



## Part 1

### CHAPTER 2

## *Al-Baqarah: The Cow*

(REVEALED AT MADĪNAH: 40 sections; 286 verses)

The name of this chapter is taken from the story narrated in vv. 67–71, regarding the slaughter of a *cow*. As this chapter deals chiefly with the Jews, and as cow-worship, as shown in footnotes 51*b* and 67*a*, was the particular form of idolatry which took a hold among the Jews, the importance of that incident seems to have been rightly estimated in giving this chapter the name that it bears.

This chapter deals mainly with the Jews and their contentions against Islām, and hence it is that much of the legislation, details of which necessarily differ from the Jewish law, and most of the Jewish objections to the prophethood of Muhammad — peace and blessings of Allāh be on him! — are dealt with in this chapter. The chapter opens with a brief statement of the fundamental principles of Islām, and, after mentioning the consequences of their acceptance or rejection in the first section, and dealing with lip-profession in the second, draws an inference of the truth of those principles, and more particularly of Divine Unity, by referring to the work of God in nature, in the third. The fourth section proceeds to show that man is endowed with vast capabilities but needs Divine revelation for his perfection, and this is illustrated in the story of Adam. The fifth section speaks of the Israelites, who are told how the Qur'ān fulfils the prophecies met with in their books, and the next two sections are devoted to Divine favours to them and their stubbornness, being followed by three others which speak of their degeneration, their tendency to cow-worship, their hard-heartedness and their violation of covenants. The eleventh section speaks of their objections to the Holy Prophet, and the twelfth refers to their great enmity and to their plans against him. The thirteenth states that former scriptures are abrogated and a better and more advanced code is given in Islām, the religion of entire submission. The next section points out that partial good is met with in all religions, but it is only in Islām that religion attains to perfection. The fifteenth reminds the Israelites of the covenant with Abraham, which required the raising of a prophet from among the Ishmaelites, being followed by another dealing with the religion of the great patriarch. The subject of the Ka'bah, the house built by Abraham, as the new *qiblah*, is thus introduced, and the next two sections, while declaring the Ka'bah to be the new centre of spiritual activity, also give reasons for the change. The nineteenth warns the Muslims that they must undergo hard trials to establish the Truth; and that it will ultimately triumph, is made clear in the twentieth section. Certain minor differences with the Jewish law are then introduced as against the common principle of the doctrine of Unity, and thus the laws relating to foods, retaliation, bequests, fasting, fighting, pilgrimage, wine, gambling, orphans, marital obligations, divorce and widowhood are discussed

in the eleven sections that follow. The next two, the 32nd and the 33rd, make a reversion to the subject of fighting, which was necessary if the Muslims would escape national death, and illustrations are given from Israelite history. We are then told in the thirty-fourth section of the mighty power of Allāh to give life to the dead, and the Muslims are told that they should not use compulsion in the matter of religion, as their opponents had done. Two instances are then quoted in the following section, one from the history of Abraham and the other from Israelite history, showing how dead nations are raised to life. But national growth and prosperity, we are immediately told in the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh sections, depend on acts of sacrifice, and every penny spent in the cause of truth yields seven hundredfold, and even much more, fruit. The Muslims, being thus promised abundance of wealth as the result of their sacrifices, are warned in the following section against usurious dealings which breed an inordinate love of wealth, for the amassing of wealth was not the goal of a Muslim's life. They are at the same time told, in the thirty-ninth section, to guard their property rights by the employment of writing in their transactions and securing evidence. In conclusion, they are taught a prayer for the ultimate triumph of the Truth. Thus we find no break in the continuity of the subject, and the change, whenever necessary, is introduced quite naturally.

There is a clear connection between this chapter and the last one. There in the concluding words is a prayer for being guided on the right path (1:5), while here that guidance is afforded in the opening words: "This book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide" (v. 2). But though this chapter follows the *Fātiḥah*, it is really the first chapter, because the *Fātiḥah* is placed at the head, being the essence of the whole of the Qur'ān. This affords very clear evidence of the wisdom displayed in the arrangement of the chapters of the Holy Book. For this chapter fittingly opens with a prelude as to the object which is aimed at in the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān, and contains in its very opening verses the fundamental principles of the Islamic religion, which are also in fact the fundamental principles which can form the basis of the natural religion of man. These principles are five in number, three of them containing theoretical ordinances or articles of belief and two containing practical ordinances or principles of action. The theoretical ordinances are a belief in the Unseen, i.e. Allāh, in Divine revelation to the Holy Prophet as well as to the prophets before him, and in the life to come, while on the practical side is mentioned prayer, which is the source from which springs true Divine love, and charity in its broadest sense. The result of the acceptance of these fundamental principles is mentioned in v. 5, being guidance in the right direction and success. Similarly, it is with a reiteration of the broad principles of the Islamic faith and with a prayer for the triumph of the Truth that the chapter ends, and the whole of the chapter is really an illustration of the truth of the principles enunciated in its beginning.

This chapter was revealed in Madinah, and belongs to the earliest Madinah revelations. The main portion of it belongs to the 1st and 2nd years of the Hijrah, but it also contains verses which were revealed later, some of them towards the close of the Prophet's life.

## SECTION 1: Fundamental Principles of Islām

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

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1 I, Allāh, am the best Knower.<sup>a</sup>

أَنَا

2 This<sup>a</sup> Book,<sup>b</sup> there is no doubt in  
it, is a guide to those who keep their  
duty,<sup>c</sup>

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

1a. The original words are *alif*, *lām*, *mim*. Translations of the Holy Qur’ān generally leave abbreviations, like the one occurring here, untranslated. The combinations of letters or single letters occurring at the commencement of several chapters, 29 in all, are called *muqatta’āt*, and according to the best received opinion these letters are abbreviations standing for words. The Arabs used similar letters in their verses. Abbreviations are known to all languages, the only peculiarity of their use in Arabic literature being that the letters carry different meanings in different places, and the meaning is decided in each case by the context. Such is the opinion of I’Ab (AH). Both he and IMsd agree in interpreting *alif*, *lām*, *mim*, occurring here as well as at the commencement of the 3rd, 29th, 30th, 31st and 32nd chapters of the Holy Qur’ān as meaning *I, Allāh, am the best Knower*, *alif* standing for *ana*, *lām* for *Allāh*, and *mim* for *a’lam* (AH, II), being respectively the first, the middle and the last letters of the words for which they stand. Others regard them as contractions for some Divine attribute. That they may also serve as the names of chapters is no ground for supposing that they carry no significance. The strange suggestion of Golius that *alif*, *lām*, *mim* stands for *amr-li-Muḥammad*, which is said to mean *at the command of Muḥammad*, is not only devoid of authority but is also grammatically incorrect. Rodwell’s statement, made in his comment, on the significance of the letter *nūn*, occurring in the beginning of chapter 68, that “the meaning of this, and of the similar symbols throughout the Qur’ān, was unknown to the Muhammadans themselves even in the first century”, is equally devoid of truth. The significance of these letters can in most cases be traced to the Companions of the Holy Prophet, and hence the suggestion that these were “private marks” or initial letters attached by their proprietor to the copies furnished to Zaid, when effecting his recension of the text under ‘*Uthmān*, is not even worthy of consideration. It is further opposed to the surest historical testimony, which proves beyond all doubt that these letters were recited as parts of the chapters in the time of the Prophet himself.

2a. Palmer translates the word *dhālika* as *that*, and thinks that its rendering as *this* is an error, but as LL says: “Like as a person held in mean estimation is indicated by *hādihā* which denotes a thing that is near, so, on account of its high degree of estimation a thing that is approved is indicated by *dhālika*, whereby one indicates a thing that is remote.”

2b. The Qur’ān is here called *al-Kitāb*, or *the Book*. The root word *kataba* means *he wrote* and also *he brought together* (LL) and *kitāb*, or *book*, is a writing which is complete in itself. Thus a letter may also be called a *kitāb*, and in this sense the word occurs in 27:28, 29. The application of the word *kitāb* to the Holy Qur’ān occurs in very early revelations, and the use of the word shows clearly that the Qur’ān was from the first meant to be a *complete book* and one that existed not only in the memory of men but also in visible characters on writing material, for otherwise it could not be called *al-Kitāb*.

2c, see next page.

3 Who believe in the Unseen<sup>a</sup> and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them,<sup>b</sup>

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ  
وَمِمَّا سَرَرْنَا لَهُمْ يَنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾

4 And who believe in that which has been revealed to thee and that which was revealed before thee,<sup>a</sup> and of the Hereafter<sup>b</sup> they are sure.

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا  
أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۖ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾

2c. I make a departure here from the rendering of the word *muttaqī*, which English translators generally render into *God-fearing* or *pious*. The root is *waqā*, and conveys the sense of *saving, guarding, or preserving* (LL). According to R, *wiqāyah* signifies the *guarding of a thing from that which harms or injures it*. The verb of which *muttaqī* is the nominative form is *ittaqā*, which means, *he preserved or guarded himself exceedingly*. “In the conventional language of the law”, according to LL, “*he preserved or guarded himself exceedingly from sin or what would harm him in the world to come.*” Hence the word *muttaqī* may properly be translated only as one who guards himself against evil, or *one who is careful of, or has regard for, or keeps his duty*. The Qur’ān is here described as affording guidance to those who keep their duty, because the sense of keeping his duty is innate in man, and everyone who has regard for duty is true to nature and true to himself. No guidance would benefit a man who has no regard for his duty. Adopting the alternative meaning, *those who guard against evil*, the significance is that guarding against evil or being saved from sin is the first stage in man’s spiritual advancement, and the Qur’ān lays down the principles by following which the higher stages of that advancement are attained.

3a. *Al-ghaib* is that *which is unseen or unperceivable by the ordinary senses*. According to R, the Unseen here stands for Allāh, a belief in Whose existence is the cardinal principle of religion. A belief in God is thus the first duty of man, the first requisite of spiritual advancement.

3b. *Ṣalāt* means *supplication or prayer*. In Islām prayer assumed a regularity and a form, and became an established institution of religion. The verb used to indicate the observance of *ṣalāt* is throughout the Holy Qur’ān *aqāma*, meaning *he kept a thing or an affair in the right state* (LL), and hence it is not the mere observance of the form that the Qur’ān requires, but the keeping of it in a right state, i.e. being true to the spirit of the prayer. The object of prayer is elsewhere clearly stated to be the purification of the heart (29:45). Spending out of what one has been given stands for *charity* in its broadest sense, or the doing of good to all creatures. This verse lays down the two prime duties of man, the two principles of action which are necessary for spiritual advancement, and these are prayer to God and service to humanity. After speaking of the cardinal principle of faith, a belief in God, the Holy Qur’ān now speaks of the two great principles of action to show how to translate faith into action.

4a. Of all the religions of the world Islām is the only one that laid down the broad basis of faith in all the prophets of the world, and the recognition of truth in all religions is its distinctive characteristic. The words *that which was revealed before thee* include revelations to all the nations of the world, for we are elsewhere told that “there is not a people but a warner has gone among them” (35:24). The Qur’ān does not, however, mention all the prophets by their names, for “of them are those We have mentioned to thee and of them are those We have not mentioned to thee” (40:78). It thus requires not only a belief in Divine revelation to the Prophet Muḥammad but

4b, see next page.

5 These are on a right course from their Lord and these it is that are successful.<sup>a</sup>

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾

6 Those who disbelieve — it being alike to them whether thou warn them or warn them not<sup>a</sup> — they will not believe.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾

7 Allāh has sealed their hearts and their hearing; and there is a covering on their eyes, and for them is a grievous chastisement.<sup>a</sup>

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

a belief in Divine revelation to the whole of humanity, to all nations of the world. A Muslim is therefore one who believes in all the prophets of God, sent to any nation, whether their names are mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān or not. This is the fourth of the fundamental principles of Islām, the second among matters relating to faith. It shows that God has always been made known to man through Divine revelation, and that revelation is a universal fact.

4b. A belief in a life after death is the last of the five fundamental principles of Islām that are stated here, the third of the principles of faith. It is only this belief that can make the generality of men conscious of the responsibility of human actions. A life after death, according to Islām, implies a state of existence which begins with death, but a complete manifestation of which takes place later, when the fruits of the actions done in this life take their final shape. It should be borne in mind that a belief in Allāh and a belief in the Hereafter, being respectively the first and the last of the fundamental principles of Islām as mentioned here, often stand for a belief in all the fundamental principles of Islām, as in vv. 8, 62, etc. It is quite unwarranted to take *al-Ākhirat* as meaning *the message or revelation which is to come*. The Qur'ān knows of no message coming to humanity after it. It is the last message, religion having been made perfect by it (5:3). The *Ākhirat* of this verse is plainly spoken of as the Last Day in v. 8.

5a. Those who accept the three principles of faith, and the two principles of action, mentioned above, are declared to be successful. The word *muflih* is the nominative form of *aftaha* which means *he attained to success*, and includes both the good of this life and the good of the Hereafter (T). The next two verses speak of those who disbelieve.

6a. The passage is parenthetical (AH), and should be translated as such. The ordinary rendering of the passage, which makes the parenthetical passage an enunciative one, makes the verse meaningless, for it would then run thus: "Those who disbelieve it is alike to them whether thou warn them or warn them not; they will not believe." Now this amounts to saying that no one who once disbelieves would ever believe, a statement which is absurd on the face of it. Treating the portion quoted above as parenthetical, the meaning is quite clear, viz., disbelievers of a particular type, i.e., those who pay no heed at all to the Prophet's warning, cannot benefit by his preaching.

7a. It should be noted that only those disbelievers are spoken of here who so hardened their hearts as not to pay any heed to the Prophet's preaching and warning, as clearly indicated in the previous verse; compare 7:179: "They have hearts wherewith they understand not, and they have eyes wherewith they see not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not. They are as cattle." Allāh is here spoken of as having sealed their hearts and ears because He made them taste the consequences of their heedlessness.

## SECTION 2: Lip-profession

8 And there are some people who say: We believe in Allāh and the Last Day;<sup>a</sup> and they are not believers.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝۸

9 They seek to deceive Allāh and those who believe, and they deceive only themselves and they perceive not.<sup>a</sup>

يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا يُخَادِعُونَ  
إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ۝۹

10 In their hearts is a disease, so Allāh increased their disease, and for them is a painful chastisement because they lie.<sup>a</sup>

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا  
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝۱۰ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ۝

11 And when it is said to them, Make not mischief in the land, they say: We are but peacemakers.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا  
إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ۝۱۱

12 Now surely they are the mischief-makers, but they perceive not.<sup>a</sup>

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ ۝۱۲

8a. Belief in Allāh and the Last Day is here equivalent to the profession of Islām; see 4b. After speaking of the two classes, the accepters and the rejecters of the Prophet's message, the Holy Qur'ān now speaks of a third class, the insincere people who accept the message only with their lips. The persons spoken of in this verse are the hypocrites, who were a source of constant trouble to the Prophet at Madinah. Before he came to that city, 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy was a person of note there, and he expected to become the leader. But the Prophet's advent and his recognition by all the communities of that city, as head of the state, robbed him of those dearly cherished hopes, and he along with his followers adopted an attitude of hypocrisy. The case of the hypocrites is dealt with at length here, in 3:149–181; 4:60–152; 9:38–127, and in the 63rd chapter, and occasionally elsewhere. But apart from the particular class of people spoken of here who were really enemies of Islām in the guise of believers, there are in every religion large numbers of people whose hearts are affected with a similar spiritual disease. Their acceptance of the Truth is only with the lips, and faith does not go deep down into their hearts. They are loud in their claims but when there is a question of carrying out the precepts of the faith or of making any sacrifice in its cause, they lag behind. These verses may as well apply to them.

9a. *Khāda'a* signifies *he strove, endeavoured or desired to deceive* him. One says this of a man when he has not attained his desire (LL). *Khāda'a* also indicates, when used concerning the Divine Being, *He requited to him his deceit* (T, LL); see 15a and 4:142a. *Khāda'a* also means *he forsook, he refrained* (LL).

10a. Compare 71:6, where Noah is made to say: "But my call has only made them flee the more", though the call was meant to bring them nearer to the truth. The disease here stands for the weakness of their hearts (AH), for they had not the courage to deny Islām openly, and this weakness only became the greater as the cause of Islām became more and more triumphant.

12a, see next page.

13 And when it is said to them, Believe as the people believe, they say: Shall we believe as the fools believe? Now surely they are the fools, but they know not.<sup>a</sup>

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

14 And when they meet those who believe, they say, We believe; and when they are alone with their devils,<sup>a</sup> they say: Surely we are with you, we were only mocking.

وَإِذَا الْكُفُورُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

15 Allāh will pay them back their mockery,<sup>a</sup> and He leaves them alone in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on.

اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

16 These are they who buy error for guidance, so their bargain brings no gain, nor are they guided.<sup>a</sup>

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ كَمَا رِجِحَتْ بُحَارُهُمْ ۗ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

12a. Their idea of making peace was only this, that they mixed with both parties, but they were really taking advantage of this opportunity to sow the seeds of dissension and mischief among the various parties. In fact, they were a constant source of mischief for whereas outwardly they were with the Muslims, they always plotted against them and gave help to their enemies.

13a. They called the Muslims fools because they were undergoing all kinds of sufferings and making sacrifices for the sake of the Truth. The hypocrites were under the impression that the Muslims would soon be wiped out of existence. They are told that Truth will prosper and the half-hearted ones are really the fools.

14a. By their *devils* are meant their *evil companions*, as plainly stated in v. 76: "And when they meet those who believe, they say, We believe; and when they are apart one with another they say." IMsd says that by *their devils* are meant *their leaders in unbelief* (I). Kf and Bd say that by their *devils* are meant *those men who made themselves like the devils in their insolence and rebellion*. In fact, the word *shaitān* (devil) signifies "every insolent or rebellious one from among the jinn and the men and the beasts" (R).

15a. According to LA, the more preferable explanation of the words *Allāhu yastahzi'u bi-him* is that *Allāh will requite them with punishment according to their mockery* and thus, it is added, the punishment of an evil is spoken of in the terms of an evil, as is laid down elsewhere: "And the recompense of evil is punishment (or evil) like it" (42:40). Another explanation is that given by Kf: "The meaning is the sending down of disgrace and contempt, for the object which a mocker has in view is to hold him whom he mocks in light estimation and to bring down contempt and disgrace upon him."

16a. They rejected the Truth and followed the error, thinking that this course would bring them worldly gain. They are told that they will have neither worldly gain nor guidance, and will be losers both temporally and spiritually.

17 Their parable is as the parable of one who kindles a fire,<sup>a</sup> but when it illumines all around him, Allāh takes away their light,<sup>b</sup> and leaves them in darkness — they cannot see.

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلْمٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

18 Deaf, dumb, (and) blind,<sup>a</sup> so they return not:

صَمٌّ بَلْمٌ عُمَىٰ فهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

19 Or like abundant rain from the cloud<sup>a</sup> in which is darkness, and thunder and lightning; they put their fingers into their ears because of the thunder-peal, for fear of death.<sup>b</sup> And Allāh encompasses the disbelievers.

أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلْمٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُخِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

20 The lightning almost takes away their sight. Whenever it shines on them they walk in it, and when it becomes dark to them they stand still. And if Allāh had pleased, He would have taken away their hearing and their sight. Surely Allāh is Possessor of power over all things.

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَغْطِفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا طَوَّسَاءَ لَلَّهِ لَكَلْبٍ بِمِمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

17a. The kindler of the fire is the Holy Prophet, who kindled the torch of light. The opening words of a hadīth are: “My example is the example of a man who kindles a fire...” (B. 81:26). The personal pronouns used lend weight to this interpretation. The kindler of the fire and the illuminer is one, while those whose light is taken away are many. This interpretation of the parable is, moreover, in accordance with the next parable, where the rain is unanimously agreed upon as representing the Divine Revelation.

17b. The light of their eyes, which alone could make them take advantage of the light which was lit up by the Prophet, was taken away. The act of taking away the light is attributed to Allāh, as the remote cause of the disappearance of their sight.

18a. The description seems to apply to those spoken of in v. 6, and accordingly the first parable may apply to them instead of to the hypocrites; or it may apply to those hypocrites who persisted in the wrong course and refused to take any advantage of the light and guidance brought by the Prophet.

19a. *Samā'* is literally *the higher* or *the upper*, or *the highest* or *the uppermost part of anything*, and it means *the sky* or *the heaven*, *the clouds* or *a cloud* (T). It is a collective noun and is used both as singular and plural (LL).

19b. This is a parable showing the condition of the hypocrites and the weak-hearted ones. When difficulties and distresses befell the Muslims — when it became dark — the hypocrites and the weak-hearted stood still. They refused to keep company with the Muslims in the battles which the latter had to fight. When there was a flash of lightning, and a success followed — a success so great that it almost blinded them — they would walk on a little and seem to be keeping company with the Muslims. The same idea is

## SECTION 3: Divine Unity

21 O men, serve your Lord Who created you and those before you, so that you may guard against evil,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ  
وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١﴾

22 Who made the earth a resting-place for you and the heaven a structure,<sup>a</sup> and sends down rain from the clouds then brings forth with it fruits for your sustenance; so do not set up rivals to Allāh while you know.

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ  
بِنَاءً ۖ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ  
مِنَ الشَّجَرِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا  
لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا ۗ أَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢﴾

23 And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it<sup>a</sup> and call on your helpers besides Allāh if you are truthful.<sup>b</sup>

وَأِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا  
فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ ۖ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ  
مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣﴾

24 But if you do (it) not — and you can never do (it) — then be on your guard against the fire whose fuel is men and stones;<sup>a</sup> it is prepared for the disbelievers.

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي  
وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ۖ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٤﴾

expressed in 22:11 in the following words: “And among men is he who serves Allāh, (standing) on the verge, so that if good befalls him he is satisfied therewith, but if a trial afflicts him he turns back headlong.” The difficulties and distresses which the Muslims experienced in the early days of Islām greatly obstructed its spread and held back many of the weak-hearted, who, under better circumstances, would have gladly joined its ranks.

22a. The word *binā*’ signifies a *structure* (LL) in its widest sense, viz., *any production or piece of work consisting of parts joined together in some definite manner*. The heaven is here called a *structure* in reference to the order which prevails in heavenly bodies. But *binā*’ is also used to signify *the roof or the ceiling of a house*, and as such it is used figuratively to indicate the vast blue overhead. Attention is thus drawn to the oneness of humanity, as if it were a single family living in one resting-place under one roof.

23a. A similar challenge is contained in 10:38, and in 11:13 doubters are challenged to produce ten chapters like it, while in 17:88, a very early revelation, the whole of mankind are declared to be unable to produce a book like the Qur’ān. Is it a question of mere style and diction? The Qur’ān itself does not say so, nor does any saying of the Holy Prophet. That the Qur’ān is a unique production of Arabic literature and has ever been regarded as the standard of the purity of that literature, goes without saying, but the chief characteristic of the Holy Book, in which no other book can claim equality with it, is the wonderful transformation which it accomplished, and it is to this characteristic that it lays claim in the very commencement when it says that this Book is a guide (2:2). That the transformation wrought by it is unparalleled in the history of the world is admitted on all hands, for if the Holy Prophet was the “most successful of all prophets

23b, 24a, see next page.

25 And give good news to those who believe and do good deeds, that for them are Gardens in which rivers flow.<sup>a</sup> Whenever they are given a portion<sup>b</sup> of the fruit thereof, they will say: This is what was given to us before; and they are given the like of it.<sup>c</sup> And for them therein are pure companions<sup>d</sup> and therein they will abide.

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ  
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا  
مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا لَوْ هَذَا الَّذِي  
رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ  
فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

and religious personalities” (En. Br. 11th ed., Art. *Koran*), this success was due to no other cause than the Qur’ān. Its injunctions swept off the most deep-rooted evils, like idolatry and drunkenness, so as to leave no trace of them in the Arabian peninsula, welded the warring elements of Arabian society into one nation, and made an ignorant people the foremost torchbearers of knowledge and science, and a politically down-trodden people the masters of the greatest empire of the world. Besides, every word of the Qur’ān gives expression to Divine majesty and glory in a manner which is not approached by any other sacred book. The challenge remains unanswered to this day.

23b. The word *shuhadā’*, translated as *helpers* or *leaders*, is the plural of *shahid*, meaning *one who gives information of what he has witnessed, or one who knows and declares what he knows, or one possessing much knowledge* (LL). *Shahid* also means an *imām* or a *leader*.

24a. The word *stones* stands for *al-hijārah*, the plural of *ḥajar*, meaning *stone*, so called because it resists by reason of its hardness; the verb *ḥajara* signifies *he prevented, hindered, forbade*, etc. (LL). By *stones* are here generally understood the idols which the Arabs worshipped, even unwhewn stones being sometimes the objects of worship among them. But the word *hijārah* may bear another significance. According to LA, you say: “Such an one was assailed with the *ḥajar* of the earth,” when his assailant is a formidable man. And when Mu’āwiyah named ‘Amr ibn ‘Ās as one of the two umpires to decide the quarrel between himself and ‘Alī, Aḥnaf said to ‘Alī: “Thou hast had a *ḥajar* (exceedingly sagacious and crafty and politic man) made to be an assailant against thee” (LL). The reference in *hijārah* may, therefore, be to the leaders spoken of in the previous verse, while *nās* would stand for the common people.

25a. Gardens with rivers flowing in them is the ever-recurring description of a future life of the righteous that occurs in the Holy Qur’ān. Elsewhere, the pure word of faith is compared to a tree which gives its fruit in all seasons (14:24). Belief is thus like a seed cast into the ground, growing into a tree and bearing fruit when properly nurtured. The rivers represent the good deeds which are necessary to the growth of the seed. It should be borne in mind that the description of paradise as given in the Holy Qur’ān is expressly stated to be a parable: “A parable of the Garden which is promised to those who keep their duty” (13:35; 47:15). The righteous are spoken of as having gardens in the next life to show that they have made the seed of faith to grow into extensive gardens, and this is in reference to the vast development of their inner self or of the faculties which God has given them.

25b. *Rizq* (lit., *sustenance*) also signifies *ḥazz* or a *portion* (LL). The fruits of the life after death are the consequences of the deeds done in this life.

25c, 25d, see next page.

26 Surely Allāh disdains not to set forth any parable<sup>a</sup> — a gnat or anything above that. Then as for those who believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord; and as for those who disbelieve, they say: What is it that Allāh means by this parable? Many He leaves in error by it and many He leads aright by it. And He leaves in error by it only the transgressors,<sup>b</sup>

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيَ أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً  
فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ  
الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ  
مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا  
وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ

25c. The meaning seems to be that whenever the faithful are made to taste of a portion of the fruits of their good deeds in the life to come, they will find those fruits so much resembling the fruits which they tasted spiritually in this life that they will think that the same fruits are given to them again. Or the words may signify: *This is what was promised to us before. The like of it may signify that the fruits of their deeds will be similar to those deeds.*

25d. The *pure mates* or *companions* may be the believing wives of the faithful, as elsewhere we have: “They and their wives are in shades, reclining on raised couches” (36:56). But more probably these are among the blessings of the heavenly life to which men and women are equally entitled. The true nature of these blessings is pointed out elsewhere under the word *hūr* in 52:20a, but it may be remarked here that all the blessings of heavenly life are according to a saying of the Holy Prophet “*things which no eye has seen and no ear has heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of them*” (B. 59:8). The words in which these blessings are depicted in the Holy Qur’ān, therefore, should not be taken literally.

26a. The parables to which reference is contained in these words are the parables speaking of the weakness of the false deities; see 29:41: “The parable of those who take guardians besides Allāh is as the parable of the spider that makes for itself a house, and surely the frailest of the houses is the spider’s house”; and 22:73: “O people, a parable is set forth, so listen to it. Surely those whom you call upon besides Allāh cannot create a fly though they should all gather for it. And if the fly carry off aught from them, they cannot take it back from it. Weak are (both) the invoker and the invoked.”

Instead of the spider and the fly, however, the gnat is mentioned here because the *ba’ūdāh*, or *the gnat*, is among the Arabs a proverbially weak creature, so that to express the utmost degree of weakness they say, *weaker than the gnat*.

26b. According to R, *iqḏāl* (ordinarily translated as *leading astray*) has a two-fold significance. It means *leading one astray* as well as *finding one as erring*: *aḏlaltu ba’irī* means *I found that my camel had gone astray*. Another significance of the word *aḏalla* is *he adjudged or pronounced him to have gone astray*, as *aḏalla-nī ṣadiqī*, occurring in a verse, is explained as meaning *my friend pronounced me to be in error* (LL). It is said of the Prophet in a ḥadīth that he came to a people *fa-aḏalla-hum*, which does not mean that he led them astray but that he *found them to have gone astray* (N). The same authority quotes other instances of a similar use of the measure *if’āl*, as *aḥmadtu-hū* means, not *I praised him* but, *I found him praiseworthy*, and *abkhaltu-hū* means *I found him parsimonious or avaricious*. It is a plain fact that Allāh guides people or shows them the right way by sending His messengers, and therefore He could not be spoken of as leading them

27 Who break the covenant of Allāh after its confirmation<sup>a</sup> and cut asunder what Allāh has ordered to be joined, and make mischief in the land. These it is that are the losers.

الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ  
وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ  
فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

28 How can you deny Allāh and you were without life and He gave you life? Again, He will cause you to die and again bring you to life, then you shall be brought back to Him.<sup>a</sup>

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ  
ثُمَّ يَمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

29 He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth. And<sup>a</sup> He directed Himself to the heaven, so He made them complete seven heavens;<sup>b</sup> and He is Knower of all things.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا  
ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ  
سَمَوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

astray. And the objects of *idāl* are always the *transgressors* as here, or the *wrong-doers* as in 14:27, or the *prodigal* as in 40:34. And again it is the devil that leads astray as in 28:15, or the transgressors as in 6:119, etc. Hence, when ascribed to God, the word *aqalla* means *He pronounced him to be erring* or *He left him in error*.

27a. The covenant of Allāh referred to here is the evidence of His Unity to which human nature bears witness, as referred to in the next verse, and as stated in 7:172. The confirmation of this covenant is brought about by sending prophets. Cutting off what Allāh has ordered to be joined is the disregard of others' rights.

28a. The first part of the verse contains an argument of the existence of God Who gave life to man, and the second states that death on this earth is not the end of life but the beginning of another, an eternal and a far higher life.

29a. *Thumma* generally denotes *then* or *afterwards*, and it is a particle denoting *order* and *delay*, but there are many examples of its use in which it implies neither order nor delay. According to Akh and other authorities, *thumma* has often the meaning of *wāw*, i.e., *and* (LL). For the statement that the earth was made after the heavens, see 79:30.

29b. It is impossible to deal with the subject of the Quranic cosmogony within the limits of a footnote. But a few suggestions may be made here. In the first place, it should be noted that the word *sab'a*, which signifies the number *seven*, is also used in a vague manner, as meaning *seven*, or *more*, *several* or *many* (LL). According to LA, the Arabic equivalents of the numbers *seven*, *seventy*, and *seven hundred* are all used to indicate a large number by the Arabs: "The mention of *seven* and *seventy* and *seven hundred* is frequent in the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Holy Prophet, and the Arabs used them to signify a large number and multiplicity". Similarly Az explains the word *sab'ina*, meaning *seventy*, as occurring in 9:80, as being "used to signify a large number and multiplicity, not indicating exactness in number" (LA). Hence the seven heavens may signify a large number of heavens. Secondly, the significance of the word *samā'*, which means only what we see *above* us, should not be lost sight of. R makes the meaning very clear when he says: "Every *samā'*, i.e. *heaven*, is a heaven in relation to what is beneath it and an earth in relation to what is above it". Thirdly, in 65:12 it is affirmed that as there are seven heavens so there is a like number of earths, which corroborates

## SECTION 4: Greatness of Man and Need for Revelation

30 And when thy Lord said to the angels,<sup>a</sup> I am going to place a ruler<sup>b</sup> in the earth, they said: Wilt Thou place in it such as make mischief in it and shed blood?<sup>c</sup> And we celebrate

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَ

the conclusion drawn above. Fourthly, the seven heavens are on one occasion called the *seven ways* (23:17), and in this sense the orbit of a planet may be called its *heaven*. In fact, this interpretation makes the significance of 65:12 very clear, for each of the seven earths will thus have a heaven for it. The seven earths together with our earth would thus make up the eight major primary planets of the solar system. Or, the seven heavens may be taken to apply to the whole starry creation, and the reference may in this case be to the seven magnitudes of the stars which may be seen by the naked eye.

One point more may be noted here. The *samā'* or the *heaven* is plainly called *dukhān*, i.e. *smoke* or *vapour*, in 41:11.

30a. The Arabic word for angels is *malā'ikah*, which is the plural of *malak*. It is said to be derived, either from *malaka* which means *he controlled*, and refers to the angels' function of controlling the forces of nature on the physical side of life, or from *alk*, to *send*, the original being in this case *ma'lak*, contracted into *malak*, and refers to the angels' spiritual function of acting as intermediaries between God and man. Both root ideas thus contain a reference to the principal functions ascribed to the angels. The existence of such intermediaries has been recognized by righteous men in all ages and all countries.

It will also be seen, from what has been said above as to the functions of the angelic beings, that Allāh's saying to them is really the expression of an intention which is to be brought into execution. It is not a conversation, or a consultation with the angels; it is an expression of the Divine will to those intermediary beings who are entrusted by the Divine Being with the execution of it. It may also be added that by the angels here are meant the angels entrusted with this particular affair, not all the angels of the universe (IJ).

30b. This shows the high place that man was destined to hold in the whole of creation. The original word *khalīfah* (from *khalafa*, meaning *he came after* or *succeeded another that had perished or died*), means primarily a *successor*, and hence *the supreme* or *the greatest ruler who supplies the place of him who has been before him* (T, LL). IMsd and I'Ab explain *khalīfah* as meaning *one who judges among, or rules, the creatures of Allāh by His command* (IJ). What is stated here is an allegorical description of the preference of man above the whole of the creation on this earth, and then of the election of those righteous servants of Allāh from among men themselves who lead others into the right path. One of the significances suggested by the commentators is that the word *khalīfah* here refers to the *children of Adam*, i.e., *the whole of mankind*. The correctness of this view is corroborated by the Qur'ān itself, which says, referring to the whole of mankind: "and He it is Who has made you successors in the land (or rulers in the earth)" (6:165), the word used for *rulers* being *khalā'if*, plural of *khalīfah*. Hence the reference here seems to be to the whole of mankind. References to Adam are contained in 2:30–39 and in 3:59; 7:11–25; 15:28–44; 17:61–65; 18:50; 20:115–124 and 38:71–85.

30c. God declares His will to the angels, the controlling forces of nature, to create man who is meant to rule the forces of nature, and to whom, therefore, power to rule is to be delegated. Being entrusted with such great powers, man could use them rightly or wrongly, and it is to this fear of abuse of power that the angels give expression, they themselves being only executors of Divine will in which they have no choice. The concluding words of this verse show that God knew that man would abuse the power given to him, but He also knew that he would turn it to good use as well. The whole history of

Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.<sup>d</sup>  
He said: Surely I know what you  
know not.

نُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَتْ إِنَّيَ أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

31 And He taught Adam<sup>a</sup> all the  
names,<sup>b</sup> then presented them to the  
angels; He said: Tell Me the names  
of those if you are right.<sup>c</sup>

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ  
فَقَالَ أُنَبِّئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

32 They said: Glory be to Thee! we  
have no knowledge but that which  
Thou hast taught us. Surely Thou art  
the Knowing, the Wise.

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا ط إِنَّكَ  
أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٥٢﴾

33 He said: O Adam, inform them  
of their names. So when he informed  
them of their names, He said: Did I

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَكَلَّمْنَا الْبَنَاتِمْ  
بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَت لَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنَّيَ أَعْلَمُ غَيْبٌ

man is briefly written in this one verse. Man is the greatest killer on this earth but he also turns the gifts of God to the best use. The angels speak of the darker side of the picture of humanity, but to God was known the brighter side as well as the darker side of this picture. Hence the words, *I know what you know not*.

30d. While giving expression to the darker side of the picture of humanity, these intermediaries declare that this could not be the Divine purpose, for *God is free from all imperfections*, such being the significance of *tasbiḥ* (LL), generally rendered as *declaring the glory of God*.

31a. Adam is generally taken to be the proper name for the first man, but neither here nor anywhere else in the Holy Qur'ān is it affirmed that Adam was the first man or that there was no creation before him. On the other hand, great Muslim theologians have held that there were many Adams — thousands of Adams — before the great ancestor of mankind known by this name (RM). As the previous verse shows, the whole of humanity is spoken of here because the shedding of blood could not be the work of one man; the reference is to the shedding of the blood of man by man. Adam, therefore, though it may also be the name of a particular man, stands for man generally.

31b. Explaining *asmā'*, which literally signifies *names* (being plural of *ism*, meaning a *name*), Rz says: "He taught him the attributes of things and their descriptions and their characteristics, for the attributes of a thing are indicative of its nature". Teaching Adam the names therefore signifies the vast capability of man and the superiority of his knowledge to that of the angels. Or, the reference may be to the faculty of speech, which is the real source of the excellence of man above the whole of creation. To this the Holy Qur'ān refers elsewhere too: "He created man, taught him (the mode of) expression" (55:3, 4).

31c. Man's superiority to the angels is made clear here. The angels were not gifted with the knowledge which was given to man, and the gift of knowledge was the greatest gift of God. The form of dialogue is kept up to indicate eternal truths. Man might be a maker of mischief and a shedder of blood, but he possessed vast capability for knowledge, and hence the angels' estimate of man, which looked only to the darker side of the picture, was not a right estimate. Evil there might be in him, but the good was preponderant.

Note that *ṣidq* (lit., *truth*) sometimes signifies *ṣawāb*, or *that which is right*, as *kidḥb* (lit., *falsehood*) sometimes signifies *khaṭa'*, i.e., *that which is wrong* (Rz).

not say to you that I know what is unseen in the heavens and the earth? And I know what you manifest and what you hide.<sup>a</sup>

السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

**34** And when We said to the angels, Be submissive to Adam,<sup>a</sup> they submitted, but Iblis<sup>b</sup> (did not).<sup>c</sup> He refused and was proud, and he was one of the disbelievers.<sup>d</sup>

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

33a. “What you hide” refers to those great qualities in man which preponderate the evil in him, and which remain hidden until they are made manifest through the Divine gift of knowledge. The immense capability of man for progress remains hidden, while the evil of shedding blood is manifested in a very primary stage in his growth.

34a. *Sajada* is really synonymous with *khad'a*, i.e., *he was lowly or submissive* (LL). In the Holy Qur'ān, the word is frequently used to signify simple submission. And you also say, *sajada la-hū*, meaning *he saluted him or he paid respect or honour to him* (LL).

What is the significance of the angels being submissive to Adam? In the first place, it must be remembered that Adam throughout this section stands for man generally; so submission is not limited to one particular man; it is to man generally. Secondly, it has already been shown that man has a superiority over the angels on account of his great gift of knowledge of things, the angels being the controlling powers of the forces of nature. By his knowledge man could harness the forces of nature and exercise control over them; in other words, the angels submitted to him.

34b. *Iblis* was not one of the angels: “He was of the jinn, so he transgressed” (18:50). In v. 36 he is called Satan. It should be borne in mind that *Iblis* and Satan (Ar. *shaiṭān*) refer to one and the same being. The word *Iblis* is used when the Evil one's evil is limited to himself, and Satan, when his evil affects others besides himself; or *Iblis* is the proud one, and Satan the deceiver. *Iblis* is derived from *balasa*, meaning *he despaired*, and *Shaiṭān* from *shaṭana*, meaning *he became distant or remote*. The same entity is thus mentioned under two different names; he is called *Iblis* because he despairs of the mercy of God and *Shaiṭān* because he allures others to do things which remove them further off from Divine mercy. *Iblis* therefore stands for the lower desires which keep man off from bowing before God and seeking His mercy, and Satan incites the low desires of man to lead others away from the path of rectitude.

What is the significance underlying the refusal of *Iblis* to submit to man? As shown in the last footnote, the angels' submission meant that man could control the forces of nature by his knowledge of things; he could conquer nature. But he himself was a part of nature, and he could not conquer his own evil desires. His advancement lay in two directions, the conquest of nature and the conquest of his own self. He could attain the first end by the power of knowledge with which he was gifted, but the higher end, the conquest of self, needed yet another act of Divine mercy, the sending of Divine Revelation; and this is explained in this story of Adam in v. 38.

34c. The thing excepted by means of *illā* (lit., *except*) is in some cases disunited in kind from that from which the exception is made, and the statement which follows *illā* is, therefore, a new statement altogether cut off from the first. Therefore instead of adopting the ordinary rendering, *with the exception of Iblis*, I adopt *but Iblis did not*.

34d, see next page

35 And We said: O Adam, dwell thou and thy wife in the garden,<sup>a</sup> and eat from it a plenteous (food)<sup>b</sup> whenever you wish, and approach not this tree,<sup>c</sup> lest you be of the unjust.

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ  
وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا  
هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

36 But the devil made them slip from it,<sup>a</sup> and caused them to depart from the state in which they were. And We said: Go forth,<sup>b</sup> some of you are the enemies of others. And there

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا  
فِيهِ ۖ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ

34d. Note that he refused to submit because he was a disbeliever, which further corroborates the statement that he was not one of the angels.

35a. The garden spoken of in this verse was on this earth, as it was on the earth that man was placed. It was certainly not the paradise to which men go after death, and from which they will never be expelled (15:48). The placing in the garden signifies leading a life of ease and comfort, as is shown by the words that follow: “Eat from it a plenteous food wherever you wish”. And more clearly still, the life in the garden is thus described in 20:117–119: “So let him not drive you both out of the garden so that thou art unhappy. Surely it is granted to thee therein that thou art not hungry, nor naked. And that thou art not thirsty therein, nor exposed to the sun’s heat”. And now, as it were, to complete the picture of happiness, the woman is brought in, and both Adam and his wife are made to dwell in the garden, though there is no mention of the wife in what has gone before. All this shows that life in the garden meant a life of comfort, ease and happiness.

35b. *Raghad* here either qualifies an understood noun, and the meaning is *a plenteous food*, or it is indicative of the condition of Adam and Eve, and the words may thus be rendered: *Eat from it wherever you wish, having abundance of all things*.

35c. According to the Bible, the tree which Adam was forbidden to approach was the tree of knowledge of good and evil; the Qur’ān does not say so. On the other hand, where the devil deceives man, he calls it “the tree of immortality” (20:120). It was therefore just the opposite of what the devil stated it to be. It was the tree of death, the spiritual death of man — the tree of evil. Adam undoubtedly stands for man in the whole of this description, and it is evil which man is again and again forbidden to approach, and it is evil against which all prophets of God have warned men. In the Qur’ān, it is always called *this tree*, which further shows that it was something which was known to man, and there is not the least doubt that not only has man been warned against evil throughout his history, but hatred for evil is also innate in him. That man hates evil by nature is shown by the fact that every man condemns evil when it is done by another. As regards the figurative use of the word *tree*, compare 14:24–26, where a good word is likened to “a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are high, yielding its fruit in every season”, and an evil word is likened to “an evil tree pulled up from the earth’s surface; it has no stability”. The order to eat from the earth a plenteous food but not to approach evil is really a description of what pure human nature is. Man is entitled to all the benefits of nature to maintain the body, to harness the forces of nature for his physical comforts and happiness, so long as he does not forget his soul. It is an order not to pamper the body at the expense of the soul, but it is as yet an order innate in human nature, not an order given by Divine Revelation — the need for revelation comes on later.

36a, 36b, see next page.

is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time.<sup>c</sup>

فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

**37** Then Adam received (revealed) words from his Lord, and He turned to him (mercifully).<sup>a</sup> Surely He is Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.

فَتَلَقَّىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٣٧﴾

36a. *Azalla* (translated as *made them slip*) is derived from *zall*, to *slip* (foot or tongue) *unintentionally* (R), and *zallat* is a *fault committed unintentionally* (R). *Azallahumā* therefore means the devil *made them commit a fault unintentionally*. The result was that they were made to depart from the happy condition in which they were. The lesson taught here is that real happiness lies in peace of mind, so that when the peace of mind is disturbed by committing an evil, even if it be unintentional, physical happiness does not avail a man.

How did the devil do it? Here the Qur’ān again contradicts the Bible. It was not the serpent that misled Eve, nor did Eve mislead Adam. The devil cast an evil suggestion into the minds of both Adam and Eve, as he casts evil suggestions into the mind of every son and daughter of Adam and Eve: “But the devil made an evil suggestion to them that he might make manifest to them that which had been hidden from them of their shame” (7:20).

36b. *Habṭ* sometimes means *going down a declivity*, or *descending from a high place to a low one*, but its more frequent use in literature is simply in the sense of *removing from one place to another*, as in *ihbiṭū miṣr-an* (2:61), which means *go to*, or *enter into*, a city. It also signifies simply change in condition. According to LL, *habaṭa* means *he came forth from it* and also *he became lowered or degraded*. And *habṭ* further signifies *falling into evil*; or *becoming low or abject*; or *suffering loss or diminution*. This loss or suffering is brought about by means of indulgence in evil.

The new condition in which man finds himself by submitting to his low desires is the condition of the mutual enmity of one to the other, the tyranny of man to man being undoubtedly the greatest evil which man can commit. The use of the words “some of you are the enemies of others” shows clearly that this address is not to Adam and Eve alone, but to all mankind or man in general.

36c. The words “an abode and a provision for a time” refer to man’s span of life on earth, which is limited as compared with the eternal life of the next world.

37a. The Arabic word *taubah* (*repentance*) gives us in fact the philosophy of repentance. *Tāba* originally means *he returned*, and hence the primary meaning of *tāba il-Allāhi* is *he returned to Allāh*. In religious terminology the word *taubah* comes to mean *returning to a state of obedience*. Thus *taubah* implies a perfect change in the course of one’s life, and this is repentance according to the Holy Qur’ān. It is not an utterance of certain words, but an actual *change* for the better. The same word *tāba* is used to express the Divine act of the acceptance of repentance, with reference again to the original meaning of the word, because in this case the Divine Being deals with man mercifully.

*Kalimāt* (*words*) here means *the revealed words of God*. Man is found too weak to overcome the evil suggestions of the devil or the evil inclinations in him, however strong he may be to conquer the forces of nature. So God comes to his help and reveals Himself to him. He sends down revelation which, strengthening his faith in God, gives him the strength to overcome the devil and reject his suggestions.

38 We said: Go forth from this (state) all. Surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.<sup>a</sup>

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ  
مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ تَّبِعَ هُدَاىَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ  
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

39 And (as to) those who disbelieve in and reject Our messages,<sup>a</sup> they are the companions of the Fire; in it they will abide.<sup>b</sup>

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ  
النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

### SECTION 5: Israelite Prophecies fulfilled in Qur'ān

40 O Children of Israel, call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and be faithful to (your)

يٰٓبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ  
عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أَوْفٍ بِعَهْدِكُمْ

38a. This section is now closed with the statement of a general law that Divine Revelation will be granted to the whole of humanity and prophets will appear everywhere from time to time, and that it would be by following the Guidance sent by God through His prophets that men will attain to perfection. This state of perfection is described as a state in which “no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve”. The man who truly follows the Divine Revelation shall have no fear of the devil misleading him, for he has subjugated his devil, nor shall he grieve that he wasted the opportunity given him in this life, for he turned it to the best use.

39a. The word *āyat* (plural *āyāt*), which occurs for the first time here, is of very frequent occurrence in the Holy Qur'ān and conveys a number of significances. The primary meaning of *āyat* is an *apparent sign or mark* (R), by which a thing is known. Hence it comes to signify a *sign* as meaning an *indication or evidence or proof* (T, LL). In this sense it signifies what is called a *mu'jizah* or a *miracle*, instead of which the Holy Qur'ān always uses the word *āyat*, thus showing that the miracles of which it speaks are not *wonders* but actual *evidence or proof* of the truth of a prophet. But the most frequent use of the word *āyat* in the Holy Qur'ān is to signify a *message or a communication* and it is in this sense that the word is applied to a verse of the Holy Qur'ān, i.e., a *collection of the words of the Holy Qur'ān continued to its breaking, or a portion of the Qur'ān after which a suspension of the speech is approvable* (T, LL). But it generally retains the wider significance of a *sign or a mark, or a Divine message or a Divine communication*.

39b. As against those who attain to perfection by following the Divine message, the people spoken of in this verse are those who not only disbelieve but also exert their utmost to oppose revealed truth and uproot it. Such people are described as companions of the Fire. They keep company with evil in this life, so the fire becomes their companion in the next to purge them of the evil consequences of their evil deeds. Their hearts burn with evil passions in this life, and it is this very fire that assumes a palpable shape in the next.

*Khalada* signifies originally *he remained or abode, or remained or abode long*, being synonymous with *aqāma* (A). Hence you say *khawālid* (plural of *khālid*), meaning *the three stones upon which the cooking-pot is placed*, so called because of their remaining for a

covenant with Me, I shall fulfil (My) covenant with you;<sup>a</sup> and Me, Me alone, should you fear.

وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ ④

**41** And believe in that which I have revealed, verifying that which is with you,<sup>a</sup> and be not the first to deny it; neither take a mean price<sup>b</sup> for My messages; and keep your duty to Me, Me alone.

وَآمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُونُوا أُولَ الْأَوَّلِينَ كَافِرِينَ بِهِ ۚ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۚ وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُونِ ④

**42** And mix not up truth with falsehood, nor hide the truth while you know.<sup>a</sup>

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ④

long time after the standing relics of a house have become effaced (LL). Therefore *khālidiān* signifies simply *abiding*, and does not necessarily convey the idea of perpetuity.

40a. After speaking of the need of Divine Revelation, the Qur'ān now speaks of a nation to whom this favour was granted, among whom many prophets were raised and who were also made rulers in the earth: "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" (5:20). The Jewish people who are addressed here are generally mentioned as Children of Israel, Israel being the other name of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham.

As for the covenants spoken of here, see Deut. 26:17–19: "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken unto His voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all His commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour". The "hearkening unto the voice of the Lord" means the acceptance of the revelation to the promised prophet of Deut. 18:18, as Deut. 18:19 shows clearly: "And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him".

41a. The verification referred to here is clearly the fulfilment of the promise contained in Deut. 18:15–18: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken .... I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him". It is nowhere but in the Holy Qur'ān that the "word of God", as promised here, is "put into the Prophet's mouth", and no prophet ever claimed to have come in fulfilment of this prophecy except the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. The whole of the Israelite history after Moses is silent as to the appearance of the promised prophet of Deut. Even Jesus Christ never said that he came in fulfilment of that prophecy and his apostles truly felt that difficulty when they thought that that prophecy would be fulfilled in the second coming of Christ. But one of the earliest messages of the Holy Prophet was that he was the like of the prophet sent to Pharaoh (73:15), and the claim is often repeated in the Holy Qur'ān.

41b. The religious leaders are specially addressed in this section. They rejected the truth which the Prophet brought, fearing to lose their high position as leaders. They thus sacrificed truth to the inducements of this life, and took "a mean price" for it.

42a, see next page.

43 And keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate<sup>a</sup> and bow down with those who bow down.

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا  
مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

44 Do you enjoin men to be good and neglect your own souls while you read the Book? Have you then no sense?<sup>a</sup>

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ  
وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

45 And seek assistance through patience and prayer,<sup>a</sup> and this is hard except for the humble ones,

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ  
إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

46 Who know<sup>a</sup> that they will meet their Lord and that to Him they will return.

الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ  
إِلَيْهِ لَرَجِعُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

#### SECTION 6: Divine Favours on Israel

47 O Children of Israel, call to mind My favour which I bestowed

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا النِّعْمَةَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ

42a. It is again the religious leaders who are spoken of here: "Mixing up the truth with falsehood" signifies their *mixing up the prophecy with their own false interpretations of it*, and thus making obscure the prophecy itself, while "hiding the truth" signifies their *concealing the prophecy itself*, for they often commanded their followers not to disclose to the Muslims those prophecies which were known to them. Compare v. 76. Or, by the *truth* is meant that which was revealed to their prophets, and by *falsehood* their own ideas which they mixed up with Divine Revelation.

43a. These are the two fundamental principles of religion, worship of God through prayer to Him, and service of humanity or helping the poor.

44a. The leaders enjoined their followers to be good because they could not remain leaders otherwise, but their own lives were corrupt. They read the Book and yet they did not follow it; how could the ignorant masses benefit by their preaching?

45a. A sign of the promised prophet of Deut. 18:18 was that he would utter prophecies which would prove true. "And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:21, 22). The Qur'ān had in the Prophet's utter helplessness at Makkah, and when the Quraish were day and night planning to take away his very life, uttered forcible predictions of the final triumph of the Prophet and of the vanquishment and discomfiture of his opponents, and those prophecies were now being fulfilled. They were, therefore, asked to wait until the Truth shone out in its full resplendence and to seek Divine help through prayer.

46a. *Zann* signifies *thought, opinion or conjecture*, and also *knowledge or certainty* which "is obtained by considering with endeavour to understand, not by ocular perception, or not such as relates to an object of sense" (LL).

on you and that I made you excel the nations.<sup>a</sup>

عَلَيْكُمْ وَإِنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

**48** And guard yourselves against a day when no soul will avail another in the least,<sup>a</sup> neither will intercession be accepted on its behalf,<sup>b</sup> nor will compensation be taken from it, nor will they be helped.

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا  
وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا  
عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

**49** And when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people, who subjected you to severe torment,<sup>a</sup> killing your sons and sparing your women,<sup>b</sup> and in this there was a great trial from your Lord.

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِنَ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءًا  
الْعَدَاةِ ابْنِ إِدْرِيسَ ابْنِ إِدْرِيسَ ابْنِ إِدْرِيسَ  
وَفِي ذَلِكَ بَلَاءٌ مِّنْ سَرِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

47a. By "the nations" are meant *the people contemporaneous with the Israelites in their days of triumph, or large masses of people* (AH). Numerous prophets were raised among them, and they were made to rule in the earth, and these are the favours of which Moses also reminds them (5:20).

48a. The Jewish religious leaders are specially addressed in the previous section. The masses who followed them blindly are now told that their leaders will not avail them aught on the great day of Reckoning when every soul is held responsible for what it did.

48b. *Shafā'at* (meaning *intercession*) is derived from the root *shaf'*, which signifies *the making a thing to be one of a pair* (T, LL) or *the adjoining a thing to its like* (R), and hence it comes to signify *intercession*. The doctrine of *shafā'at* or intercession is a well-known doctrine, according to which the prophets and the righteous will intercede for the sinners on the day of Judgment. But intercession has another significance also, which is referred to in 4:85, viz., the institution of a way which another imitates, so that the latter, in fact, joins himself to his model, and this is really the primary significance of *shafā'at*. Thus *shafā'at* has a twofold significance, viz., firstly it enables a man to walk in the ways of righteousness by imitating his model, and, secondly, it affords him a shelter from the evil consequences of certain weaknesses which he is unable to overcome by himself.

The statement made here, that intercession shall not be accepted on a certain day, is in reference to those who have not made themselves deserving of intercession by joining themselves with a righteous servant of God, so as to take him for their model. It is only people who have done their best to follow a righteous servant of God and failed in some respects owing to mortal weaknesses that can benefit by intercession, not those who pay no regard at all to Divine commandments.

49a. No details of the oppressions to which the Israelites were subjected are given in the Holy Qur'ān. According to the Bible: "They did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens" (Exod. 1:11); "And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour" (Exod. 1:14).

49b. See Exod. 1:15–18 and also 1:22: "And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive". The object was to demoralize and extirpate the Israelites.