the righteous one. It may be noted that in v. 11 we have a reference to the Jewish plots against the Prophet's life, and the two sections that follow are, as it were, parenthetical, reminding the Jews and the Christians of their covenants and their violation of them, and the subject of v. 11 is continued in this and the following section.

29a. *Ithmi* here means not my sin, but the sin committed against me, i.e., the sin of murder; while by *ithmi-ka* is meant thy sin, i.e., his previous sin on account of which his offering was not accepted. The righteous brother tells the wicked one that even after knowing that he intended to kill him he would not be the first to raise his hand against him and kill him, but he would rather that the guilty one should go on adding to his sins.

31a. The Bible is silent on this point; but there is nothing improbable in primitive man learning from other creatures.