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THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER
CHAPTER 8
SURAH AL-ANFAL

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

008

SURAH AL-ANFAL

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Introduction and Summary

In the previous Introductions to Surahs we have shown how each Surah is a step or gradation in the teaching of the Quran. The first seven Surahs, comprising a little less than one-third of the Quran, form a gradation, sketching the early spiritual history of man and leading up to the formation of the new Ummah or Community of the Holy Messenger. Now we begin another gradation, consolidation that Ummah and directing us as to various phases in our new collective life.

In this chapter we have the lessons of the Battle of Badr enforced in their larger aspects;

1. the question of war booty;
2. the true virtues necessary for fighting the good fight;
3. victory against odds;
4. clemency and consideration for one's own and for others in the hour of victory.

As regards booty taken in battle,

- the first point to note is that that should never be our aim in war. It is only an adventitious circumstances, a sort of windfall.
- Secondly, no soldier or troop has any inherent right to it. A righteous war is a community affair, and any accessions resulting from it belong to Allah, or the community or Cause.
- Thirdly, certain equitable principles of division should be laid down to check human greed and selfishness.

A fifth share goes to the Commander, and he can use it at his discretion; for his own expenses, and for the relief of the poor and suffering, and the orphans and widows (8:41).

The remainder was divided, according to the Prophet's practice, not only among those who were actually in the fight physically, but all who were in the enterprise, young and old, provided they loyally did some duty assigned to them.

- Fourthly, there should be no disputes, as they interfere with internal discipline and harmony.

These principles are followed in the best modern practice of civilized nations. All acquisitions of war belong absolutely to the Sovereign as representing the commonwealth. In the distribution of booty not only the actual captors but also the "joint captors" and the "constructive captors" share. See Sir R. Phillimore's International Law (1885), vol, 3, pp. 209-10, 221-24.

As regards the military virtues, which are the types of virtuous throughout life, we are shown by an analysis of the incidents of Badr how against the greatest odds, Allah's help will give victory if men are fighting not for themselves but for the sacred Cause

of Allah. And directions are given for the treatment of prisoners and for maintaining the solidarity of the Muslim community.

The date of this Surah is shortly after the battle of Badr, which was fought on Friday, the 17th of Ramadan in the second year of the Hijrah. A short account of the battle is given in n. 352 to 3:13.

Summary- All booty is really at the disposal of Allah's Messenger under directions from Allah. Men of faith accept and obey these directions with cheerfulness. Victory and the prize of victory come from Allah, as was proved at Badr (8:1-19, and C.89).

Obedience and intelligent discipline, zeal, faith, and gratitude to Allah, are the true passports to success and protection from the assaults of evil. Evil will be piled up with evil and destroyed (8:20-37, and C.90).

The battle of Badr was a testing time, and showed how virtue and valour can conquer against odds. Steadfastness and obedience; faith, courage, and fearlessness; due preparation and free expenditure of resources and energy—these expected from you by Allah, and His help is all-sufficient (8:38-64, and C.91).

Even tenfold odds against you do not count if you are fighting for truth and faith against enemies of truth and faith; but remember clemency and consideration in the hour of victory (8:65-75, and C.92).

C.89 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(8:1-19)

*Fight the good fight, but dispute not
About the prize: that is for Allah
To give. Men of faith act and obey.
'Tis nobler to fight for Truth
Than to seek worldly grain.*

*To the pure in faith Allah will give
The mind and the resources to conquer.
They but fight, with no thought
Of ever turning back; the victory
Should be ascribed to Allah, not men.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَنْفَالِ...

1. They ask thee concerning (things taken as) spoils of war.

C1178. The occasion was the question of the division of the booty after the battle of Badr- See [Introduction to this Surah](#).

...قُلِ الْأَنْفَالُ لِلّٰهِ وَالرَّسُولِ...

Say:

"(such) spoils are at the disposal of Allah and the Messenger:

C1179. Booty taken in a lawful and just war. It belongs to the Cause, in this case the Cause of Allah, as administered by His Messenger. The chief thing is to remain staunch to the Cause of Allah, and have no differences among those who stand for the Cause.

Our internal relations must be kept straight: they must not be disturbed by cupidity or worldly considerations of gain, for any windfalls of this kind should be outside our calculations.

...فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَأَصْلِحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ...

so fear Allah, and keep straight the relations between yourselves:

...وَأَطِيعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١)

obey Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe."

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ...

2. For, believers are those who,

- when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts,

...وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا...

- and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened,

...وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٢)

- and put (all) their trust in their Lord.

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ (٣)

3. - Who establish regular prayers

- and spend (freely) out of the gifts We have given them for sustenance:

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا...

4. Such in truth are the believers:

...أَلَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٤)

they have grades of dignity with their Lord, and forgiveness, and generous sustenance.

C1180. Sustenance: again in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. The object is to warn off from the love of booty and worldly wealth.

Why do we want these?

To all true Believers Allah gives generous sustenance in any case, in both senses, but especially in the spiritual sense, for it is coupled with forgiveness and grades of dignity before Allah' in the next verse.

كَمَا أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَارِهُونَ (٥)

5. Just as thy Lord ordered thee out of thy house in truth even though a party among the believers disliked it.

C1181. Just as: the comparison takes us back to the first clause in verse 4: "such in truth are the Believers"-

just as thy Lord also is just and true in ordering thee out to fight against heavy odds, when the alternative was to fight against the unarmed caravan which would have given thee abundant booty almost without a fight.

To appreciate the full meaning, remember that the word **haqq**, translated "truth" means also "right just", "what is becoming."

The true Believers believe in truth and do right in obedience to Allah's command. So Allah also, in asking them to fight against odds, is not asking them to rush to destruction, but is providing them with an opportunity of vindicating the truth in scorn of worldly advantage. And He made good His promise by giving them victory.

يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَمَا تَبَيَّنَ...

6. Disputing with thee concerning the truth after it was made manifest,

...كَأَلَمَّا يُسَافِرُونَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ (٦)

as if they were being driven to death and they (actually) saw it.

C1182. In verse 6 we have again the word "truth": some of the Believers disputed concerning "the truth": they did not feel sure that the course recommended was the right course.

They thought it would be certain destruction: they saw death almost staring them in the face.

وَإِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللَّهُ إِحْدَى الطَّائِفَتَيْنِ أَنَّهَا لَكُمْ ...

7. Behold! Allah promised you one of the two (enemy) parties, that it should be yours:

C1183. Just before Badr there were two alternatives before the Muslims in Madinah to save themselves from being overwhelmed by the Makkan Quraish with all their resources from the rich Syrian trade.

- One, which had least danger for the time being, and also promised much booty, was to fall upon the

Quraish caravan returning from Syria to Makkah richly laden, and led by Abu Sufyan with only 40 men unarmed. From a worldly point of view this was the safest and most lucrative course.

- The other alternative, was to leave the booty out boldly against the well-armed and well-equipped Quraish army of 1,000 men coming from Makkah.

The Muslims had no more than 300 men, ill-armed, to oppose this force. But if they could defeat it, it would shake the selfish autocracy which was in possession of Makkah.

By Allah's help they won a splendid victory, and the standard of Truth was established, never to be lowered again.

...وَتَوَدُّونَ أَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوْكَةِ تَكُونُ لَكُمْ...

ye wished that the one unarmed should be yours,

...وَيُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُحَقِّقَ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَيَقَطَعَ دَابِرَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧)

but Allah willed to justify the truth according to His words, and to cut off the roots of the unbelievers.

لِيُحَقِّقَ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٨)

8. That He might justify and prove falsehood false, distasteful though it be to those in guilt.

إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ...

9. Remember ye implored the assistance of your Lord, and He answered you:

...أَنْتِي مُمِدُّكُمْ بِأَلْفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرَدِّينَ (٩)

"I will assist you with a thousand of the angels, ranks on ranks."

C1184. Cf. 3:123, 125, 126.

The number of angels, a thousand at Badr and three thousand and five thousand at Uhud, is equal to the strength of the enemy.

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ...

10. Allah made it but a message of hope, and an assurance to your heart:

...وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ...

(in any case) there is no help except from Allah:

C1185. All help comes ultimately from Allah. In special cases it may take special forms to put heart into us, and to fit in with our feelings and our psychology.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (١٠)

and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

Section 2

إِذْ يُغَشِّيكُمُ النُّعَاسَ أَمَنَةً مِّنْهُ ...

11. Remember He covered you with a sort of drowsiness, to give you calm as from Himself,

C1186. Cf. 3:154 for Uhud.

Calm (presence of mind) is essential in battle and in all posts of danger. If the mind is too much in a state of excitement, it cannot carry out a well-considered or well-concerted plan. This spirit of calm confidence on the part of tile Muslims won against the blustering violence of the Quraysh.

... وَيُنَزِّلُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً ...

and He caused rain to descend on you from heaven,

C1187. The rain was welcome for many reasons.

- Water was scarce both for drinking and ablutions;
- the Muslim band, without baggage or equipment or comforts, found that their thirst aggravated their fatigue;
- the sand was loose, and the rain consolidated it and enabled them "to plant their feet firmly."

...لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ رَجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ...

- to clean you therewith,
- to remove from you the stain of Satan,

C1188. "Stain of Satan": Dirt is physically a symbol of evil, and the Muslims were particular about ablutions before prayer. But the rain also refreshed their spirits and removed any lurking doubts in their minds (suggestions of the Evil) that victory might be impossible in such adverse circumstances.

...وَلِيُرْبِطَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيَبَيِّنَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ (١١)

- to strengthen your hearts, and
- to plant your feet firmly therewith.

إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

12. Remember thy Lord inspired the angels (with the message):

"I am with you: give firmness to the believers:

سَأَلْفِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرَّعْبَ...

I will instill terror into the hearts of the unbelievers:

...فَأَضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ وَأَضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ (١٢)

smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them."

C1189. The vulnerable parts of an armed man are above the neck. A blow on the neck, face or head, finishes him off.

If he has armour it is difficult to get at his heart. But if his hands are put out of action, he is unable to wield his sword or lance or other weapon, and easily becomes a prisoner.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ...

13. This because they contended against Allah and His Messenger:

... وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (١٣)

if any contend against Allah and His Messenger, Allah is strict in punishment.

ذَلِكُمْ فَذُوقُوهُ...

14. Thus (will it be said):

"Taste ye then of the (punishment):

...وَأَنَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ (١٤)

for those who resist Allah, is the penalty of the fire."

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

15. O ye who believe!

...إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحَفًا فَلَا تُلُوهُمُ الْأُدْبَارَ (١٥)

when ye meet the unbelievers in hostile array, never turn your backs to them.

C1190. The laws of Jihad are exactly similar to those enforced by military virtue and discipline. Meet your enemy fairly and squarely, not rashly, but after due preparation.

Zahfan in the text (meeting in hostile array) implies a slow and well-planned proceeding towards a hostile army. When once in combat, carry it through: there is no room for second thoughts.

Death or victory should be the motto of every soldier: it may be death for himself individually, but if he has faith, there is triumph in either case for his cause.

Two exceptions are recognised:

- reculer pour mieux sauter, to go back in order to jump forward; or
to deceive the enemy by a feint;
- if an individual or body is, by the chances of battle, isolated from his own force, he can fall back on his force in order to fight the battle.

There is no virtue in mere single-handedness. Each individual must use his life and his resources to the best advantage for the common cause.

وَمَنْ يُؤَلِّمْهُم يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهُ إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِقِتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّرًا إِلَى فِتْنَةٍ...

16. If any do turn his back to them on such a day
unless it be in a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a troop (of his own)

...فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ...

He draws on himself the wrath of Allah, and his abode is Hell,

...وَبَيْتَ الْمَصِيرِ (١٦)

and evil refuge (indeed)!

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ...

17. It is not ye who slew them;
it was Allah:

...وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى...

when thou threwest (a handful of dust), it was not thy act, but Allah's:

C1191. When the battle began, the Holy Prophet prayed, and threw a handful of dust or sand at the enemy, which, as described in traditions, struck the eyes of the enemy.

This had a great psychological effect. Every act in the battle is ascribed to Allah, a it was in His cause and it was not undertaken except by His command. (R).

...وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلَاءً حَسَنًا...

in order that He might test the believers by a gracious trial from Himself:

C1192. Numerically the odds against the Muslims were three to one. In other ways they were at a disadvantage: of arms and equipment they had but little, while the enemy were well-found: they were inexperienced, while the Quraish had brought their foremost warriors.

In all this there was a test, but the test was accompanied by gracious favours of countless value:

- their Commander was one in whom they had perfect faith, and for whom they were ready to lay down their lives;
- the rain refreshed them;
- their spirit was unshaken; and
- they were fighting in Allah's cause.

Thus the trial or test became itself a blessing.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٧)

for Allah is He who heareth and knoweth (all things).

ذَلِكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُوهِنُ كَيْدِ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٨)

18. That, and also because Allah is He who makes feeble the plans and stratagems of the unbelievers.

إِنْ تَسْتَفْتِحُوا فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْفَتْحُ وَإِنْ تَنْتَهُوا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ...

19. (O unbelievers!) if ye prayed for victory and judgment, now hath the judgment come to you:

C1193. Fath: victory, decision, judgment.

The Quraish in Makkah had prayed for victory: they were confident that their superior numbers, equipment, and experience would be decisive.

With a play on the word, they are told that the decision had come, and the victory-but not in the sense they had hoped for!

if ye desist (from wrong), it will be best for you:

...وَإِنْ تَعُودُوا نَعُدْ...

if ye return (to the attack) so shall We.

...وَلَنْ نُعْطِيَ عَنْكُمْ فِئَتِكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَوْ كَثُرَتْ...

Not the least good will your forces be to you even if they were multiplied:

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٩)

for verily Allah is with those who believe.

C.90 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(8:20-37)

*Be ready to obey Allah's call, and to hold
All else as naught: He will give you
The light, turn away all evil from you,
And forgive you your sins and shortcomings.
Ever keep in remembrance His mercies and grace.
The godless may try to keep men
From Allah, but they will not thrive:
They will be hurled together to destruction.*

Section 3

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ...

20. O ye who believe!
obey Allah and His Messenger,

...وَلَا تَوَلُّوا عَنْهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُونَ (٢٠)

and turn not away from him when ye hear (him speak).

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ (٢١)

21. Nor be like those who say,
"We hear," but listen not:

C1194. Cf. 2:93.

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ ...

22. For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb,

C1195. Cf. 2:18.

... الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٢٢)

those who understand not.

وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا لَأَسْمَعَهُمْ...

23. If Allah had found in them any good, He would indeed have made them listen;

...وَلَوْ أَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ (٢٣)

(as it is), if He had made them listen, they would but have turned back and declined (faith).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ...

24. O ye who believe!

give your response to Allah and His Messenger, when He calleth you to that which will give you life;

C1196. There are two points to note.

1. Note that after Allah and His Messenger are mentioned, the pronoun and verb in the next clause are singular:

everything that Allah's Messenger put forward as an injunction came by inspiration from Allah:

the Messenger made his will coincide completely with Allah's will.

2. We are asked actively to give our response in deed and life to the call of duty and conscience, for that call leads to real life, the life eternal, even though it may apparently mean in this world the loss of things that make life dear or the loss of life itself.

If we refer this to Jihad, i.e., fighting in and for the Cause, both literally and metaphorically, the meaning becomes quite clear.

...وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ...

and know that Allah cometh in between a man and his heart,

C1197. If the human heart is refractory and refuses to obey the call of Allah, that is not the end of the matter. Allah has to be reckoned with. The refusal may be because there was some pet human scheme which the heart of man was not willing to give up for Allah's Cause.

Will that scheme come to fruition by refusing to serve the higher Cause?

By no means. Man proposes, but God disposes.

If the scheme or motive was perfectly secret from men, it was not secret from Allah. The heart is the innermost seat of man's affections and desires: but Allah intervenes between man and his heart. (R).

...وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٢٤)

and that it is He to whom ye shall (all) be gathered.

وَأَتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً...

25. And fear tumult or oppression, which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong

C1198. Fitnah: has many meanings:

- the root meaning is trial or temptation, as in 2:102 and 8: 28;
- an analogous meaning is trial or punishment, as in 5:71;
- tumult or oppression, as in 2:193, and here: and in 8:39,
- there is here (8:25) the further shade of meaning suggested, discord, sedition, civil war.

This warning against internal discord or tumult was very necessary in the Civil Wars of early Islam, and was never more necessary than it is now. For it affects innocent and guilty alike.

...وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٢٥)

and know that Allah is strict in punishment.

وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

26. Call to mind when ye were a small (band), despised through the land,

...بِتَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ...

and afraid that men might despoil and kidnap you;

C1199. On the immediate occasion the Muslims were reminded that;

- they were a small band in Makkah despised and rejected;
- living in a state of insecurity for their persons,
- their lives, their property,

and those of their dependants, persecuted and exiled and how by the grace of Allah they found a safe asylum in Madinah;

- how they found friends and helpers,
- how their many needs were cared for, and
- how at length they gathered strength and numbers enough to defeat the forces of godlessness, injustice, and oppression.

But for every individual, in some form or other, the lesson applies. His spiritual life begins humbly; he is despised and laughed at, perhaps persecuted and shut out from ordinary privileges open to all; but Allah gives him strength; friends spring up for him; and he is sustained until his highest spiritual desires are gradually fulfilled.

... فَأَوَّاكُم وَأَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهِ ...

but He provided a safe asylum for you, strengthened you with his aid,

... وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٢٦)

and gave you good things for sustenance: that ye might be grateful.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ ...

27. O ye that believe!

betray not the trust of Allah and the Messenger,

...وَتَحُونُوا أَمَانَاتِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٧)

nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you.

C1200. Trusts may be of various kinds:

- property, goods, credit, etc.;
- plans, confidences, secrets, etc;
- knowledge, talents, opportunities, etc,

which we are expected to use for our fellowmen.

Men may betray the trust of Allah and His Prophet by misusing property, or abusing the confidence reposed in them, or the knowledge or talents given to them. On that special occasion, when the plans for the protection of Allah's worshippers against annihilation were of special importance, the Prophet's trust and confidence had to be guarded with special care.

Occasions for scrupulously respecting the trust and confidence of our fellow-men occur every day in our life, and few of us can claim perfection in this respect. Hence the special distinction of the Prophet of Allah, who earned the title of Al-Amin, the one who was true to every trust reposed in him.

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ...

28. And know ye that your possessions and your progeny are but a trial;

C1201. A big family-many sons-was considered a source of power and strength: 3:10, 116.

So in English, a man with many children is said to have his "quiver full":

Cf. Psalms, 127:4-5:

"As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man, so are the children of thy youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

So with property and possessions: they add to a man's dignity, power, and influence. But both possessions and

a large family are a temptation and a trial. They may turn out to be a source of spiritual downfall, if they are mishandled, or if the love of them excludes the love of Allah.

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (٢٨)

and that it is Allah with whom lies your highest reward.

Section 4

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا...

29. O ye who believe!

if ye fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong),

C1202. Cf. 2:53 and 2:185.

The battle of Badr is called the Furqan in Muslim theology, because it was the first trial of strength by battle, in Islam, between the powers of good and evil. Evil was defeated, and those who had real faith were tested and sorted out from those who had not faith enough to follow the banner of Faith.

See also [8:41](#) and [n. 1210](#).

...وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ...

remove from you (all) evil (that may afflict) you,
and forgive you:

...وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢٩)

for Allah is the Lord of grace unbounded.

وَأَذِمْ مَكْرُ بِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيُنَبِّئُوكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ...

30. Remember how the unbelievers plotted against thee,
to keep thee in bonds,
or slay thee,

or get thee out (of thy home).

C1203. The plots against Al-Mustafa in Makkah aimed at three things. They were not only foiled, but Allah's wonderful working turned the tables, and brought good out of evil in each case.

- They tried to hold the Prophet in subjection in Makkah by putting pressure on his uncles, relatives, and friends. But the more they persecuted, the more the little Muslim community grew in faith and numbers.
- They tried to injure or slay him. But the wonderful example of his humility, perseverance, and fearlessness furthered the cause of Islam.
- They tried to get him and his followers out of their homes. But they found a new home in Madinah from which they eventually re-conquered not only Makkah but Arabia and the world.

...وَيَمْكُرُونَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللَّهُ...

They plot and plan, and Allah too plans,

...وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ (٣٠)

but the best of planners is Allah.

C1203a. Cf. 3:54.

وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا قَالُوا قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هَذَا...

31. When Our signs are rehearsed to them, they say:

"We have heard this (before):

if we wished, we could say (words) like these:

...إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٣١)

these are nothing but tales of the ancients."

C1204. Cf. 6:25.

وَإِذْ قَالُوا اللَّهُمَّ إِن كَانَ هَذَا هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ...

32. Remember how they said:

"O Allah! if this is indeed the truth from Thee,

فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حَجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ أَوْ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٣٢)

rain down on us a shower of stones from the sky,
or send us a grievous penalty."

C1205. This was actually a challenge thrown out by the Infidels in Makkah not seriously but as a taunt. The answer is in the two following verses.

Allah punishes in His own good time, not according to the foolish and frivolous taunts of the Unbelievers. While the Holy Prophet was with them, he -the Mercy of the Worlds- conferred a certain amount of immunity to them. There were also other Muslims, just men who asked for forgiveness.

And Allah keeps the door of repentance and forgiveness open to all as long as they make it possible. But let them not be puffed up with pride, or think that they have lasting immunity.

What became of Abu Jahl? He and some of his greatest warriors were slain at Badr. The little autocratic clique that prevented Muslims from access to the Sacred Mosque had their punishment not long afterwards. They pretended to be its guardians.

But were they? Could they be?

Only the righteous could be true guardians to Allah's places of worship, and particularly to the Central House of the Ka'bah. It was to be a place of pure worship, while their idolatrous worship was mere mummery,- whistling and clapping of hands. All false worship advertises itself by noise and unseemly riot: it is said that the Pagans used to go naked round the Ka'bah.

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ...

33. But Allah was not going to send them a penalty whilst thou wast amongst them;

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ (٣٣)

nor was He going to send it whilst they could ask for pardon.

وَمَا لَهُمْ آلَا يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَا كَانُوا أَوْلِيَاءَهُ...

34. But what plea have they that Allah should not punish them, when they keep out (men) from the sacred Mosque -- and they are not its guardians?

...إِن أَوْلِيَاؤُهُ إِلَّا الْمُنَفِقُونَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٤)

No men can be its guardians except the righteous;
but most of them do not understand.

وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ إِلَّا مَكَاءً وَتَصْدِيَةً...

35. Their prayer at the house (of Allah) is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands:

...فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (٣٥)

(its only answer can be), "Taste ye the penalty because ye blasphemed."

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّوا عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

36. The unbelievers spend their wealth to hinder (men) from the path of Allah,

...فَسَيُنْفِقُونَهَا ثُمَّ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُونَ...

and so will they continue to spend;
but in the end they will have (only) regrets and sighs;
at length they will be overcome:

...وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُونَ (٣٦)

and the unbelievers will be gathered together to Hell.

...لِيَمِيزَ اللَّهُ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ ...

37. In order that Allah may separate the impure from the pure,

C1206. It is only when matters are brought to an issue that evil is separated distinctly from the good. Then evil consorts with evil, and good with good.

The evil will be piled into a heap. When the cup is full, the punishment will come. There will be no mistake about it.

The good should not be discouraged, because in fighting against them, all forces of evil join together and pool their resources together. The more they do so, the easier is the final arbitrament. It is all in Allah's Plan.

... وَيَجْعَلُ الْخَبِيثَ بَعْضَهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ...

put the impure, one on another,

... فَيَرْكُمُهُ جَمِيعًا فَيَجْعَلُهُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ ...

heap them together, and cast them into hell.

... أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٣٧)

They will be the ones to have lost.

C.91 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(8:38-64)

The battle of Badr brought to an issue

The fight between Truth and Unbelief.

It was the Day of Differentiation.

Not for spoils was it won, nor by numbers;

But by courage and planning, union of wills,

And pooling of strength and resources-

Above all by the help of Allah,

Whose help is ever all-sufficient.

Section 5

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَنْتَهُوا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَّا قَدْ سَلَفَ ...

38. Say to the unbelievers, if (now) they desist (from unbelief), their past would be forgiven them;

...وَأِنْ يَعْوِدُوا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّةَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٣٨)

but if they persist, the punishment of those before them is already
(a matter of warning for them).

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ...

39. And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression,
and there prevail justice and faith in Allah altogether and
everywhere;

C1207. Cf. 2:193 and n. 207.

...فَإِنْ انْتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٣٩)

but if they cease, verily Allah doth see all that they do.

C1208. If they cease from fighting and from the
persecution of truth, Allah judges then by their actions
and their motives, and would not wish that they should
be harassed with further hostility.

But if they refuse all terms, the righteous have nothing
to fear: Allah will help and protect them.

وَأِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَاكُمْ...

40. If they refuse, be sure that Allah is your Protector --

...نِعْمَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ (٤٠)

the best to protect and the best to help.

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ...

41. And know that out of all the booty that ye may acquire (in war),

فَأَنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ...
a fifth share is assigned

- to Allah, and
- to the Messenger, and
- to near relatives,
- orphans,
- the needy, and
- the wayfarer,

C1209. The rule is that a fifth share is set apart for the Imam (the Commander) and the rest is divided among the forces.

The fifth share reserved is expressed to be for Allah and the Prophet, and for charitable purposes for those to whom charity is due. Ultimately everything is at the disposal of Allah and His Prophet: **8:1**: but four-fifths are divided, and only one-fifth is retained for the special purposes. The Imam has discretion as to the mode of division.

In the Prophet's life-time a certain portion was assigned to him and his near relatives.

إِن كُنْتُمْ آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ

النَّقَى الْجَمْعَانِ...

if ye do believe in Allah and in the revelation We sent down to Our servant on the day of testing, the day of the meeting of the two forces.

C1210. Testing: Furqan: Criterion between right and wrong, decision between the forces of faith and unbelief.

The battle of Badr is called by this name. See **8:29** and **n. 1202**.

...وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٤١)

For Allah hath power over all things.

C1211. Allah's power is shown in the events detailed in the three verses following (**verses 42-44**), leading to the complete victory of the Muslims over the pagan Quraysh.

إِذْ أَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوَى وَالرَّكْبُ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ...

42. Remember ye were on the hither side of the valley, and they on the farther side, and the caravan on lower ground than ye.

C1212. The little Islamic force from Madinah went out to meet the big Makkan army, and they met on the two sides of a valley at Badr, while the Quraish caravan was on lower ground towards the sea, about 3 miles from Badr.

...وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُمْ لِاخْتِلَافِئِم فِي الْمِيعَادِ...

Even if ye had made a mutual appointment to meet, ye would certainly have failed in the appointment:

C1213. They were all at cross purposes. The caravan was making for Makkah, but scarcely thought it could get there. The Quraish force was trying to save the caravan and then annihilate the Muslims. The Muslims had decided to attack the Quraish army from Makkah which turned out to be big, more than three times their number.

Yet the two forces met, precisely at the spot and at the time when a decisive battle should take place and the Muslims dispose of the pretensions of the Makkans. If they had carefully planned a mutual appointment, they could not have carried it out more precisely.

On the Muslim side the few martyrs knew that the victory was theirs and those who survived the battle enjoyed the fruits of the victory. On the pagan side, both those who died and those who lived knew fully the issue joined. Even psychologically both sides went in with full determination to decide the issue.

...وَلَكِنْ لَيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا...

but (thus ye met), that Allah might accomplish a matter already enacted;

...لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَىٰ مَنْ حَيَّ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ...

that those who died might die after a clear sign (had been given), and those who lived might live after a clear sign (had been given).

...وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٤٢)

And verily Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things).

إِذْ يُرِيكُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَنَامِكَ قَلِيلًا...

43. Remember in thy dream Allah showed them to thee as few:

...وَلَوْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ لَفَسَلْتُمْ وَلَنَنزَعَنَّ عَنْكُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ سَلَّمَ...

if He had shown them to thee as many, ye would surely have been discouraged, and ye would surely have disputed in (your) decision:

but Allah saved (you):

...إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٤٣)

for He knoweth well the (secrets) of (all) hearts.

وَإِذْ يُرِيكُمُوهُمْ إِذِ الْتَقَيْتُمْ فِي آعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيلًا...

44. And remember when ye met, He showed them to you as few in your eyes,

...وَيُقَلِّكُمُ فِي آعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا...

and He made you appear as contemptible in their eyes: that Allah might accomplish a matter already enacted:

C1214. The Muslim army though they knew their worldly disadvantage, did not realise the full odds against them. The Makkans came exulting in any case, and they despised the contemptible little force, opposed to them. Even though they thought the Muslim force was twice as great as it was (3:13), still that number was contemptible, when taken with its poor equipment.

Both these psychological mistakes subserved the main Plan, which was to bring the matter to a decisive issue, whether the Pagans of Makkah were to continue their arrogant oppression, or the religion of Allah was to be established in freedom and honour.

...وَالِلَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ (٤٤)

for to Allah do all questions go back (for decision).

Section 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقَيْتُمْ فِتْنَةً فَاتَّبِعُوا...

45. O ye who believe! when ye meet a force, be firm,

...وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٤٥)

and call Allah in remembrance much (and often); that ye may prosper.

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ...

46. And obey Allah and His Messenger;

...وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ...

and fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart;

...وَأَصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (٤٦)

and be patient and persevering;

for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.

C1215. A fine description of the Muslim virtues which make for success and whose loss brings about humiliation and failure.

"Power": literally, "wind", -the favourable wind for a sailing ship.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطْرًا وَرَأَى النَّاسَ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

47. And be not like those who started from their homes insolently and to be seen of men, and to hinder (men) from the path of Allah:

C1216. A true description of the Makkan army which met its doom.

...وَاللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ (٤٧)

for Allah compasseth round about all that they do.

وَأَذَى زَيْنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَقَالَ...

48. Remember Satan made their (sinful) acts seem alluring to them, and said:

...لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَإِنِّي جَارٌ لَكُمْ...

"No one among men can overcome you this day, while I am near to you":

...فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَتِ الْفُؤَادَانِ نَكَّصَ عَلَى عَقَبَيْهِ وَقَالَ...

but when the two forces came in sight of each other, he turned on his heels, and said:

...إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنْكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ...

"Lo! I am clear of you;

lo! I see what ye see not;

lo! I fear Allah;

...وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٤٨)

for Allah is strict in punishment.

C1217. It is the way with the leaders of evil, when they find their cause lost, that they wash their hands of their followers and leave them in the lurch. They see more clearly than their dupes. They are not simpletons: they know the consequences of the wrath of Allah.

Satan's "fear" of Allah is terror combined with hatred, - the very opposite of the feeling which is described in Taqwa viz., the desire to avoid doing anything against Allah's will, such desire being founded on trust in Allah and the love of Allah.

Section 7

إِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ ...

49. Lo! the hypocrites say, and those in whose hearts is a disease:

C1218. Cf. 2:10 for "disease in the heart."

Trust in Allah brings its own reward: our eyes are opened, and we see how great, good, and wise is the Cherisher of the Worlds. Others may sneer and despise. But the blessing of Allah keeps our minds fresh and our hearts contented.

... غَرَّ هَوَالَاءِ دِينُهُمْ...

"These people, -- their religion has misled them."

...وَمَنْ يَتَّوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٤٩)

But if any trust in Allah, behold! Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.

وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ
وَأَذْبَارَهُمْ...

50. If thou couldst see, when the angels take the souls of the unbelievers (at death), (how) they smite their faces and their backs (saying):

C1219. In contrast to the taunt against those who trust in Allah, "that their religion has misled them," is shown the terrible punishment, after death, of those who laughed at Faith.

...وَدُوفُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ (٥٠)

"Taste the penalty of the blazing fire.

ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ ...

51. "Because of (the deeds) which your (own) hands sent forth:

C1220. The punishment is shown to be due to their own deeds of wrong, because Allah is never unjust to the least of His servants.

... وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ (٥١)

for Allah is never unjust to His servants:

كَذَابِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ...

52. "(Deeds) after the manner of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them:

...كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ...

they rejected the signs of Allah, and Allah punished them for their crimes:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٥٢)

for Allah is strong, and strict in punishment:

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُعَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا

بِأَنفُسِهِمْ...

53. "Because Allah will never change the grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls:

C1221. Allah bestows His grace freely, but He never withdraws it arbitrarily. Before He changes their state and circumstances, an actual state of rebellion and contumacy has arisen in their own souls, which brings about its inevitable punishment.

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٥٣)

and verily Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things)."

كَذَّابٍ آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ ...

54. "(Deeds) after the manner of the people of Pharaoh and those before them":

they treated as false the signs of their Lord;

C1222. C1222. These words from the address of the angels are quoted again, in order to add the comment that follows.

Note that in verse 51, the words were that they rejected the Signs of Allah and were punished:

here the words are that they treated the Signs as false and were destroyed: -a higher degree of guilt deserved a severer punishment.

... فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ...

so We destroyed them for their crimes, and We drowned the people of Pharaoh:

...وَكُلُّهُمْ ظَالِمِينَ (٥٤)

for they were all oppressors and wrongdoers.

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٥)

55. For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are those who reject Him:

They will not believe.

C1223. In [8:22](#) we were warned against "the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah", who do not make use of their faculties of hearing, speaking and understanding, in the service of Allah, and in fact misuse their faculties to blaspheme Allah.

The same brute creatures are shone here in another light: they are faithless both to Allah and man.

الَّذِينَ عَاهَدتَّ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْفُضُونَ عَهْدَهُمْ فِي كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ...

56. They are those with whom thou didst make a Covenant, but they break their covenant every time

C1224. The immediate occasion was the repeated treachery of the Banu Quraiza after their treaties with the Muslims. But the general lesson remains, as noted in the two following verses.

Treachery in war is doubly wrong, for it endangers so many lives. Such treachery should be punished in such a way that it gets no chance again. Not only the actual perpetrators but those who follow their standard should be rendered powerless.

And the broken treaty should be denounced so that the innocent party can at least fight on equal terms.

From actual physical warfare we can carry the same lesson to spiritual warfare. A truce or understanding is possible with those who respect definite principles, not with those who have no principles and are merely out for oppression and wickedness.

...وَهُمْ لَا يَتَّقُونَ (٥٦)

and they have not the fear (of Allah).

فَأِمَّا تَنفَقْتَهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَسَرِّدْ بِهِمْ مَّنْ خَلَفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَدْكُرُونَ (٥٧)

57. If ye gain the mastery over them in war, disperse, with them, those who follow them, that they may remember.

C1224a. The purpose of the verse is to urge Muslims to act against their enemies described above with a severity and resoluteness which would serve as a deterrent to other enemies of Islam who might be inclined to follow their example and act treacherously towards Muslims. (Eds.).

وَأِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانْبِذْ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَى سَوَاءٍ...

58. If thou fearest treachery from any group, throw back (their covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَائِنِينَ (٥٨)

for Allah loveth not the treacherous.

Section 8

وَلَا يَحْسِبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَبَقُوا إِنَّهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُونَ (٥٩)

59. Let not the unbelievers think that they can get the better (of the godly):

they will never frustrate (them).

...وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ...

60. Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war,

C1225. The immediate occasion of this injunction was the weakness of cavalry and appointments of war in the early fights of Islam. But the general meaning follows.

In every fight, physical, moral, or spiritual, arm yourself with the best weapons and the best arms against your enemy, so as to instill wholesome respect into him for you and the Cause you stand for.

...تُرْهِيبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ...

to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies,

...وَأَخْرَيْنَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ...

and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know.

C1226. There are always lurking enemies whom you may not know, but whom Allah knows. It is your duty to be ready against all, for the sacred Cause under whose banner you are fighting.

...وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ (٦٠)

Whatever ye shall spend in the Cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you,

and ye shall not be treated unjustly.

C1227. Be always ready and put all your resources into your Cause. You do not do so in vain. Allah's reward will come in various forms. He knows all, and His reward will always be more generous than you can possibly deserve.

وَأِنْ جَنَّحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ...

61. But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah:

...إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٦١)

for He is the one that heareth and knoweth (all things).

C1228. While we must always be ready for the good fight lest it be forced on us, even in the midst of the fight we must always be ready for peace if there is any inclination towards peace on the other side.

There is no merit merely in a fight by itself. It should be a joyful duty not for itself, but to establish the reign of peace and righteousness and Allah's Law.

وَأِنْ يُرِيدُوا أَنْ يَخْدَعُوكَ فَإِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللَّهُ...

62. Should they intend to deceive thee, verily Allah sufficeth thee:

...هُوَ الَّذِي أَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهِ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٦٢)

He it is that hath strengthened thee with his aid and with (the company of) the believers:

C1229. In working for peace there may be a certain risk of treachery on the other side. We must take that risk: because the men of Faith have Allah's aid to count upon and the strength of the united body of the righteous. (R).

وَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ...

63. And (moreover) He hath put affection between their hearts:

...لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَّا أَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ...

not if thou hadst spent all that is in the earth, couldst thou have produced that affection,

...وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٦٣)

but Allah hath done it: for He is Exalted in might, Wise.

C1230. On the immediate occasion, the greatest miracle and most wonderful working of Allah's grace was the union of hearts produced among the jarring, war-like, excitable Clements of Arabia under the gentle, firm, and wise guidance of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah.

At all times we must pray to Allah for this gift above all, -union, understanding, and pure and sincere affection among those who take Allah's name. With it there is strength and success. Without it there is humiliation, slavery, and moral degradation.

There may be many causes of difference and dispute. The reconciliation can only come from the glory and wisdom of Allah.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَسْبُكَ اللَّهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٦٤)

64. O Prophet! sufficient unto thee is Allah, (unto thee) and unto those who follow thee among the believers.

C1231. The Believers: mere lip-profession of belief, or even the kind of belief that does not result in action, is not enough.

To those whose belief is so sincere that it results in complete trust in Allah and in fearless action in His service, the consequences on this earth do not matter. Allah's good pleasure is enough for them.

C.92 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(8:65-75)

*No man of heart, spirit, or constancy
Can ever be cowed down by odds
Against him. We fight not for spoils
Or for captives, but for the glory
Of Allah' and for truth and faith.
We must be kind to all, but especially
Regard the needs of our comrades,
Linked to us by ties of duty and affection.
Our highest reward will be forgiveness
And grace from the Giver of all.*

Section 9

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ...

65. O Prophet!

rouse the believers to the fight.

...إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ عِشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَغْلِبُوا مِائِينَ...

If there are twenty amongst you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred:

...وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of the unbelievers:

...بِأَلْهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ (٦٥)

for these are a people without understanding.

C1232. In a fight, odds of ten to one against any one are appalling. But they do not daunt the men of faith. Whether they personally win or die, their Cause prevails. They are sure to win: because;

- they have divine aid, and

- even humanly speaking, those who take up arms against truth and righteousness are fools, and their seeming power is but a broken reed.

الآن خَفَّفَ اللهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِيكُمْ ضَعْفًا...

66. For the present, Allah hath lightened your (task), for He knoweth that there is a weak spot in you:

C1233. Given equal conditions, Muslims on account of their faith could win against odds of ten to one. But where their organization and equipment are weak, as was the case about the time of Badr, they were set a lighter task, and asked to tackle no more than odds of two to one against them.

As a matter of fact at Badr they won through against odds of more than three to one.

...فَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِئَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا مِئَتَيْنِ...

but (even so), if there are a hundred of you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred,

...وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أَلْفٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفَيْنِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

and if a thousand, they will vanquish two thousand, with the leave of Allah:

...وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (٦٦)

for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَىٰ لَهُ حَتَّىٰ يُثْخِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

67. It is not fitting for an Prophet that he should have prisoners of war until he hath thoroughly subdued the land.

C1234. An ordinary war may be for territory or trade, revenge or military glory, -all "temporal goods of this world."

Such a war is condemned. But a Jihad is fought under strict conditions laid down by Islam, and solely for the cause of Allah. All baser motives, therefore are strictly

excluded. The greed of gain in the shape of ransom from captives has no place in such warfare. (R).

At the same time, if there has been heavy loss of life already, captives may be taken, and it would be for the Imam to exercise his discretion as to the time when it was safe to release them, and whether the release should be free or on parole or on a fine by way of punishment.

Destruction and slaughter, however repugnant to a gentle soul like that of Muhammad, were inevitable where evil tried to suppress the good. Even Jesus, whose mission was more limited, had to say: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword." (Matt. 10:34).

Seventy captives were taken at Badr, and it was decided to take ransom for them. While the general principle of fighting for the purpose of taking captives in order to get their ransom is condemned, the particular action in this case was approved in verses [68-71](#).

...تُرِيدُونَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ...

Ye look for the temporal goods of this world;
but Allah looketh to the hereafter;

...وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٦٧)

and Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.

لَوْلَا كِتَابٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ سَبَقَ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِيمَا أَخَذْتُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٦٨)

68. Had it not been for a previous ordainment from Allah, a severe penalty would have reached you for the (ransom) that ye took.

C1235. Though any motive of worldly gain, which may have been in the minds of some among the victorious Muslim army, is condemned as worthy of a severe penalty, what actually happened is ascribed to the Plan of Allah, which was preordained.

Among the prisoners taken were the Prophet's uncle 'Abbas and Hadhrat 'Ali's brother, Aqil, who afterwards became Muslims. 'Abbas was an ancestor of the founder

of the celebrated 'Abbasi Dynasty which played such a notable part in Islamic history. In his case the promise made in verse 70 was amply fulfilled.

In the case of all prisoners, if there was any good in their hearts, their very fight against Islam and their capture led to their being blessed with Islam. Thus does Allah's Plan work in a marvelous way, and evolve good out of seeming evil.

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا غَنِمْتُمْ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ...

69. But (now) enjoy what ye took in war, lawful and good: but fear Allah:

C1236. Enjoy: literally, eat. See 7:19. n. 1004, and 5:66, n. 776.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٦٩)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِمَنْ فِي أَيْدِيكُمْ مِنَ الْأَسْرَى...

70. O Prophet! say to those who are captives in your hands:

...إِنْ يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ خَيْرًا يُؤْتِكُمْ خَيْرًا مِّمَّا أَخَذَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ...

"If Allah findeth any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you:

C1237. This is a consolation to the prisoners of war. In spite of their previous hostility, Allah will forgive them in His mercy if there was any good in their hearts, and confer upon them a far higher gift than anything they have ever lost. This gift in its highest sense would be the blessing of Islam, but even in a material sense, there was great good fortune awaiting them, e.g., in the case of Abbas (see n. 1235).

Note how comprehensive is Allah's care. He encourages and strengthens the Muslims, at the same time condemning any baser motives that may have entered their minds, He consoles the prisoners of war and promises them better things if there is any good in them

at all. And He offers comfort to those who have left their homes in His Cause, and knits them into closer fellowship with those who have helped them and sympathized with them.

...وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٧٠)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

وَأَن يُرِيدُوا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللَّهَ مِن قَبْلُ ...

71. But if they have treacherous designs against thee, (O Messenger!) they have already been in treason against Allah,

C1238. If the kindness shown to them is abused by the prisoners of war when they are released, it is not a matter for discouragement to those who showed the kindness. Such persons have in their treachery shown already their treason to Allah, in that they took up arms against Allah's Prophet, and sought to blot out the pure worship of Allah.

The punishment of defeat, which opened the eyes of some of their comrades, evidently did not open their eyes. But Allah knows all, and in His wisdom will order all things for the best. The Believers have done their duty in showing such clemency as they could in the circumstances of war. For them "Allah sufficeth" (8:62).

... فَأَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ ...

and so hath He given (thee) power over them

...وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٧١)

and Allah is He who hath (full) knowledge and wisdom.

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

72. Those who believed, and adopted exile, and fought for the faith, with their property and their persons, in the Cause of Allah,

...وَالَّذِينَ آوَوْا وَتَصَرَّوْا أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ...

as well as those who gave (them) asylum and aid - these are (all) friends and protectors, one of another.

C1239. The reference is to the Muhajirin and the Ansar, the Emigrants and the Helpers, the people who forsook their homes and adopted voluntary exile from Makkah in company with their beloved Leader, and their good friends in Madinah, who gave them asylum and every kind of assistance, moral and material.

Under the magnetic personality of the Holy Prophet these two groups became like blood-brothers, and they were so treated in matters of inheritance during the period when they were cut off from their kith and kin.

...وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُم مِّنْ وَلَايَتِهِم مِّنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ

يُهَاجِرُوا...

As to those who believed but came not into exile, ye owe no duty of protection to them until they come into exile;

C1240. The Believers (Muslims) were entitled to all assistance in matters of religion. But if they were not strong enough to suffer voluntary exile on behalf of the Cause and make the personal sacrifices which their more ardent brethren in faith made, they could not reasonably ask for political or military assistance or protection.

...وَإِنِ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم

مِيثَاقٌ...

But if they seek your aid in religion, it is your duty to help them, except against a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance:

C1241. If a community suffers voluntary exile on account of persecution and oppression, and some of its weaker brethren stay behind, holding fast to faith but not prepared for the higher sacrifice, the exiles have still a duty to help their weaker brethren in matters of religion.

The exiles, being at open war against the State which oppressed them, would be free to fight against such State. But if the weaker brethren are in a State in mutual alliance with the Community, the Community cannot in honour interfere with that State, whether it is Muslim or not.

Presumably the alliance implies that the grievances of the weaker brethren will be redressed by the State itself. But it is not honourable to embarrass your own ally.

...وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٧٢)

and (remember) Allah seeth all that ye do.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ...

73. The unbelievers are protectors, one of another:

...إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ (٧٣)

unless ye do this, (protect each other), there would be tumult and oppression on earth, and great mischief.

C1242. Evil consorts with evil. The good have all the more reason for drawing together and not only living in mutual harmony, but being ready at all times to protect each other. Otherwise the world will be given over to aggressions by unscrupulous people, and the good will fail in their duty to establish Allah's Peace and to strengthen all the forces of truth and righteousness.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

74. Those who believe, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith, in the Cause of Allah,

...وَالَّذِينَ آوُوا وَتَصَرَّوْا أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا...

as well as those who give (them) asylum and aid, these are (all) in very truth the believers:

...لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٧٤)

for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous.

C1243. Believers who make all sacrifices in the Cause of Allah have given the best possible proof of their Faith by their actions. They have loved Allah much, and much will be forgiven them.

What they sacrificed was, perhaps, judged by universal standards, of small value, but its value will be estimated by the precious love behind it, and its reward will be of no ordinary kind.

It will not be a reward in the ordinary sense at all, for a reward is given once for all. It will be a provision which last for ever, and is on the most generous scale.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ بَعْدُ وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا مَعَكُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مِنْكُمْ...

75. And those who accept faith subsequently, and adopt exile, and fight for the faith in your company, they are of you.

C1244. Those who come into the fold last are none the less brethren in the fullest acceptance of the term. But any special provisions made in the special circumstances of the first martyrs for the Cause will not of course apply to them as the special circumstances which made them necessary have ceased to exist.

See next note.

...وَأُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ...

But kindred by blood have prior rights against each other in the Book of Allah.

C1245. The Book of Allah: i.e., the Eternal Decree, the Preserved Tablet (85:22).

Blood-relationship and its rights and duties do not depend on special circumstances of a temporary nature. Any temporary rights of mutual inheritance established between the early Emigrants and Helpers (n. 1239) would not apply to later recruits, who would come under entirely different circumstances.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٧٥)

Verily Allah is well acquainted with all things.