

ESSENCE OF THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

Malik Ghulām Farīd



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Written by
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Foreword

Essence of the Qur'ān was written by Malik Ghulam Farid (1897 to 1977) to provide an overview of the message of the Qur'ān and its implications for the body of believers. Within the book, which was penned in 1977, Farid analyzes each chapter of the Qur'ān, providing the historical context and background surrounding the events recorded therein. He also presents a summary of the content in the sequence it appears.

Farid tailored this treatise for the non-Arabic speaker who cannot gain a full appreciation of the depth of the Qur'an from reading its literal translation. It is a commendable effort that simplifies the cultural, linguistic, and theological intricacies which abound throughout the Qur'an.

We recommend *Essence of the Qur'ān* as a supplementary resource for Western audiences seeking a deeper understanding of the Qur'ān, without the need to delve into the details of a commentary.

al-Ḥāj Munir-ud-Din Shams
Additional Wakīl-ut-Taṣnīf

Preface

This book serves the keen desires, interests and the spiritual hunger of the seekers of truth who do not have the opportunity or ability to read the Holy Qur'ān in Arabic or are unable to derive full benefit from a perusal of the literal translation of the Holy Book. For their benefit an effort, therefore, has been made to render the essence of each *Sūrah* (Chapter of the Holy Qur'ān) in order to fully convey the complete message of the Holy Qur'ān.

The message in every *Sūrah* (Chapter) sets out in brief the salient features and principal subjects dealt within it. Thus, this exposition provides an overview of the teachings and principles embodied in the Holy Qur'ān. The Holy Qur'ān constitutes a compendium of all that is good, lasting and fundamental in previous Scriptures, that was lacking, but which was surely needed for the moral and spiritual guidance and development of man. All the noble ideals and principles of permanent value have been incorporated in it.

This treatise presents for the readers an essence of the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān so that they may realize the supreme object for which God created man and appreciate the guidance that He has provided for him.

Malik Ghulām Farīd

January 1977

Introduction

Human life has a noble purpose. It is real, it is earnest. The finite character of his reason, the brevity of the span of his life on earth, the multiplicity and the intricate and diverse nature of the phenomena of human life, furnish ample evidence for the inescapable conclusion that man's life has a most noble and sublime purpose. Man is God's vicegerent on earth and has been endowed with a Divine personality. He is manifestly the central figure in the universe. He is created to develop and reflect in his person Divine attributes. It is for the fulfilment of this most sublime object that from time immemorial it has been the Divine practice that whenever moral darkness enshrouds the earth and humanity consigns belief in God to oblivion and gives itself to the worship of the gods of his own conception and creation, and moral turpitude blunts the consciousness of sin, a Divine Messenger is raised to reclaim and redeem this great purpose.

“The beginning of the seventh century was an epoch of national and social disintegration, and religion had become extinct as a moral force and had been reduced to mere ritual and ceremony and the great faiths of the world—Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Confucianism—had ceased to exercise a healthy influence on the lives of their followers. The holy flames kindled by God's great Prophets had been quenched in the blood of man” (*Spirit of Islam*). In describing the situation of the world at that time J. H. Denison wrote: “In the preceding two centuries the civilized world stood on the verge of chaos. It seemed that the great civilization that it had taken four thousand years to construct was on the verge of disintegration ... Civilization like a gigantic tree whose foliage had over-reached the world and whose branches had borne the golden fruits of art and science and literature stood tottering, its trunk no longer alive with the flowing sap of devotion and reverence, but rotten to the core” (*Emotion as Basis of Civilization*). Most deplorable was the condition of Arabia at that time when every conceivable vice had taken deep roots in that country and its leaders had completely despaired of its regeneration.

Biblical Prophecies about the Holy Qur'ān

Such was the moral condition of the world when the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him), humanity's greatest Divine teacher, appeared in the world and the perfect Divine Law in the form of the Holy Qur'ān was revealed to him. A perfect Law could only have been revealed when all or most of the evils had made their appearances and had

become established.

The Holy Prophet's advent fulfilled the most crying need of the time. Both his advent and the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān were foretold in the previous Divine Scriptures. Prophecies to this effect are to be found in the Scriptures of almost every Faith. The Bible being the best known and most widely read of all revealed Books, and also being its forerunner and in its pristine purity being its counterpart as a Book of Divine Laws, contains the largest number of these prophecies. Some of them are as follows:

And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Sinai unto them, he shined forth from mount Paran and he came with ten thousands of saints, from his right hand went a fiery Law for them. (Deut 33:2).

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 (Deut 18:18).

Jesus said unto them: Did ye never read in the Scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore, say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder (Matt 21:42, 43).

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you. I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you unto all truth, for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak (John 16:7-12).

Organization of the Holy Qur'ān

The word *Sūrah* rendered in English as 'Chapter' means: i) Rank and eminence; ii) mark or sign; iii) an elevated and beautiful edifice; and iv) something full and complete (*Aqrah & Qurṭubī*). The Chapters of the Holy Qur'ān are called *Sūrahs* because: i) One is exalted in rank by reading them and attains to eminence through them; ii) they serve as marks of the beginning and the end of different subjects dealt with in the Holy Qur'ān; iii) they are each like a noble spiritual edifice and iv) each one of them contains a complete theme. The name *Sūrah* for such a division has been used in the Holy Qur'ān itself (v. 24:2). It has been used in the Ḥadīth also. The Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) said "Just now a *Sūrah* has been revealed to me and it runs as follows" (Muslim). From this it is clear that the name *Sūrah* for a division of the Holy Qur'ān has been in use from the very beginning of Islam and it is not a later innovation.

The Holy Qur'ān has one hundred fourteen *Sūrahs* (Chapters) and six thousand three hundred sixty verses. According to scholarly opinion it is generally believed the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) received his first revelation—the first five verses of *Sūrah Al-'Alaq* in Cave

Ḥirā', on the 24th night of Ramaḍān and according to some scholars on some other odd night after this night, thirteen years before the *Hijrah*, corresponding to 610 A.D. The last verse to be revealed was the fourth verse of *Sūrah Al-Mā'idah*.

The Holy Qur'ān has two sets of verses. Some are *Muḥkam*—firm and decisive in meaning and others *Mutashābih*—capable of different interpretations. When interpreting a *Mutashābih* verse it may be noted that only such interpretation of it should be accepted as agrees with verses that are *Muḥkam*. For the convenience of the readers the Holy Qur'ān was later divided into thirty *Pārahs* and seven *Manzils* and each *Sūrah* into *Rukū's* (sections). Of the one hundred and fourteen *Sūrahs*, sixty-five are believed to have been revealed before the *Hijrah*, eighteen after the *Hijrah* and opinions about the remaining thirty-one *Sūrahs* differ as to how many were revealed before the *Hijrah* and how many after it. The *Sūrahs* revealed before the *Hijrah*—the Meccan *Sūrahs* deal with the fundamentals of religion, particularly with the basic principles of Islam. Stress has been laid in them upon doctrines and morals and upon Divine attributes with particular emphasis upon the necessity and importance of Revelation, repudiation of polytheism, life after death and upon how to preach and propagate the Divine Message and to bear courageously and steadfastly the opposition and persecution one had to suffer in the discharge of the sacred mission. They contain prophecies about the ultimate triumph of Islam and deal also with the doubts and objections of disbelievers regarding the Divine origin of the Holy Qur'ān and the truth of the claims of the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) and most effectively and convincingly removed them in terse, pithy and forceful language. They provide striking illustrations of condensation and economy of expression. The *Sūrahs* revealed after the *Hijrah*—(Medinite *Sūrahs*), however, primarily deal at length with statecraft and international relations, also shed light on the fulfilment of the prophecies made in the Meccan *Sūrahs*.

The Revelation of the Holy Qur'ān

The Holy Qur'ān was revealed at intervals and it took about twenty-three years to complete. The disbelievers say, '*Why was the Holy Qur'ān not revealed to the Prophet all at once*' (v.25:33)? To this objection the Holy Qur'ān answered in the words: *We have revealed it in this manner that we may strengthen thy heart therewith and we have arranged it in the best form* (v. 25:33). The gradual revelation of the Holy Qur'ān was, therefore, intended to serve a sublime purpose. The Divine design was to provide for the needs of each situation as it arose. The interval between the revelation of different passages afforded the believers an opportunity to witness the fulfilment of some of the prophecies contained in the passages already revealed and thus their faith became strengthened. It was also intended to answer the objections raised by disbelievers during the interval. The revelation was spread over a

long period of time in order also to enable the believers to learn, remember and assimilate the Qur'ānic teachings and to commit the Holy Qur'ān itself to memory. The gradual revelation of the Holy Qur'ān also fulfilled the following biblical prophecy:

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. (Isaiah 28:9-11).

The Holy Qur'ān possesses all the qualities and attributes implicit in this word. It is not only completely free from every defect and imperfection but possesses all the excellent qualities that the last Divine Law for the whole of mankind should possess, and it possesses them in full measure.

Names of the Holy Qur'ān

The proper name of the Holy Qur'ān which occurs at several places in the Holy Book itself is *Al-Qur'ān* (v. 28:56). It also uses for itself additional names and qualifying epithets, some of which are: *Al-Kitāb*, the Perfect Book (v. 2:3); *Adh-Dhikr*, the Source of Honour of the Reminder (v. 15:10); *Al-Hūdā*, the Guidance (v. 72:14); *Al-Furqān* that which distinguishes between right and wrong (v. 25:2); *Al-Bushrā*, the Glad Tidings (v. 16:90); *Al-Burhān*, the clear Argument (v. 4:176); *Al-Qayyim*, the Guardian (v. 18:3); *Al-Muhaimin*, the Protector (v. 5:49); *An-Nūr*, the Light (v. 7:158); *Al-Ḥaqq*, the Truth (v. 18:82); *Al-Bayān*, the clear Demonstration (v. 3:138); *Al-Khair*, the Goodness (v. 3:104); *An-Ni'mat*, the Bounty (v. 93:12); *Ar-Raḥmat*, the Mercy (v. 2:06); *Ash-Shifā'*, the Healing (v. 10:158); *Al-Ḥukm*, the Judgement (v. 13:38); *Ar-Rūḥ*, the Spirit of the Divine Word (v. 42:53); *Al-Ḥikmat*, the Wisdom (v. 17:40); *Al-Mizān*, the Balance (v. 57:26); *Al-Karīm*, the Noble (v. 56:78); *Al-'Ajab*, the Wonderful (v. 72:2); *Al-Ḥākīm*, Full of Wisdom (v. 36: 3); *Al-Mājid*, the Glorious (v. 50:2); *Al-'Azīz*, the Mighty (v. 41:42); *Al-Mubīn*, that which explains fully (v.12:2); *Al-Muṣaddiq*, that which fulfils the prophecies made in the previous Scriptures (v. 6:93); *Mubārak*, the Blessed (v. 6:93); *Al-Marfū'ah*, the Exalted (v. 80:14); *Al-Muṭahharah*, the Purified (v. 80:14).

All the names and qualifying epithets shed light upon the extensive import of the verses in which they occur.

Language of the Holy Qur'ān

Being the eternal revelation for all mankind till the end of time it was natural that the Holy Qur'ān should have enjoyed complete immunity from all possibilities of interpolation or tempering of its text. No other Divine Scripture has claimed this distinction nor has any one of them enjoyed this immunity. This distinction and superiority of the Holy Qur'ān has been set forth in the most challenging terms: *We ourselves have sent down this Exhortation and We will most surely safeguard it* (v. 15:10). The promise made in this verse has

been remarkably fulfilled. Not even the ardent enemies of Islam, despite all their efforts, have been able, during the past several hundred years, to detect even a solitary instance of interpolation or perversion of its text. According to Muir: "There is otherwise every security, internal and external, that we possess the text which Muḥammad gave to the world and used." Noldeke has paid his tribute to this exclusive distinction of the Holy Qur'ān in these words: "Efforts of European scholars to prove the existence of later interpolations in the Qur'ān have failed" (Enc. Brit.).

To implement this promise God chose Arabic for conveying the eternal truth enshrined in the Holy Book. Whereas, during the past several centuries the different extant languages of the world have undergone many changes as to have become quite different from what they were in the beginning, the wearing effect of the past many years has found it impossible to render the language of the Holy Qur'ān obsolete. This is a distinctive peculiarity of the language. Moreover, some lay claim that Arabic is the basis of all languages. The word '*Arabī* (Arabic) connotes fullness, abundance and clarity. The Arabic language is so called because its roots are innumerable and are pregnant with a vast variety of meanings and also because it is most expressive, eloquent and comprehensive. It possesses suitable words and phrases for the full expression of all sorts of ideas and shades of meaning. Any topic can be discussed in this language with a precision and thoroughness inapproachable in any other language. The rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Qur'ān are so characteristic, so powerful, so highly emotive that any verse whatsoever is bound, in the nature of things, to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendour of the original" says Professor Arberry.

Qur'ānic Concept of the Divine Being

Of all the manifold inimitable and inapproachable excellencies in which the Holy Qur'ān far excels all other revealed Scriptures, the most outstanding is its repeated reference to and great emphasis on the attributes of the Divine Being. There is a well-known saying in Arabic: "He who loves something talks of it most frequently." The Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) would talk about *Allāh* unceasingly. Always finding him engrossed in remembrance of Allāh, the Meccans would observe, "*Ashiqa Muḥammadun Rabbahū*" i.e., Muḥammad (may peace and blessings be upon him) has fallen in love with his Lord, i.e., *Allāh*. *Allāh* is the name used in the Holy Qur'ān for the Supreme Being Who is the sole possessor of all perfect attributes and is completely free from all conceivable defects and shortcomings. The word has been used numerous times in the Holy Qur'ān without evoking a feeling of unnecessary repetition. No other Divine Scripture has a proper name for God. The names found and used in other revealed Books are either descriptive or attributive. The principal attributes used for Allāh in the Holy Qur'ān fall into two main categories, viz., "Transcendent Attributes" and "Attributes of Similitude." The "Transcendent Attributes" are eternal and unchangeable and

are manifested through God's exclusive attributes and are found in no other being. The four "Transcendent Attributes" of Allāh mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān are: He is *Aḥad*, which means the One, the sole (v. 112:3). He Who has no second to share in His Lordship or in His Essence. He is One and Alone in the sense that when we think of Him, the very idea that there is any other being or thing besides Him is absent from our minds. He is neither the starting point of any chain nor its last link. The second "Transcendent Attribute" is *Aṣ-Ṣamad* (v. 112:3), which signifies the Supreme Being to Whom recourse is made for the fulfilment of all our needs and who will continue to exist forever after all creation has ceased to exist. He is Self-Subsisting and depends on no being or thing. He is above conjecture or conception. Another "Transcendent Attribute" is that He has succeeded no one and will be succeeded by no one (v. 112:3). He is complete in all His attributes and is Eternal, Everlasting and Absolute. The fourth "Transcendent Attribute" mentioned is that there is no one like Him (v. 112:5). Human reason demands that there should be one Creator and one Controller of the whole universe. The perfect order that pervades and permeates the entire universe leads to but one inevitable conclusion that one uniform law must be governing it and the unity and uniformity of the law and design prove and proclaim the unity of the Creator. These four-principal "Transcendent Attributes" may be said to constitute God's Throne (*His 'Arsh*). The principal "Attributes of Similitude" are: *Rabb-ul-Ālamīn*—Lord of all the worlds (v. 1:2); *Ar-Raḥmān*—the Gracious (v. 1:3); *Ar-Raḥīm*—the Merciful (v. 1:3); and *Māliki Yaumid- Dīn*—Master of the Day of Judgment (v. 1:4). Whereas, the "Transcendent Attributes" represent God's "Throne," the "Attributes of Similitude" may be said to be "the Bearers of His Throne." In view of the brevity of the introduction it is difficult to enter here into a detailed explanation of the various Divine attributes referred to in the Holy Qur'ān either expressly or by inference stemming from these four principles, as "Attributes of Similitude". It may be said, however, that nothing in any other revealed Scripture touches even the fringes of the beauty, sublimity and majesty of the Divine attributes mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān.

The Holy Qur'ān on Life after Death

Do you imagine that We have created you as a mere pastime and that you will not have eternal life and opportunities of eternal development after death (v. 23:119).

The verse clearly states that man has been created to serve a great purpose—to develop and reflect in his person Divine attributes and is manifestly the central figure in the whole of creation. Having a great and sublime purpose to fulfill his life does not end with his departure from this world and with the soul's flight from its physical body. The human soul continues its never-ending journey in a new world, in a new form and in a new body. The very idea that with the dissolution of its physical tabernacle the human soul suffers death militates against God's Wisdom and His whole

design and purpose in creating the universe. Death is merely the translation of the soul from one form of existence into another which is essential for its complete development. After its flight from its physical habitat the soul is given another body which grows and develops and takes forms which it is not possible for man to know or even to conceive of.

Life after death is only an image and manifestation of the present life, and the rewards and punishments in the next world will only be the embodiments and images of the actions in this life. Heaven and hell are not new material worlds. Call them material, if you will, but they are only embodiments of the spiritual facts of this life. The entanglements of this world shall be seen as fetters in the next. The heart burning of this world shall likewise be seen as flames of burning fire, and the love which a believer feels for his Lord and Creator will appear as wine in the life to come. Thus, there will be streams, honey, meat of birds, wine, fruits, thrones, companions besides many other things in Paradise, but they will not be the things of this world but will only be the embodiments of spiritual facts of the life of this world. This is why the Holy Qur'ān says: *No soul knows what joy of the eyes is hidden for them (the believers) for their good works* (v. 32:18). The Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) has said: "No eye has seen the blessings of Paradise, nor has any ear heard of them, nor can human mind conceive of them" (Bukhārī).

Western Scholars and the Holy Qur'ān

Before closing these introductory remarks about the Holy Qur'ān, it would be appropriate to draw attention to the opinions of some eminent scholars about the many excellences of the Holy Qur'ān:

"I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of the Qur'ān which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness" (*Bonaparte et' Islam by Cherfils*).

"This book will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence" (*Goethe*).

"The creed of Muḥammad is free from the suspicion of ambiguity and the Qur'ān is a glorious testimony to the Unity of God" (*Gibbon*).

"We may well say that the Qur'ān is one of the greatest books ever written" (*Dr. Steingass*).

"The dogma of Unity of God has been proclaimed therein (in the Qur'ān) with a grandeur, a majesty, an invariable purity and with a note of sure connection which it is hard to find surpassed outside the pale of Islam" (*Sir Thomas Arnold*).

"The Qur'ān was the prime inspiration of a religious movement which gave rise to a civilization of wide extent, vast power and profound vitality" (*Prof. Arberry*).

"We must not be surprised to find the Qur'ān the fountainhead of the

sciences. Every subject connected with heaven or earth, human life, commerce and various trades is occasionally touched upon ... it was indirectly due to the marvellous development of all branches of science in the Muslim world” (*Dr Hart Wing Hirschfeld*).

“Its (Qur'ān's) miraculous quality resides partly in its style, so perfect and lofty that neither men nor jinn could produce a single chapter to compare with its briefest chapter and partly in its content of teachings, prophecies about the future, and amazingly accurate information such as the illiterate Muḥammad could never have gathered of his own accord” (*Harry Gaylord Dorman*).

“The Qur'ān is the one miracle claimed by Muḥammad—his standing miracle he called it... and a miracle indeed it is” (*Bosworth Smith*).

“The Qur'ān contains, pure, elevated and benignant precepts (*Washington Iving*).

“Well then, if the Qur'ān were his (the Prophet's) own composition, other men could rival it. Let them produce ten verses like it. If they could not (and it is obvious that they could not) then let them accept the Qur'ān as an outstanding evidential miracle” (*H.A.R. Gibb*).

“The Qur'ān is probably the most often read book in the world, surely the most often memorized and possibly the most influential in the daily life of the people who believe in it” (*James A. Michener*).

“On the whole we find in the Qur'ān a collection of wisdom which can be adopted by the most intelligent of men, the greatest of philosophers and the most skilful of politicians ... But there is another proof of the Divinity of the Qur'ān; it is the fact that it has been preserved intact through the ages since the time of its revelation till the present day... Read and re-read by the Muslim world, this book does not rouse in the faithful any weariness; it rather through repetition, is more loved every day. It gives rise to a profound feeling of awe and respect in the one who reads it or listens to it... It was, therefore, neither by means of violence of arms, nor through the pressure of obtrusive missionaries that caused the great and rapid diffusion of Islam, but above all, through the fact that this Book, presented by the Muslims to the vanquished with the liberty to accept or reject, was the Book of God, the Word of Truth, the miracle Muḥammad could show to those in doubt and to those who remained stubborn” (*Laura Veccia Vaglieri—Apologies de l' Islamisme pp. 57-59*).

“If greatness of purpose, smallness of means and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muḥammad. The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world, and more than that he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls. On the basis of a Book, every letter of which has become law, he created a spiritual

nationality, which blended together peoples of every tongue and of every race... philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muḥammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?" (*Lamartine, 'Historic de la Turquie*).

The Holy Qur'ān is a well-preserved and well-protected Divinely-revealed Book. No effort has been spared by its hostile critics to find fault with the purity of its text. All efforts in this direction have led to but one inevitable result that the Book which the Prophet Muḥammad (may peace and blessings be upon him) gave to the world fourteen hundred years ago has come down to us without the change of a single vowel (Muir). The Holy Qur'ān is also a well-preserved Book in the sense that those believers who are pure of heart can have access to the spiritual treasures which it contains.

Believers are enjoined that before reading the Holy Qur'ān they should solicit God's protection against Satan: *When thou recitest the Qur'ān, seek refuge with Allāh from Satan, the rejected* (v. 16:99). Refuge or protection implies i) that no evil should befall us; ii) that no good shall be missed by us; iii) that after we have attained goodness, we may not again relapse into evil.

In referencing the Holy Qur'ān, the verse: *Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm* (In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful) has been counted as the first verse of the *Sūrah* in which it appears. Some publishers of the Holy Qur'ān, however, begin counting the verses after the first verse.

Chapter 1

Al-Fātiḥah

الْفَاتِحَةُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Place and Time of Revelation

As reported by many traditionalists, the whole of this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca, and from the very beginning formed part of the Muslim Prayer. The *Sūrah* has been referred to in the Qur'ānic verse, *We have indeed given thee the seven oft-repeated verses and the great Qur'ān* (15:88), which was admittedly revealed at Mecca. According to some reports, the *Sūrah* was also revealed a second time at Medina. The time of its first revelation, however, may be placed very early in the Prophet's ministry.

Names of the *Sūrah* and their Significance

The best-known title of this short *Sūrah*, i.e. *Fātiḥatul-Kitāb*, (Opening Chapter of the Book) is reported on the authority of several reliable traditionalists (Tirmidhī & Muslim). The title was later abbreviated into *Sūratul-Fātiḥah*, or simply *Al-Fātiḥah*. The *Sūrah* is known by quite a number of names, the following ten are more authentic, viz. *Al-Fātiḥah*, *Aṣ-Ṣalāt*, *Al-Ḥamd*, *Ummul-Qur'ān*, *Al-Qur'ānul-'Aḳīm*, *As-Sab'ul-Mathānī*, *Ummul-Kitāb*, *Ash-Shifā'*, *Ar-Ruqayyah* and *Al-Kanz*. These names throw a flood of light upon the extensive import of the *Sūrah*.

The name *Fātiḥatul-Kitāb* (Opening Chapter of the Book) signifies that the *Sūrah*, having been placed in the beginning, serves as a key to the whole subject-matter of the Qur'ān. *Aṣ-Ṣalāt* (The Prayer) signifies that it forms a complete and perfect prayer and constitutes an integral part of the institutional Prayers of Islam. *Al-Ḥamd* (The Praise) signifies that the *Sūrah* brings to light the lofty purpose of man's creation and teaches that the relation of God to man is one of grace and mercy. *Ummul-Qur'ān* (Mother of the Qur'ān) signifies that the *Sūrah* forms an epitome of the whole of the Qur'ān, containing in a nutshell all the knowledge that has a bearing on man's moral and spiritual development. *Al-Qur'ānul-'Aḳīm* (The Great Qur'ān) signifies that although the *Sūrah* is known as *Ummul-Kitāb* and *Ummul-Qur'ān*, it nevertheless forms part of the Holy Book and is not separate from it, as mistakenly considered by some. *As-Sab'ul-Mathānī* (The Oft-repeated Seven Verses) signifies that the seven short verses of the Chapter virtually fulfil all the spiritual needs of man. It also signifies that the Chapter must be repeated in every *Rak'at* of Prayer. *Ummul-Kitāb* (Mother of the Book) signifies that the prayer contained in the Chapter was the cause of the revelation of the Qur'ānic Dispensation. *Ash-Shifā'* (The Cure) signifies that it provides remedy for all the legitimate doubts and

misgivings of man. *Ar-Ruqayyah* (The Charm) signifies that it is not only a prayer to ward off disease but also provides protection against Satan and his followers and strengthens the heart of man against them. *Al-Kanz* (The Treasure) signifies that the *Sūrah* is an inexhaustible storehouse of knowledge.

Al-Fātiḥah Referred to in a Prophecy of the New Testament

The best-known name of the *Sūrah*, however, is Al-Fātiḥah. It is interesting to note that this very name occurs in a prophecy of the New Testament: "I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven...and he had in his hand a little *book open*: and he set his right foot upon the sea and his left foot on the earth" (Rev. 10:1, 2). The Hebrew word for 'open' is *Fatoah* which is the same as the Arabic word *Fātiḥah*. Again, "And when he (the angel) had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices" (Rev. 10:3, 4). "The seven thunders" represent the seven verses of this Chapter. Christian scholars say that the prophecy refers to the second advent of Jesus Christ, and this has been established by actual facts. The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, in whose person the prophecy relating to the second advent of Jesus has been fulfilled, wrote commentaries on this Chapter and deduced arguments of the truth of his claim from its contents and always used it as a model prayer. He deduced from its seven short verses Divine realities and eternal verities, which were not known before. It was as if the Chapter had been a sealed book until its treasures were laid bare by Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy contained in Rev. 10:4: "And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, 'Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not.'" The prophecy referred to the fact that *Fatoah* or *Al-Fātiḥah* would, for a time, remain a closed book, but that a time would come when treasures of spiritual knowledge contained in it would be laid bare. This was done by Ḥaḍrat Aḥmad.

Connection with the Rest of the Qur'ān

The *Sūrah* forms, as it were, an introduction to the Qur'ān. It is, in fact, the Qur'ān in miniature. Thus at the very beginning of his study, the reader becomes familiar in broad outline with the subjects he should expect to find in the Holy Book. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that *Suratul-Fātiḥah* is the most important Chapter of the Qur'ān (Bukhārī).

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* contains the essence of the entire Qur'ānic teaching. It comprises, in outline, all the subjects dealt with at length in the body of the Qur'ān. It starts with a description of the fundamental attributes of God, which form the pivot round which all the other Divine attributes revolve, and the basis of the working of the universe and of the relation between God and man. The four principal Divine attributes, *Rabb* (Creator, Sustainer and Developer), *Raḥmān* (Gracious), *Raḥīm* (Merciful) and *Māliki Yaumid-Dīn* (Master of the Day of Judgment) signify that after having created man, God endowed him with the

best natural capabilities and provided the means and material needed for his physical, social, moral and spiritual development. Further, He made a provision that man's strivings and endeavours should be amply rewarded. The *Sūrah* goes on to say that man has been created for '*Ibādah*, i.e. the worship of God and the attainment of His nearness and that he constantly needs His help for the fulfilment of this supreme object. The mention of the four Divine attributes is followed by a comprehensive prayer in which all the urges of the human soul find full expression. The prayer teaches that man should always seek and invoke the assistance of God that He may provide him with the means required for success in this life and in the life to come. But as man is apt to derive strength and inspiration from the good example of those noble and great souls of the past, who achieved the object of their life, he is taught to pray that like them God should open up for him also avenues of unlimited moral and spiritual progress. Finally, the prayer contains a warning lest after having been led to the right path he should stray away from it, lose sight of his goal and become estranged from his Creator. He is taught to remain always on his guard and constantly to seek God's protection against any possible estrangement from Him. This is the subject, which is put in a nutshell in *Al-Fātiḥah* and this is the subject with which the Qur'ān deals fully and comprehensively, citing numerous examples for the guidance of the reader.

Believers are enjoined that before reading the Qur'ān they should solicit God's protection against Satan: *When thou recitest the Qur'ān, seek refuge with Allāh from Satan, the rejected* (16:99). Now, refuge or protection implies; (1) that no evil should befall us; (2) that no good should escape us; and (3) that after we have attained goodness, we may not again relapse into evil. The prescribed words of the prayer are: "I seek refuge with Allāh from Satan, the rejected," which must precede every recitation of the Qur'ān.

A Chapter of the Qur'ān—and there are 114 of them—is called a *Sūrah*. This word, rendered into English as 'Chapter', means, (1) rank and eminence; (2) a mark or sign; (3) an elevated and beautiful edifice; and (4) something full and complete (Aqrab & Qurṭubī). The Chapters of the Qur'ān are called *Sūrahs* because (a) one is exalted in rank by reading them and attains to eminence through them; (b) they serve as marks for the beginning and the end of the different subjects dealt with in the Qur'ān; (c) they are each like a noble spiritual edifice and (d) each one of them contains a complete theme. The name *Sūrah* for such a division has been used in the Qur'ān itself (2:24 & 24:2). It has been used in the Ḥadīth also. Says the Holy Prophet: "Just now a *Sūrah* has been revealed to me and it runs as follows" (Muslim). From this it is clear that the name *Sūrah* for a division of the Qur'ān has been in use from the very beginning of Islam and is not a later innovation.

Chapter 2

Al-Baqarah

الْبَقْرَةَ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Title, Date of Revelation and Context

This, the longest *Sūrah* of the Qur'ān, was revealed at Medina in the first four years after the Hijrah and is known as Al-Baqarah. The name was used by the Holy Prophet himself. The *Sūrah* seems to have derived its title from vv. 68-72 where an important incident in the life of the Jewish nation is briefly mentioned. For a long time, the Jews had lived in Egypt as serfs and slaves under the cruelest bondage of the Pharaohs who were cow-worshippers. As is generally the case with subject races, they had borrowed from, and slavishly imitated, many customs and habits of the Egyptians and consequently had come to possess a strong liking, bordering on adoration, for the cow. When Moses told them to sacrifice a particular cow which symbolised their object of worship, they made a great fuss about it. It is this incident to which vv. 68-72 refer. Besides Al-Baqarah, the *Sūrah* possesses another name—*Az-Zahrā'*, and both this *Sūrah* and *Āl-e-Imrān* are jointly known as *Az-Zahrawān*—The Two Bright Ones (Muslim). The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: 'Everything has its peak, and the peak of the Qur'ān is *Al-Baqarah*' (Tirmidhī). The *Sūrah* is placed next to *Al-Fātiḥah* because it embodies answers to all the important problems which at once confront the reader when he turns from *Al-Fātiḥah* to a study of the main Book. Though generally connected with all the other *Sūrahs*, *Al-Fātiḥah* possesses a special relationship with Al-Baqarah which constitutes the fulfilment of the prayer, 'Guide us in the straight path... Thy displeasure.' Indeed Al-Baqarah with its discourses upon the Signs, the Book, the Wisdom and the Means of purification (2:130), constitutes an appropriate and comprehensive reply to that great prayer.

Subject-Matter

It is sometimes said that the Qur'ān starts with this *Sūrah* as its very opening verse, viz. "This is a perfect Book; there is no doubt in it," shows; while *Al-Fātiḥah* being, as it were, the Qur'ān in miniature though forming its integral part, possesses an independent and peculiar position of its own (15:88). The subject-matter of this long Chapter is epitomized in its 130th verse. This verse contains a prayer of the Patriarch Abraham in which he implores God to raise a Prophet among the Meccans who should (1) recite to them the Signs of God; (2) give the world a Scripture containing perfect laws of the *Sharī'ah*; (3) explain the wisdom underlying them; and (4) should lay down principles and rules of conduct which should bring about complete

spiritual transformation in their lives and should make them a great and powerful nation, fit to lead the whole world. The four great objects for which Abraham prayed have been dealt with in this Chapter in the same order in which he prayed for them. The "Signs" are discussed in the first 168 verses, the "Book" and "Wisdom" in vv. 169-243 and lastly "the Means of national progress" in vv. 244-287. "The recital of the Signs" refers to the arguments about the truth of the Holy Prophet; "the teaching of the Book and Wisdom" to the laws of the *Sharī'ah* laid down in the *Sūrah* and the wisdom or philosophy which underlies them, and last of all in elucidation of the subject of the spiritual change spoken of in Abraham's prayer it refers to the principles that lead to national awakening.

The *Sūrah* has 40 sections and 287 verses. It opens with a statement of three fundamental beliefs—belief in God, Revelation and Life after death and two practical ordinances about Prayer and *Zakāt*, the rest being an extension and explanation of these principles and ordinances. In response to the prayer for guidance, the Qur'ān claims to present a perfect code of laws which comprises all the truths that were found in earlier revealed Scriptures, with much more that they did not contain, and claims also to guide man to the highest pinnacle of spiritual glory. The second section decries and deprecates mere verbal profession of faith which has no deep roots in the heart. The third section, however, lays down standards and criteria by which the truth of the Qur'ān can be tested and verified. And for this purpose, it draws pointed attention to the process of evolution working in the physical universe. This process is to be seen in the spiritual realm also. Then mention is made of the first link in this spiritual chain—of Adam, the first man, to whom God revealed His Will. In the 4th section we are told that objections are being raised against the Holy Prophet. But these objections cannot detract from his truth even as they could not detract from Adam's truth. The next twelve sections—5th to 16th—dispose of the objection, viz. where was the necessity of a new revelation when God had already revealed Himself to Adam? It is stated that in harmony with progressive evolution in the spiritual system, God has been sending down His revelation in every age, every succeeding revelation being an improvement upon the preceding one. Moses was the Founder of a new *Sharī'ah*. He was followed by a galaxy of Divine Messengers who were opposed and persecuted by the Israelites. Persistent defiance of Divine commandments on the part of the Israelites and their iniquities made them lose their title to Divine grace. Hence Prophethood, in accordance with biblical prophecies, was transferred to the House of Ishmael and the Holy Prophet was raised in the barren and arid Valley of Mecca with the most perfect and complete Law. This filled the Israelites with rage though they had no right to fret and fume at their being deprived of Prophethood. They opposed the Holy Prophet and spared no pains to bring him to naught. But opposition to Divine purpose has never succeeded.

The next two sections dispense with the objections of the Israelites as to why the Holy Prophet has given up the *Qiblah* of all the former Prophets in favour of the Ka'bah. They are told that in the first place facing a certain direction in Prayers or fixing a particular place as the *Qiblah* cannot be an object to be sought after, it only serves to bring about and maintain unity among a people. Secondly, in the prayers which Abraham had offered for the sons of Ishmael, it was prophesied that Mecca would one day become a place of pilgrimage for them and the Ka'bah their *Qiblah*. In the 19th section it is mentioned that the Holy Prophet will meet strong opposition from disbelievers in the discharge of his onerous mission, and this opposition will continue till the Fall of Mecca. The 20th section draws attention to the supreme truth that all that is stated above is not an idle guess or conjecture; the very creation of the heavens and the earth, the alternation of day and night and other natural phenomena bear incontrovertible testimony to its truth inasmuch as, on the one hand, the law of nature points to the existence of a spiritual law and to a process of progressive evolution in it and, on the other, the whole universe seems to be working in support of the Holy Prophet. With the 21st section begins a description of the ordinances of the *Shari'ah* and the wisdom underlying them; and first of all directions have been laid down for using lawful (*Halāl*) and wholesome (*Ṭayyib*) food, because human actions are governed by man's mental condition and his mental condition is strongly influenced by the food he eats. In the 23rd section substance of Islamic teaching is given which consists of belief in God, Life after death, revealed Scriptures and Divine Messengers. Doing good to others, worship and contributions to national funds are also mentioned as constituents of righteous conduct. To these, observance of patience under trials and fulfilment of solemn promises are added. Maintenance of justice, legitimate help of relatives and observance of social laws, of which the law of inheritance occupies a most prominent place, are also regarded as important. In the next section stress is laid on devotional exercises which purpose is fulfilled by the Islamic Fast. Sections 24th and 25th deal with rites and laws pertaining to Pilgrimage which plays a very important role in bringing about national unity and solidarity among Muslims. In section 26th light is shed on the philosophy of ordinances of the *Shari'ah* which should be shown due regard because outward acts have a very potent effect on inward purity. Then it is stated that the laws of the *Shari'ah* are disregarded because men generally do not like to spend their time and money in the cause of God and they adduce lame excuses to shirk their duty in this respect. In fact, no progress is possible without sacrifice and believers are exhorted to spend their hard-earned wealth in the way of Allāh so that full religious freedom may be established. In section 27th we are told that when religious freedom is interfered with, fighting becomes obligatory and sacrifice of life and money necessary. Then it is stated that, in order to while away their time and to seek mental relief, people indulge in

drinking, and in order to collect money to meet the expenses of war, they have recourse to gambling. Islam condemns these evil practices. Next, we are told that war leaves behind many orphans who should be properly looked after, and in this connection, Muslims are enjoined not to contract marriage with idolatrous women because it is calculated to disturb the harmony of their domestic life. In sections 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st, we are told not to have sexual intercourse with women in their monthly courses which is a sort of temporary separation. These instructions are followed by laws that govern divorce which is more or less a permanent separation and then by laws that concern suckling and also treatment of widows. Sections 32nd and 33rd deal with principles that have a special bearing on national awakening and by observing which alone a people can make real progress, and Muslims are told that a people who seek to occupy an honoured place among the powerful nations must be prepared to face death to promote the cause of truth and righteousness. In section 34th it is mentioned that man's stay on earth is but temporary and he should spare no effort to establish real connection with his Creator, and this is only possible by deep meditation on Divine attributes. Then in *Āyatul-Kursiyy*, which the Holy Prophet has termed as one of the best and most exalted Qur'ānic verses, a brief but very comprehensive mention is made of God's attributes and it is said that no compulsion is needed to exhort a person to establish his connection with the Possessor of such noble and sublime attributes. Then in the 35th section it is stated that whereas moral righteousness takes place in an individual directly through God's own grace, moral transformation comes about among nations through the instrumentality of Divine Messengers, and hints that both these kinds of reformation are decreed to take place four times among the progeny of Abraham. Next, it is said that both collective effort and national cooperation are essential for moral transformation to take place on national scale; the results in this respect of the concerted and collective efforts and mutual cooperation of true believers are far in excess of their sacrifices. Then all transactions based on interest are strictly forbidden and the giving and taking of interest has been denounced as tantamount to waging war against God and His Prophet because transactions based on interest are against the spirit of mutual help and cooperation and of doing good to fellow beings. Muslims are further told that they should entertain no apprehension that no progress is possible without interest. God has decreed that eventually destruction will overtake nations which give or take interest. Next, it is stated that one way of rendering mutual help and cooperation is to advance money on loan but all transactions dealing with lending and borrowing money should be properly written down. The *Sūrah* ends on the beautiful note that whereas the above-mentioned directions are necessary for bringing about moral transformation among a people, the best, the safest and the surest means to raise their moral standard and to effect real and true righteousness and purity of character among them is that they should

have firm faith in the Word of God, constantly keep in view, reflect and meditate upon His attributes and should seek Divine help by prayer sincerely offered to Him. This is, in brief, a summary of the subject-matter of this longest of the Qur'ānic *Sūrahs* and the moral is forcefully brought home directly to the disbelievers in general and to the People of the Book in particular that in the Holy Prophet is fulfilled the prayer of the Patriarch Abraham and thus if the Holy Prophet is rejected, Abraham will have to be regarded as a liar and an impostor and consequently the whole Mosaic Dispensation and Christianity also will be dubbed as tissues of lies and falsehoods. Indirectly, the truth of the Message of Islam has been made clear for the whole world to accept because the creation of man possesses a great and sublime object and that object can only be fulfilled by believing in the message embodied in the Qur'ān which alone now contains the right *Shari'ah* and sheds light on the wisdom and philosophy of its ordinances and by believing in and acting upon which alone can purity of the heart and Divine Realisation be attained.

Chapter 3

Āl-e-‘Imrān

آلِ عِمْرَانَ؟

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Connection with the Preceding *Sūrah*

There exists such a deep and far-reaching connection between this *Sūrah* and the preceding one, Al-Baqarah, that the two are called Az-Zahrawān (The Two Bright Ones). Whereas Al-Baqarah deals with the wrong beliefs and evil practices of the Jews with whom began the Mosaic Dispensation, the present *Sūrah* deals mainly with the wrong doctrines and dogmas of Christianity which subject constitutes its culmination. The *Sūrah* is named Āl-e-‘Imrān (The Family of ‘Imrān). ‘Imrān or ‘Amrān was the father of Moses and Aaron, the progenitors of the family from which sprang Mary, the mother of Jesus, brief account of whose life and mission is given in this *Sūrah*. Being closely connected with Al-Baqarah, the *Sūrah* may be safely supposed to have been revealed immediately after it. A detailed mention of the Battle of Uḥud places its revelation in the third year of the Hijrah.

Āl-e-‘Imrān has a twofold connection with Al-Baqarah. First, there subsists a strong and deep link between the subject-matter of the whole of this *Sūrah* and that of the whole of *Sūrah* Al-Baqarah, and another link equally strong between the concluding portion of Al-Baqarah and the opening verses of this *Sūrah*. In fact, the order in the Qur’ān is of two kinds. Either, the topic with which one Chapter is concluded is continued in the following Chapter, or the whole of the subject matter of the preceding Chapter is referred to in the next. This two-fold connection also exists between Al-Baqarah and Āl-e-‘Imrān. The connection of the whole subject-matter of Āl-e-‘Imrān with that of Al-Baqarah mainly consists in a description of the causes that led to the transfer of Prophethood from the Mosaic to the Islamic Dispensation. This was the main theme of Al-Baqarah, and in explanation of it the degenerate condition of the Jews was dealt with at some length in that *Sūrah*. But in Al-Baqarah very little light was shed on Christianity, in which culminated the Mosaic Dispensation. This omission could have given rise to the seemingly legitimate doubt that though Judaism which constituted the beginning of the Mosaic Dispensation had become corrupt, its culmination, the Christian Faith, was still pure; and hence, apparently there was no necessity of introducing and establishing a new religion—Islam. To remove this doubt, the hollowness of the Christian dogmas has been exposed in the present *Sūrah*.

Title

The *Sūrah* is known by several names in the Ḥadīth, i.e. Az-Zahrā’ (The

Bright One), *Al-Amān* (The Peace), *Al-Kanz* (The Treasure), *Al-Mu'īnah* (The Helper), *Al-Mujādalah* (The Pleading), *Al-Istighfār* (The Seeking of Forgiveness) and *Aṭ-Ṭayyibah* (The Pure).

As the falsity of Christian doctrines is sought to be established in this Chapter it rightly opens with the hint that as Christianity had become corrupt and degenerate, it could not prove a bar to the introduction of a new and better dispensation. On the contrary, Christianity itself constituted a strong testimony to the need for the introduction of a new Law. Consequently, the Divine attributes the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining have been placed in the very beginning of this *Sūrah* to repudiate the Christian basic doctrines. The other connection between the two *Sūrahs*, viz. that of the concluding portion of *Al-Baqarah* with the opening words of this *Sūrah* is apparent from the fact that *Al-Baqarah* had concluded with a prayer for national regeneration and reformation of Muslims and the triumph of Islam over its enemies, and the Divine attributes—the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining have been placed in the beginning of the present *Sūrah* to assure Muslims that God will certainly come to their aid because He being the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining, His power knows no weakening or diminution.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah*, like the preceding one, opens with the abbreviated letters, *Alif Lām Mīm*, (I am Allāh, the All-Knowing), which are intended to draw attention to the Divine attribute of knowledge; and, mention of the attributes, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining is meant to point out that in this *Sūrah* the Divine attribute of knowledge has been substantiated by God's attributes, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining, i.e. the fact that God is Living, Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining constitutes proof of His being All-Knowing, because death and decay are the result of lack of knowledge. The *Sūrah* proceeds to say that, as Jews and Christians have strayed away from the right path, Divine punishment will overtake them, and their being the followers of Torah and the Gospels will not save them from God's punishment, because these Books have been abrogated and, therefore, are unable to satisfy human needs and requirements. After this it tells Muslims to banish all doubt or misgiving from their minds that, in view of the numerical superiority of Jews and Christians and the preponderance of the material means at their disposal, they would not prevail against the latter, because God had already granted them predominance over their more powerful enemies, the Quraish and other infidel tribes of Arabia. The same phenomenon will be repeated now. Moreover, national victories do not result solely from the preponderance of material means but primarily and very largely from the superiority of national morals. And final victory will come to Muslims because, though they lack material means, they are in possession of ample moral and spiritual means and because also they follow a true religion.

Next, the *Sūrah* proceeds to disabuse the minds of the enemies of Islam of

the fondly-held illusion that their national usages and customs are superior to those of Muslims. Further, they are told that by holding wrong beliefs and resorting to evil practices they appear to ignore the law of cause and effect, which cannot be flouted with impunity. The *Sūrah* then develops the subject that the path to progress and prosperity for Muslims does not lie in imitating other peoples' ways and manners but in strictly following Islam and the Holy Prophet. After this a clear and detailed exposition of the real subject is taken in hand with a brief reference to the beginnings of Christianity, refutation of which is one of its main themes. Then attention of the People of the Book is drawn to the fact that when Muslims also believe in the truth of the Divine origin and source of their Faith, why should they fritter away their energies and resources in fighting with them; instead both should combine to preach to infidels the doctrine of the Oneness of God, on which they agree, and should keep within proper bounds their respective doctrinal differences. The Christians, then, are particularly warned that they cannot hope to continue to be the "Chosen Ones" of God and retain His grace and love if they refuse to accept the new Faith; they are asked how, after having already subscribed to the doctrine that Truth has always been revealed by God from time to time, can they with justification defy this principle? It is further stated that matters regarding which the People of the Book dispute and quarrel with Muslims are not of much weight, because originally some of them were regarded as permissible by their own forefathers. The subject is further developed that Muslims and Jews have a meeting-point in Abraham, and since it was Abraham who laid the foundations of the Ka'bah, why should the Israelites quarrel with Muslims on the basis of fancied and insubstantial differences? Then a note of warning is sounded to Muslims that the People of the Book have gone so far in opposition to them that, if the latter had their way, they would certainly lead them astray. But Muslims will not go astray because they are the recipients of God's favour. They will meet strong opposition and persecution from them which they should endure with steadfastness and should try to strengthen their connection with God and establish their mutual relations on a firmer basis because they will soon need to develop a united front when confronted with a severe attack from Christians. Before that time comes, they should add to their numbers by conveying the Message of Islam to as many people as they possibly can. They are further warned against harbouring the delusion that, in the event of their fight with Christians, the Jews would help them. On the contrary, the latter would spare no pains to harass and oppress them. In spite of this warning against the Jews the *Sūrah* does not fail to recognize the good wherever it is found and says that all the People of the Book are not bad. There are also good people among them, but only those, who entertain bad designs against Islam, will come to grief. It is these with whom the Muslims should eschew all friendly contact to avoid being influenced by the latter's undesirable morals.

Then a brief reference is made to the Battle of Badr. The Muslims are told

that, just as in extremely adverse circumstances God protected and helped them against very heavy odds in that encounter and vouchsafed to them a clear victory over the idolaters of Mecca, the same will happen with regard to the People of the Book; God's mercy and grace will accompany them in opposition to the latter. The People of the Book depend for their power and material might on transactions based on interest. But the taking and giving of interest runs counter to good morals. By taking interest they oppress God's servants and by subscribing to the doctrine of Atonement and the dogma of the non-acceptance of repentance they declare God to be cruel like themselves. The believers are further enjoined to do their duty, make suitable sacrifices and employ properly the material means at their disposal, leaving the rest to God for the success of their life's mission. The *Sūrah* then enunciates a very sound principle, viz. that the Holy Prophet is but a Divine Messenger; if he should die or be killed in a battle (though in conformity with Divine promise this would never happen), Muslims should not lose heart and should entertain no doubt about the truth of Islam because Islam relies for its success and prosperity on no individual however exalted. Another rule of conduct to be observed in time of war is that the leaders of Muslims should behave with greater leniency than in ordinary times towards other Muslims and should have proper regard for their susceptibilities, so that the enemy may not get an opportunity to create discord and dissension among them. It is further enjoined that at such time all matters should be decided after mutual consultation. Then, Muslims are reminded of the great good God has done to them in that He has raised for them a great Messenger. They should follow him and eschew the path of the disturbers of peace. The *Sūrah* lays down the principle, viz. that those, who die while fighting for the cause of Truth, are entitled to special respect. By their death they receive eternal life and inspire their community, as it were, with a new life. Again, reference is made to the People of the Book saying that morally they have become so depraved that, while, on the one hand, they claim to be God's "Own Chosen People," on the other, they hesitate to spend their money in His way. Muslims are enjoined to take a lesson from this. The moral depravity of these people is further contrasted with their claim that they are commanded to give their allegiance only to that Messenger who should demand the greatest sacrifice of them. The *Sūrah* says that such Messengers did appear among them, but they refused to accept them. Next, the theme of sacrifice is developed and believers are told that it would be foolish on their part to be afraid of making sacrifices for national cause. They are then warned that their faith will be put to a severe test. They should not think that they will achieve success without passing through fire and blood. In the next few verses some special qualities and characteristics of true believers are mentioned and they are taught certain prayers which are essential for national progress and prosperity. The *Sūrah* concludes with the rules of conduct by observing which Muslims can achieve success and predominance in this life and the pleasure of God in the next.

Chapter 4

An-Nisā'

النِّسَاءُ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah* is appropriately entitled An-Nisā', (The Women) because it deals chiefly with the rights and responsibilities of women and also with their status and position in society. It was revealed at Medina between the third and fifth year of the Hijrah after the Battle of Uḥud and it mainly deals with the subject of widows and orphans who were left behind in large numbers after that battle. Muslims and European scholars are all agreed on this point. Noldeke, the great German Orientalist, however, is inclined to place some of its verses among the Meccan revelations, because, according to him in those verses "the Jews are referred to in a friendly spirit", as they had not yet come into conflict with Muslims. Wherry thinks that the words "O people" in verse 134 show that at least this verse was revealed at Mecca because this form of address has been exclusively used in the Meccan *Sūrahs*. But to say that because a certain verse uses the expression "O people" it must, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, belong to the Meccan period is a mere assertion. The fact is that because at Mecca the number of the believers was very small and they had not yet been welded into a distinct and separate community and very few commandments of the *Sharī'ah* had been revealed, the Meccans—believers and disbelievers—were all addressed together by the words "O people." But as after the Emigration of the Holy Prophet to Medina the commandments of the *Sharī'ah* came thick and fast and an organised community of believers, quite distinct and separate from the disbelievers, had come into existence, they were addressed as "O ye who believe". But where the address is general, applying both to believers and non-believers, the expression "O people" has been used.

The connection of the *Sūrah* with the previous Chapter consists in the fact that in the former *Sūrah* one of the principal subjects dealt with was the Battle of Uḥud while this *Sūrah* deals with the various problems to which that battle gave rise. The *Sūrah* also sheds a flood of light on the evil designs and machinations of the Jews and the Hypocrites of Medina who, after the Battle of Uḥud, seeing that Islam was gaining great power in the land, mustered all their resources to make a last effort to destroy it root and branch. In a way also the *Sūrah* constitutes an extension of the subject matter of the preceding *Sūrah* in that it demolishes the basic Christian doctrine of Atonement, and establishes that Jesus did not die on the Cross.

Summary of Subject-Matter

As in Āl-e-'Imrān, the Christian basic doctrines constitute one of the main

themes of this *Sūrah* also. But in this *Sūrah* greater space has been assigned to a comparison of the detailed teachings of the two religions—Islam and Christianity—with special reference to the progress and domination of Christianity in the Latter Days. As in the Latter Days, Christian writers and speakers were to profess and proclaim loudly that Islam had degraded woman by giving her a much lower status than man, this *Sūrah* largely deals with the problems concerning females, and a cursory glance over the Qur'ānic teaching about women establishes the fact that even in this respect Islamic teachings are far superior to those of Christianity. And as the subject of orphans is intimately connected with that of women, it has also received special mention in this *Sūrah* which is the first revelation to safeguard their rights and those of women. Women have not only been given all the rights to which they are legitimately entitled, particularly the right of inheritance, but have also been declared to be the sole masters and arbiters of their property. The second main topic dealt with in this *Sūrah* is that of hypocrisy. As in the Latter Days Christianity was to gain worldwide predominance and a large number of Muslims were to live under Christian Governments and, as a result of their subjugation by Christian rulers and their fear of Christian criticism of Islam they were to adopt hypocritical attitude towards their own Faith, the subject of hypocrisy has also been treated in this *Sūrah* along with that of women, and light is thrown on the depths to which a hypocrite can sink morally and spiritually. The hypocrites are warned that shame and abasement would seize them because they fear men more than their Creator. Towards its end the *Sūrah* sheds some light on the subject of Jesus' crucifixion and it is emphatically stated and convincingly established that the belief that Jesus died on the Cross is utterly false and unfounded. Like other human beings he died a natural death, and this false doctrine is belied by proven facts of history, and even the Gospels lend no support to it. The *Sūrah* closes with a brief reversion to the subject of *Kalālah* in order to draw attention to the spiritual hairlessness of Jesus who in a sense was a *Kalālah* inasmuch as he left no spiritual successor, Prophethood having been transferred from the House of Israel to that of Ishmael.

Chapter 5

Al-Mā'idah

المائدة

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation

According to Commentators of the Qur'ān this *Sūrah* belongs to the Medinite period. 'Ā'ishah is reported by Ḥākim and Imām Aḥmad to have said that this is the last *Sūrah* which was revealed to the Holy Prophet. Taking into consideration all the relevant data one is inevitably led to the conclusion that the *Sūrah* was revealed in the last years of the Holy Prophet's ministry and some of its verses were actually among the last to be revealed. Though Imām Aḥmad says on the authority of 'Asmā', daughter of Yazīd, that the whole of this *Sūrah* was revealed together, it seems that because a major portion of it was revealed at one time, the whole of it came to be regarded as having been revealed at the same time. This is why perhaps Rodwell has assigned the *Sūrah* the last place in order of revelation.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah*, like *Sūrahs* Āl-e-'Imrān and An-Nisā', deals mainly with Christian doctrines and particularly denounces the doctrine that the Law is a curse. It opens with the injunction that all covenants must be fulfilled and that it was necessary to lay down laws as to what is lawful and what is unlawful. It further claims that the Qur'ān has laid down ordinances bearing upon man's complete moral and spiritual development, and it is in this respect that the Qur'ān constitutes the final and irrevocable Divine Law for all mankind. This claim of the Qur'ān is embodied in the fourth verse of the *Sūrah*, which also implies that because the Law is most essential for the spiritual guidance of man and his moral development, it is wrong to regard it as a curse. The verse further hints that when the eating of meat offered to idols and of blood and of strangled animals was forbidden to Christians and this commandment constituted an ordinance of the Law (The Acts, 15:20, 29), they could not take exception to the Law and condemn it as a curse. The *Sūrah* proceeds to lay down Islamic commandments with regard to eatables and enjoins that they should be *Halāl*, i.e. allowed by the Law and *Ṭayyib* (pure), i.e. their use should in no way contravene or offend against medical or hygienic regulations. Islam, alone of all religions, while laying down ordinances regarding lawful and unlawful things, has pointed out the nice distinction between what is only lawful and what is both lawful and pure. Next, it is stated that the Jews and the Christians broke God's covenants and disregarded and defied Divine commandments which led to their moral and spiritual ruin and brought disgrace and humiliation on them. But they could now rehabilitate themselves into Divine favour by accepting the Holy Prophet. Christians are further

warned that at first by deifying Jesus they caused the wrath of God to come down upon them and that now they have become jealous of the Holy Prophet because God has chosen him for His favours. This jealous attitude of theirs towards the Holy Prophet resembles that of Cain towards Abel. The *Sūrah* proceeds to state that while Jews and Christians lose no opportunity to oppose Islam, they themselves have become so depraved as to have ceased to act upon their own religious Scriptures and are increasingly becoming ignorant of the teachings of their own religions. They are told that if they do not see their way to accepting Islam, they should at least follow their own Scriptures and abide by their own Law. But if, owing to the political supremacy of Islam, they have sometimes to seek the judgment of the Islamic Government, that judgment will and must inevitably be according to the Qur'ānic Law. Then attention of the Muslims is drawn to the great change that has come over their political position and they are told that as the power of the infidels has been finally broken and Christians now are to be their principal enemies, and Jews, in spite of their enmity towards Christianity, are to side with Christians, they (Muslims) should be on their guard against both of them. Some light is then shed on the stratagems and machinations employed by the enemies of Islam to turn Muslims away from their Faith and to lower it in their estimation. After this, importance of the preaching of Islam is impressed upon Muslims. They are told that the one real method effectively to defeat the activities of Jews and Christians is to preach the Message of Islam to them and to bring home to them its truth from their own Scriptures. It should also be made clear to them that now their salvation lies in Islam and that their idolatrous beliefs are false, particularly the doctrine that Jesus was son of God. Similarly, mention is made of Jews who, by opposing and persecuting the two great Prophets—David and Jesus—incurred God's displeasure. Their attention is drawn to their past faults and failings, and Christians being more amenable to accepting the truth than Jews, commandments have been laid down which particularly concern them, viz. commandments about what is lawful and what is unlawful; commandments about oaths; about the use of wine and games of chance and about hunting; and also commandments regarding criticism of religion and ordinances about religious rites and ceremonies and about evidence. Last of all a somewhat detailed mention is made of the particular circumstances of Jesus's ministry, and it is shown that they closely resemble those of other Prophets of God and that therefore there was nothing of Godhead or Divinity about him and that all material progress of Christian people was due to a prayer of his. But they have made improper use of their material progress and prosperity and have succumbed to polytheistic beliefs and practices. God will, on the Day of Judgment, establish their guilt and put them to shame from the mouth of Jesus himself. The *Sūrah* ends with the declaration that to God belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and He has power over all things, which implies the hint that the belief that the Kingdom of God is only in heaven as the Christians say, has no foundation.

Chapter 6

Al-An‘ām

الأنعام

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah* belongs to the Meccan period. According to most accounts, the whole of it was revealed in one portion; and as reported by some traditionists, as many as 70,000 angels stood guard when it was being revealed, which points to the special protection which was afforded to its subject-matter. The *Sūrah* probably derives its title from vv. 137-139 where the *An‘ām* have been condemned as one of the causes of idolatry.

Subject-Matter

In this *Sūrah* there is a change in the treatment of the subject-matter from that adopted in the previous *Sūrahs*. It contains a refutation of non-Israelite religions and starts with the refutation of the Zoroastrian Faith, which believes in the duality of Godhead—in two separate gods of good and evil. The Qur‘ān exposes this doctrine by declaring that both the powers of doing good and evil are, in reality, two links of the same chain, one remaining incomplete without the other; so they cannot be said to have been created by two different gods. Light and darkness are indeed Divine creation of the same God, and instead of pointing to the duality of the Godhead, they really constitute a strong argument in favour of Oneness of God and possess a peculiar affinity with the creation of man and his natural powers and faculties. The *Sūrah* proceeds to discuss the important subject that evil is born of the wrong use of God-given faculties, and that whenever men cease to make right use of them God raises a Prophet to teach them their right use. After this it is stated that the delay in Divine punishment overtaking disbelievers often emboldens them all the more, though the delay is always due to God’s mercy. They persecute their Prophet and his followers, entertaining a false hope that in this way they would succeed in weakening the faith of the believers, but the faith of believers remains unflinching and steadfast under severest trials and tribulations, while disbelievers at once disown their own idolatrous beliefs whenever they are overtaken by misfortunes. Further, light is shed on the subject that irreligiousness is born of lack of faith in Life after death or in the failure of disbelievers to establish real connection with God. This dual lack of faith makes them bold in the rejection of truth. Opposition to the Prophets by the disbelievers appears to be not quite unnatural, since only those people seek God who possess some natural kinship with spiritual matters, for the spiritually deaf cannot hear the Voice of God. They see Sign after Sign and yet continue

to repeat parrot-like that no Sign has been shown to them. The opponents of the Holy Prophet have seen many Signs but have not profited by them. They are, therefore, warned that now they will see only the Sign of punishment. But God is not quick to punish. It is when disbelievers wilfully and persistently shut the door of repentance upon themselves and scornfully reject the Divine Message that they are punished. Next, it is stated that only those who have fear of God in their hearts accept the truth, and the Holy Prophet is told to address his appeal only to the God-fearing. For the others, it is necessary that fear of God should first be created in their hearts, then will arguments and reasons benefit them. Further, it is stated that it is essential for the progress of Islam that special attention be paid to the spiritual training of believers, because the Prophet is mortal and must die one day and only the community of believers will remain behind to preach and propagate the Divine Message. Next, the disbelievers are told that they are foolish to find fault with the Holy Prophet merely because the promised punishment has not already overtaken them. They are told that to punish the haughty and boastful rejecters of truth rests entirely in the hand of God Who punishes them as He thinks fit or opportune. It may be that a person, who is today the enemy of truth and seems to deserve Divine punishment, may bring about true reformation in himself tomorrow and deserve Divine mercy. So the infliction of punishment, or deferring thereof, is God's own work. The *Sūrah* then exposes the falsity of polytheistic doctrines by means of an argument which the Patriarch Abraham had with his people; and then mention is made of the favours and blessings which God bestowed upon him and his descendants because they strove hard to establish truth in the world. The *Sūrah* proceeds to state that the mission of God's Messengers never fails. Like rain-water it gives fertility and freshness to a soil spiritually bleak and barren, and as it is not possible to attain true realization of God unless He reveals Himself to men, it is necessary that Divine Messengers should appear time after time as it is through them that God reveals Himself to the world. Then it is stated that for the attainment of true faith a corresponding wholesome change of heart is a *sine qua non*. Without such a change, even Signs and miracles prove of no avail. Next, a contrast is instituted between Islamic Teaching, which answers and satisfies the demands of reason and justice and the doctrines and practices of idolaters, which are based neither on reason nor on argument. Towards the end of the *Sūrah* we are told that the Qur'ān has been revealed to raise and honour even those nations to whom no revelation has so far been sent in order that they may not suffer from a feeling of inferiority before the People of the Book. The Message of the Qur'ān, unlike that of former revealed Scriptures, is for the whole of mankind, and it seeks to establish real and permanent peace between different sections of humanity as well as between man and his Creator.

Chapter 7

Al-A‘rāf

الْأَعْرَافُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Title and Time of Revelation

According to Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn Zubair, Ḥasan, Mujāhid, ‘Ikrimah, ‘Aṭā’ and Jābir bin Zaid, this *Sūrah* belongs to the Meccan period with the exception of vv.165-172. Qatādah however, is of the opinion that v. 165 was revealed at Medina. The *Sūrah* takes its title from v. 47. Commentators have not succeeded in finding out any real connection between the word *A‘rāf* and the subject-matter of the *Sūrah*. This is because they have assigned a wrong meaning to the word. They think that *A‘rāf* is the name of an intervening spiritual stage between Paradise and Hell and that the Fellows of *A‘rāf* will appear distinct from the inmates of Hell but will not as yet have entered Paradise. The Qur’ān rejects this meaning of the word because it has mentioned only two groups of people—the dwellers of Paradise and the inmates of Hell. There is no mention in it of any third group or class of people. It lends no support to the interpretation of the word *A‘rāf* as the place of persons of a middling spiritual status, nor can any internal evidence be adduced in support of this interpretation. The Qur’ān depicts the Fellows of *Al-A‘rāf* as at one time addressing the dwellers of Paradise and at another time talking to the inmates of Hell; and their spiritual knowledge has been declared to be so great that they can recognize the dwellers of Paradise by their special marks and also the inmates of Hell by the latter’s particular signs. They rebuke and upbraid the inmates of Hell and pray for the inmates of Paradise (7:47, 49, 50). Can a person, who himself is hanging, as it were, in a state of uncertainty between Paradise and Hell, be so presumptuous as to assume an air of superiority as the Fellows of *Al-A‘rāf* have been shown to do? The fact is that the Fellows of *Al-A‘rāf* are the Prophets of God, who will enjoy a special spiritual status on the Day of Judgment and will pray for the dwellers of Paradise and rebuke and reprimand the inmates of Hell. And because the *Sūrah* is the first among the Qur’ānic Chapters in which the life stories of several Prophets have been dealt with at some length, it has rightly been given the name *Al-A‘rāf*. Moreover, the very construction of the word supports this inference. *A‘rāf* is the plural of ‘*Urf*’ which means a high and elevated place and means also that spiritual realization which a man acquires by the help of God-given intellect and the testimony of his inner self. So *A‘rāf* may signify those teachings of which the truth is established by rational arguments and the testimony of human nature; and, as the teachings of Prophets possess all these qualities, they alone deserve this spiritually exalted position and so they can legitimately be called the Fellows

of *Al-A'rāf* (Elevated Places). In short, the *Sūrah* Al-A'rāf is so called because in it illustrations have been given from the lives of those eminent men of very high spiritual position who in the past taught mankind eternal truths in accordance with the demands of human nature and human reason, and whom the men of this world resisted and sought to bring low, but whom the jealous God raised to a very exalted position.

Subject-Matter and Context

Spiritually speaking the *Sūrah* serves as a kind of *Barzakh* (intervening link) between the *Sūrahs* that precede it and those that follow it, which signifies that the subject-matter of the preceding *Sūrahs* has been developed into a new theme in this *Sūrah*. In the preceding *Sūrahs* the main theme consisted of refutation of Judaism and Christianity and that of other Faiths which profess to derive their authority mainly from Philosophy and Reason. In this *Sūrah* both these themes have been jointly treated and the falsity of the positions of both these sets of creeds is demonstrated and the truth of Islam established. First of all, it is stated that because the Qur'ān is the revealed Word of God, there is no possibility that it will ever meet with destruction or will fail to achieve its object. Then Muslims are warned that they should not, in a fit of despondency, come to a hasty compromise with the followers of other religions, because the opponents of a true religion have always suffered disgrace and humiliation in the end. Next, it is stated that God has created man for the attainment of a most sublime object, but most men forget this noble purpose of their lives. The paradisiacal life of Adam and his expulsion from it have been cited as an illustration of this subject, and it is added that in the very beginning after having created man God provided for him the means to attain a high spiritual status; but man gave no heed to God's plans for him, and followed Satan. Further, it is mentioned that, unlike former Faiths which aimed at individual development, Islam seeks to bring about reformation of whole communities. Whereas former Prophets sought to make individuals enter Paradise, Islam's aim is that whole communities and nations should attain bliss. But, as every effort at reformation has to encounter obstacles and vicissitudes before it attains its consummation, so whenever the Muslim community deviates from Islamic principles and teachings God raises for their reformation divinely-inspired Reformers from among the followers of the Holy Prophet so that man may not lose his newly-gained Paradise by deviating from the path of national progress and development. The *Sūrah* then proceeds to lay down standards and criteria for the recognition of these promised Reformers and light is also shed on the ultimate doom of their opponents. Next, it is said that all Divine plans work gradually. As in the material world, so in the realm of the spirit, all progress is subject to the law of evolution and it is by a process of progressive evolution that the spiritual development of man has taken place from the time of Adam to that of the Holy Prophet, and in his teaching greater attention has been devoted to the betterment and organization of the whole community. The believers,

therefore, should always keep in mind that from small seeds grow big trees and that even great objects seem very insignificant in the beginning and remain hidden. So it behoves believers to keep their eyes open and let not the grand object of their creation remain hidden from their sight because, if once it was allowed to become hidden, it would remain hidden for ever.

With v. 60 begins a brief account of the life-history of some Prophets of antiquity whose mission it was to take man back to the blissful heavenly existence from which he was expelled. After that it is stated that good is ingrained in human nature of which it constitutes an integral part and that evil only comes later and is the result of external influences; and that, in spite of his instinctive goodness, man cannot attain perfection without the help of Divine revelation. By rejecting Divine guidance, he deprives himself of his instinctive goodness and is spiritually ruined. Again, reference is made to the mission of the Holy Prophet, and his opponents are warned not to ignore the patent fact that his intellect is sound and motives pure, that his teachings are in perfect harmony with human nature and natural law and that the testimony of the time also is in his favour. Then some misgivings and doubts of disbelievers have been removed and it is stated that they will put up a very strong opposition to the Holy Prophet, but God will protect him from all harm. Muslims, however, are admonished not only to endure patiently the opposition of disbelievers but also to pray for them. Further, the *Sūrah* observes that like the opponents of former Prophets, the opponents of the Holy Prophet will continue to demand Signs, but it lies entirely with God to show Signs. He shows them when in His infallible wisdom He thinks opportune. But does not, the disbelievers are asked, the Qur'ān which fulfils the real object and purpose of Prophethood, constitute a sufficient Sign? Muslims, therefore, are exhorted to give to the miracle of the Qur'ān that great measure of true appreciation which it richly deserves, because the more the Heavenly light is vouchsafed to man, the truer should be his appreciation of it.

Chapter 8 & 9

Al-Anfāl and At-Taubah

الْأَنْفَالُ—التَّوْبَةُ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Title, Date of Revelation and Connection Between the Two *Sūrah*s

Though, as commonly known, it is only the first of these two Chapters which is known by the name Anfāl, yet truly speaking this Chapter comprises both the parts—the one which is known as Al-Anfāl and the other which is known as at-Taubah. This means that at-Taubah or Barā'at is really not a separate *Sūrah* but only a part of Al-Anfāl. This is a solitary instance in the Qur'ān where a *Sūrah* has been split into parts, all the other *Sūrah*s being compact wholes. The proof of the fact that at-Taubah is not a separate *Sūrah* but is a part of Al-Anfāl is that unlike all other Chapters at-Taubah is not prefixed by *Bismillāh*, which under Divine direction was placed at the head of every *Sūrah* and formed its integral part, and because also there obtains such a striking similarity between the subject-matter of these two Chapters that they both form but one *Sūrah*. Both Al-Anfāl and at-Taubah were revealed at Medina; Al-Anfāl was revealed about the time of the Battle of Badr, in the first or second year after *Hijrah*, and at-Taubah or Barā'at, according to Bukhārī, was among the last portions of the Qur'ān to be revealed in the ninth year after the *Hijrah*.

A Collective Note on Both *Sūrah*s

In Al-Anfāl the prophecy was made that God would give to Muslims a great victory, and that the property and possessions of their enemies would fall into their hands. This prophecy continued to prove for disbelievers a constant source of mockery at the cost of the Faithful, because God, out of His infallible wisdom, and in conformity with His eternal law had delayed its fulfilment along with the revelation of that portion of Chapter Al-Anfāl which contained a mention of it. When Mecca fell and the aforesaid prophecy was fulfilled, the remaining portion of the *Sūrah* was revealed. It began with *A declaration of complete vindication on the part of Allāh and His Messenger to the idolaters to whom you had announced a commitment that Islam would triumph in Arabia. So go about in the land for four months, and know that you cannot frustrate the plan of Allāh and that Allāh will humiliate the disbelievers.* Incidentally, it may be noted here that some Commentators have taken the above Declaration to mean that a period of four months was granted to those idolaters with whom Muslims had treaty engagements and that this period was intended as a notice, after which all treaties and agreements with them were to be considered as having terminated. This interpretation of the Declaration is evidently wrong; because if it was meant as only a notice of the

denunciation of the treaties there was no sense in combining the Declaration with the injunction that they should go about the land and see for themselves that God's purpose had prevailed. He who is granted a limited respite naturally makes hasty preparations to depart for a place of safety and does not go about in the land sightseeing. Again, if the verse be understood to give notice of termination of existing treaties and to grant a limited respite to those idolatrous tribes who had treaties of alliance with Muslims, how would the very next verse be explained which says that such people as have entered into treaties with Muslims are not to be expelled till the termination of their treaties. It is thus clear that the Qur'ānic words "*Alladhīna 'āhadttum*" used in the first verse of Chapter at-Taubah allude to no political treaty or agreement but only to such declarations as Muslims and disbelievers had made against each other about the ultimate triumph of their respective causes. On the side of Islam, it was declared in Chapter Al- Anfāl that the property and possessions of disbelievers would fall into the hands of Muslims, and the disbelievers, on their side, had declared that Islam would be exterminated and they would capture the belongings of the Muslims. It is these contradictory declarations that have been metaphorically termed as '*Ahd* or agreement in the verse referred to above, and the idolaters are told to go about in the country and see for themselves whether or not the declaration which was made in Chapter Al- Anfāl about their eventual destruction had proved true. So, truly speaking, *Sūrah* Barā'at constitutes only a declaration of the fulfilment of the great prophecy made in *Sūrah* Al- Anfāl and is thus not a separate *Sūrah*. In short, there exists a very real connection between these two Chapters which really constitute one Chapter, for, as stated above, *Sūrah* Al- Anfāl was revealed at the time of the Battle of Badr and in it a clear prophecy was made about the ultimate destruction of disbelievers. Then after the last encounter with the idolaters of Mecca, *Sūrah* Barā'at was revealed to announce the fulfilment of that prophecy and the ushering in of a new era.

Subject-Matter of the *Sūrahs*

Chapter Al- Anfāl opens with a description of the Battle of Badr and at the outset Muslims are told that they will win a great victory over the disbelievers whose property and possessions will fall into their hands. These wars are the Signs of God and should not be made the means of seeking worldly gains. Next, they are told that they should fight courageously in the cause of God and should not be proud of their strength or organization, neither should they be afraid of the numbers and military prowess of their enemies. Further, obedience to authority is emphasized and it is stated that obedience to God's commands will open for the Muslims the avenues to success and prosperity and will protect them from the machinations and intrigues of their enemies, even as God had protected the Holy Prophet against the secret plots of the Meccans. The *Sūrah* proceeds to say that the enemy is proud of his numbers and military prowess and believes himself to be in the right, and even invokes the wrath of God upon

the liar. Such a determined enemy would not easily admit defeat. The *Sūrah* exposes their false pretensions. It further says that the discrepancy between the words and deeds of disbelievers shows that their faith is a mere slave of their intellect and has no firm roots in their hearts. The Muslims are buoyed up with the Divine promise that the war in which they are engaged will end in a victory for them and success also will continue to attend their endeavours in future engagements. To achieve this, obedience to authority and endurance of hardships and unity of action are enjoined upon them.

The *Sūrah* further deals with the sanctity of treaty obligations and Muslims are told that disbelievers will repeatedly violate their agreements but this should not incite them to a breach of their own obligations. They should disabuse their minds of the misconception that their cause would suffer in any way if they did not avenge a breach of agreements on the disbelievers' part by a corresponding violation of an obligation by themselves. On the contrary, they should continue scrupulously to observe treaties; but agreements they have made should cause no mitigation of suitable preparations for war on their part. They are, however, enjoined that if during hostilities disbelievers sue for peace, such an offer should not be rejected, because if disbelievers violate terms of peace and restart hostilities, Muslims will not suffer on account of this fresh breach of trust by them. This injunction implied a reference to the treaty of Ḥudaibiyah when a breach of treaty obligations by the disbelievers led to the Fall of Mecca. Muslims are further told that captives will fall into their hands and they should treat them with kindness.

The promise of victory given to Muslims in Al- Anfāl is declared to have been fulfilled in the opening verses of Barā'at where it is stated that Muslims have become masters of the whole of Arabia, so the idolaters should go about in the land and see for themselves whether or not the whole country has come under Muslim domination. In verses that follow disbelievers are reprimanded for their repeated breach of solemn treaties and covenants and Muslims are warned not to enter into any fresh agreement with them and should not fear that the severance of ties with them would, in any way, adversely affect the prosperity of Mecca, because God Himself would provide for them. Next, they are told that they should not think that after they have conquered Arabia war would come to an end and they would have peace. On account of the intrigues and secret plots of Christians a new series of wars would start, and because they are idolatrous people they would not bear to see perfect Unity of God established in the earth. Moreover, they have become morally depraved while Islam seeks to establish true equality and freedom. How could then a Christian government view with equanimity the establishment by its side of another government based on equality and freedom, whose proximity would incline its subjects to rebellion? So having proper regard for the things which God has declared sacred, Muslims are told to make suitable preparations for the impending war with them.

As there was an interval between the revelation of the first 37 verses of the *Sūrah* Barā'at and those that follow, mention has been made in the latter verses about the fulfilment of the prophecy made in the former. In this connection a brief description is given of the expedition to Tabūk and of the circumstances in which the prophecy referred to above was fulfilled. The Hypocrites and those weak of faith who were seized with the fear of the powerful Kingdom of the Kaiser are reprimanded. Their moral weakness is exposed and believers are bidden not to accept their help, for even without their help God will grant victory to them over the Qaiṣar (this subject has been dealt with in fuller detail in Chapters Rūm and Faṭḥ). In this connection, mention is made of the intrigues of the Hypocrites to injure the cause of Islam. Towards the close of *Sūrah* at-Taubah it is emphasized that in spite of the intrigues and plots of the Hypocrites and the great power and material resources of disbelievers the Holy Prophet will succeed in his mission through the help of God, "the Lord of the Mighty Throne."

Chapter 10

Yūnus

يُونُسُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date and Place of Revelation

This *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca in the late Meccan period, i.e. in the last four or five years of the Prophet's stay there. Some Commentators have ascribed some of its verses to the Medinite period, but their opinion is not based on historical data. They seem to have drawn the inference merely from the subject-matter of those verses. The *Sūrah* derives its name from v. 99.

Subject-Matter

On pondering over the contents of the Qur'ān we notice that not only its verses are interrelated but also that every *Sūrah* possesses a subtle connection with the one preceding it and the one following it. Moreover, certain groups of Qur'ānic Chapters are linked with other groups. Thus a perfect order runs throughout the whole of the Qur'ān. Its different Chapters are related to one another in more ways than one; and when their order and arrangement are considered, no doubt is left that the Qur'ān is indeed a great miracle of diction. The present *Sūrah* possesses a threefold connection with the preceding Chapter. First, it constitutes a continuation of the preceding Chapter. Two subjects were mentioned in its concluding portions: (a) The revelation of the Book and its denial (9:127); (b) the coming of a Messenger of God and the benefits derived from following his teaching (9:128). The same subject is continued in the present *Sūrah*. It mentions the importance of the Book (10:2) and it refers to the Divine Messenger (10:3). Secondly, the *Sūrah* completes the subject-matter of the preceding one. In that Chapter (which is not really a separate Chapter but is a part of Chapter 8) reference was made to the fact that the time of the prosperity and predominance of Islam had come and that God's promises were going to be fulfilled in all their glory and grandeur. So the believers were exhorted to attend to the purification of their hearts in order that their repentance might be accepted. As doubts might have arisen in the hearts of some people that on account of the enormity of their sins their repentance will not be accepted, the present Chapter removes that doubt and stresses the fact that God's mercy encompasses and transcends all things, though it requires the highest form of repentance to attract it. Thirdly, all the Chapters of the Qur'ān from Chapter 2 to Chapter 9 (which are really seven in number; for, as stated above, Chapter 9 is not a separate Chapter but forms part of Chapter 8 and was written separately only on account of the special importance of its subject-matter) deal with one group of subjects, while with this Chapter begins a new group of *Sūrahs*, ending with Chapter 18. This second group deals with a

distinct and separate theme, yet its subject-matter is closely connected with that of the first group. In the first group the truth of Islam is established by reference to the Holy Prophet and his work, and an appeal is made for the acceptance of Islam in view of the superiority of its principles, the excellence of its teachings, the vastness of the spiritual knowledge which it holds out to seekers after truth, the wisdom underlying its teachings and its extraordinary influence. In the second group, comprising Chapters 10-18, emphasis is laid on the need of Prophethood, the importance of religion and on the object of the Holy Prophet's advent, by referring particularly to the criteria and characteristics of Prophethood, the claims and history of previous Prophets and to the arguments based on, and supported by, human reason and common sense.

Thus the subject-matter of the two groups is very closely linked and related to each other, the only difference being that whereas in the first group reference is made to the prophecies which were made at the advent of the Holy Prophet or which had been made by previous Prophets and were fulfilled in due time, thus bearing witness to the truth of the Holy Prophet; in the second group the truth of Islam has been explained on its own merits and on the basis of the canons of Prophethood.

Chapter 11

Hūd

هُود

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation

According to Ibn ‘Abbās, Al-Ḥasan, ‘Ikrimah, Mujāhid, Qatādah and Jābir bin Zaid this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca and, according to Muqātil, the whole of it belongs to the Meccan period, with the exception of vv. 13,18 and 115, which are considered to have been revealed at Medina.

Subject-Matter

The preceding *Sūrah* had classified the enemies of God’s Messengers under three categories: (a) Those who were completely destroyed; (b) others who were wholly spared; and (c) those who were partly destroyed and partly spared. In the present Chapter the Qur’ān discusses the first category and states that God destroyed the people of Hūd so completely that no trace of them was left behind, and that He raised in their place another people with whom started a new era in human activities. The *Sūrah* also points out that God watches men and deals with them according to their actions and makes provision for their guidance as circumstances demand. As this provision is made for their good, those who do not benefit by it suffer moral death. In this way the process goes on. And just as when one generation of men passes away it is succeeded by another generation, similarly, when one religious movement perishes, its place is taken by another. The *Sūrah* further tells us that while worldly progress may be possible for a time without observing Divine commandments, permanent success is granted to those people only—their memory being perpetuated and their name indelibly imprinted on world’s history—who are honest and true to God and man. After this, reasons are given, why believers triumph over disbelievers and the latter fail in their struggle against Truth. The *Sūrah* illustrates this Divine practice by citing examples of peoples who were once mighty in power and strong in numbers, but who met with destruction when they rose against the apparently humble followers of God’s Messengers—the peoples of Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot and Shu‘aib. The great Patriarch Abraham is also mentioned but only incidentally in the course of the story of Lot. Reference to Abraham is followed by a brief account of Moses, in relation not to the Israelites but to Pharaoh, who along with his arrogant people was destroyed, because he rejected the Divine Message.

Next, believers are warned against associating with people for whom Divine punishment is decreed; for association with such people is calculated naturally to involve them in punishment meant for the latter. Thereafter the Holy Prophet

has been told not to worry about the threatened destruction of those of his people who will not believe, for the people of many a Prophet before him had met with a similar fate when they opposed and rejected the Truth. So many instances of Divine punishment have been cited in this *Sūrah* and such emphasis laid on the Holy Prophet's great responsibilities that he is reported to have said, '*Sūrah* Hūd has prematurely aged me' (Manthūr), meaning that the contents of the *Sūrah* weighed so heavily on his mind that he felt the impact of premature old age. Lastly, however, the Holy Prophet is cheered and comforted with the prophecy that great progress and prosperity await his followers.

Chapter 12

Yūsuf

يُوسُفُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation, Context and Subject-Matter

According to most Companions of the Holy Prophet, the whole of this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca; but, according to Ibn ‘Abbās and Qatādah, verses 2-4 were revealed after *Hijrah*. As already pointed out, Chapter 10 (*Sūrah* Yūnus) deals with both aspects of God’s dealings with man—His punishment and mercy. But whereas Chapter 11 (*Sūrah* Hūd) deals with the subject of Divine punishment, the present Chapter (Chapter 12) deals with that of God’s mercy. The *Sūrah* which deals with God’s punishment (Hūd) has been placed before the present *Sūrah* which deals with His mercy, because the enemies of the Holy Prophet were to be shown mercy after they had been punished for their misdeeds. The *Sūrah*, however, possesses one peculiarity. The whole of it deals with the life-story of only one Prophet—Joseph. In this it differs from all other *Sūrahs*. The reason for this peculiarity is that the life of the Prophet Joseph bears a very close resemblance to that of the Holy Prophet, even in minor details. The entire *Sūrah* has been devoted to a somewhat detailed account of the Prophet Joseph’s life in order that it might serve as a forewarning of the incidents that were to occur during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. In Chapter 10 the story of the Prophet Jonah was chosen as an illustration of Divine mercy, while in the detailed account given in the present Chapter the example of Joseph has been cited as an illustration for that purpose. Two reasons may be given for this:

(1) The lives of Jonah and that of the Holy Prophet resemble each other only in their closing stages but Joseph’s life resembles that of the Holy Prophet even in small details.

(2) Although the case of Jonah resembles that of the Holy Prophet in that as, the peoples of both Jonah and the Holy Prophet were ultimately pardoned through God’s mercy, the resemblance between the two is only partial, but the resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet, especially in the way in which God treated Joseph’s brethren and the Holy Prophet’s people is very close and is almost complete. The mercy shown to Jonah’s people was the direct result of God’s grace, Jonah having no hand in it, but the declaration of pardon for Joseph’s brethren was made by Joseph himself, and so in the case of the Quraish of Mecca the announcement of their full and unqualified forgiveness came directly from the Holy Prophet’s own mouth.

Chapter 13

Ar-Ra'd

الرعد

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Preponderance of scholarly opinion is in favour of the view that this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. Its subject-matter also confirms this view. Some verses, however, were revealed at Medina. These verses are 44th (according to 'Aṭā'), 32nd (according to Qatādah), and 13-15th (according to certain other authorities). In Chapter 10 (*Sūrah Yūnus*) it was stated that whenever a Prophet appears in the world, people are made to accept the Divine Messenger either by being visited with Heavenly punishment or God showers his mercy upon them if they deserve it. Stress was laid in Chapter 11 (*Sūrah Hūd*) on Divine punishment and in Chapter 12 (*Sūrah Yūsuf*) on God's mercy. The present *Sūrah*, however, explains how the promises and prophecies about the rise and prosperity of the Holy Prophet, made in the three preceding Chapters, will be fulfilled and how Islam eventually will prevail over other religions.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the theme that God works in inscrutable ways. The means by which His Messengers and Prophets rise to power remain hidden from human eyes till the results, towards the accomplishment of which they work, become apparent. It proceeds to draw attention to a well-known law of nature that different kinds of fruits and vegetation grow from a soil which is watered by the same water. Similarly, the Holy Prophet, born and brought up in the same environment with the pagan Meccans, rose to be God's great Messenger. The disbelievers are further told that they should not judge the Holy Prophet by his present weak state and by the paucity of his means and resources, nor should they wonder at the promises of his ultimate success. It is not his promised success that is to be wondered at; rather it would have been strange if he had not appeared at the time of humanity's crying need. The Holy Prophet is bound to succeed and his enemies must fail. The cause of Islam shall triumph and the children of the leaders of disbelief themselves shall join its fold. God will withdraw His help from disbelievers and their power and glory will depart. All the laws and elements of nature being under God's control, He will make them subservient to the Holy Prophet's cause. The false gods of the idolaters will be quite powerless to impede or arrest the progress of the new Faith. The *Sūrah* goes on to develop the theme that so great are the spiritual powers of the Holy Prophet that he could overcome his enemies single-handed, even as a man having eyes could overcome a host of blind men. Polytheism cannot stand against the doctrine of the Unity of God, nor can the votaries of

false gods against the devotees of the True God. The enemies of truth shall melt away and vanish like foam or froth. Men of weak understanding see only the rising foam and froth and do not care or have the intelligence to see the pure water underneath. The foam and froth disappear but pure water and gold remain. Similarly, the superficial and trifling beliefs of the polytheists are bound to perish and the great and noble ideals preached by the Qur'ān will endure and its teachings, being in harmony with human nature, will find their way into the hearts of men, who will gradually come to realize on which side lies the truth when they compare the moral stature of believers with that of disbelievers. Mighty Signs will be shown and great miracles wrought by means of the Qur'ān and human hearts, the strongest of all earthly citadels shall fall. One of these Signs will be that his people will drive out the Holy Prophet from Mecca and will draw the sword against him. But Islam shall continue to make headway till Mecca, the centre of disbelief and opposition will fall to the victorious arms of the Holy Prophet. Idolatry shall disappear from Arabia for all time and Islam shall be firmly established there. The world shall witness all these Signs wrought not by human agency but by the hand of the Almighty God Himself. The *Sūrah* contains many prophecies about the discomfiture and destruction of the leaders of disbelief and foretells a bright future for Islam.

The Title

The above constitutes the main theme of the *Sūrah* and it is in conformity with this theme that it has been named Ra'd or Thunder. Rain brings with it lightning and thunder and it is in the fitness of things that heavenly rain—the Qur'ānic revelation—should also be accompanied by thunder and lightning. Islam has brought with it, thunderbolts. Those who draw the sword against Islam shall perish by the sword and those who owe allegiance to it shall sit on the thrones of power and glory.

Chapter 14

Ibrāhīm

إِبْرَاهِيمَ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Introduction

The subject-matter of the preceding *Sūrah* is continued and explained more fully and clearly in this *Sūrah*. The truth of the Qur'ānic teaching is sought to be proved from observation, inferences to this effect having been drawn from facts of history. It is pointed out that in circumstances similar to those of the Holy Prophet, Messengers of God were successful in their own day against very powerful opposition. The Holy Prophet, therefore, is also bound to succeed in his mission, in spite of the meagreness of his means. Then the *Sūrah* proceeds to say that the real purpose of the Qur'ānic revelation is to provide guidance for mankind which is groping in darkness, and the Holy Prophet has been raised to bring people out of this Cimmerian darkness into light. Prophets had also appeared before him, prominent among them being Moses. The *Sūrah* sheds light on the main reason for the triumph of Divine Messengers over their opponents which is that they worship God and preach the Truth. After dealing with this subject the *Sūrah* lays down some prominent marks and characteristics of the revealed Word of God and the criteria by which its truth can be tested. Judged by these criteria the Qur'ān is definitely proved to be God's own revealed Word. Muslims then are advised how best to profit by its noble ideals and teachings. Next, the *Sūrah* points out that the change which was about to take place in Arabia through the Message of the Qur'ān had been decreed ages ago by Almighty God. It had been God's plan and purpose since Abraham went to the wilderness of Paran and settled his son Ishmael and his wife Hagar there that that barren and bleak country would one day become the centre of the greatest religious Movement the world had ever seen. Mecca was founded to fulfil this Divine plan. This is why, in spite of the sterility and barrenness of its soil, God has ever provided for its inhabitants their means of livelihood in an ample measure. While Abraham was reconstructing the House of God with the help of his son, Ishmael, they prayed that God might raise up among the Meccans a Messenger, who should recite to them His Signs and teach them the Book and wisdom and should purify them (2:130). This prayer was fulfilled in the person of the Holy Prophet. The *Sūrah* reminds the Faithful that their duties and responsibilities had already been explained to them by Prophet Abraham and that they should never lose sight of them. It ends with a warning to disbelievers that since Mecca had been founded to become the centre and citadel for the preaching and propagation of the doctrine of the Divine Unity, they should give up idolatry. All efforts on their part to oppose the Divine purpose were bound to end in complete failure and frustration.

Chapter 15

Al-Ḥijr

الْحَجْر

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

According to consensus of scholarly opinion the *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. In the preceding *Sūrah* it was pointed out that though the former Prophets possessed no material means, yet their mission progressed and prospered because they had the Word of God to guide and help them. So will the Holy Prophet succeed in his mission. The Word of God, the present *Sūrah* emphatically declares, is a great force before which no worldly power can stand. Forging of lies against God is not a thing to be trifled with and impostors and forgers of lies against God soon meet their deserved end, and it is stated that the Qur'ān is the revealed Word of God and possesses irrefutable proofs to establish its Divine origin.

Subject-Matter

The basic theme of the *Sūrah* is that no heavenly Scripture can approach the Qur'ān in beauty of diction and style and in the grandeur of its contents. It is a revealed Scripture par excellence. It stands unequalled and unrivalled in every respect. Its beauties and good qualities are so many and so varied that even disbelievers on occasions are forced to confess that they possess nothing like it and wish that they too had possessed a Scripture like it. In spite of this confession on their part, they do not see their way to accept it and do not realize that by their refusal to accept the Qur'ān they would be deprived of truth and would draw upon themselves the displeasure and punishment of God. The Qur'ānic Message is bound to succeed and nothing can stand in its way. Those who hesitate or refuse to accept it will themselves be the sufferers. The *Sūrah* then states that if the Qur'ānic revelation is ridiculed and treated with contempt, it is nothing to be wondered at, for the revelations of previous Prophets also were held up to scorn. But the scoffers do not appreciate this patent fact that it is no easy thing to forge lies against God, because to do so is to invite sure destruction. The All-Powerful God sees to it that lies are not successfully forged against Him and that a forgery becomes easily distinguished from His revealed Word. He vouchsafes it a special distinction and eminence and creates a favourable atmosphere for its acceptance by right thinking men and raises those who accept it from a low to a very high level of moral excellence.

Chapter 16

An-Naḥl

النَّحْل

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. Ibn ‘Abbās makes an exception of vv. 96, 97 and 98, which according to him were revealed at Medina. Professor Noldeke, however, thinks that the *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca with the exception of vv. 44, 112, 120, 121 and 126. It is prefaced with no abbreviated letters. As the subject-matter of a *Sūrah* is an amplification and expansion of the abbreviated letters placed at its head and is governed by them, the subject-matter of a *Sūrah* which has no abbreviated letters constitutes, in fact, a continuation of the subject-matter of the preceding *Sūrah* which has abbreviated letters in its beginning; and is subject to, and governed by, those abbreviated letters. Thus the subject-matter of this *Sūrah* should be considered as a continuation of the subject-matter of the preceding *Sūrah* (Al-Ḥijr) and should be taken as governed by the letters *Alif Lām Rā*, placed in the beginning of that *Sūrah*; only the method of approach and treatment of the subject is different.

Subject-Matter

Quite appropriately the *Sūrah* has been given the title of An-Naḥl (lit. the Bee), because by a reference to the natural instinct of the bee which has been termed *Waḥi* in the Qur’ān (16:69) attention is drawn to the fact that the entire universe depends for its smooth and successful working on *Waḥi*, whether manifest or hidden, direct or indirect. This subject constitutes the pivot or basic theme of the *Sūrah*. Moreover, the subject of Jihād has been introduced here as an important subject. As Jihād was to become the target of attacks from all quarters, it is hinted that, like honey, which is protected by the bee from undue interference by its God-given sting, the Qur’ān which is a storehouse of spiritual honey shall be protected by the use of force which Muslims will have to employ to protect it. Believers are then told that if they wish their kith and kin to accept the Qur’ān they should see that their own hearts are cleansed because without purity of heart it is impossible to know God. God does not compel anyone to accept the truth, because by using force the very purpose of religion is defeated.

Next, the *Sūrah* enters into a discussion of the Life after death and it is stated that even in this world nations are resurrected and given a new life, and it is with their *Hijrah* (Emigration) that their resurrection begins. Accordingly, the Holy Prophet also would have to leave his native place and emigrate to Medina because it was essential for the spiritual development of his followers that they should be separated from disbelievers and be educated and trained in the

teaching of their religion in congenial environments. From this the conclusion is drawn that if it is so necessary for the spiritual progress of believers to undergo *Hijrah* in this world, how far more is it necessary for the permanent spiritual advancement of man that he should undergo a spiritual *Hijrah* which is another name for death. After this *Hijrah* the Faithful and the disbelievers begin to travel on separate paths; the disbelievers go to Hell and the Faithful bask in the sunshine of Divine Grace and scale the heights of atonement with God. The subject that great and wholesome results will flow from the Holy Prophet's *Hijrah* (Emigration) is continued. The *Sūrah* proceeds briefly to deal with the question, why respite is granted to disbelievers and why they are not forced to accept the Truth. This leads to the treatment of the objection that if the Holy Prophet is a true Messenger of God, why is his teaching at variance with that of earlier Prophets. In answer to this objection it is stated that the real teaching which former Prophets gave to their peoples greatly differed from the current, adulterated and corrupt teachings attributed to them. In fact, a new Prophet comes only when former Teachings become corrupt and lose their title to Divine protection. By citing the example of the bee, the *Sūrah* draws attention to the fact that just as, guided by Divine inspiration, the bee collects its food from fruits and flowers and converts it into delicious and wholesome honey, it is in the fitness of things that for his moral regeneration and spiritual development man should be guided by revelation, and proceeds to say that just as honey varies in quality, so are all men not of equal spiritual development. Like the different colours and flavours of honey, revelations of various Prophets are also of different patterns. Then one more argument is given to establish the need of Divine revelation. When with the passage of time people become separated from the era of a Prophet and vested interests grow up and become entrenched and privileges flow from father to son and all natural avenues of progress and advancement are closed upon the common man, God raises a new Prophet who wages a relentless war against this tyranny of man against man, and the so-called leaders who erstwhile enjoyed monopoly of power and benefit are dethroned from seats of authority and the common men who follow the new Prophet take their place. The chains of bondage of men are broken and they begin to breathe in an atmosphere of true freedom. Next, disbelievers are warned that great changes which are decreed to be brought about by means of the Qur'ān would take place very soon. The time cries for a change and the new Message possesses all the essential qualities and ingredients of a perfect Teaching. The followers of this new Teaching will succeed and all power and dominion will pass into their hands. A veritable war will be waged against disbelief and its leaders will be destroyed. Towards the end of the *Sūrah* the Holy Prophet is told that the sphere and scope of his preaching should now widen and embrace in its orbit Christians and Jews. This would excite a new opposition and Muslims would suffer persecution from all quarters; but the Divine cause of Islam would continue to grow and prosper amid opposition and persecution, and its enemies would meet with their deserved fate.

Chapter 17

Banī Isrā'īl

بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This Chapter is known as Banī Isrā'īl because it deals with some important incidents in the history of the Israelites and with the experiences through which they had to pass. It also bears the title of *Isrā'* because it opens with the Holy Prophet's great Vision about his spiritual Night Journey to Jerusalem which forms one of the most outstanding topics of this Chapter. According to Ibn Mas'ūd, one of the earliest Companions of the Holy Prophet, the revelation of this *Sūrah* was completed between the 4th and 11th year of the Call. Christian writers assign this period between the 6th and the 12th year. Towards the end of the previous *Sūrah* Muslims were warned that very soon they would meet with opposition from 'the People of the Book' as severe as they had already experienced at the hands of Meccan idolaters, but that they should bear it with patience and fortitude till God should give them victory over their opponents. In the present *Sūrah* their attention is drawn to the fact that this opposition will start at Medina and will end in the total defeat and discomfiture of 'the People of the Book;' their sacred places falling into the hands of Muslims.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah*, as its title shows, deals with the history of the Jewish people, with a pointed reference to two outstanding occasions when they openly disobeyed and defied the two great Prophets of God—David and Jesus. As a result of this defiance they suffered the destruction of their national life, first at the hands of the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar and then at those of the Roman Emperor Titus. This special reference to the twofold destruction of Jews implied a warning to Muslims that their wrongdoings and transgressions would also result in the double eclipse of their national life. The warning, however, was also accompanied with a word of hope and good cheer for them. It was to this effect that since the Holy Prophet was the last Law-giving Prophet, his Dispensation would not, like the Jewish Dispensation, suffer total extinction but after initial reverses would emerge triumphant with increased lustre and effulgence. Besides, some other subjects to which only an implied reference was made in the preceding *Sūrah* have also been dealt with at some length. The *Sūrah* opens with the subject of *Isrā'* (Spiritual Night Journey of the Holy Prophet) in order to show that as the successor and counterpart of Moses, his followers will conquer the lands which were promised to Moses, and that like Moses he will have to leave his native place. But his Emigration will lead to very rapid progress and advancement of his noble cause. Then it is briefly

stated that the people of Moses acquired great power and prestige through their Prophet, though subsequently they came to grief by defying and ignoring Divine warning. But the Qur'ān, being a much more complete code of Laws, is capable of bringing about a greater and a completer change in the lives of its followers than was the Book of Moses. This brief reference to the rise and decline of Jews is attended with a warning to Muslims that God would bestow upon them His favours and like the Jews they would also rise to great heights of material greatness and glory, but that after they had acquired wealth, power and influence, they should not forget God. Then some rules of conduct are mentioned by acting upon which a people could rise to a very high spiritual stature. But, instead of benefiting by these rules, disbelievers arrogantly turn away from them and give no thought to the dreadful end to which their conceit and pride are likely to lead them. They are warned that rejection of truth never produces wholesome results and that they will be visited with severe Divine punishment, particularly in the Latter Days, when the world will witness a fight to the finish between the forces of Light and Darkness and finally the forces of Satan shall be completely routed. The *Sūrah* then administers a severe rebuke to disbelievers that they seek to annihilate the Holy Prophet, but God has decreed a great and noble purpose for him and a mighty destiny awaits him. His name shall be known unto the remotest corners of the earth and shall be honoured to the end of time. The world shall recognize him as humanity's greatest Guide and Leader and the Qur'ān as a storehouse of limitless spiritual knowledge. The *Sūrah* closes with a brief description of the signs of the Latter Days and of the evils which will then prevail in the world and declares that it is prayer and true connection with God that can save man from sin.

Chapter 18

Al-Kahf

الكهف

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

According to Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Zubair the whole of this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca (Manthūr). Almost all the Commentators of the Qur’ān appear to be agreed upon this point. Western scholars have assigned the *Sūrah* to the sixth year of the Call, but most probably it was revealed in the fourth or fifth year. Anas reports that the *Sūrah* was revealed in one whole and was guarded by seventy thousand angels (Manthūr, vol. 4, p. 210). In Chapter An-Nahl the prophecy that the Holy Prophet would meet with severe opposition from the Jews and the Christians had been dealt with at some length. This subject was further elaborated in *Sūrah* Banī Isrā’īl in which it was stated that he would be taken to regions where he would live among the Jews and would establish new contacts with them and later meet with opposition from both the Jews and the Christians and in the end would conquer them. The *Sūrah* Banī Isrā’īl mentioned a Vision of the Holy Prophet, which also embodied a prophecy that he would conquer the Holy Land of the Jews, and alluded to two revolts of the Jews foretold in the Book of Deuteronomy. The first revolt took place after the time of David as a consequence of which the Jews were expelled from their native land. They repented of their sins and their homeland was restored to them. But they again relapsed into iniquitous practices, defied God’s commandments and revolted for the second time in the time of Jesus. This second defiance brought upon them severer punishment. Their holy places were destroyed and they were exiled from their beloved Land of Promise. These prophecies had also mentioned the conditions and circumstances under which the first part of the Israelites—the Jews—had to pass. A description of their condition, however, gave rise to two obvious questions: (a) If Christians, who form the second part of the Mosaic Dispensation, have been spared the punishment with which the Jews who were its first part were afflicted, does it not follow that Christians are heirs to the Divine blessings and favours promised to the Jews? (b) Why are Muslims warned to be on their guard lest they incur Divine displeasure by following in the footsteps of the Jews, and what does this warning portend and what has the future in store for them?

Subject-Matter

Both these very natural and pertinent questions have been answered in the present Chapter and some light has also been shed on the vicissitudes through which Christianity—second branch of the Mosaic Dispensation—was to pass. Mention has also been made of how Muslims would behave and make

themselves the object of Divine wrath by imitating the iniquitous ways of the Jews. An answer has also been supplied to yet another question, viz. what connection is there between these matters and the story of the Dwellers of the Cave, and of Dhul-Qarnain and Gog and Magog and the parable of "Two Gardens" and the *Isrā'* (Spiritual Journey) of Moses? The answer which this *Sūrah* gives to this question is that these parables describe in metaphorical language the rise and fall of Christian nations and also the hardships and tribulations which the Muslims were to suffer from them on account of their own iniquities.

In order to expand the subject and give it more clarity, the *Isrā'* (Spiritual Journey) of Moses has been mentioned after the parable of the "Two Gardens." This Spiritual Journey of Moses describes in metaphorical language the great material and moral progress which his followers were to make just as the phenomenal progress of the followers of the Holy Prophet has been described in his own *Isrā'*, mentioned in Chapter Banī Isrā'il. The *Isrā'* of Moses describes in detail when and how this great advancement would commence and where it would stop and when the Israelites would become deprived of Divine favours which would be transferred to the House of Ishmael. After this we are told that the Ishmaelites, after having inherited God's favours, would, in their turn, incur His displeasure by defying His commandments and would be punished by Gog and Magog who would, at one time, spread over and dominate the entire world. Towards the end of the *Sūrah* mention is made of one—Dhul-Qarnain, who stood in the way of the domination of the whole world by Gog and Magog. Thus light is thrown on the material and spiritual conditions of Christians both in the early stages of their Faith and in the Latter Days. The Dwellers of the Cave symbolize early Christians in the period of their weakness, and Gog and Magog represent them in the heyday of their glory in the Latter Days. The *Sūrah* closes with an assurance to the followers of Islam that God would break and shatter the forces of irreligiousness unleashed by Gog and Magog, and would bring about the deliverance of Muslims by means of a second Dhul-Qarnain. This second Dhul-Qarnain is the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement who is a follower of the Holy Prophet.

The *Sūrah* being very important, some additional details of its subject-matter may be mentioned. It states that God has revealed the Qur'ān in order to remove the errors that had crept into previous heavenly Scriptures. It warns those who ascribe a son to God that by so doing they incur Divine displeasure. These people hate Islam, and their beginning is not like their end. In the beginning they were very weak and were subjected to bitter persecution. God had mercy on them and delivered them from their trials and tribulations and put them on the road to progress and prosperity. But when they grew rich and prosperous, they resorted to idolatrous practices, and instead of turning to God they turned to the world and became entirely lost in it. Muslims are warned to take a lesson from their fate and in the day of their own power and glory to be

on their guard, particularly against being remiss in Divine worship, against excessive love of wealth and worldly possessions, and against a life of ease and luxury. The glory and power of Christian nations as compared with the degradation and poverty of Muslims are then graphically depicted in 'the parable of two men', one rich and the other poor. The rich man—Christian nations—would be proud of his riches while the poor man would turn to God. Pride and conceit would come to grief in the long run and circumstances beyond human control would bring about the rich man's decline and fall. The *Sūrah* proceeds to give some details of those great changes which were revealed to Moses in his Vision in which he was told that the development and progress of his Dispensation would fall far short of the great heights which another and a later Dispensation would attain. This later Dispensation—Islam—would bring to perfection and completion the teaching which the Mosaic Dispensation had left incomplete, and would emerge triumphant from the ashes of a declining and decadent Christendom. After having dealt with the decline and fall of Christian nations and with the rise of Islam, the *Sūrah* describes the conditions which would follow the triumph of Islam. It is stated that a time would come when Muslims would also turn their backs upon religion and would become entirely engrossed in the pursuit of material wealth and power. To punish them for their sins God would once again grant success and prosperity to Christian nations which for a time had been restrained from advancing into Southern and Eastern regions. Then would come great destruction upon the world and nations of the world would become divided into two hostile camps, wedded to two opposite ideologies. Sin and iniquity would prevail in the world and injustice and tyranny would become rampant. When things would come to such a pass God would create circumstances which would finally check the seemingly irresistible onrush of the flood threatening to engulf the entire world. While dealing with this subject the *Sūrah* clearly hints that the same people would play an important part in arresting and stopping this flood who had once before broken the political power of Gog and Magog—true followers of the Holy Prophet. See also "The Larger Edition of the Commentary," pp. 1474-1480.

Chapter 19

Maryam

مَرْيَمَ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Consensus of opinion among the Companions of the Holy Prophet is that the *Sūrah* was revealed very early at Mecca, probably towards the end of the fourth year of the Call, before the Emigration to Abyssinia which took place in the month of Rajab in the fifth year. Its connection with Chapters Banī Isrā'īl and Al-Kahf consists in the fact that some account of the rise and progress of the Jews and Christians was given in these two Chapters. In Banī Isrā'īl it was particularly stated that the Jews would suffer national eclipse twice and twice they would rise to power and glory, and that the followers of Islam would, like the Jews, also rise to power twice and twice like them they would decline and fall. In *Sūrah* Al-Kahf the same subject was dealt with at greater length, specially the part dealing with Christians. After it had been explained in that *Sūrah* that Muslims would sustain national disaster at the hands of the followers of the Messiah of the Mosaic Dispensation and would regain their lost glory under the lead and guidance of the Messiah of the Islamic Dispensation, a brief history of the Christian Faith is given in the present *Sūrah*. The *Sūrah* thus constitutes a third link in the chain in which Chapters Banī Isrā'īl and Al-Kahf respectively form the first and second link. In fact, the three Chapters deal with the same subject and follow the same pattern in dealing with that subject.

Subject-Matter

In the abbreviated letters at the head of the *Sūrah* a comparison has been instituted between Christian and Islamic doctrines and attention has been drawn to the fact that while originally Christianity was a Divine Dispensation, subsequently some false doctrines and dogmas found their way into its teaching. As these doctrines run counter to Divine attributes, a brief account of Jesus's birth has been given to refute them. This account is preceded by a brief mention of Prophet Zachariah, because according to biblical prophecies Prophet Elijah was to have descended from heaven 'before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord' (Mal. 4:5); and Jesus on being asked by the Jews about Elijah, who was to have appeared before him, answered that he was John who had come in his power and spirit (Matt. 11:14, 15; 17:12; Mark 9:13). He also told them that Elijah was not to have come from heaven but like all mortals was to have been born of an earthly mother in the form of another man and that he was John (Matt. 11:11; Luke 7:28).

While giving an account of Jesus, the *Sūrah* refers to the unusual

manner of his birth without the agency of a human father. The procedure adopted to bring about this most extraordinary consummation implied that Prophethood was now going to be transferred from the House of Isaac to that of Ishmael, since there had remained among the Israelites no male from whose loins a Prophet of God should have been born. After this the *Sūrah* reinforces the argument against the godhead of Jesus by stating that if all the Prophets from Adam down to the last Israelite Prophet before Jesus, to whom a brief reference is made in the *Sūrah*, were mere human beings, why should Jesus, who was also only a Prophet of God, be invested with Divine attributes and be regarded as God or Son of God. As Resurrection and Life after death were to be widely denied in the Latter Days by Christians with whom the *Sūrah* particularly deals, much stress has also been laid on the Hereafter, and stale and hackneyed arguments of disbelievers against it exposed and refuted. The disbelievers, the *Sūrah* says, seem to derive false comfort from their wealth, material means and large numbers and adduce these things as an argument in support of their denial of the Life after death and of their belief that what really matters is the present life. They are warned that they should not be deceived by the apparent material weakness of believers and of their own power, wealth and vast resources since Truth always progresses gradually and in stages but most surely it does triumph in the end. The *Sūrah* ends with an answer to an implied question, viz. why Arabic has been adopted as a vehicle for the revelation of the Qur'ānic teaching. The answer given is: Since the Arabs are the first addressees of the Qur'ān, and it is natural and also sensible that a Message should be addressed to a people in their own tongue in order that they should easily understand it and having understood it should convey it to others; therefore the Qur'ān has been revealed in Arabic.

Chapter 20

Ṭā Hā

طه

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed very early at Mecca. This is the opinion of ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd, one of the earliest Companions of the Holy Prophet. The *Sūrah* continues to deal with Christian beliefs and doctrines which formed the primary theme of the preceding Chapter. One of the basic doctrines of Christianity is that the Law is a curse. The *Sūrah* opens with an emphatic repudiation of this Christian doctrine. The Law, it says, is not only not a curse but is positively a great Divine boon and mercy, and instead of being a burden and an encumbrance, its object is to afford solace and spiritual contentment to man. This is one of the principal objects of the Qur’ān which it fulfils most adequately. The Holy Prophet is comforted with the message that God has revealed the Qur’ān to lighten man’s burdens and not to add to his difficulties. It meets all human major needs and requirements.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* proceeds to tell Christians that in order to understand and realize the truths embodied in the Qur’ān, they should ponder over the circumstances and conditions through which Moses had to pass. It is stated that after his spiritual upbringing had become complete and he was found fit to be entrusted with the great responsibilities of a Prophet, Moses was commanded to go to Pharaoh and convey to him the Divine Message. Pharaoh refused to accept it, behaved arrogantly and sought to kill Moses. Thereupon Moses was commanded by God to take the Israelites out of Egypt to Canaan. Pharaoh pursued them with his mighty hosts but Divine punishment overtook him and he was drowned in the sea before the very eyes of the Israelites. Moses then went up to the "Mount" where the Law was revealed to him. The *Sūrah* then administers a subtle rebuke to Christians. They are told that when before the advent of Jesus the Israelites believed in the doctrine that God was One and later great stress had also been laid in the Qur’ān upon Divine Unity and upon the importance and significance of the Law or the *Sharī‘ah*, how could a teaching which regarded the Law as a curse and entertained and preached polytheistic doctrines intervene between these two strictly monotheistic creeds? Next, mention is made of Divine punishment that would overtake Christian nations for their sins and iniquities after they had enjoyed material prosperity for a thousand years. Of these the last three centuries would be marked by uniform progress and prosperity of a very high order. This would make them disdainfully ignore the Divine warning that a dreadful fate was in store for

them. The *Sūrah* emphatically declares that this event will certainly come to pass and Christian nations of the West will be seized with a terrible visitation; lofty mountains shall crumble and become like scattered dust (vv. 106, 107). Then the subject with which the *Sūrah* has opened is rehearsed, viz. that the Qur'ān easily yields to understanding and comprehension because it has been revealed in the national tongue of the people who are its first addressees. Like the Christian Scriptures it usually does not talk in parables and metaphors, thus leaving the subject confused and lacking in clarity, but explains its teaching in an easily comprehensible language. The importance of the Law is driven home by strong and forceful arguments and it is shown to be not an unmitigated curse but a great Divine blessing. Then mention is made of the expulsion of Adam from "the garden." This incident on which the whole fabric of the Christian doctrine of atonement stands is either misunderstood or deliberately misinterpreted and misrepresented by Christians. The truth is that the birth of Adam took place according to a fixed Divine plan, and Divine plans never miscarry or fail in their object. While according to the Bible, God created Adam in His own image (Gen. 1:27) and then, beguiled by Eve, Adam fell into sin, the Qur'ān declares that having been created in God's own image and likeness, Adam could not possibly have been guilty of any such fall. It describes him as only having slipped into an inadvertent lapse (v. 116). The *Sūrah* ends with a stern warning to disbelievers that Signs and miracles of their own devising will never be shown to them and that if, in spite of having seen many heavenly Signs, they still persisted in denying the Divine Message, they will be punished as were punished the disbelievers of the former Messengers of God.

Chapter 21

Al-Anbiyā'

الأنبياء

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah*, like the three preceding ones, was revealed at Mecca, very early in the Holy Prophet's ministry. Ibn Mas'ūd says that it was revealed before the 5th year of the Call, along with Chapters Ṭā Hā, A1-Kahf and Maryam. The opening verses of *Sūrah* Maryam were recited by Ja'far before the Negus during the Emigration to Abyssinia which took place in that year. The immediate connection of the *Sūrah* with *Sūrah* Ṭā Hā consists in the fact that towards the end of that *Sūrah* it was stated that Divine punishment would overtake disbelievers at its appointed time, and the Holy Prophet was enjoined to bear their opposition and persecution patiently and with fortitude. The present *Sūrah* opens with a warning to disbelievers that the time of their punishment has already arrived and that though they will now have to render an account of their actions, they will continue to wander in the wilderness of heedlessness and disbelief. This is the immediate connection of the *Sūrah* with the preceding one. But it is its subject-matter as a whole, which, in fact, constitutes the real connecting link between the present *Sūrah* and some of the preceding Chapters. In *Sūrah* Maryam some of the false Christian doctrines were repudiated and rebutted, viz. that Jesus possessed Divine attributes, that he had abrogated the Law and had declared it to be a curse and that salvation depended not on good works but upon atonement. In *Sūrah* Ṭā Hā detailed account of Moses was given in order to refute again these false doctrines. The Christians were told that Christianity was but a link in the Mosaic Dispensation, and that Moses's circumstances constituted a flat repudiation of their doctrines. His whole pride lay in the fact that he was a Law-giving Prophet. If the Law was a curse, then, according to Christian belief, Moses, instead of having been regarded as an object of respect and pride, should have been condemned and denounced. After this, the *Sūrah* Ṭā Hā gave a brief account of the lapse suffered by Adam and thus traced the Christian theory of the original sin to its very root and then refuted it. It was made clear in that *Sūrah* that sin formed no part of the heritage of man and that he is punished only for his own trespasses and offences. Next, it was stated that if it was not possible for man to get rid of sin, then the very purpose of Divine punishment is defeated and God's Prophets and His Messengers, instead of holding out warnings to sinners, should have given them the comforting message that being mere creatures of circumstances and possessing no volition or discretion they will not be called to account for their actions. The same subject has been enlarged and expanded in the present

Sūrah and the lesson is driven home that the enemies not only of this or that Prophet but those of all Messengers of God—from Adam to Jesus and then to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad—were punished for their wicked deeds and the righteous rewarded for their good actions. If man had inherited sin and if he could not shed it, then there was no sense or justification in punishing the sinners and rewarding the righteous. So the dogma of inherited sin is a baseless invention.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with a warning to disbelievers that Divine punishment is fast approaching, but they are deluding themselves into a false sense of security. There never came in the world a Divine Messenger who was not jeered and scoffed at. But out of sympathy with and solicitude for the spiritual well-being of their peoples the Prophets of God invited them to accept Truth and be saved. If sin formed a part of man's heritage, then of what avail was this invitation? The *Sūrah* then proceeds to state some objections of disbelievers which are effectively answered. After this, disbelievers are asked to consider, what new burden the Qur'ān imposes upon them that they should be bent upon rejecting its Message. The primary object of that Message is to exalt and raise them to moral eminence. As it is God's own revealed Word, its rejectors will not escape punishment. The *Sūrah* then asks disbelievers whether they have ever given the idea serious consideration that an All-Knowing and Wise God could not have created the universe without a great and grim purpose, and that those who stand in the way of its fulfilment are bound to fail. Next, the *Sūrah* deals with the all-important subject of Divine Unity which forms the basic and fundamental belief of all religions. When one uniform law pervades and governs the whole universe, it says, how can the polytheists justify *Shirk* (belief in the plurality of gods)? Belief in the plurality of gods implies disagreement on the part of these gods in regard to the management and control of the universe. And as evidently there exists perfect order in it, there should be only One Creator and One Controller of the whole universe. And why God should have a son, for a son is needed only when the father is likely to fall a victim to decay or death or when he cannot perform his work single-handed and unassisted. But all such notions about God are blasphemous and unfounded. After this the *Sūrah* points to another Divine law, viz. that whenever darkness enshrouds the entire face of the earth and the world suffers from a dearth of righteous men, God opens the gates of His mercy upon mankind and heavenly water, in the form of Divine revelation, descends upon earth and gives new life to a world steeped in sin and iniquity. The phenomenon of the alternation of light and darkness in the spiritual realm corresponds to a similar phenomenon in the physical world where day and night follow each other. Then the *Sūrah* drives home the argument that it is foolish on the part of disbelievers to reject the Holy Prophet on the plea that he is but an ordinary mortal. It is not the status and the position of the bearer of the Qur'ānic Message so much that matters. What really matters

is, who has sent him. In order to show that the Holy Prophet's cause will prevail, the *Sūrah* cites the cases of some former Prophets—Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, Idrīs, and others, who in the teeth of bitter, persistent and organized opposition succeeded in their missions. All these chosen servants of God like Jesus were models of noble and righteous conduct and like him they suffered great hardships and privations in the way of God. Then why of all of them Jesus alone should be regarded as son of God and not they? After the account of these Prophets, special mention is made of Jesus and his mother whose circumstances were in no way different from theirs. Even the unusual manner of Jesus's birth entitles him to no particular spiritual status. The birth of Yaḥyā had also taken place in very exceptional circumstances. If Jesus was born without the agency of a father, Yaḥyā's birth took place when his father had reached an extreme old age and his mother had become barren and was quite unfit to give birth to a child. Similarly, Jesus's suffering in the cause of Truth was nothing novel. Though he was hung on the Cross he was taken down alive, but Yaḥyā suffered actual death for the sake of God. Then why should Jesus's death alone atone for the sins of man and not that of Yaḥyā? Towards the end the *Sūrah* points to the phenomenal rise and great material might and dazzling prosperity, progress and power of Gog and Magog—Christian nations of the West. When these nations, the *Sūrah* proceeds to say, will spread all over the world and will occupy every position of power and eminence, and when other nations of the world will bow down to them in submission and pay homage to them, then will the promise about their ultimate destruction be fulfilled. Divine punishment will come down upon them so sudden and swift that they will be taken completely by surprise. All their handiworks, the source and cause of their pride, and all their pomp, glory and grandeur will be destroyed and reduced to ashes and dust.

Chapter 22

Al-Ḥajj

الْحَجُّ

(Revealed partly before and partly after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

According to scholarly opinion a part of the *Sūrah* was revealed before the *Hijrah* and a part after it. Ḍaḥḥāk, however, holds that the whole of it was revealed after the *Hijrah*. In *Sūrah Al-Anbiyā'* it was stated that Divine punishment continues to dog the footsteps of disbelievers because they reject the truth. In its last verse the Holy Prophet was enjoined to invoke Divine punishment upon disbelievers because of their persistently hostile attitude. The opening verse of the present *Sūrah* constitutes an answer to his prayer. This is the immediate connection of the *Sūrah* with *Al-Anbiyā'*. But there exists a broader connection and deeper relationship between the subject-matter of some preceding Chapters and this *Sūrah*. The subject which began in *Sūrah Maryam* and was later developed and elaborated in *Sūrahs Ṭā Hā* and *Al-Anbiyā'* is brought to completion in the present *Sūrah*. In *Sūrah Maryam* the basic principles of the Christian Faith were explained and effectively refuted, as without their refutation there could have been no justification for a new Message. The Holy Prophet had claimed to have brought a new Message and a new Law for the whole of mankind. If Christianity could be shown to have existed in the world in its pristine purity and if there was extant in the world a Faith which claimed to be true, practical and practicable, then the need of a new Faith could not arise. So the basic principles of Christianity had to be proved to be false and unfounded. This was done in *Sūrah Maryam* whereby shedding light on the incidents attending his birth Jesus was shown to have been in no way different from, or superior to, other Messengers of God. In *Sūrah Ṭā Hā*, the Christian doctrine that Law is a curse was fully and completely repudiated, while in *Sūrah Al-Anbiyā'* the same subject was treated in a different manner, and the doctrine of original sin was shown to be quite untenable. It was made clear that if man suffered from the legacy of original sin and being devoid of free will he could not get rid of it, then the very object of the advent of Divine Messengers was defeated and man could not have been regarded as accountable for his actions and deeds. In the present *Sūrah*, however, we are told that if Jesus had attained the highest stage of spiritual perfection, then there was no need of a new *Sharī'ah* (Law) and a new Messenger. But the fact that the Holy Prophet had claimed to be a new Messenger and to have brought a new Law, in itself constitutes a challenge to this Christian belief.

Subject-Matter

The subject-matter of the *Sūrah* is split into five main parts: (1) The

disbelievers are threatened with Divine punishment because they reject the claim of the Holy Prophet which rests on the following very sound hypotheses: (a) His teachings are indispensable for mankind and are based on truth and wisdom and have sound and solid arguments to establish their abiding utility and the emptiness of the objections of disbelievers. (b) Heavenly Signs uphold the Prophet's cause—his followers are prospering both materially and spiritually and his enemies like those of the former Prophets are suffering defeat at his hands. (c) He will be blessed with Divine boons and blessings in an unusual measure. (d) His teachings are designed to bring about peace, harmony and goodwill among nations of the world. (e) All false faiths and religious systems including Christianity will retreat before the invincible onrush of Islam and will eventually be completely routed. (2) All Divine Messengers were opposed and satanic people placed all sorts of obstacles and impediments in their way. But God removed all those obstacles and the cause of Truth ultimately prevailed. (3) The advent of the Holy Prophet has fulfilled that Divine purpose for which Patriarch Abraham had prayed to God in the barren and arid valley of Mecca when he left his son Ishmael and his wife Hagar there. (4) The Holy Prophet has met with long and hard opposition and has endured untold hardships with great patience and fortitude, and the time has now arrived that he be granted permission to fight his opponents in self-defence. Defensive warfare is not only permissible but is commendable when the cause of Truth is at stake; and Divine succour comes to those who fight in its defence. If fighting in defence of Truth had not been allowed, man would have become deprived of freedom of conscience which is his most precious heritage, and God would have ceased to be worshipped and sin and iniquity would have reigned supreme in the world. (5) Divine Teaching like fresh rain gives new life and vigour to a spiritually dead world and is, therefore, bound to succeed. The cycle of a new Revelation taking the place of an old one continues. When a particular Teaching completes its allotted span of life and serves its intended purpose, a new Teaching replaces it and becomes the vehicle of Divine Will and Purpose. The *Sūrah* ends with the Divine promise that Heavenly help will come to the Holy Prophet because he is the Promised Teacher. His followers should, therefore, give him full and unconditional allegiance. This is the way to victory and success.

Chapter 23

Al-Mu'minūn

الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

There is sufficient internal evidence to show that the *Sūrah* was revealed towards the end of the Holy Prophet's stay at Mecca. Sayūfī regards it as the last *Sūrah* to have been revealed at Mecca just before the Holy Prophet's departure for Medina. Though it may not have been actually the last, it was certainly one of the last *Sūrahs* to be revealed at Mecca. In the closing verses of the previous *Sūrah* believers were told to turn to God and obey His commandments as in this lay the secret of their future progress and prosperity. They were also enjoined to wage war with the sword so that those who had drawn the sword against Islam should themselves perish by the sword. They were further enjoined to strive in the way of the Lord with the Qur'ān and the promise was held out to them that if they did so, God would help them and vouchsafe to them success and prosperity. The promise was conditional. A sure guarantee, however, is given here that a community of believers will certainly be born who, because they will fulfil the above-mentioned conditions, will achieve success. Thus a thing, which was presumed in the preceding *Sūrah* to have existed, is claimed in this *Sūrah* to have come into being as an actual fact.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the glad tidings to the true believers that the time of their success and prosperity has already arrived, and proceeds to give a brief description of their characteristics and special marks which is indicative of the process of their spiritual growth and development. This description is followed by a brief but beautiful account of the growth of the human foetus and defines the different stages through which the child passes—from the stage of a drop of sperm to that of a fully developed human being, and then explains that just as every physical birth is followed by death and Resurrection, similarly nations or communities among whom at one time a spiritual renaissance takes place, are at another time subject to decay and decadence and in due course are succeeded by another people. In fact, spiritual and physical developments bear close resemblance. Both of them have to pass through seven stages of development. Next, the *Sūrah* develops the theme that all things are sent down into the world according to a determined measure and each one of them continues to exist and is afforded protection till an appointed time. When, however, it has served its utility, it decays and dies. In the same way Divine Teachings, sent down before the Qur'ān, became defunct when they had served their intended purpose. Thus, the mere fact that a Teaching is Divine does not entitle it to immunity from

decay. It is only the Qur'ān which has been granted continuity of life and which will, therefore, continue to provide spiritual sustenance to all of humanity for all times to come. The *Sūrah* then recounts some of the favours which God has bestowed upon man and which are necessary for his physical sustenance, and then draws the moral lesson that when God has taken so much care to provide for man's physical needs, He must have taken equal, even greater, care to provide for his spiritual requirements. Next, it is stated that the most essential prerequisite to ensure spiritual progress is belief in the Unity of God that since the inception of the world the Prophets of God have taught and preached. Noah preached and propagated the Oneness of God. After him came a galaxy of Prophets, all of whom taught that God was One, and those Divine Teachers who came after them also emphasized and stressed this point. The devotees of darkness, however, always opposed and persecuted these Prophets. The result of the struggle between truth and falsehood invariably was that the believers were successful and those, who disbelieved and rejected the Divine Messengers, suffered defeat and came to grief. The righteous servants of God fear their Lord and believe in His Signs and have firm faith in His Unity and do good deeds to the best of their abilities, and yet consider that they have not fully discharged their duties and responsibilities. They strive to vie with one another in doing good deeds. After this, disbelievers are warned that they will be punished if they persisted in their rejection of the Divine Message. But they do not desist from their evil course and continue to indulge in iniquitous deeds till when the hour of punishment arrives, they beg and beseech that they might be granted one last opportunity to reform themselves. But then it is too late, and they are made to realize that pain and punishment even for a brief period after a whole life of ease and comfort are doubly mortifying. The *Sūrah* ends by stating the great spiritual truth that man is not created without purpose. His life has a noble aim. He should not, therefore, doubt or dispute the truth of Divine Law and of God's Messengers and should realize that he will have to render account of his deeds before his Lord.

Chapter 24

An-Nūr

النُّور

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The consensus of scholarly opinion assigns this Chapter to the Medinite period. The regrettable incident relating to ‘Ā’ishah, the Holy Prophet’s noble wife, to which special reference has been made in it, took place in 5 A.H. after the Holy Prophet’s return from the expedition against Banī Muṣṭaliq in the month of Ramaḍān of that year. Its connection with the preceding Chapter, *Sūrah* Al-Mu’minūn, consists in the fact that in that *Sūrah* it was stated that Islam would continue to produce men who would, by their righteousness and godly conduct, win God’s pleasure and succour. The present *Sūrah* deals with the means and methods which help to draw Divine grace and succour and lays down as a principle that the adoption of the ways of virtue and righteousness and the protection and preservation of national morals, and the maintenance of discipline of a high order in the family and the community, are very essential for this purpose. This is why the *Sūrah* at the very outset lays great stress on the preservation of national morals with an added emphasis on the regulation and reformation of relations between the sexes. The preceding *Sūrah* had stated that one of the essential characteristics of believers who were decreed to meet with Divine succour was that they guarded their chastity. This *Sūrah* is an extension and amplification of the subject-matter of the preceding one. The achievement and maintenance of success, it says, demands that the intellect, ideals and morals of a people should be chaste and that there should exist perfect harmony and appreciative understanding between the relations of the individual and those of the community, and that great emphasis ought to be laid on national discipline and organisation, and precedence should be accorded to national requirements over the needs of the individual.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* deals with certain special subjects and has laid particular stress on the problems which constitute the foundation on which the whole social and moral structure of society stands and which cannot be defied without doing mortal injury to the moral well-being of a people. As sexual immorality is calculated to break the discipline and organization of a community and as the evils associated with it are likely to affect severely its morals, great emphasis has been laid in the *Sūrah* on the avoidance of suspicion in matters of sex; and believers are told not to become panicky on account of a few individuals having strayed away from the path of moral rectitude, as such cases of moral lapse may cause the whole community to become alert and careful; and thus eventually

may prove conducive to good results. The subject is further developed and slander-mongering receives a severe reprimand. Because, if, on the basis of mere suspicion or the testimony of witnesses of doubtful integrity, haphazard aspersions are permitted to be cast on one another's chastity, sexual immorality is likely to become widespread in the community and young people become prone to run away with the notion that there is no harm in indulging freely in sex. Next, believers are strongly enjoined to guard and preserve national morals and it is considered very essential for Muslims to develop watchfulness and extreme awareness about their protection and preservation. If vigilance is allowed to relax, deterioration in national morals is sure to ensue. But whereas it is true that sexual immorality, if permitted to spread unchecked, brings about the degradation and disintegration of a whole community, individuals suspected of stray acts of immorality should not be hunted down and crushed. As in every community there are to be found some persons of lax morals, such individuals may be treated with a certain indulgence. But at the same time a warning is held out to those who seek, by their continued pernicious activities, to create discord among Muslims and to indulge in abusive language and calumny that they will be punished in this world and in the next. God will expose their iniquities and sins and will bring upon them disgrace and humiliation. The *Sūrah* then proceeds to observe that it is his careless acts that subject a man to suspicion and calumny and that most careless of all such acts is promiscuous intermingling between the sexes. In order to put a stop to such occasions as cause suspicion and lead to slander-mongering, the *Sūrah* directs Muslims not to enter a house without having obtained prior permission. Further, it enjoins on Muslim men and women that if they happen to confront each other, they should restrain their looks and guard all avenues of sin and vice. As an additional safeguard, Muslim women are further enjoined not to display their beauty, natural as well as artificial, to those males as are outside the prohibited degrees of marriage (v. 32), except such parts of the body as it is not possible for them to cover, for instance, the build of the body or their stature. For this purpose, they should wear their head-coverings in such a manner as to cover their breasts. (For a detailed note on "Pardah" see v. 32). Another safeguard enjoined for the improvement and preservation of national morals is that widows should not be allowed to remain unmarried. It is further stated that steps should be taken to set free prisoners of war at the earliest occasion and a captive, who does not find it possible to earn his or her freedom immediately, may be allowed to pay the indemnity money in easy instalments.

Towards its close the *Sūrah* strongly urges Muslims to set right their family and national affairs and to be on their guard against promiscuous intermingling of the sexes. A special direction to be observed in this respect is that even prisoners of war serving as house servants and also minor children should not enter the private apartments of their masters or parents before dawn, at noon and after nightfall. At other times all members of the household are at liberty to move about the house freely. When, however, children reach their puberty, they

should observe the regulations in regard to "pardah." Older women, however, who have no desire or need for marriage can, if they so choose, relax the rules about "pardah," but even they are not allowed to display their adornments to strangers. The organisational structure of society transcends the organisational structure of the family, and the *Sūrah* has not neglected to lay down requisite rules for the smooth and successful conduct of national affairs. The *Sūrah* then holds out a promise to Muslims that if they carry out the programme of life which God has laid down for them, they will become the leaders of the world both in spiritual and temporal spheres and their religion will become firmly established in the world. But when their rule is established and their cause triumphs and prevails, they should worship God, help the poor and the needy and obey the commandments of their Prophet.

Chapter 25

Al-Furqān

الْفُرْقَان

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Preponderance of scholarly opinion regards this *Sūrah* as of Meccan origin and assigns it to the last Meccan period. Certain Western writers are of the view that it was revealed very early in the Holy Prophet's ministry. They attribute this inference to the absence of any reference to persecution of Muslims on the part of the Quraish which, they say, began some years later. This assumption is too flimsy to merit serious consideration. This is like saying that because some Medinite Chapters are almost devoid of any mention of disbelievers, therefore, no fighting had taken place between Muslims and disbelievers in the Medinite period.

Sūrah An-Nūr had ended on a note about the very great importance and usefulness of the Islamic organisation. It had also stated that certain Muslims were unacquainted with its great potentialities; on the other hand, they were afraid of the organisation of disbelievers which was rotten to the core. The present *Sūrah* gives the reasons why the fear of the people of weak of faith is but an illusion and a figment of their own distraught imagination and does not exist in fact.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the categorical statement that the Qur'ānic Message is meant for the whole of mankind. It further says that the Almighty God Who has revealed the Qur'ān is the sole and undisputed Master of the heavens and the earth, and the sole Creator of every atom of the universe. His Word, therefore, is and must be in perfect harmony with the laws of nature, hence its acceptance or rejection does not merely mean the acceptance or rejection of a revealed Law but amounts to submission to or violation of the laws of nature itself. Next, it is stated that because disbelievers find it difficult to deny the excellence and superiority of the teachings of the Qur'ān, they take refuge behind the subterfuge that it is not the work of a single individual but is the result of the combined efforts of many persons. They further allege that its teaching has been plagiarised from old Scriptures. But these pleas possess no substance because if the Qur'ān had been the work of human effort, it could not have possessed a teaching which it is beyond the power of man to produce. And if it had been merely a copy of the ancient Scriptures, those Scriptures should also have possessed the excellences and beauties possessed by it, but that is not the case. Next, it answers some worn out and hackneyed objections of disbelievers such as the Holy Prophet is a mere mortal and is subject to the demands of the flesh.

Then, a brief reference is made to the law of the rise and fall of nations and disbelievers are warned that the time of their decadence and downfall and that of the rise, progress and prosperity of Muslims has already arrived. Furthermore, the attention of disbelievers is drawn to the phenomenon that God has made two waters, one bitter and the other sweet, both flowing side by side. They continue their parallel course and do not mix with each other. Similarly, the teachings of the Qur'ān and those of other Scriptures will continue to exist side by side in order that by comparing them people might distinguish the true from the false and the sweet from the bitter. Towards its end, the *Sūrah* mentions a few special signs and marks of those righteous servants of God who by acting upon the teachings of the Qur'ān attain to the highest pinnacle of spiritual eminence, and closes with a pointed reference to the great truth that God has created man to serve a very sublime and noble object and whosoever fails to fulfil this object will forfeit God's mercy and grace.

Chapter 26

Ash-Shu‘arā’

الشُّعْرَاءُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

A large majority of Muslim scholars regard this *Sūrah* as of Meccan origin. It is entitled Ash-Shu‘arā’ (poets) in order to drive home to Muslims the supreme lesson that success comes to a people only when their profession and practice go together and that empty talk like that of the poets leads nowhere. From this *Sūrah* a departure has been made in the subject-matter of the preceding sixteen Chapters. From *Sūrah* Yūnus the Qur’ān had directed its address principally to the Jews and the Christians. With this Chapter the believers take their place; and the form, nature and scope of the address have been changed; therefore, a change has also taken place in the Muqatta‘āt placed at the head of the *Sūrah*. The preceding *Sūrah* had ended on the note that it would be a great mistake to suppose that God would allow the time-honoured system that had come into being through the great religions of the world to be destroyed. On the contrary, He had created man to demonstrate in his person His great attributes and in order also that he should respond to the Divine Call. If man does not fulfil the object of his creation, then there is no need or justification for him to exist and no need for God to feel any hesitancy in destroying him. In this *Sūrah* we are told that in his love and solicitude for humanity, the Holy Prophet felt grieved at this apprehended possibility and desired that man may be saved. The destruction of man also clearly does not seem to be in harmony with the Divine design which is that he should be vouchsafed the opportunity to discover, with his own will and endeavour, the way of nearness to God and then should try to attain it. But if he refuses to do so, he should suffer the consequences of his refusal. The *Sūrah* further says that if man had not been endowed with the discretion and the ability to make a choice, he would have become a mere machine and an automaton and would not have been the image of his Creator as he is considered to be. So he must act and conduct himself in harmony with Divine scheme without which he cannot attain true and real salvation.

Subject-Matter

At the outset the *Sūrah* makes the claim that the Qur’ān gives its own proofs and arguments and needs no extraneous help or support to substantiate and establish the truth of its claims and teachings and proceeds to say that when for the fulfilment of human requirements and needs, God has created pairs in all things in the physical world, it stands to reason that in the spiritual realm also He should have created their counterparts. Then quite appropriately the *Sūrah*

gives the account of some Divine Messengers and opens this account with the story of Moses, who in pursuance of Divine command succeeded in taking the Israelites out of Egypt. To illustrate further that truth always triumphs in the long run and opposition to it comes to grief, the *Sūrah* gives a brief account of Prophets Abraham, Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot and Shu‘aib. Abraham demonstrated to his people the folly and futility of idol-worship. His account is followed by that of Noah whose people rejected him on the ground that he sought to remove all social distinctions. He was followed by Hūd and Ṣāliḥ. Both these Divine Prophets tried hard to make their people realise that it was not material pomp and power but good morals and spiritual strength upon which really depended their life and prosperity but their peoples threw their preaching and warnings to the wind. The peoples of Lot and Shu‘aib fared no better. The former indulged in an unnatural vice and the latter were dishonest in their commercial dealings. Towards the end the *Sūrah* reverts to the subject with which it had commenced, viz. that the Qur’ān is the revealed Word of God and that it gives sound and solid arguments to prove this claim, and adds that the Prophets of yore had testified to its truth and that the learned men of Israel also are convinced in their heart of hearts that it is God’s own revealed Word because it fulfils the prophecies which are contained in their Scriptures. The *Sūrah* invites disbelievers to ponder over the teachings of the Qur’ān and to see that if they could have been the work of satans or could the Holy Prophet himself have produced them. It further says that the teachings of the Qur’ān bear close resemblance to those of the earlier Scriptures, and satanic people evidently could have no access to their Divine Source. Satans descend only upon liars and sinners and upon those who forge lies and coin and copy falsehood. The poets derive inspiration from these votaries of falsehood and are in turn followed by men of low morals and of no fixed principles. They and their followers take delight in tall, meaningless talk, but do not act upon what they profess and preach. The *Sūrah* closes with enjoining the Holy Prophet to continue to preach the Unity and Oneness of God to his people and educate and train them for the promotion of the cause of Islam. He is further enjoined to trust in the Almighty and Merciful God under Whose protection and fostering care he passes his days, and Who will very soon end the state of dispersion of Muslims and will bring them together in a place where they will live in peace and prosperity and will worship the One True God in perfect safety and security.

Chapter 27

An-Naml

النمل

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Towards the close of the preceding *Sūrah* the disbelievers' charge that the Holy Prophet was a poet and that satans descended upon him was most effectively refuted and it was stated that satans descended only upon sinful liars and forgers who mixed falsehood with truth, and that hotchpotch of much falsehood mixed with a little truth could never produce any good results. The *Sūrah* further said that the poets had no great aim or fixed programme in life, and wandered, as it were, distractedly in every valley and did not practise what they preached. To continue and elaborate the subject the present *Sūrah* opens with a firm declaration that the Qur'ān is God's own revealed Word. It explains fully and completely all matters that concern man's spiritual life and supports its principles and ideals with sound and cogent arguments. According to Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Zubair the *Sūrah*, was revealed at Mecca. Other Muslim scholars also support this view.

Subject-Matter

Whereas the preceding *Sūrah* opened with the abbreviated letters *Ṭā Sīn Mīm*, this *Sūrah* begins with the letters *Ṭā Sīn*, the letter *Mīm* having been omitted. This shows that the subject-matter of this *Sūrah* constitutes a continuation of the subject-matter of the preceding *Sūrah* though in a little different form. It begins with a brief reference to a vision in which Moses saw a manifestation of Divine Majesty and proceeds to give a somewhat detailed account of David and Solomon in whose reigns the Israelite conquests, power and material glory had attained their zenith. After this, the *Sūrah* deals at some length with the two most fundamental and basic religious beliefs—the existence of God and life after death. To support and substantiate the first belief the *Sūrah* adduces arguments from nature, man's inner self and from his collective life. After alluding to the fact that God's great powers are manifested in the marvellous working of the laws of nature, the *Sūrah* advances the acceptance of prayer by God as an invincible argument in support of His existence. Another unanswerable argument given by the *Sūrah* is that God reveals Himself to His Messengers and righteous servants and vouchsafes to them the knowledge of the unknown, instances of which are to be witnessed in every age. Next, the *Sūrah* deals with Life after death. After briefly pointing to other arguments it advances as one unassailable proof in support of Life after death the great moral and spiritual revolution which the Holy Prophet brought about among his people, and then proceeds to expatiate upon it. The

argument begins and develops in this way. The Arabs had completely despaired of their future. They heedlessly wallowed in the quagmire of immoral ways and practices and rejected the Holy Prophet's Message and refused to believe that they will have to render an account of their deeds in an afterlife. Morally and spiritually they were virtually a dead people. But they received a new life through the Qur'ān. The water of Divine revelation descended upon the bleak and barren soil of Arabia and it bloomed and blossomed and pulsated with a new vigorous life, and by acting upon its teachings the Arabs, erstwhile the scum and dregs of humanity, became its leaders and teachers. This marvellous revolution constituted a proof positive of the fact that God, Who could raise a spiritually dead people to a new life, had the power to raise also the physically dead to life again. The *Sūrah* closes on the note that God has chosen Mecca to be the Centre for His last Message and that from this town shall emanate a Divine Light which will illumine the whole world.

Chapter 28

Al-Qaṣaṣ

الْقَصَص

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

By common agreement the *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. According to ‘Umar bin Muḥammad it was revealed while the Holy Prophet, during the *Hijrah*, was on his way to Medina. The verse, *He Who has made the teaching of the Qur’ān binding on thee will most surely bring thee back to thy ordained place of return* (v. 86), clearly shows that the Holy Prophet was yet in Mecca when he was told that at first he would have to leave Mecca as a fugitive and then would come back to it as a conqueror. The preceding *Sūrah* had ended with the verse, *So whoever follows guidance, follows it only for the good of his own soul; and as to him who goes astray, say, I am only a Warner, which meant that no force would be allowed to be used in the propagation of the teachings of the Qur’ān*. It was to establish truth of this Qur’ānic claim that the present *Sūrah* was revealed.

Subject-Matter

The present is the third and last of the Chapters which belong to the *Ṭā Sīn Mīm* group. These three Chapters open with the same abbreviated letters and, therefore, possess a striking similarity in the subject-matter. They all begin with the important subject of the revelation of the Qur’ān and end with the same subject. In Chapter 26th much space is devoted to the presentation by Moses of his Message to Pharaoh. In Chapter 27th pride of place is given to the manifestation that Moses saw of the Divine Glory and Majesty and to the spiritual experience which he had in the blessed Valley of Ṭuwā. In the present *Sūrah*, however, the different phases of Moses’s life have been treated in greater detail than perhaps in any other *Sūrah*—his being taken out of the sea in a miraculous manner, his infancy and childhood, his youth, his *Hijrah* and his Call—the implication being that the Holy Prophet, who was the like of Moses, would also have to go through similar experiences, though under different conditions and in different circumstances. The *Sūrah* opens with an account of the pitiable condition of the Israelites under Pharaoh—how by his policy of ruthless exploitation and suppression he sought to kill in them all manly qualities and how when their humiliation had reached its nadir, God raised Moses and through him brought about their emancipation by drowning Pharaoh and his mighty hosts in the sea before their very eyes. After the account of Moses’s life-story, the *Sūrah* refers to the prophecies that are found in the Bible about the Holy Prophet and proceeds to tell the Quraish that if they accepted him, they would enjoy all those spiritual and material blessings

and benefits of which Mecca, as the Centre and Citadel of the new Faith, was destined to receive. But if they rejected him, they would incur the displeasure of God. The *Sūrah* then proceeds to say that when disbelievers, on account of their persistent rejection of truth are seized with punishment, they start condemning and denouncing their leaders who, they say, lead them astray and are the cause of their ruin. The leaders, on their part, disown them and even curse them for having blindly followed them. The real cause, however, of the rejection of the Divine Message, the *Sūrah* says, is that puffed up with material wealth and thereby lulled into a false sense of security, men of wealth and influence make light of God's Prophets, mock at them and persecute them, ignoring the supreme moral lesson which is writ large on the pages of history that the rejection of Truth has never been allowed to go unpunished and disbelief has always landed its protagonists into ruin. Towards its close the *Sūrah* makes a pointed reference to a mighty prophecy which was implied in Moses's flight from Egypt to Midian, in his sojourn there for ten years and his subsequent return to Egypt and in delivering the Israelites from Pharaoh. The prophecy was to the effect that like Moses the Holy Prophet of Islam also would leave his native place and go to live in a strange place for ten years and then would come back to the cradle of his Faith and conquer Mecca and establish Islam on a firm footing. The last few verses of the *Sūrah* sum up its subject-matter, and the Holy Prophet is told that he never had the remotest idea that he will ever be made the bearer of the Divine Message, but now that he has actually been entrusted with his great mission, he should call all mankind to the ways of the Lord, and trusting in Him and refusing to be discouraged or dismayed, should fight his way to success like the great and valiant votary of Truth he is.

Chapter 29

Al-‘Ankabūt

الْعَنْكَبُوت

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

A large majority of Muslim scholarly opinion is inclined to place the revelation of the *Sūrah* in the middle or the late middle Meccan period. The *Sūrah* seems to derive its title from v. 42 where the falsity and futility of polytheistic beliefs are illustrated by a beautiful simile that these beliefs, being frail and brittle like a spider’s web, cannot stand intelligent criticism. The preceding *Sūrah* had ended on the note that the Holy Prophet will come back as a victor and conqueror to his native town, Mecca, from where he had been driven out as a friendless fugitive, a price being placed on his head. The present *Sūrah* opens with a warning to believers that long and hard work; and hardships and privations patiently borne, are the sine qua non of a successful life.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* continues to develop the theme that great favours and blessings which are to be bestowed upon believers in this and the next life will not be conferred upon them unless their belief is put to a severe test. They will have to pass through the crucible of fire and blood to deserve them. It is only by true and sincere repentance and by turning to God with a humble and contrite heart and by bringing about real and abiding reformation in one’s life that one can earn God’s forgiveness and become entitled to Divine boons and bounties. Reverting to the subject of the persecution of believers the *Sūrah* proceeds to say that they should allow no amount of hardships and privations to stand in the way of their serving the cause of Truth, and are forcefully exhorted to place their loyalty to God above the loyalty to their parents when the two loyalties clash and conflict. Then brief references are made to the life-stories of the Prophets Noah, Abraham, Lot and some other Divine Messengers, to show that persecution can never arrest or retard the progress of the true Faith and that compulsion in matters of religion never pays, and a people cannot be compelled permanently to continue to subscribe to views forcibly imposed upon them. The *Sūrah* further says that polytheistic beliefs, being as frail as a spider’s web, cannot stand intelligent and searching criticism. The disbelievers, therefore, have no reason or justification to continue to hold idolatrous beliefs when a book like the Qur’ān which fully meets all the moral needs and requirements of man and is eminently fitted to raise him to the highest moral summits has been revealed. The *Sūrah* further disposes of an oft-quoted objection of disbelievers that the Qur’ān has been composed by the Holy Prophet; on the contrary, it is presented as the greatest Divine miracle in answer to the disbelievers’ demand

for Signs and miracles. Towards its close believers are consoled and comforted with the assurance that if they remained steadfast under the persecution to which they are being subjected a great and bright future lies before them. The *Sūrah* ends on the note that believers will have to take up the sword in defence of Islam and to conduct vigorous Jihād against the forces of evil. But the real Jihād, it says, does not consist in killing and being killed, but in striving hard to win the pleasure of God and in preaching the Message of the Qur’ān.

Chapter 30

Ar-Rūm

الرُّوم

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca, but it is difficult to assign an exact date to its revelation. The most reliable authorities, however, place it in the sixth or seventh year of the Call, as in that year the tide of the Persian conquest to which the *Sūrah* pointedly refers was at its height; the Persian armies were knocking at the very gates of Constantinople and the disgrace and degradation of the Romans had touched its nadir. Towards the close of the preceding *Sūrah* it was stated that 'the present life is but a pastime and a sport' if it is not spent in a noble cause, and that life, real and everlasting, is the one in which a spiritual wayfarer strives with might and main to win the pleasure of God. The present *Sūrah* opens with the prophetic words that the believers will successfully meet the ordeal of trials and tribulations through which they will be made to pass and as a reward of their sacrifice and suffering the gates of Divine grace and mercy will be opened to them.

Subject-Matter

The dominant theme of the *Sūrah* is the defeat and discomfiture of the forces of disbelief and darkness and the rise and triumph of Islam. It states with an emphasis and certainty which dispel all doubt that the old order is about to die and a new and better one will emerge from its ruins. The *Sūrah* opens with the declaration of a prophecy about the ultimate success of the Romans over the Persians. The prophecy was made at a time when the tide of the Persian conquest was sweeping away everything before its irresistible onrush and the degradation and humiliation of the Romans had sunk to its lowest depths. It was then beyond human knowledge and ingenuity to predict that within a period ranging from three to nine years, tables would be completely turned upon the Persians, and the vanquished would become the victors. The prophecy was literally fulfilled in most extraordinary and unforeseen circumstances. Its fulfilment implied another and a greater prophecy that the forces of disbelief which were then too powerful for the poor and the weak Muslims to withstand would also be put to complete rout, and Islam would march triumphantly from strength to strength. Next, the *Sūrah* refers to the great powers of God manifested in the creation of the heavens and the earth, the alternation of day and night, the perfect design and order that exist in the universe, and in the birth of man from a very insignificant beginning. All these things lead to the irresistible and inevitable conclusion that God Who possesses such vast and unlimited powers does also have the power to make Islam grow from a small

seed into a mighty tree under whose shade the whole of humanity will someday take rest. Islam is bound to succeed because it is *Dīnul-Fiṭrah*, i.e. it conforms to human nature and appeals to man's conscience, reason and common sense. Its triumph will come about through a great and wonderful revolution which will take place in Arabia. A people, morally as good as dead, will be roused from their deep sleep of ages, and drinking deep at the spiritual fountain caused by the Holy Prophet to flow, will become the torchbearers of spiritual light and will carry the Message of Islam to the ends of the earth. The *Sūrah* ends on the note that opposition to Islam cannot arrest or retard its progress. Truth in the long run triumphs and prospers and falsehood is defeated and humiliated. This phenomenon has taken place in the time of every Prophet of God and it will again take place in the time of the Holy Prophet. The Prophet is then asked to bear with patience and fortitude all the persecution and mockery to which he is being subjected, as success will soon come to him.

Chapter 31

Luqmān

لُقْمَانَ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation, Title and Context

By common consent the *Sūrah* is considered to have been revealed at Mecca, towards the middle of the Meccan period, or, as some say, in the sixth or seventh year of the Call. The preceding *Sūrah*, Ar-Rūm, had ended on the note that the Qur'ān explains fully all those teachings that deal with the spiritual development and progress of man. But the disbelievers have not the eyes to see the truth, their hearts being sealed. They see Sign after Sign and yet go on harping on the tune that the Holy Prophet is a liar and a forger. The present *Sūrah* opens with the solemn affirmation that the Holy Prophet is not a forger or a liar and that this Book, the Qur'ān, has been revealed to him by the Wise and All-Knowing God. It is full of wisdom and leads an honest seeker- after truth to the right path. It was further mentioned in the preceding *Sūrah* that the cause of Islam will continue to prosper and triumph and disbelievers will meet with defeat, disgrace and humiliation. In the present *Sūrah* some light is shed on those noble moral principles by acting upon which nations and individuals can achieve success and prosperity and can rise to greatness and eminence.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* in its very beginning refers to the sine qua non of success—correct belief and right action—and proceeds to discuss some universal moral principles from the mouth of a non-Arab sage, Luqmān, the basic principle being that God is One and that all other noble ideals flow from this belief. The principle, second in importance to Divine Unity, concerns man's obligations to man, the most essential of which are his obligations to his parents. In between these two basic commandments a Muslim is taught to subordinate all his loyalties to God and to allow no other loyalty, not even loyalty to parents, to conflict or clash with his loyalty to His Creator. But under no circumstances should he cease to be kind and considerate and respectful to them. Next, it is stated that man's duty to God takes practical shape in the observance of Prayers and his obligations to mankind in doing good and abstaining from evil. The *Sūrah* says that when a true believer enters upon the noble and arduous task of preaching the truth and calling upon people to live righteously, difficulties and impediments bar his way and he has to put up with opposition, abuse, and persecution. He is told to bear all this opposition and persecution with patience and fortitude. When he is not discouraged or dismayed by the opposition and persecution he has to face in the discharge of his great and noble task, success comes his way and large crowds of people give their allegiance to him. In the

hour of public applause and acclamation he should not lose his mental poise and should particularly be on his guard against conceit and arrogance. The *Sūrah* then refers to the laws of nature implying that these laws are working in favour of Islam. It ends on a note of warning to disbelievers that the day of their reckoning when their wealth and their influence, power and prestige, would prove of no avail, is fast approaching. Even their children will accept Islam and spend their wealth to promote its cause.

Chapter 32

As-Sajdah

السَّجْدَة

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah* was also revealed at Mecca. The preceding *Sūrah* had ended with the statement that God alone knows when a particular people are to rise or fall and that He alone provides for the physical needs of man and for his moral and spiritual requirements. The present *Sūrah* opens with the declaration that God being the Lord of all the worlds, in His hands lie all those means upon which the progress and prosperity of nations and individuals depend and He alone controls those causes that lead to their decline and downfall.

Subject-Matter

The main theme of the *Sūrah* is the ultimate triumph of Islam. It opens with a strong repudiation of the disbelievers' charge that the Qur'ān is a forgery and the Holy Prophet an impostor. The Prophet, it says, is not an impostor because impostors never succeed in their missions, but the cause of the Holy Prophet is daily advancing by leaps and bounds; neither is the Qur'ān a forgery because it has been revealed in the fullness of time and in accordance with the demands of truth and justice and fulfils all the moral and spiritual needs and requirements of man and because also the whole universe seems to be working in support and furtherance of its Message. The *Sūrah* then makes a little digression and makes a prophecy that after its initial phenomenal progress Islam will receive a temporary set-back; a comparative eclipse of a thousand years which will be followed by a second renaissance, as a result of which it will regain its pristine glory and will march on its course of uniform success. Next, the *Sūrah* gives a beautiful illustration how from a very insignificant beginning Islam will grow in strength, expand and spread and will become a mighty force. The illustration is taken from the insignificant birth of man from mere clay. Towards its close the *Sūrah* sums up its central theme and adds that the advent of the Holy Prophet is not anything novel. Just as in the physical world when the earth becomes parched and scorched God sends down rain and it begins to vibrate with a new life, in the same way in the spiritual realm, when mankind gropes and flounders in spiritual darkness, a Divine Messenger is raised and the spiritually dead receive a new life through him.

Chapter 33

Al-Aḥzāb

الْأَحْزَابُ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed at Medina. It was revealed between the 5th and the 7th year of the *Hijrah*, possibly up to the 8th and the 9th year. There is sufficient internal evidence to establish this fact. In the preceding few Chapters the prophecy was repeatedly and emphatically made that Islam would continue to make progress and gather strength, till the whole of Arabia would accept its Message, and idolatry would disappear from the country, never to return. In the immediately preceding *Sūrah*—As-Sajdah—it was stated that Muslims would be favoured with all sorts of physical comforts and material prosperity. Towards its end the disbelievers had tauntingly asked when the prophecy about the victory of Islam and its great spread and expansion would be fulfilled. That question has received an emphatic answer in the present *Sūrah*. It is stated that prophecy about the rise and progress of Islam has already been fulfilled and Islam has become a great power.

Subject-Matter

With the accession to Islam of great political power and prestige and with its emergence as a full-fledged State, the ordinances of the *Shari'ah* began to be revealed in quick succession to guide Muslims in political and social matters. This *Sūrah* embodies several such ordinances. At the outset it abolishes a deep-rooted custom of the Arabs—the adoption of another person's son as one's own. Then it refers to a very deep and real spiritual relationship that subsists between the Holy Prophet and Muslims. In his capacity as their spiritual father he stands closer to them than even their own selves and his wives are their spiritual mothers. Next, the *Sūrah* gives a somewhat detailed description of the Battle of the Trench which was the fiercest encounter in which the Muslims had so far been engaged. The whole of Arabia had risen like one man against Islam and a well-equipped army, numbering from 10,000 to 20,000 strong, had marched on Medina. The Muslims were a paltry 1200, though according to some writers the total number of those employed in digging the Trench including women and children was in the neighbourhood of 3000. The combat was quite unequal. The Muslims were in sore straits. But God sent His hosts and the powerful enemy was routed and scattered. In the next few verses the *Sūrah* states that while in a religious community there is no dearth of sincere and devoted followers, there are also to be found in its ranks, hypocrites and the weak of faith. These hypocrites loudly profess to be true followers but when in the Prophet's time Medina was attacked by a mighty force, they asked to be

excused from fighting on the side of Muslims on very lame excuses. They broke their plighted word. The Banū Quraiḫah were the first to dishonour their pledge and to leave Muslims in the lurch when the latter were hemmed in on all sides and the very fate of Islam hung in the balance. After the Confederates dispersed, the Holy Prophet marched against them and they received deserved punishment.

As a result of the Battle of the Trench and of the subsequent banishment of the Banū Quraiḫah large booty fell into the hands of Muslims. From a persecuted and economically very poor minority they had grown into a rich, powerful and prosperous State. Material wealth brings in its train worldly-mindedness, a desire for ease and comfort and apathy towards service and sacrifice. This is a state of affairs which a Reformer has specially to guard against. Love of ease and comfort generally makes appearance first in the domestic circle, and as the members of the Holy Prophet's household were to serve as a model in social behaviour, it was in the fitness of things that they should have been required to set an example in self-denial. The Holy Prophet's wives were asked to make a choice between a life of comfort and ease and his simple and even austere companionship and they lost no time in making their choice. They preferred the Prophet's company. The wives of the Holy Prophet were particularly enjoined to set an example in piety and righteous conduct, as befitted the wives of the greatest of God's Prophets and in preserving the dignity and decorum of their exalted position, and by teaching Muslims the precepts and commandments of their religion. The *Sūrah*, then, makes a reference to Zainab's marriage with Zaid. The failure of this marriage and Zainab's subsequent marriage with the Holy Prophet served a double purpose. By giving in marriage Zainab, his own cousin and a full-blooded Arab lady, intensely proud of her ancestry and exalted social position, to a freed slave, the Holy Prophet had sought to level to the ground all those invidious class distinctions and divisions from which the Arabian society had suffered, as according to Islam all men were free and equal in the sight of God. Next, the *Sūrah* removes a possible misgiving to which the abolition of the custom of adoption might have given rise, viz. that in the absence of real sons the Holy Prophet will die issueless and his Movement will wither and die out for want of an heir. It says that it was God's own plan that the Prophet should have no male issue; but this did not mean that he would be issueless since he was the spiritual father of the whole of mankind. As practical proof of this claim he would bring into being a community of righteous and most loyal spiritual sons. The *Sūrah* further says that since the Holy Prophet is the spiritual father of the Faithful, his wives are their spiritual mothers, and therefore marriage with them, after the death of the Holy Prophet, is a grievous sin. The Holy Prophet himself is told that he is not to divorce anyone of his existing wives, nor to add to their number, and his wives are enjoined that, consistently with their dignity as "Mothers of the Faithful," they should observe certain rules regarding dress, etc.

when going out. This injunction enjoining privacy and decorum applies equally to all Muslim women. Towards its close the *Sūrah* points to the very high destiny of man and to his great responsibilities as the crown of God's whole creation. He has been endowed with great powers and capabilities denied to other beings and, therefore, he alone among all creation can, by acting upon the laws of the *Sharī'ah*, imbibe and reflect in his person Divine attributes.

Chapter 34

Saba'

سَبَا

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation, Title and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. It is difficult to assign it a definite date. Some scholars place it in the Middle Meccan Period; some others like Rodwell and Noldeke give it a later date. The preceding several Chapters embodied prophecies about the rise, progress and the ultimate victory of Islam over other Faiths, while in the immediately preceding Chapter, *Al-Aḥzāb*, the subject was dealt with at some length; how the combined forces of darkness utterly failed in their nefarious designs to destroy Islam and how Islam emerged from one of the severest ordeals with flying colours; its power and prestige having been considerably enhanced. In the present *Sūrah*, however, Muslims have been warned that they should be on their guard against falling into bad ways because when wealth and prosperity come to a people, they are prone to give themselves up to a life of ease and luxury. Since God has no particular relation with any community for all time, if Muslims in the heyday of their glory and material prosperity led a life of sin—as did the Sabaeans or the Israelites after Solomon—they too would suffer the same fate.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the celebration of the praises of Allāh 'to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth,' implying that as God is Great and Almighty a people who seek to defy His authority are sure to meet with failure and frustration. It proceeds to say that disbelievers delude themselves into the belief that their rejection of the Message of Islam will go unpunished and that 'the Hour will never come upon them.' They are warned that their power will break and their glory depart and that this fact will constitute a proof of the truth of the Holy Prophet's mission. Next, the *Sūrah* makes a somewhat detailed reference to Prophets David and Solomon, who made vast conquests and subdued rebellious tribes, and in whose reigns, the Israelite power and glory rose to its zenith. But in the pride of their power and prosperity the Israelites fell into evil ways and began to lead a life of sin. This reference to the Israelites is followed by a reference to the Sabaeans who were a highly prosperous and cultured people, but who like the Israelites defied and disobeyed Divine commandments and like them incurred the displeasure of God and were destroyed by a mighty flood. By referring to the might, glory and prosperity of the Israelites under David and Solomon, and to that of the Sabaeans, and to the subsequent destruction of both, the *Sūrah* gives a warning to Muslims that wealth, power and prosperity will also be bestowed on them,

but if in the heyday of their glory they, like the Israelites and the Sabaeans, gave themselves up to a life of luxury and ease, they will be punished like them. Next, the *Sūrah* deals with its main theme, viz. the progressive rise of the cause of Islam and the sad fate that is in store for idol-worshippers and their false deities. The disbelievers are challenged to call upon their deities to obstruct the progress of Islam, and to arrest the decline and downfall of their own false ideals and institutions. They are told that no power on earth could stop this from happening. In order to make them realize that their cause was destined to perish and Islam to sweep away everything before it, they are further told to study the operation of the laws of nature, which were all working in its favour. In answer to the disbelievers' demand as to when the prophecy about the rise and progress of Islam will be fulfilled, the *Sūrah* goes so far as to fix a definite date for it. Its signs, it says, will begin to appear about a year after the Flight of the Holy Prophet from Mecca when the Quraishites, by expelling him from his native town, will render themselves deserving of Divine punishment. After this the *Sūrah* observes that whenever a Divine Reformer makes his appearance it is the vested interests and privileged classes that stand in his way. They feel and apprehend that the rise of the new Movement will weaken their hold on the poor people who, by accepting the new Message, will refuse to be exploited or suppressed any more. So they fight it tooth and nail and try to nip it in the bud and the suppressed and exploited classes are, by threats and intimidation, dragooned into accepting their lead and opposing the Divine Reformer. Towards its close the *Sūrah* refers to a simple criterion by which it could be easily found out that the Holy Prophet is neither an impostor nor a maniac but a true Prophet of God. An impostor, it says, is never allowed to prosper and eventually comes to a sad end but the cause of the Prophet is progressing, and a madman cannot bring about such a wonderful revolution in the life of a whole people as the Holy Prophet has done.

Chapter 35

Fāṭir

فَاطِر

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca, probably at the time at which the preceding *Sūrah* was revealed. In that *Sūrah* Muslims were told that like the Israelites they will be given wealth, power, prosperity and prestige and that if in the heyday of their glory and greatness they consigned God to oblivion and abandoned themselves to a life of luxury and ease, they will draw upon their heads His wrath as did the Israelites before them. In the present *Sūrah* they are promised honour and eminence through the Qur'ān whose commandments they should not fail to observe.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the declaration that all praise belongs to God Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. The declaration implies that being the Creator of the universe God has not only provided for the physical needs of man but also for his moral and spiritual needs, and that for this purpose He has created angels through whose instrumentality He controls the physical universe and conveys His Will to men. It further says that since the creation of man God has been sending Prophets and Messengers to convey His Will and that now He has decreed to bestow His mercy upon mankind in the form of the Qur'ān. After this announcement of the bestowal of Divine mercy upon man he has been warned not to reject it, as this will entail grave consequences. The *Sūrah* proceeds to draw a moral lesson from the quite insignificant beginning of man, that Islam will, from a humble start, grow into a mighty organization. It further compares it to a sea whose water is sweet which slakes the thirst of spiritual wayfarers. Next, it observes that Islam is no novel phenomenon. Alternate periods of spiritual light and darkness continue to come over the world as day follows night and vice versa. After a long period of darkness and cessation of revelation, the sun of Islam has risen to illumine the dark world and God has decreed to bring into being a new creation and a new order of things through its teachings. Through the Qur'ān God will give eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf and the dead will also receive a new life, but those who will deliberately shut the avenues of their hearts and refuse to listen to the Divine Call will incur spiritual death. The *Sūrah* then invites attention to the study of the physical phenomenon which bears a striking resemblance to a similar phenomenon in the spiritual realm. When rain falls on dry and parched land, it begins to bloom, blossom and vibrate with a new life, and crops, flowers and fruits of varying hues, tastes and forms, are brought forth. The water that comes down in the

form of rain is the same but the crops and fruits are different. Similarly, the same water of Divine revelation produces different results among men of different natures and moral aptitudes. While on the one hand it produces highly righteous and God-fearing men, on the other, a community of vicious and wicked men also comes into being who carry on relentless fight against the cause of truth. This fight between the devotees of truth and the forces of darkness invariably ends in one inevitable result—the triumph of truth over falsehood. Towards its close the *Sūrah* brings home to idolaters the untenability of their position and warns them that if, in spite of the falsity and futility of their beliefs and practices, they continued to stick to them, Divine punishment will overtake them, though God is very slow in punishing and continues to grant respite to sinners till by persisting in their perverse attitude they shut upon themselves the doors of His mercy.

Chapter 36

Yā Sīn

يس

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

All scholarly opinion is agreed on this point that the *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. Its style and contents support this view. On account of the importance of its subject-matter, the Holy Prophet called it the heart of the Qur'ān. In the preceding *Sūrah* it was stated that God, being the Maker of the heavens and the earth, has made full provision not only for the physical needs of man but also for his moral and spiritual requirements. This He did by revealing Himself to His chosen servants whom He raised among every people. To the Holy Prophet whom the present *Sūrah* designates as "The Perfect Leader" or "The Leader par excellence," God revealed Himself in His completest manifestation and gave him the most perfect and infallible Book in the form of the Qur'ān.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with addressing the Holy Prophet as "The Perfect Leader," meaning that the system of Divine Messengers which began with Adam found its most perfect example in him. The Holy Prophet's path is now the only right and straight path that leads to God. All other paths that formerly led to the Supreme Being have now been closed and shall remain closed till the end of time. God will now reveal Himself to the world through the Holy Prophet's followers. In His infallible wisdom He has chosen the Arabs, among whom no Messenger had come for centuries, to preach to humanity the last Divine Message. The land of Arabia was dreary and dry. The water of Divine revelation descended upon it and it has now begun to blossom into a new and vigorous spiritual life. The *Sūrah* then proceeds to tell in metaphorical language how God had been revealing Himself to mankind through His Messengers. It tells of Moses and Jesus and of the Holy Prophet, who were raised in the fulness of time to call men to God. Then it tells of a "certain man" whom God will raise from among the followers of the Holy Prophet in a land far away from the centre of Islam (36:21) in the Latter Days, when religion would be at its lowest ebb and the very idea of Divine revelation would be doubted and denied. This Divine Reformer will call mankind to Islam. But like the Prophets of yore, his will be a voice in the wilderness. The forces of evil will hold the whole world in their firm grip. Man will worship false gods and Divine punishment will descend upon the world. Next, the *Sūrah* invites attention to a well-known law of nature, viz. that when all the earth becomes dry and parched, God sends down rain and the dead soil begins to vibrate with a new life; and herbage, vegetables and flowers and fruits of various kinds and colours grow up.

Similarly, when man's soul becomes corroded and contaminated God causes spiritual water to descend from heaven in the form of Divine revelation. The *Sūrah* then gives another simile to explain the same subject. It points to the law of the alternation of day and night. It further points to a revealed truth that God has created all things in pairs; there are pairs even in vegetables and in inorganic matter. This simile points out that all true knowledge is the result of the combination of Divine revelation and human reason. Towards its close the *Sūrah* draws attention to a great and bright future for Islam. It says that the Divine decree that a people, like the Arabs, who had remained very low in the scale of humanity for long centuries, would now rise to the height of material power and spiritual glory, is not an idle dream or poetic fancy. A Prophet of God, a Divine Messenger, has appeared among them and he will lead them to the highest pinnacle of spiritual and material grandeur and glory.

Chapter 37

Aṣ-Ṣāffāt

الصَّافَّاتُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Place of Revelation and Context

Baihaqī and Ibn Mardawaih report Ibn ‘Abbās as saying that the *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. According to Qurṭubī the consensus of scholarly opinion also regards the *Sūrah* as having been revealed very early in the Holy Prophet’s ministry at Mecca. Its style and subject matter also support this view. In the preceding *Sūrah* the Holy Prophet was called "The Perfect Leader" who was given the Qur’ān as an infallible guide for the whole of humanity till the end of time. In the beginning of the present *Sūrah* it is stated that this "Perfect Leader" will, with the help of the Qur’ān and by his own noble example, succeed in bringing into being a community of righteous men.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with a firm declaration that under the fostering care of the Holy Prophet—"The Perfect Leader"—a community of noble and righteous men will be born who not only themselves will glorify God and sing His praises—so much so that the sandy wilderness of Arabia will resound with them—but by precept and practice will prevent others from idol-worship and evil practices, till the Unity of God will become firmly established in Arabia and from there the light of Islam will spread to the ends of the earth. The *Sūrah*, then proceeds to say that whenever there appears a Prophet of God in the world, forces of darkness seek to obstruct the spread of his Message by misrepresenting and misinterpreting it, or by misquoting the Prophet and tearing a passage out of his revelation and mixing much falsehood with it. But they completely fail in their evil designs, and truth continues to make progress. It further says that when disbelievers are told that the teachings of the Qur’ān will bring about a great change in Arabia and the spiritually dead Arabs will not only receive a new life but, having received it themselves, will impart it to others, the disbelievers jeer and scoff at the idea and call it the ravings of a maniac and the phenomenon as outside the bounds of possibility like the coming into life of those who are physically dead. The *Sūrah* replies to the firm denial of the disbelievers of this phenomenon with a firmer affirmation that such a thing will certainly come to pass and they will suffer disgrace and humiliation. Next, the *Sūrah* gives a brief description of the heavenly blessings that will be bestowed upon the righteous and chosen servants of God. The account of heavenly blessings and bounties, to be bestowed on the believers is followed by an account of the punishment which will be meted out to the rejectors of truth and persecutors of God’s Prophets. Further, the *Sūrah* gives a

few illustrations from the lives of Divine Prophets to show that the cause of truth never fails and its rejection is never productive of good results. The illustrations given are from the lives of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elias, Jonas and Lot. The *Sūrah*, then, repudiates and condemns idol-worship, particularly the worship of angels. The idol-worshippers are reprimanded that they are foolish enough not to understand this simple fact that the ascription of Divine powers and attributes to weak human beings or to forces of nature or even to angels who themselves are created beings, offends against human reason, common sense and conscience. They are further told that the angels are only God's creatures who have specific duties to perform. The *Sūrah* ends on the note that it is an unalterable Divine decree that when forces of darkness are pitted against God's Prophets and His chosen servants, the latter receive Divine succour, while the votaries of Satan meet with defeat and discomfiture. This fact has been proved again and again in the lives of Divine Messengers and it leads to but one conclusion that 'all praise belongs to God, the Lord of all the worlds.'

Chapter 38

Ṣād

ص

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed in the early years of the Holy Prophet's life at Mecca. Ibn 'Abbās, as reported by Baihaqī and Ibn Mardawaih, subscribes to this view, and other scholars, too, agree with him. From its contents and subject-matter the *Sūrah* bears a very close resemblance to Aṣ-Ṣāffāt which had ended with the challenging Divine declaration: God's hosts shall be victorious and it shall be an evil day for the disbelievers when Divine punishment shall descend into their courtyard. The *Sūrah* opens with an equally emphatic declaration that it is an unalterable decree of the Truthful God that the believers shall attain wealth, power and eminence while the disbelievers shall meet with disgrace and destruction.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with a firm declaration—in fact God swears by the Qur'ān—that by acting upon its teachings and by making it a rule of their lives the believers will achieve glory and eminence and will come to occupy a most honoured place among the comity of mighty nations. It further says that the Meccan disbelievers repeat the parrot-like cry that they will not give up the worship of their gods at the behest of a man who is just one of them. In reply to this foolish plea they are told, 'Since when have they begun to arrogate to themselves the possession of the treasures of God's grace and mercy? It is God's own prerogative that He chooses whom He deems fit for the conveyance of His Will to His creatures; and that now He has chosen the Prophet Muḥammad for this purpose.' After making an emphatic prediction that the forces of evil will suffer defeat and disgrace and the votaries of the One God will be given power, wealth and distinction, the *Sūrah*, by way of introduction, gives a somewhat detailed description of the great glory and prosperity which the Israelite nation had attained in the reigns of two of their Prophet-kings—David and Solomon. It also refers to the plots that were hatched in David's glorious reign to undermine his power and influence and to the seeds of decay and disintegration that had been sown during Solomon's reign when the Israelites rolled in wealth and were at the peak of material prosperity. The Holy Prophet, by implication, is told that, consumed with jealousy at his growing power, his enemies will also hatch plots to take his life and will seek to nip the tender plant of Islam in the bud but they will fail in their wicked designs and Islam will continue to gain power and strength. But if Muslims did not take proper care they would find, to their cost, that in the very heyday of their glory,

forces of darkness would seek to undermine the solidarity and stability of Islam. After this a brief mention is made of Prophet Job who had to suffer great hardships, but the temporary phase of his tribulation quickly passed away and he came to his own and his loss was doubly made up. The reference to Job is followed by a fleeting allusion to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Prophets Ishmael, Elisha and Dhul-Kifl, and it is added that those good people who copy their example and follow in their footsteps receive God's favours which know no decrease or diminution. The *Sūrah* closes on the note that whenever men stray away from the path of rectitude, and begin to worship false gods, a Divine Messenger is raised among them to bring them back to the worship of the One True God. The sons of darkness seek to put all sorts of obstacles and impediments in his way and deceive and beguile men away from God. But truth overcomes all hindrances, and triumphs and prevails in the long run.

Chapter 39

Az-Zumar

الزُّمَرُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Like the preceding five Chapters with which it has great resemblance in style and subject-matter, this *Sūrah* was revealed early in the Holy Prophet's ministry. Some writers like Rodwell and Muir assign it to the late Meccan period. Predominance of scholarly opinion, however, is in favour of the *Sūrah* having been revealed early in the Holy Prophet's life at Mecca. The principal theme of the six Chapters, which begin with *Saba'*, is Divine revelation with special reference to the revelation of the Qur'ān and the doctrine of the Unity of God. The fact that there is one Designer and One Controller and Creator of the whole universe is inescapably inferable from the order, adaptation, proportion and coordination which pervade the whole universe and to which all the sciences bear undeniable testimony. The success of Divine Messengers with their extremely meagre resources against very heavy odds constitutes another argument to prove God's Existence and His Unity.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the subject of Qur'ānic revelation and proceeds to deal with the need, purpose and the supreme object of all revealed Books and Divine Prophets which is the establishment of Unity of God on earth. The greatest impediment that bars the way to the achievement of this great and noble object lies in the fact that man is prone to worship false gods—the idols of his own creation. Of all forms of idolatry, perhaps the most hideous and most prevalent, and which has done the greatest injury to the spiritual development of whole communities, is the belief that Jesus is son of God. The *Sūrah* cites the most beautiful and consummate design and order in the universe as an argument in support of the belief that there is only one Designing Mind behind all creation. The three stages, through which the embryo passes before it develops into a full-fledged human being, are adduced as an additional argument. After having briefly discussed the need and purpose of Divine revelation, the *Sūrah* gives two very strong and sound arguments in its support, viz. (1) those who invent lies against God, and those who reject truth, never succeed in life. Failure and ignominy dog their footsteps. (2) The Prophets of God and those who accept them and follow their lead always meet with success and their cause prospers. These two arguments constitute an infallible criterion to judge the truth of a claimant to Divine revelation. Judged by these standards, the claim of the Holy Prophet as a Divine Messenger, and of the Qur'ān as Heavenly revelation, stands unchallenged and proved beyond doubt. Next, the *Sūrah*

gives sinners a message of hope and good cheer. It tells them that God is Most Merciful and Forgiving. His mercy encompasses all things. He only requires a change of heart on the part of the sinner. Man has to work out his own destiny and the vicarious sacrifice of nobody can save him. But he is vouchsafed many opportunities to repent and reform, but if he continues to walk in evil ways deliberately, he is severely punished. Towards the close the *Sūrah* devotes quite a few verses to the description of the Day of Resurrection.

Chapter 40

Al-Mu'min

الْمُؤْمِن

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

With this *Sūrah* begins a group of Chapters all of which have the same abbreviated letters, *Hā Mīm*, affixed to them and which open with the subject of the revelation of the Qur'ān, and belong to the same period. According to Ibn 'Abbās and 'Ikrimah, all these *Sūrahs* were revealed at Mecca at a time when opposition to Islam had become persistent, organized and bitter (vv. 56 & 78) and the Holy Prophet's enemies were even seeking to kill him (v. 29). Towards the close of the last *Sūrah* the Holy Prophet was comforted with the assurance that very soon Divine judgment will issue forth between him and his enemies. The forces of darkness will be routed; idolatry will disappear from Arabia, and the whole country will reverberate with the praises of God. The present *Sūrah* opens with the most welcome declaration that the Great and Mighty God has revealed the Qur'ān in order that Divine Majesty and Holiness be established in the world and disbelief obliterated from it.

Subject-Matter

As mentioned above, the *Sūrah* opens with a firm declaration that the time has come when truth will triumph over falsehood and righteousness over evil, and the praises of God will be sung in the land where idolatry had been rampant. This great consummation will be brought about by means of the Qur'ān. The enemies of truth will strain every nerve and use their influence and powerful resources to nip the tender plant of Islam in the bud. But they will fail in their evil designs and endeavours. The Holy Prophet is told not to be deceived and overawed by the glamour of power and great material resources of disbelievers, because they are destined to come to a sad end. He is further told that his opponents are not the only and the first people to oppose truth. There have been people before who also sought to kill their Prophets and exterminate their missions. But God's punishment overtook them. So will punishment seize his opponents. The *Sūrah* then refers to the case of Moses as an illustration of the sad end to which the opponents of the Holy Prophet are bound to come. While Pharaoh rejected Moses's invitation to truth, a 'believing man' from his own household gave a most pathetic but convincing speech, exhorting his people not to seek to kill a man (Moses) whose only fault was that he said that Allāh was his Lord, and who possessed sound and solid proofs to support and establish his case. He further warned them that they should not be misled by their wealth, power and material resources, for all these were transitory things. But instead of benefiting by his sincere advice Pharaoh mocked at him. Next,

the *Sūrah* makes pointed reference to the invariable Divine law, viz. that help and succour of God are always with His Messengers and with their followers and that failure and frustration continue to dog the footsteps of disbelievers till the end of time. This Divine law operated in the time of every Prophet and it will see its fullest manifestation in the time of the Holy Prophet. The disbelievers are then told that they have no reason to reject the Holy Prophet. His advent is not a novel phenomenon. Just as day follows night in the physical world, so does spiritual awakening follow a period of moral decadence in the spiritual realm. As the world had become spiritually dead, God raised the Holy Prophet to give it a new life. The *Sūrah* closes on the note that when God has made adequate provision for the physical needs of man, He could not have ignored to make a similar provision for his spiritual needs. He has been making this provision from time immemorial. He sent His Messengers and Prophets in the world who invited men to their Lord and Creator; but out of ingratitude and folly the sons of darkness rejected the Divine Message in every age and earned God's displeasure.

Chapter 41

Ḥā-Mīm As-Sajdah

حَمِّ السَّجْدَةِ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* bears the title of Ḥā Mīm As-Sajdah. It is also known as Fuṣṣilat. Being the second of the seven Chapters of *Ḥā Mīm* group, it possesses a very close resemblance with the *Sūrah* that goes before it and those that follow it in style and subject-matter, and like them it was revealed at Mecca at a time when opposition to Islam had grown strong, determined and persistent. While towards the close of the preceding *Sūrah* the disbelievers were warned that when Divine punishment overtook them, belief and repentance would be of no avail, the present *Sūrah* opens with the statement that it is those people, who close the avenues of their hearts and persistently refuse to listen to the Qur'ān, that render themselves deserving of punishment. It further declares that the Qur'ān contains all that is necessary for the moral development of man and explains fully and completely all its tenets, teachings and principles in the most explicit, expressive and intelligible language and adduces as an argument the creation of the universe in six periods or stages to prove Divine Unity, and proceeds to say that all Prophets brought the self-same Message of Divine Unity. Even the Prophets of antiquity like Hūd and Ṣāliḥ preached the same doctrine. Next, it is stated that whenever a new Prophet comes in the world, the leaders of disbelief try to stifle the voice of Truth by raising a loud hue and cry against it and seek to confuse the minds of the people by using all sorts of guiles and subterfuges; but falsehood has never succeeded in drowning the voice of Truth. Likewise, will the efforts of opponents of the Holy Prophet fail against him. The angels of God will descend upon those who believe in him and stand by him through thick and thin, consoling and comforting them, blessing their endeavours with success and telling them that they will inherit Divine blessings in this world and will be God's guests in the next. The *Sūrah* proceeds to say that night of sin and iniquity will pass away and the sun of righteousness and God's Unity will shine upon Arabia, and a people, who for centuries had groped in the darkness of ignorance, will receive a new life, and Islam, after having taken deep roots in Arabia, will spread and expand to the farthest ends of the earth. This marvellous change will come about through the noble teaching of this wonderful Book—the Qur'ān. God alone knows how and when the seed of truth that the Holy Prophet has sown in the soil of Arabia will develop and grow into a mighty tree, but grow it must, and under its cool and comfortable shade great nations will take rest.

Chapter 42

Ash-Shūrā

الشُّورَى

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah*, like the preceding one, was revealed at Mecca about the same time; but according to Noldeke a little later. Ibn ‘Abbās, as reported by Mardawaih and Ibn Zubair, holds the view that it was revealed at Mecca when opposition to Islam was extremely severe and Muslims were in a tight corner. The preceding *Sūrah* had ended on the note that anyone who opposes and rejects Heavenly Teaching injures only his own soul and himself suffers the consequences of rejection. The present *Sūrah* opens with the declaration that the Qur’ān has been revealed by the High, Wise and Mighty God; if the Prophet’s people rejected its Message they would be so doing at their own cost.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the important subject of the Qur’ānic revelation and proceeds to say that man’s sins are many and great but God’s forgiveness is greater and His grace unbounded. His mercy demanded that the Qur’ān should have been revealed to deliver man from the bondage of sin but he is so constituted that instead of benefiting from God’s mercy he worships gods of his own creation. The Prophet, therefore, is told not to grieve over what the disbelievers do, as he is not appointed a guardian over them. His duty only is to convey the Divine Message, the rest is God’s own affair. The *Sūrah* then refers to the invariable Divine practice that whenever differences arise among the followers of various Faiths on the basic principles of religion, God raises a Prophet to remove those differences and to lead them to the right path. But the basic principles of all religions being the same, all Divine Messengers followed the same religion—total submission to God. This "religion" found its best and completest exposition in the revelation of the Qur’ān and, therefore, it received a specific name—Al-Islām. The Holy Prophet is enjoined to invite the whole of mankind to this most perfect and last Divine Teaching, and to let no persecution or persuasion stand in his way. Compliance with the Qur’ānic commandments or their defiance, the *Sūrah* continues, constitutes good or bad action. It is their deeds which determine the destiny of nations and individuals and make or mar their future. In their lives there comes a day when their actions are weighed in the balance. If their good actions outweigh their bad actions, a life of bliss and happiness awaits them. If, on the other hand, their evil deeds exceed their good deeds, then they have a life of regrets and sighs. Next, the *Sūrah* says that the Holy Prophet has worked very hard and suffered much in the cause of truth, and this from no personal motives. Being full of the milk of human kindness his

only concern and desire is that men should establish true and real relationship with God. Could such a sincere and honest well-wisher of mankind be capable of forging lies against God? Yet his people accuse him of this most heinous of sins. Why cannot they understand this simple fact that the forging of lies against God is a deadly poison which brings about the complete ruin of the forger? Instead of being ruined, however, the noble efforts of the Holy Prophet are producing excellent results and his cause is making uniform and rapid progress. The *Sūrah* then draws attention to the physical phenomenon that whenever dry earth needs water God sends down rain from the clouds. Similarly, when the spiritual earth had become dry, God had sent down heavenly rain in the form of the Qur'ān. Then after briefly referring to the fundamental principle that the affairs of the Islamic State and other matters of national importance should be transacted by mutual consultation, the *Sūrah* lays down the basis of the penal laws of Islam. According to it the real object underlying punishment is the moral reformation of the guilty person. There is no place in Islam for the monastic Christian teaching of turning the other cheek under all conditions, nor the Jewish doctrine of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Towards its close the *Sūrah* tells disbelievers that the Holy Prophet has done his duty. He is but a Warner and he has warned them. He has not been made a guardian over them. He is the Life and the Light and his is the way that leads to the realization of the object of man's creation. At the end, the *Sūrah* mentions three forms of Divine revelation.

Chapter 43

Az-Zukhruf

الزُّكْرُوفُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

According to Qurṭubī there exists complete unanimity of opinion among scholars that this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. Ibn ‘Abbās also lends his powerful support to this view. It is, however, difficult to assign an exact date to its revelation. Scholarly opinion generally is inclined to place it towards the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth year of the Call. The previous *Sūrah* had ended on the note that the revelation which descends on Heavenly Messengers and Prophets by Divine command possesses an element of mystery. It was further stated that before revelation actually descended upon the Holy Prophet, he was not conversant with its nature and significance. The present *Sūrah* opens with the affirmation that because the Qur’ān has been revealed in a most clear and eloquent language and because also it deals with all basic truths and its teaching is easily comprehensible, therefore, in spite of the element of mystery in its revelation, there is no reasonable ground for anyone to reject it. It further says that God would not stop sending fresh revelation whenever there was genuine need for it, just as Prophets of God did not cease to come because they were mocked and jeered at. The phenomenon of the advent of Divine Reformers will continue despite anything the disbelievers might say or do.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* like the three preceding Chapters opens with the declaration that the Qur’ān has been revealed by God, the Lord of all Honour and Praise, and proceeds to deal with the subject of Divine Unity—its basic theme—in a way and form different from that in which it has been dealt with in other Chapters of the *Ḥā Mīm* group. It says that God, in order to establish His Unity, has been sending, from time immemorial, His Messengers and Prophets. They preached and taught that God is One. They were rejected and opposed and persecuted. But this did not cause God to stop sending new Prophets and new revelations. Prophets continued to appear in the fulness of time, and the greatest of them came in the person of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. The *Sūrah* develops this argument and says that God has created the heavens and the earth for the service of man and has made full provision for his physical needs. When He has taken so much care to provide for his material needs and physical comforts, it is inconceivable that He should have neglected or ignored to make similar provision for his moral and spiritual requirements. It is to meet man’s moral needs that God sends a new revelation. But in their ignorance and folly disbelievers set up equals to God in various shapes and forms; and even go so

far as to shift the responsibility for their idolatrous practices to God, brazenly saying that if God had so willed, they would not have worshipped idols. The plea is against human intelligence and common sense, and no Divine Scripture supports it. The real cause of the disbelief of disbelievers lies in their pride and conceit because the Qur'ān, as they say, has not been revealed to a great man. In answer to this arrogant assumption of superiority the disbelievers receive a severe rebuke that what they call greatness carries no weight in the sight of God. Were it not that the obliteration of disparity of wealth, position and status would have rendered social order impossible and would have created chaos, God would have given to disbelievers tons of gold and silver so much so that even the staircases of their houses would have been made of gold, because these things are nothing in God's sight. As stated above the main theme of the *Sūrah* is the unsparing denunciation of idolatry. But while the Qur'ān condemns idol-worship it respects Jesus who, according to Christians, is an object of worship, as a great and noble Messenger of God, adding that he invited his people to the worship of One God, but they ignored his teachings and deified him. So the fault lay with them and not with him. The *Sūrah* ends on a brief but most clear and convincing discourse on Divine Unity.

Chapter 44

Ad-Dukhān

الدُّخَانُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

All authorities including Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Zubair agree that the *Sūrah* belongs to the Middle Meccan period. Noldeke assigns its revelation to the sixth or seventh year of the Call. In its closing verses, the preceding *Sūrah* had made a pathetic reference to the agonized outpourings of the Holy Prophet’s lacerated heart that, in spite of his best efforts his Message had failed to evoke adequate response in his people. In answer to his cries of agony, the Holy Prophet was told to overlook their faults and invoke God’s mercy on them, for, thus his prayer would draw Divine grace and would make them realize their mistake and listen to him. The present *Sūrah* opens with the declaration that the Qur’ān which fully explains the truths and realities of life has been revealed in a period of spiritual darkness to reclaim mankind from sin. The *Sūrah* is the fifth of the *Hā Mīm* group. Like the preceding Chapter it opens with the subject of revelation of the Qur’ān, though in a different form and context. It commences with the theme that whenever darkness enshrouds the face of the earth and humanity is stuck fast in the quagmire of moral turpitude, God raises a Messenger and gives him a new Message to reclaim and regenerate the world. Prophets of God had been appearing at such times of decadence, and now that the moral need of humanity was greatest and spiritual darkness was most intense and overwhelming, God has raised the greatest of His Messengers and has given him the last and most perfect Law—the Qur’ān. The advent of the Holy Prophet is not a novel phenomenon. Divine Messengers had appeared before him in the fulness of time, most prominent among them being Moses. The *Sūrah* then gives a pathetic description of the dreadful fate that overtook Pharaoh and his people. They went to their doom in disgrace and ignominy, and God chose the Israelites for the bestowal of His special favours. This is how God brings about transformation in the life of a people. It further says that human life has a great mission. It is for the fulfilment of this great mission that God raises His Messengers in the world. The *Sūrah* ends on the note that the principles and ideals of Islam have been taught in a most clear and convincing manner.

Chapter 45

Al-Jāthiyah

الْجَاثِيَةِ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Like the other Chapters of the *Hā Mīm* group, this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. But no exact date can be assigned to its revelation, though Noldeke places it immediately after 41st *Sūrah*. It opens with the statement that just as timely rain gives new life to dead earth, similarly a Divine Prophet is raised when men become morally corrupt. As men had become corrupt, so God now has raised the Holy Prophet Muḥammad to regenerate them.

Subject-Matter

Like the preceding five Chapters the present *Sūrah* also opens with the subject of the Qur'ānic revelation and Divine Unity which constitute its main themes, and adduces the creation of man and of all animal and vegetable life on earth, the coming down of timely rain from the clouds which quickens the dead earth, the marvellous creation of the universe and the complete and consummate design and order that pervade and permeate it as great Signs to establish the existence of an Unerring and All-Powerful Being behind all this, and proceeds to invite disbelievers to consider how the Wise Being, Who has made such wonderful provision for man's short and temporary life on earth, could have failed to make similar provision for his eternal life. This provision for man's spiritual sustenance has been made in the revelation that descends upon God's Messengers to lead him to the achievement of the great goal of his life. The *Sūrah* then says that God does not allow the arrangement which He has made for the moral and spiritual regeneration of man to be interfered with, and so He does not allow a forger of lies to prosper. Sooner or later the impostor comes to grief. But the Holy Prophet's mission is making uniform progress. This is proof positive of the fact that he is not a liar but a true Messenger of God. The *Sūrah* then gives one more argument to prove and substantiate the claim of the Holy Prophet, viz. that all the forces of nature are working in support and furtherance of his cause. It is, therefore, bound to succeed. Next, a brief reference is made to the Mosaic Dispensation and it is stated that the Qur'ān has been revealed because the Torah had failed to satisfy the spiritual needs of man. It also fulfils the prophecies made in the Torah about the advent of a Prophet from among the brethren of the Israelites (Deut. 18:18). The *Sūrah* further tells disbelievers that God has created man to achieve a great and noble goal; therefore, a better and fuller life which knows no end awaits him in the next world. It is only in this way that the creation of man can be justified. The *Sūrah* closes with a brief but very effective description of the Day

of Judgment. But before that day comes, the disbelievers will have to give an explanation in this very life, why they disobeyed and defied the Prophets of God. They are warned that if they did not repent and mend their ways, they will be doomed to a life of failure and frustration.

Chapter 46

Al-Aḥqāf

الْأَحْقَافُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This is the last *Sūrah* of the *Ḥā Mīm* group. Like other Chapters of this group it was revealed at Mecca towards the middle of the Holy Prophet's ministry before *Hijrah*. Noldeke places its revelation immediately after Chapter 7. The *Sūrah* seems to resemble its sister *Sūrahs* of the *Ḥā Mīm* group in tone and tenor. The preceding *Sūrah* had ended on the solemn declaration that 'God is the Mighty, the Wise.' In the present *Sūrah* the claim made in these words is sought to be justified. The *Sūrah* claims that the Qur'ān has been revealed by the Wise and Mighty God. God is Wise in the sense that the Qur'ānic teaching is based on sound and solid foundations, and is supported by reason, common sense and accumulated human experience; and He is Mighty in the sense that by living up to its ideals and principles Muslims will gain ascendancy and predominance over their opponents.

Subject-Matter

Like the preceding six Chapters this *Sūrah* opens with the subject of the Qur'ānic revelation and Divine Unity which constitutes its main theme, and gives the following arguments in refutation of idolatry: (a) Only that Being can command and demand of us that we should adore and worship Him Who, besides being our Creator and Sustainer, is Almighty and All-Powerful and can therefore compel obedience to His laws and commandments. (b) Idolatry finds no support in any revealed Scripture. (c) Human knowledge, reason and experience repel it and revolt against it. (d) A deity which cannot, and does not, answer our prayers is of no use and the so-called gods of idolaters are incapable of responding to the prayers of their votaries. The *Sūrah* next says that the Holy Prophet's claim to Prophethood is no new phenomenon. Divine Messengers have been appearing at all times and among all peoples to teach them Unity of God and their duty to their fellow-beings. It then dismisses as foolish and unfounded the plea which the disbelievers generally put forward as an excuse for rejecting the Divine Revelation, viz. 'If there had been any good in the revelation presented to us, we, being better informed and better placed in life, would have been the first to accept it.' The *Sūrah* further says that whereas disbelievers, being proud of their great material resources and social status, reject the Divine Message, others who are endowed with faith and spiritual wealth, accept it and stick to it under the severest trials and tribulations. It then refers to the fate of 'Ād, a people who had flourished in the neighbourhood of the Meccans, to show that disbelief never prospers. The Adites were so

completely destroyed that not a vestige of their great and glorious civilization remained. Towards its end the *Sūrah* sounds a note of warning to the people of the Holy Prophet that they should not be misled by their wealth and prosperity and by the present poverty and weakness of Muslims, and that if they persisted in rejecting the Divine Message, their prosperity itself would prove to be their ruin. The *Sūrah* ends with an exhortation to the Holy Prophet and his followers, calling upon them, that as brave votaries of Truth they should bear with patience and fortitude all the suffering and persecution to which they are being subjected, as the time was fast approaching, when their cause will triumph and their persecutors will stand before them in utter disgrace and humiliation, begging for forgiveness and mercy.

Chapter 47

Muḥammad

مُحَمَّدٌ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* is also known as *Qitāl* (war) because it devotes a large portion of its text to the subject of war—its causes, ethics and consequences. Baiḍāwī, Zamakhsharī, Suyūṭī and others hold that the *Sūrah* was revealed after the *Hijrah*—a large part of it having been revealed probably before the Battle of Badr, in the early days of the Holy Prophet’s life at Medina. Towards the end of the last *Sūrah* it was unambiguously and emphatically stated that opposition to the Divine Message, however powerful, organized and persistent, can never succeed and that Truth must prevail in the long run. The subject assumes a certain definiteness in this *Sūrah* and disbelievers are told that the cause of Islam will, after overcoming all difficulties and impediments, triumph.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the challenging statement that all the efforts of disbelievers to retard and arrest the progress of Islam will come to naught and the condition of the Prophet’s followers will improve day by day, and then proceeds to say that since disbelievers have drawn the sword against the Holy Prophet they shall perish by the sword. After holding out to Muslims a definite promise of success against their enemies, the *Sūrah* briefly lays down important rules of war, as, for instance, prisoners can be taken only after regular fighting in which the enemy is decisively beaten (v. 5), and that after the war is over, they are to be set free either as an act of favour, or, after taking proper ransom. Thus the *Sūrah* in a short verse, has struck most effectively at the evil practice of slavery. It is further stated that falsehood eventually must suffer defeat. This is a lesson writ large on the pages of history; and the evil fate of peoples nearer home such as ‘Ād, Thamūd, Midian and the people of Lot should open the eyes of the Meccans. Next, the *Sūrah* says a few words of comfort and good cheer to the Holy Prophet telling him that though he is being driven out of his native place, friendless and apparently helpless, to seek refuge in a distant place among alien people, yet his cause will triumph. Then it briefly mentions the aims and objects of war according to Islam and closes with an exhortation to Muslims to be prepared to spend whatever they possess for the cause they hold so dear, because not to spend when the cause requires its votaries to spend with both hands, is calculated not only to injure the common cause but also the individual himself.

Chapter 48

Al-Fath

الْفَتْحُ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

According to consensus of scholarly opinion the *Sūrah* was revealed when, after signing the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, the Holy Prophet was on his way back to Medina, in the 6th year of *Hijrah* in the month of Dhul-Qa'dah (Bukhārī). The Treaty being an epoch-making event, all incidents connected with it have been carefully preserved in Islamic history. So, complete agreement exists concerning the date and place of the revelation of this *Sūrah*. It bears the title Al-Fath (The Victory). The title is appropriate in that a seemingly diplomatic defeat eventually proved to be a master-stroke of strategy on the part of the Holy Prophet and led to the Fall of Mecca, and consequently to the conquest of the whole of Arabia. Towards the close of the preceding *Sūrah*, believers were given definite promise of victory over their opponents. The present *Sūrah* declares in clear and unequivocal terms that the promised victory is not a thing of some indefinite distant future, but is quite near. It is so near that it may be said to have actually arrived; and it will be so decisive and overwhelming that even the most sceptic person will find it hard to deny it.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with a firm declaration that the promised victory has actually arrived and that it would be clear, definite, and overwhelming. The Holy Prophet is further told that as a result of it people will join the fold of Islam in such large numbers that it would prove a formidable task for him adequately to train and educate the new converts into the tenets and principles of the Faith. He should, therefore, implore God's help in the discharge of his onerous duty, and ask for His forgiveness and mercy lest, due to human limitations, some defects should remain in its full execution. The *Sūrah* proceeds to say that because of lack of proper realization of the full import of the Treaty the believers were downcast, God would send down solace and tranquillity on them and their faith would increase, while the false satisfaction and delight of disbelievers would prove to be short-lived. The believers are further told that they should not have doubted the wisdom of the Holy Prophet's action in signing the Treaty since he was God's Messenger and all his actions were done under Divine direction and guidance. Their duty was 'to believe in him, help him, and honour him.' The *Sūrah* further says that believers earned the pleasure of God when they swore allegiance to the Holy Prophet under 'The Tree' that they would stand by him through thick and thin, even unto death. It was God's own plan that fighting did not take place at that time because in

Mecca there lived some true and sincere Muslims whom believers did not know and who would have unwittingly been killed, if fighting had taken place. Next, the Hypocrites and those, who lagged behind, receive a severe rebuke and their hypocrisy is exposed. Whenever they are invited to fight in the cause of God, the *Sūrah* says, they invent false excuses to justify their staying behind, but by their foolish subterfuges and false excuses they deceive no one but themselves. Towards its close, the *Sūrah* reverts to the subject that not only would the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah prove to be a great victory but that other victories would follow in its wake, and the neighbouring countries would fall to the victorious arms of Muslims.

Chapter 49

Al-Ḥujurāt

الْحُجُرَات

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed in the 9th year of the *Hijrah*, after the Fall of Mecca. When with the Fall of Mecca Islam had become a great political power and large masses of people had entered its fold, it was in the fitness of time that the newly initiated people should have been taught good manners and morals. The *Sūrah* teaches Muslims those good manners and morals. It also deals with some social evils which find their way into a materially-advanced and wealthy society (the Muslims had become such a society after the conquest of Arabia) and speaks of the accession to Islam of great political power and material wealth. Naturally, and quite appropriately, it embodies regulations for the settlement of international disputes. It opens with strict injunctions to Muslims to show full regard and respect to the Holy Prophet which befits his status as a great Divine Messenger. They are further enjoined not to anticipate his decisions but to give unquestioning obedience to him. They should not raise their voices above his voice; this not only constitutes bad manners but also shows lack of proper respect for the Leader which is calculated to undermine discipline in the Muslim Community. The *Sūrah*, then, warns Muslims to be on their guard against giving credence to false rumours, as such rumours are calculated to land Muslims into very awkward situations and lays down, in brief words, rules on which a League of Nations, or a United Nations Organization, can be built on sound and solid foundations. Next, it mentions some social evils which, if not guarded against and effectively checked in time, are calculated to eat into the vitals of a community and undermine its whole social structure. Of these social evils the common ones are suspicion, false accusation, spying, backbiting; and most pronounced and far-reaching in their evil consequences are conceit and pride born of a false sense of racial superiority. The Qur'ān recognizes no basis of superiority save that of piety and righteous conduct.

Chapter 50

Qāf

ق

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

All competent authorities assign the revelation of this *Sūrah* to the early Meccan period. Its tenor and contents support this view. The preceding two *Sūrahs* had dealt with the prospects of a great and glorious future for Islam, and also with the social and political problems that arise when power and wealth come to a people. The present *Sūrah*, having the abbreviated letter *Qāf* in its beginning, points to the fact that the Almighty God has the power to make the weak and disorganised Arabs into a powerful nation, and that He will certainly bring about this consummation, using the Qur'ān as the means and instrument for achieving this purpose.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* is the first of a group of seven Chapters which end with *Sūrah* Al-Wāqī'ah. Like all Meccan Chapters it lays special stress, in emphatic and prophetic language, on the Qur'ān being the revealed Word of God, on Resurrection being an undoubted reality, and particularly on the ultimate triumph of the cause of Islam. The *Sūrah* points to the phenomena of nature and to the histories of the past Prophets as guides which lead to this inevitable conclusion. It opens to deal with the all-important subject of Resurrection, and in order to prove the truth of this primal fact, uses as an argument the phenomenon that a people, who for long centuries had remained spiritually dead and defunct, will receive a new and vigorous life through the Qur'ān. The *Sūrah* further says that disbelievers cannot bring themselves to accept the fact that a Warner can appear from among them to tell them that they will be raised to life after 'they are dead and have become dust.' They are told to study the wonderful creation of the celestial firmament with the beautiful stars and planets which adorn it and which work with a regularity and punctuality that knows no deviation, and to ponder over the creation of the vast expanse of the earth which grows all sorts of fruits and foods for its dwellers. They will then realize that the Author and Architect of this great and complex universe possesses the power and wisdom to give man a new life after his physical habitat has disintegrated. The *Sūrah* then points to the purposefulness of the creation of man—God's supreme creature and His noblest handiwork—and to his discretion and complete responsibility and accountability for his actions. The *Sūrah* ends on the note that the creation of the universe and of man, its apex and acme, shows that the wise Creator could not have brought into existence this complex universe without a great purpose behind its creation. This leads to the conclusion that there must be and there is a life beyond the grave.

Chapter 51

Adh-Dhāriyāt

الذّٰرِيّٰت

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Like the preceding one this *Sūrah* was revealed early in the Holy Prophet's ministry at Mecca. Noldeke assigns its revelation to the fourth year of the Call. The preceding *Sūrah* had dealt with two resurrections—a spiritual resurrection which was to be brought about by the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Final Resurrection in the Life after death, the former resurrection having been cited as an argument in support of the latter. The *Sūrah* opens with an important prophecy that a body of highly righteous men would come into existence through the influence of the Qur'ānic teaching. Like moisture-laden clouds which give rain to vast areas of parched and burnt land and make them blossom into new life, this holy band of righteous believers, having themselves awakened to a new spiritual life, would carry the Qur'ānic Message to the ends of the earth, sweeping all opposition before their onward march. The prediction, seemingly impossible of fulfilment, would constitute, when turned into a palpable reality, an invincible argument in support of the fact of the Final Resurrection. The *Sūrah*, further, says that whenever a Divine Messenger appears in the world to tell his people that there is a life beyond the grave in which they will have to account for their deeds they laugh him to scorn, and oppose and persecute him; and cites the case of the people of Lot who were punished for their iniquities and unnatural and immoral practices. It also briefly refers to the punishment that overtook Pharaoh, 'Ād, Thamūd and the people of Noah, and towards the end draws pointed attention to the supreme object of man's creation which is that he should cultivate and demonstrate in himself Divine attributes and should discharge fully and faithfully his obligations to God and his fellow-beings.

Chapter 52

At-Tūr

التُّور

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca in the early years of the Call. Noldeke places it after Chapter 51, while according to Muir it was revealed somewhat later. In the preceding *Sūrah* attention was drawn to the great spiritual revolution, which was brought about by the Qur'ān. It was in the fitness of things and quite in accordance with the laws of nature (the *Sūrah* stated) that because men had become corrupt and had forgotten God, a new Revelation should have come. The *Sūrah* had ended on the note that like the former Prophets the Holy Prophet will meet with severe opposition, but the cause of Truth will triumph and disbelievers will be punished. The present *Sūrah* refers to the biblical prophecies about the Holy Prophet and warns disbelievers that if they persisted in their opposition Divine punishment will overtake them.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with a direct and emphatic reference to the prophecies about the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet in the Bible and states that the Bible, the Qur'ān and the Ka'bah all bear witness to the truth of Islam and the Holy Prophet, and warns disbelievers that opposition to Truth is never productive of good results. But those righteous servants of God, who accept the Divine Teaching and mould their lives in accordance with it, would receive Divine favours. Next, the *Sūrah* declares that the Holy Prophet is neither a soothsayer nor a madman nor a poet but a true Messenger of God, because the great moral and spiritual revolution brought about by him could not be the work of a madman or a poet; nor could the great Divine Book—the Qur'ān—that has been revealed to him, be the work of a forger of lies. It has been revealed by the Great Creator of the heavens and the earth. The Holy Prophet seeks no reward nor will disbelievers' plans against him succeed, because he is under God's protection. But Divine punishment, which is fast approaching, will overtake the disbelievers.

Chapter 53

An-Najm

النَّجْم

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

According to overwhelming scholarly opinion the *Sūrah* was revealed in the 5th year of the Call, shortly after the first Emigration to Abyssinia which took place in the month of Rajab of that year. In the preceding *Sūrah* the truth of the Qur'ānic revelation and that of the Divine claim of the Holy Prophet was sought to be established by a fleeting reference to biblical prophecies and natural phenomena. In this *Sūrah* the same subject has been dealt with in a very exquisite and forceful style. It is stated that the Holy Prophet is a Divine Messenger par excellence and that he has been commissioned by God as humanity's last and infallible guide and preceptor.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with citing the falling of *An-Najm* as an evidence in support of the Divine claim of the Holy Prophet. The Prophet, having been initiated into Divine mysteries, and having drunk deep at the fountain of Divine grace and knowledge and of Divine realisation, attained to the highest peak of spiritual eminence to which a human being can conceivably rise. Then he became filled to the fullest extent with the milk of human kindness, love and sympathy, and having been thus spiritually equipped, was appointed to preach Divine Unity to a world given to the worship of gods, made of wood and stone. The *Sūrah* then gives very strong, solid and sound arguments from human reason and history, and from the insignificant beginnings of man, in support of the doctrine of the Oneness of God and condemns idolatry in forceful terms. This foolish practice, it declares, is born of lack of true knowledge and rests on baseless conjecture which 'avails naught against truth.' Next, it says that idolaters should have learnt from the life-stories of Abraham, Moses and other Prophets that idolatrous beliefs and practices have always landed the idolaters into moral and spiritual ruin. It further says that every man will have to bear his own cross and to render account of his actions to God Who is the Final Goal of all. The *Sūrah* closes on a note of warning to disbelievers that if they persisted in rejecting the Divine Message, they would meet with a sad fate as did the people of Noah and 'Ād and Thamūd tribes, and that it was inevitable that falsehood will perish and nothing could avert it.

Chapter 54

Al-Qamar

القَمَر

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed about the same time as the preceding one, An-Najm, which was revealed in the 5th year of the Call. *Sūrah* An-Najm had ended on a note of warning to disbelievers that the Hour of their doom had drawn near, and the present *Sūrah* opens with the expression that the threatened Hour has almost arrived—it is at their very door. This is the fifth of the group of seven Qur'ānic Chapters which begin with *Sūrah* Qāf and end with Al-Wāqī'ah. All these Chapters were revealed very early in the Holy Prophet's ministry and deal with the basic doctrines of Islam—Existence and Unity of God, Resurrection and Revelation; and adduce laws of nature, human reason, common sense and histories of the past Prophets as arguments to prove these theses. In some of them special emphasis is laid on one kind of arguments with a fleeting reference to other kinds and vice versa. In the present Chapter the Holy Prophet's Divine claim and Resurrection have been dealt with, with special reference to the histories of the past Prophets, particularly to those of Noah, the tribes of 'Ād and Thamūd and Lot's people. Towards its end the Chapter makes a pointed reference to the fulfilment of the prophecy about the destruction and overthrow of the power of pagan Arabs about which a warning had been given in the preceding *Sūrah* (53:58).

Chapter 55

Ar-Raḥmān

الرَّحْمٰن

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Being the 6th of the special group of the *Sūrah*s, which begin with Qāf and end with Al-Wāqī‘ah, and which were revealed, more or less at the same time at Mecca, in the early years of the Call, this *Sūrah* has close resemblance with other members of the group in the subject-matter, and deals like them with the basic principles of Islam—Divine attributes, particularly with God’s Unity, with Resurrection and Revelation. In *Sūrah* Al-Qamar instances were given of the peoples of some Prophets of antiquity with whom the Arabs were quite familiar and who were punished for rejecting the Divine Message, and then the pagan Quraish were asked, would they not benefit from the sad fate of those peoples and accept the Qur’ānic Message which was so easy to understand and to follow? The present *Sūrah* also gives the reasons why the Qur’ān was revealed.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the Divine attribute—*Ar-Raḥmān*, signifying that after having created the universe, God created man, the apex and crown of all creation, and that his creation was the result of God’s *Raḥmāniyyah* (Beneficence). After man’s creation God revealed Himself to him through His Prophets and Messengers, because he could not attain the sublime object of his creation and fulfil his high destiny without being guided to his great goal by Divine revelation. Prophethood found its most complete and perfect manifestation in the person of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad to whom God gave the Qur’ān, the last and final code of Divine Laws for the guidance of the whole of humanity for all time. But God’s gifts to man did not end with his creation. He made the whole universe subservient to him. The heavens with all the celestial bodies, and the earth with all its treasures, the deep seas and high mountains, were all created for his sake. Over and above all that God endowed him with great intellectual and discretionary powers so that by sifting the right from the wrong he might follow Divine guidance and thus attain the object of his creation. But man seems to be so constituted that, instead of benefiting from the endless vistas of spiritual progress and development opened up to him by the Gracious, Beneficent and Merciful Providence, in his conceit and arrogance he ignores and defies Divine Laws and consequently brings down upon himself God’s displeasure. The disobedience and defiance of Divine Laws, the *Sūrah* hints, will assume a most heinous form in some time to come (which seems to be the present time) and man will then be visited with such destructive and annihilating Divine punishment as he had not known before. But whereas

punishment which will be meted out to the guilty and the iniquitous will be most grievous and frightful, the Divine favours which will be bestowed upon the righteous and the God-fearing in that age of Mammon-worship and hankering after pleasures of the flesh will also be beyond measure or count, and thus both Divine punishment and favours would show that whereas God is 'Swift at reckoning, He is also the Master of glory and honour.' The *Sūrah* seems to deal particularly with the time when the power and prestige of Western nations will be at their highest.

Chapter 56

Al-Wāqi‘ah

الْوَاقِعَةُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This is the last of the group of seven Chapters which begin with *Sūrah Qāf*. These seven Chapters were revealed at Mecca, more or less at the same time, in the early years of the Holy Prophet’s ministry. Naturally, therefore, they are very much similar in tone and tenor; but in no other case perhaps, is this similarity so marked as it is between this *Sūrah* and its predecessor, *Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān*. The subject in *Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān* is completed in this *Sūrah* and thus it forms a befitting sequel to *Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān*. In *Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān*, for instance, three groups of people—(a) those fortunate ones who are granted special nearness to God, (b) the general body of believers who have achieved Divine pleasure, and (c) the rejectors of Divine Messengers—were referred to only by implication. In the present *Sūrah*, however, they have been expressly mentioned. The *Sūrah* dealing particularly with the important subjects of the Resurrection, Revelation and the repudiation of idolatry, was quite appropriately revealed early at Mecca where the preaching of the Qur’ānic Message was directed exclusively to the idolatrous Quraish, who believed neither in Resurrection nor in Revelation. The seven Chapters also contain certain prophecies about the great and glorious future of Islam, side by side with direct and emphatic mention of the inevitability of the Resurrection, thus drawing attention to the inescapable conclusion that the fulfilment of those prophecies about the progress of Islam would prove that the Resurrection was also an undeniable fact.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with a firm and emphatic declaration that the great and Inevitable Event, which was foretold in the preceding *Sūrah*, will most surely come to pass, and when it came to pass it will shake the earth to its depths, and the mountains shall be shattered, causing a new world to emerge from the ashes of the old. Further, as a result of this Great Event people will become sorted out into three groups: (a) The fortunate ones who will enjoy God’s special nearness, (b) the true and righteous believers who will receive handsome rewards for their good deeds and (c) the unfortunate disbelievers who will be punished for their evil deeds. The *Sūrah* then gives a graphic description of the Divine blessings and favours in store for the first two classes, following with a description of the punishment to be meted out to the deniers of the Divine Message. Next, it advances the usual argument of the creation of man and of his development from a seminal drop into a full-fledged human being, to prove his second birth

after death. Towards its close the *Sūrah* reverts to the subject with which it had begun, and explains that the great reformation to which it refers in its opening verses will be brought about by the Qur'ān which is indubitably the revealed Word of God, and which is protected and guarded like a precious treasure. The *Sūrah* closes with a beautiful homily that when the inevitable end of all life is death, from which there is no escape, then why should people be neglectful of this hard fact and consign God to oblivion?

Chapter 57

Al-Ḥadīd

الْحَدِيدُ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This is the first of the last ten Medinite Chapters of the Qur'ān which end with Chapter 66. It seems to have been revealed after the conquest of Mecca or the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah, as is clear from the mention of *Al-Fath* (the Victory) in v. 11 which refers to the Fall of Mecca or, according to some, more appropriately to the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah. The series of the Meccan Chapters which began with Saba' and which, with the exception of the three intervening Medinite Chapters—Muḥammad, Al-Fath and Al-Ḥujurāt—had continued without interruption, ended with the preceding Chapter and had completed the subject matter of the Meccan *Sūrah*s. With the present *Sūrah*, however, begins a new series of Medinite Chapters, which end with At-Taḥrīm. In the preceding *Sūrah* it is stated that the Qur'ān is a well-preserved Book (v. 79) which among other things signifies that its teachings are in perfect harmony with natural laws and with the dictates and demands of human nature, reason and common sense. The present *Sūrah* opens with the Divine attributes: the Mighty, the Wise. And quite naturally, the Being Who is Wise and Mighty must have revealed a Book whose teachings are consistent with the laws of nature and with human reason and conscience.

Subject-Matter

In the previous seven Meccan *Sūrah*s, especially in the three immediately preceding ones—Al-Qamar, Ar-Raḥmān and Al-Wāqī'ah—it was repeatedly declared, in a forceful though metaphorical language, that a great reformation, a veritable resurrection, was about to be brought about by the Holy Prophet among a people who for long centuries had grovelled in moral dust and dirt; and who, because they had no living relations with civilized society, were looked down upon as pariahs among nations. The present *Sūrah* points out that the great day of the phenomenal progress and power of that pariah nation—the Arabs—has already dawned and that the eventual victory of truth over falsehood is in sight. But there are essential conditions to be fulfilled before that consummation takes place. There must be on the part of Muslims a firm and invincible faith in the truth of Islamic ideals and a preparedness to make necessary sacrifice of life and property for the furtherance of its cause. The believers then are told that after they have acquired power and prosperity, they should not neglect moral ideals and indulge in the pursuit of transitory material pleasures. The *Sūrah* continues the theme, namely, that from time immemorial God's Messengers have been appearing in the world to lead men to the goal of

their lives which is to win the pleasure of God, and which cannot be attained by leading a life of complete renunciation or flight from the world, as Jesus's followers mistakenly had thought and practised, but by making proper use of natural powers and faculties, bestowed by God on man and of the things He has created for his use.

Chapter 58

Al-Mujādalah

المجادلة

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* is the second of the last seven Medinite Chapters of the Qur'ān. It contains a somewhat detailed reference to the evil custom of *ihār* (calling one's wife one's mother) which was only cursorily dealt with in *Sūrah* Al-Aḥzāb which shows that this *Sūrah* was revealed before Al-Aḥzāb. But as Al-Aḥzāb was revealed between 5th and 7th year of the *Hijrah*, the present *Sūrah*, therefore, must have been revealed earlier; very likely between the 3rd and the 4th year. In the immediately preceding *Sūrah*—*Sūrah* Al-Ḥadīd—"the People of the Book" were sternly told that Divine grace was not their monopoly and that since they had repeatedly defied and opposed and persecuted God's Messengers, it would now be transferred for all time to the House of Ishmael. In the present *Sūrah* Muslims are warned that as their material prosperity would excite the enmity of their external and internal foes, they should be on their guard against their evil designs and machinations. And, it is an invariable practice of the Qur'ān that whenever it deals with the machinations of the enemies of Islam, it also makes a pointed reference to some social evils. This method was adopted in *Sūrahs*, An-Nūr and Al-Aḥzāb, and it has been adopted in the present *Sūrah* also.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with a sharp denunciation of the evil custom of *ihār* and by citing the case of Khaulah, a Muslim lady, lays down the ordinance that if anyone calls his wife "mother," he has to atone for this heinous moral lapse by either freeing a slave, if he has one, or by fasting for two successive months, and failing that by feeding sixty needy persons. The *Sūrah* then proceeds to deal with the plots and conspiracies of the internal enemies of Islam and condemns the formation of secret societies and holding secret conferences to injure its cause. Then with befitting relevance it lays down some rules of conduct about social gatherings; and towards its close it sternly warns the enemies of Islam that by their opposition to it they will incur God's wrath but will never be able to arrest or impede its progress. This warning to disbelievers is followed by an equally strong warning to believers, that under no circumstances should they make friends with the enemies of their Faith, however closely related the latter might be to them, as by opposing Islam they have waged a veritable war against God, and friendship with God's enemies is inconsistent with true faith.

Chapter 59

Al-Ḥashr

الْحٰشِر

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* is the third of the seven last Medinite Chapters of the Qur'ān. The preceding *Sūrah* had dealt with the secret plots and machinations against Islam of the Jews of Medina. The present one, however, deals with their punishment, particularly with the expulsion from Medina of the Banū Nadir, one of the three Jewish tribes—Banū Qainuqā', Banū Naḍīr and Banū Quraysh—a few months after the Battle of Uḥud in the fourth year of the *Hijrah*. The expulsion was an act of great wisdom and political foresight on the Holy Prophet's part. Because, if the Jews had been allowed to remain in Medina they would have proved, on account of their conspiracies and secret plots, a source of constant danger to Islam. Next, the *Sūrah* deals with the Hypocrites of Medina who were neither true to Muslims nor to Jews. A hypocrite is essentially a coward, and a cowardly person is never sincere or honest to anyone. The Hypocrites of Medina proved dishonest even to the Jews in the latter's hour of peril. The *Sūrah* opens with Divine glorification and ends with an exhortation to Muslims to sing the praises of the Beneficent and Merciful Lord, Who had nipped the wicked designs of their enemies in the bud and had opened out endless vistas of progress and prosperity for them. The *Sūrah* has close resemblance with *Sūrah* Al-Anfāl.

Chapter 60

Al-Mumtahinah

الْمُتَّحِنَةُ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Like the preceding three Chapters, this *Sūrah* was revealed, as its contents show, at Medina, in the 7th or 8th year of *Hijrah*, sometime during the interval between the Treaty of Ḥudaibiyah and the Fall of Mecca. The preceding *Sūrah* had dealt with the intrigues and machinations of the Hypocrites and the Jews of Medina and with the punishment which was meted out to them. The present *Sūrah* deals with the believers' social relations with disbelievers in general, and with those at war with Islam in particular. It opens with an emphatic prohibitory injunction to Muslims against having intimate friendly relations with those disbelievers who are at war with and are bent upon extirpating Islam. The injunction is so strict and comprehensive that even very near blood relations have not been exempted from it. The prohibitory injunction is followed by an implied prophecy that very soon the implacable enemies of Islam would become its devoted followers. The injunction, however, has its exception. It does not apply to those disbelievers who have good neighbourly relations with Muslims. Such disbelievers are to be treated equitably and with kindness. The *Sūrah* then lays down some important injunctions with regard to believing women who migrated to Medina, and also with regard to those women who left Medina and went over to disbelievers. In order to bring home to Muslims the seriousness of the matter, the *Sūrah* closes with repeating the injunction that Muslims are not to make friends with those people, who, by adopting an openly hostile attitude towards Islam, have incurred God's wrath.

Chapter 61

Aṣ-Ṣaff

الصَّفِّ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed at Medina, probably in the third or fourth year of the *Hijrah*, after the Battle of Uḥud, as v. 5 seems to possess an implied reference to the lack of discipline or unquestioning obedience to the Holy Prophet of which some of the Muslims were guilty in that battle. The preceding two Chapters had dealt with the subject of war against disbelievers, and with social and political problems arising out of it. The present *Sūrah* emphasizes the importance of giving unqualified and unquestioning obedience to the Leader, and of presenting, under his guidance, a solid, compact and united front to disbelievers.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the glorification of God's wisdom and might, and proceeds to admonish believers that when they glorify God and extol His Holiness with their tongues, they should give a practical proof of their profession with their actions, thus making their actions harmonize with their verbal declarations. And when they are called upon to fight in the cause of Truth, they should present a firm and solid front to disbelievers, and should give unqualified obedience to their Leader. The *Sūrah* then makes a brief reference to the misbehaviour of the followers of Moses who, by maligning and defying him, caused him much vexation and mental anguish, and, by implication, warns Muslims never to behave like them. Next, mention is made of the prophecy of Jesus about the advent of the Prophet Aḥmad, followed by a firm declaration that all the attempts of the votaries of darkness to extinguish the Light of Allāh will come to naught. The Light will continue to shine in all its glory and effulgence and Islam will prevail over all religions. But before this eventually comes to pass, the Muslims will have to 'strive with their wealth and persons in the cause of Allāh.' Only then will they deserve to be blessed with God's pleasure and material glory, 'with gardens through which streams flow.' The *Sūrah* closes with exhorting Muslims to help God's cause, as did the disciples of Jesus by undergoing all manner of sacrifice and suffering for it.

Chapter 62

Al-Jumu‘ah

الْجُمُعَة

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah* seems to have been revealed several years after *Hijrah* (see v. 4). In the preceding *Sūrah* Jesus's prophecy about the advent of the Prophet Aḥmad was mentioned. The present *Sūrah* further deals with that prophecy. Like the preceding *Sūrah* it opens with the glorification of the might and wisdom of God, and, as a proof and demonstration of these two Divine attributes, points to the appearance of the Holy Prophet among the unlettered Arabs, who from an uncivilized, uncultured and unlettered people, became, through the teaching of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's noble example, the teachers and leaders of mankind, spreading light and learning wherever they went. The *Sūrah* then refers to the same spiritual phenomenon which will take place at some later time through a great Deputy of the Holy Prophet, the Promised Messiah, and proceeds to condemn the Jewish people for their rejection of the Holy Prophet, in spite of the fact that their Scriptures abound in prophecies concerning him. Thus by implication, the *Sūrah* warns Muslims against behaving like Jews when the Great Deputy of the Holy Prophet appears among them. Towards its close, importance of the Friday Prayer is emphasized and an implied hint is made that at the time of the Second Advent of the Holy Prophet which has been likened to the Friday Prayer, there would be a mad craze for trade, commerce and worldly gains and many other diversions to amuse and turn men away from God; and Muslims are exhorted not to let these things distract their attention in the midst of their religious duties.

Chapter 63

Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn

الْمُنَافِقُونَ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This also is a Medinite *Sūrah*, having been revealed, as its subject-matter shows, sometime after the Battle of Uḥud. Whereas the preceding *Sūrah* had specifically dealt with the Jews of Medina, this *Sūrah* deals with other enemies of Islam—the Hypocrites, and exposes their evil designs, their infidelity and dishonesty, and condemns their loud professions of faith as false and treacherous. They are the real enemies of Islam, says the *Sūrah*, since they try to deceive Muslims by their oaths and their false professions of faith, using them as a screen for that purpose. They have, by their evil designs and nefarious activities, condemned themselves beyond redemption. They mistakenly think that, like themselves, the Companions of the Holy Prophet are a band of self-seekers who will leave him when their material interests so demanded. The *Sūrah* closes with the exhortation to Muslims that they should spend their wealth in the cause of God, before the time comes when Islam will no longer need their money.

Chapter 64

At-Taghābun

التَّغَابُن

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Introductory Remarks

The *Sūrah* was revealed at Medina. The previous *Sūrah* had closed on an exhortation to believers to spend liberally in the cause of Truth before the day arrived when they would have to render an account of their actions before God. In the present *Sūrah* some description is given of that awful day, which is called 'the day of losses and gains.' The believers are exhorted again with greater emphasis not to allow any consideration of ties of relationship to stand in the way of their resolve to spend their wealth in Allāh's way. The *Sūrah* further says that God had brought into existence the entire universe for man's service and had endowed him with great natural powers and faculties in order that he should achieve the object of his creation. Unfortunately, ungrateful men defy God's commandments. They are warned that they should make preparation for the day when the realization of the loss resulting from disobedience of Heavenly Messengers will be brought home to them. Towards the close of the *Sūrah* the believers are told that they can make up for remissness, if any, in the discharge of their obligations to God and their fellow beings, by giving unquestioning obedience to the commandments of God, and by spending liberally in the cause of Truth.

Chapter 65

At-Ṭalāq

الطَّلَاق

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed at Medina, sometime in the fifth or sixth year of the *Hijrah*. The immediate cause of its revelation seems to be the divorce pronounced by ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Umar against his wife during her monthly course, a procedure which the *Sūrah* is intended to prohibit (Bukhārī). In the preceding *Sūrah* a note of warning was sounded against some of the wives and children of believers, as sometimes they tend to become an impediment in the way of men wishing to make monetary sacrifice in the cause of Truth. This may possibly lead to estrangement between the husband and the wife and ultimately to divorce, or the divorce may result from incompatibility of dispositions, or from some other cause. It was, therefore, necessary to lay down the correct procedure for divorce. This may be regarded as the immediate connection of this *Sūrah* with the preceding one. But there also runs a deeper connection in the subject-matter of the Qur’ān as a whole. It is characteristic of the style of the Qur’ān that when any of its *Sūrahs* deals with a particular subject in its opening verses, then in order to emphasize its importance it briefly, but pointedly, reverts to the same subject in its closing verses. The same procedure has been adopted in the Qur’ān as regards the whole *Sūrahs*. Thus some of the social and political problems which were dealt with in detail in the opening Medinite Chapters such as Al-Baqarah, Āl-e-‘Imrān, An-Nisā’, have again been briefly treated in the last ten Medinite Chapters. The subject of divorce with which this *Sūrah* briefly deals has already been dealt with in detail in *Sūrah* Al-Baqarah.

Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* opens with the procedure to be adopted when a man intends to divorce his wife, and also with the treatment to be extended to her after the divorce has been pronounced and she is waiting for her *‘Iddah* (period of waiting) to expire. It is enjoined that during this period she should be provided with all the necessities of life, commensurate with the financial means of the husband. It is significant that four times in the course of five brief verses of the *Sūrah* believers have been exhorted to observe fear of God in their dealings. This shows that in the matter of divorce husbands are generally tempted to treat their divorced wives unjustly. Hence the repeated injunction to observe fear of God.

Chapter 66

At-Tahrīm

التَّحْرِيمِ

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

With this Chapter ends the series of Medinite *Sūrah*s which began with *Sūrah* Al-Ḥadīd. A part of it may be assigned to the 7th or 8th year of *Hijrah* and a part of it to a later period, as the incident mentioned therein shows. The preceding *Sūrah* had dealt with some aspects of *Ṭalāq*—permanent separation between husband and wife. The present *Sūrah*, however, deals with the subject of temporary separation, that is to say, with cases wherein a man, due to some disagreement or conflict in domestic affairs, temporarily gives up conjugal relations with his wife, or swears not to use a lawful thing. The *Sūrah* opens with an injunction addressed personally to the Holy Prophet not to forbid himself the use of things which God has made lawful for him. The specific incident referred to in the opening verse indicates that due to misunderstanding or disagreement that may disturb, though temporarily, domestic harmony and peace, friction might sometimes arise in the otherwise most peaceful atmosphere of even a Prophet's household. The injunction, which applies to the Holy Prophet as much as to his followers, signifies that in such a case of temporary disharmony extreme measures should not be resorted to. The Holy Prophet's wives are further warned that they should never lose sight of his very exalted position as God's Messenger and should not make demands from him which are inconsistent with it. The *Sūrah* then tells believers to take care that members of their household do not deviate from the path of rectitude lest they might land themselves into trouble. As the *Sūrah* opens with mentioning an incident concerning relationship of the Holy Prophet with his wives, it ends fittingly with a simile, comparing disbelievers to the wives of the Prophets Noah and Lot; and believers to the wife of Pharaoh, and the highly and righteous ones among them, to Mary, mother of Jesus.

Chapter 67

Al-Mulk

الْمُلْكُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

With this *Sūrah* begins a series of Chapters, extending to the end of the Qur'ān, which were revealed before *Hijrah* with the solitary exception of *Sūrah* An-Naṣr which, though belonging to the Medinite period, was actually revealed at Mecca on the occasion of the Holy Prophet's Last Pilgrimage. The whole of the Qur'ān being God's own revealed Word is simply inimitable and inapproachable in subject-matter, style and diction but the Chapters revealed at Mecca in the early years of the Prophet's Call possess a majesty and grandeur, all their own. The beauty of rhythm and the charm of cadence of the revelations of this period are beyond human power adequately to describe. As these Chapters generally deal with matters of belief and doctrine, e.g., prophecies about the great and glorious future of Islam, Existence of God and His attributes, Revelation, Resurrection and Life after death, much symbolism has necessarily been used to describe the mystical and the spiritual in terms of what we can perceive by our physical senses. This *Sūrah* belongs to the middle Meccan period—8th year of the Call being the approximate time when, according to competent authorities, it was revealed.

Subject-Matter

As stated above, the Meccan *Sūrahs* generally deal with matters of belief. The present *Sūrah* naturally opens with proclaiming the Lordship, Sovereignty and Almightyness of God, and as proof of these Divine attributes adduces the fact that God is the Creator of life and death and of the whole universe through whose component parts, from the smallest atom to the largest planet, there runs a wonderful and flawless design and arrangement. The creation of the universe and the beautiful order that pervades the cosmos are proofs positive of the fact that God is and that He has created man to serve a sublime object and to achieve a noble goal. But man, in his perversity and ingratitude has always rejected God's Message and consequently has incurred His displeasure. The *Sūrah* recounts the manifold Divine blessings and favours without which man cannot exist for a single moment and, by implication, calls upon him to make proper use of them for the realization of the purpose for which he has been created. It closes with a beautiful homily, thereby bringing home to man the supreme truth that just as no physical life can exist without water, so spiritual life, too, needs for its sustenance the heavenly water of Divine revelation.

Chapter 68

Al-Qalam

الْقَلَمِ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation, Context and Subject-Matter

This is one of the first four or five Chapters which were revealed at Mecca in the very beginning of the Call. According to some authorities it was revealed just after *Sūrah* Al-‘Alaq, which was the first Qur’ānic *Sūrah* to have been revealed, but some other authorities place it after *Sūrahs*, Al-Muzzammil and Al-Muddaththir. There is, however, no doubt about it that all these Chapters were revealed more or less in consecutive order, because there exists a strong likeness in their subject-matter. The present *Sūrah* deals principally with the Holy Prophet’s claim as a Divine Messenger. Like all the Meccan *Sūrahs* which mainly deal with matters of doctrine and belief, it deals with the truth of the Holy Prophet’s claim and gives sound and solid arguments to support it. A large part of the *Sūrah* is also devoted to a discussion of the fight of disbelievers against Truth, and to the evil end to which they ultimately come, and gives reasons why they reject Truth and strive and struggle against it and how, when their efforts appear to be on the point of bearing fruit they come to naught, and Truth, which seems to be going under, begins to prosper, prevail and predominate. Towards the close of the *Sūrah*, the Holy Prophet is enjoined to bear with patience and fortitude all the mockery, opposition and persecution to which he is subjected, because his cause is bound to succeed.

Chapter 69

Al-Ḥāqqah

الْحَاقَّةُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

General Remarks

The *Sūrah*, like the preceding one, was, as its subject-matter shows, among the earliest Chapters to be revealed at Mecca. It is almost wholly devoted to the subject of the inevitability of the Resurrection; and adduces the sure and certain success of the Holy Prophet against heavy odds as an argument in support of this hypothesis. As the Holy Prophet's ultimate success and the Resurrection were regarded by disbelievers as impossible, the coming to pass of the one did indeed, constitute an incontrovertible proof that the other will also take place. Thus the *Sūrah* opens with a firm and emphatic declaration that enemies of Truth shall be routed. It then proceeds to draw a parallel between the destruction of the deniers of the Divine Message and the Resurrection and says that for disbelievers the "hour" of punishment will be most distressful and agonizing and for the believers it will be a time of perennial joy and happiness. The *Sūrah* closes with a firm and emphatic declaration that both these events—the Resurrection and the success of the Prophet's cause, against very heavy odds and under the most unfavourable circumstances—will, most surely, come to pass, because what the Prophet says is God's own revealed Word and not the bragging of a poet, nor the idle conjectures of a soothsayer, nor a fabrication, for, if he had forged a lie against God, he would have met with certain and violent death, because a forger is never allowed to prosper.

Chapter 70

Al-Ma‘ārij

المعارج

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Introductory Remarks

The *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca about the 5th year of the Call, not later than the close of the early Meccan period. Noldeke, Muir and some other eminent authorities, assign this date to its revelation. In the preceding *Sūrah* the disbelievers were warned that *Al-Ḥāqqah* (The Great Calamity) would soon overtake them if they did not repent of their sins and accept the Divine Message. The present *Sūrah* opens with mentioning the disbelievers' demand: 'When will the threatened punishment come?' They are told that it would soon be upon them, nay, it is at their very door. But when it came, it would be so overwhelming and devastating that it would cause the mountains to fly like flakes of wool, and disbelievers would wish to part with their near and dear ones—their wives, children and brothers—as ransom for themselves. But then it will be too late. Towards its close the *Sūrah* warns disbelievers again that they consider prophecies about the glorious future of Islam as only the dream of a visionary, but the time was fast approaching when, with their eyes cast down, they will hasten to the Holy Prophet to accept Islam. Then they will realize to their shame and sorrow that what the Holy Prophet had foretold about their ultimate defeat was only too true.

Chapter 71

Nūḥ

نُوحٌ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation, Context and Subject-Matter

As the *Sūrah* records the spiritual experiences of the Prophet Noah, it has fittingly been named after him. Wherry gives 7th year of the Call as the date of its revelation, while Noldeke places it in the 5th year, but according to other authorities it was revealed in the first Meccan period, about the time when some of the immediately preceding Chapters were revealed. Towards the end of the preceding *Sūrah* it was stated that wicked people invariably reject the Divine Message; they oppose and persecute God's Messengers till the hour of punishment arrives and they meet their deserved end. The present *Sūrah* gives a brief account of the missionary activities of one of the greatest Prophets of antiquity—Noah and depicts him as pouring out the agony of his heart before his Lord and Creator in words full of extreme pathos. He preached to his people day and night, he says, and spoke to them in public and in private. He reminded them of the great favours and bounties that God had bestowed upon them. He warned them of the evil consequences of the rejection of the Divine Message. But all his preaching and warning, his sympathy with and solicitude for, their well-being only met with ridicule, opposition and abuse; and instead of following him whose heart was full of love for them, they chose to follow those false leaders who led them to destruction. When Noah's exhortation and preaching of a whole lifetime proved a voice in the wilderness, he prayed to God to destroy the enemies of Truth. The *Sūrah* closes with this prayer of Noah.

Chapter 72

Al-Jinn

الْجِنِّ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation, Context and Subject-Matter

This *Sūrah* is generally considered to have been revealed on the Holy Prophet's return from Tā'if, where, after he had almost despaired of the Meccans from whom he had received nothing but ridicule, opposition and persecution, he had gone to preach his Message. The visit to Tā'if took place two years before *Hijrah* when the opposition to the new Faith had taken an ugly turn and the condition of the Holy Prophet and his followers had become desperate in the extreme. If, as some authorities are of the view, the *Sūrah* relates to an incident other than the one mentioned in *Sūrah Al-Aḥqāf* (46:30-33), then it might have been revealed much earlier. The context and contents of the *Sūrah* seem to lend some weight to the latter view. In the preceding *Sūrah* it was stated that the lifelong preaching of Noah had met with only gibes and jeers, and that only a few persons other than his near relatives had given him their allegiance—even his son and wife taking an active part in opposition to him. In order to show that there existed a similarity between the circumstances of Noah and those of the Holy Prophet it is stated that a party of the jinn—a people not known to the Holy Prophet before—visited him, listened to the Qur'ān and at once believed in him. The *Sūrah* gives a fairly long account of the beliefs and doctrines of these people, their conduct and outlook on life, and emphatically affirms that it is impossible for anyone to distort or tamper with the revealed Word of God because, like a precious treasure, it is strongly guarded by Divine sentinels. Towards the end, it is stated that whenever a Divine Teacher calls men to God, the forces of evil try to stifle his voice, but the Teacher carries on his mission, undeterred by the machinations of evilly-disposed people. The *Sūrah* closes with an infallible criterion to test the Divine Source of the Message of a Prophet, viz. that it contains prophecies about great world events which human knowledge cannot foresee or foretell, and also that the Prophet succeeds in delivering his Message and fulfils his mission.

Chapter 73

Al-Muzzammil

الْمُزَّمِّل

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Consensus of scholarly opinion assigns the revelation of this *Sūrah* to the earliest period of the Call; some scholars consider that it was the third Chapter to be revealed. In the preceding *Sūrah* (Al-Jinn) it was stated that angels descend upon Divine Messengers to guard the Word of God revealed to them from being distorted or tampered with. In the present *Sūrah* the Holy Prophet is enjoined to devote a part of the night to Prayer and remembrance of God so that angels may descend upon him to help him against evil plots and machinations of his enemies. Like all Meccan *Sūrahs*, this *Sūrah* also deals mainly with the Divine mission of the Holy Prophet and with the truth of the Qur'ānic revelation. It foretells in brief but very forceful words the eventual triumph of the Holy Prophet and adduces the fulfilment of this prophecy as an argument in support of Life after death and Resurrection. Particular emphasis has been laid on Prayer and remembrance of God which is a most effective means to draw Divine help and succour to prepare the Prophet for the mighty task that lies ahead of him.

Chapter 74

Al-Muddaththir

الْمُدَّثِّر

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

By common consent this *Sūrah* was one of the first two or three *Sūrahs* which were revealed at Mecca. This and the preceding *Sūrah* (Al-Muzzammil) seem to be "twins" as they are so closely linked as regards the time of their revelation and their tone and tenor. The present *Sūrah*, in fact, complements the subject-matter of the preceding one. The Muzzammil of the previous *Sūrah*, immersed in devotional prayers and contemplation and passing through a period of intense preparation for the attainment of spiritual perfection, has become developed into the Muddaththir (destroyer of sin and vanquisher of the forces of evil, deliverer of mankind, their leader, guide and warner) of the present *Sūrah*. From that time onward, the Holy Prophet's life was no more his own. It was given to God. He preached the Divine Message with unswerving purpose, in the face of insult, opposition and persecution. The *Sūrah* opens with a firm command to the Holy Prophet to stand up, proclaim the Truth he has and warn those who would not accept it—those whom wealth, power and position have rendered spiritually blind and deaf—that they would suffer punishment because they did not offer Prayers and did not feed the poor and because also that they indulged in vain pursuits. The *Sūrah* ends on the note that the Qur'ān is but a reminder and an exhortation. He, who accepts its Message, accepts it for the good of his own soul and he, who rejects it, does so to his own detriment.

Chapter 75

Al-Qiyāmah

الْقِيَامَةُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation, Context and Subject-Matter

The *Sūrah* is entitled, "The Resurrection," because it almost wholly deals with the subject of Resurrection. It is decidedly one of the earliest Chapters which were revealed at Mecca, because the Meccan Chapters specifically deal with God's Unity, Resurrection and Revelation. Towards the end of the preceding *Sūrah* it was emphatically declared that those people, who will accept the Qur'anic Message, will rise to great eminence and will enjoy an honoured place among the comity of powerful nations. The present *Sūrah* opening with a discussion of the subject of Resurrection, throws a broad hint that a great moral resurrection is going to be brought about among a morally degraded and degenerate people—the Arabs—through the ennobling teachings of the Qur'ān and the purifying company and example of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. The *Sūrah* opens with a solemn affirmation that the Resurrection undoubtedly will take place, and significantly enough adduces man's spiritual resurrection as evidence in support of this affirmation. As a further proof, it swears by *Nafs Lawwāmah* (the Self-Accusing Spirit) which in action is the first stage of the process of moral regeneration of man. Then an oft-repeated objection of disbelievers is mentioned that when they are dead and reduced to dust, how will they be raised again to life? The *Sūrah* refutes this objection by saying that in their heart of hearts they know that man's sins never go unpunished and, therefore, there must be a day when they will be called to account for all their actions. Next, the collection of the Qur'ān and the Divine protection of its text are offered as further arguments in the same connection, since of all revealed Scriptures the Qur'ān has laid the greatest emphasis on the inevitability of Resurrection. Then, a brief but graphic description is given of the agony of death and man's intense desire to be spared of it. This shows that at the moment of death the fear that one will have to render an account of one's actions gnaws at one's heart. Towards its close disbelievers are admonished that man has not been created without purpose or responsibility and that he will have to account for his failure to discharge it. The disbelievers are further reminded that man's physical development from a sperm-drop into a full-fledged human being, endowed with unique powers and faculties, constitutes an irrefutable argument that his life is intended to serve a sublime purpose and that it will not end with the departure of the soul from its physical tabernacle.

Chapter 76

Ad-Dahr

الدَّهْر

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation, Context and Subject-Matter

This *Sūrah*, like the preceding one, belongs to the early Meccan period. It is also called *Al-Insān*. Towards the end of the preceding *Sūrah* it was stated that man's creation from an insignificant fluid and his development into a full-fledged human being, endowed with great natural powers, leads to the inescapable inference that his life has a Divine purpose to serve and that the Great God Who created him from a sperm-drop possesses the power to give him a new life after he is dead. The present *Sūrah* constitutes an extension of the same theme, viz. that man has been gifted with wonderful natural capabilities to rise to great spiritual heights. Its opening verses remind him of his insignificant beginning and of his having been endowed with reason and understanding, in order that, following the path shown to him by God's Prophets, he may make interminable spiritual progress and thus achieve the object for which he has been created. But when Divine Teachers appear to guide men to God, some of them reject God's Message and incur His displeasure, while others, more fortunate, respond to the Divine Call and earn Heavenly blessings. The *Sūrah*, then, gives a beautiful description of the Divine favours which are bestowed upon the righteous believers in this world and in the Hereafter, referring briefly also to the kind of punishment which the disbelievers receive here and will receive in the Hereafter for their wilful rejection of the Divine Message. It fittingly closes with the observation that God has revealed the Qur'ān, to guide man to the path which leads to the Lord and Creator of all creation, but he can derive no benefit from it unless he conforms his will to the Will of God.

Chapter 77

Al-Mursalāt

الْمُرْسَلَات

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Noldeke and Muir assign the revelation of this *Sūrah*, probably correctly, to the 4th year of the Call. Like other early Meccan Chapters, this *Sūrah* also deals with the subject of Resurrection, and as an argument in support of it, adduces the great spiritual revolution that is brought about by Divine Messengers among their peoples, especially the marvellous moral change which the Holy Prophet wrought in the lives of the degenerate and decadent Arabs. The advent of Divine Prophets has been compared in the *Sūrah* to the Day of Decision when bad men are separated from good men or, to use a beautiful metaphor, when grain becomes sifted from chaff. On that Day of Decision, the guilty are punished and the righteous receive the rewards of their good deeds. The *Sūrah* gives very apt and adequate description of the punishment—fittingly corresponding to their evil deeds—that will be meted out in the Hereafter to the defiers and violators of Divine laws, and goes on to describe the blessings and boons of Paradise which will be bestowed upon those who regulate their lives and conduct in accordance with them. In support of the doctrine of the Resurrection the *Sūrah* also alludes, quite convincingly, to the development of the sperm-drop into a properly shaped human being, equipped with great natural powers—in itself a wonder of creation. Towards the end, the *Sūrah* brings home to disbelievers the untenability of their rejection of the Qur'ānic revelation.

Chapter 78

An-Naba'

النَّبَا

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* is entitled An-Naba' because it deals with subjects of exceptional importance i.e. certainty of Resurrection, predominance of the Qur'ān over all other revealed Scriptures, and of Islam over all other Faiths. The Day of Decision, i.e. the day when this Qur'ānic claim will become an established fact, is mentioned twice in the preceding *Sūrah* and is repeated here. According to Muslim Commentators the *Sūrah* was revealed very early in the Holy Prophet's ministry at Mecca. Noldeke agrees with this Muslim scholarly opinion. It opens with enumerating the great Divine gifts bestowed upon man, and directs his attention to the implied suggestions that he has been placed upon this earth to serve a certain object and his life here is the seed-bed of an eternal future and it will be followed by a Day of Reckoning. The *Sūrah* then gives a brief but an awe-inspiring picture of that Day, and a graphic description of the heavenly blessings that await the righteous and of the terrible punishment which will be meted out to the rejectors of Truth in this life and in the next.

Chapter 79

An-Nāzi‘āt

النَّازِعَات

(Revealed before Hijrah)

General Remarks

All competent authorities, including Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Zubair agree that, like the preceding Chapter this is a very early Meccan *Sūrah*, In that *Sūrah*, the Muslims were promised power, prosperity and predominance in the world. In the present *Sūrah* light is shed on the ways and means by which they could achieve these things, as well as on the signs and marks that point towards the imminent fulfilment of that promise. The *Sūrah* opens with a description of some of the special traits of character of the Holy Prophet’s Companions and of other groups of righteous men who, by bringing into play these characteristics, achieved glory, power and victory. The *Sūrah* then points out that power will come to Muslims as a result of wars which will break the power of the enemies of Islam. The case of Pharaoh is cited to show that opposition to Truth never goes unpunished. Next, we are told that in the extremely weak condition of early Muslims, prophecies about a glorious future of Islam seemed impossible of fulfilment, but the Great God Who created the vast heavens and earth and Who placed on it rivers and mountains and highways, had the power to make the impossible possible, and also that He can give a new life to the dead in the next world. Towards the close of the *Sūrah* it is stated that when the great Event—the complete triumph of Islam or the Final Resurrection—takes place, the guilty will burn in the fire of Hell, but those, who had lived a life of righteousness, will enjoy the blessings of Paradise.

Chapter 80

‘Abasa

عَبَسَ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Context and Subject-Matter

This *Sūrah*, like the two preceding it, is among those Chapters which were revealed at Mecca in the very early years of the Call. Noldeke and Muir, besides Muslim scholars, subscribe to this view. Towards the end of the preceding Chapter, the Holy Prophet was told that his duty was confined to conveying the Divine Message to his people. The present *Sūrah* opens to deal with the incident of ‘Abdullāh ibn Umm Maktūm, and proceeds to teach the moral lesson that it is not worldly riches and social status which determine the real worth of a person, but the goodness of his heart and willingness on his part to listen to truth and accept it. It also constitutes an eloquent commentary on the Holy Prophet’s regard for the susceptibilities of the poor and oppressed people. It further says that being the last Divine Message for mankind the Qur’ān will be respected and read all over the world and will be protected and preserved. The *Sūrah* ends on a note of warning to disbelievers that if they rejected its Message and persisted in opposing the Holy Prophet, they will have to face a day of reckoning when misery, shame and ignominy will be their lot. The righteous believers, however, will reside in the ‘Gardens of Bliss,’ their faces beaming with Divine joy and happiness.

Chapter 81

At-Takwīr

التكوير

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed early at Mecca, very probably in the 6th year of the Call or even earlier. The preceding Chapters had dealt with the subject of Resurrection and the great and marvellous revolution which was brought about by the Holy Prophet among his people and which has also been called "resurrection" in the Qur'ān. This "resurrection" was to take place twice, first by the advent of the Holy Prophet himself and then by his Second Advent in the person of a great Deputy of his—the Promised Messiah and Mahdī—to which a clear reference is made in 62:4. It is this second renaissance of Islam at the hands of the Promised Messiah and the great changes which were to take place in his time which this *Sūrah* speaks of. It opens with a description of those changes and follows it up with a fleeting reference to the moral degeneration of Muslims at that time and to the causes thereof, and ends by striking a note of optimism and cheerfulness to them, holding out to them the promise that eventually the night of the degradation of Muslims will give place to the dawn of their success, because Islam, being God's last Message for the whole of mankind, has come to stay.

Chapter 82

Al-Infiṭār

الْإِنْفِطَارُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Introductory Remarks

The *Sūrah* is so similar in style and subject-matter to the one preceding it that it forms, as it were, its counterpart, but with a separate name. It is characteristic of the Qur'ān that, in view of their importance, it takes out certain parts of the text of a particular *Sūrah* and in order to draw pointed attention to the subject dealt with in the separated parts and in order also that the separated parts may be easily committed to memory, it gives them a distinct name and individuality. The *Sūrah* deals particularly with the conditions that were to prevail in the Latter Days when Christian doctrines and ways of life will have impressed very deeply the conduct and concepts of non-Christian peoples, especially the Muslims. All the prophecies mentioned in the *Sūrah* have been literally fulfilled. It was revealed at Mecca in the early years of the Call about the time of the revelation of the preceding Chapter.

Chapter 83

At-Taffif

التَّافِفِ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* opens with a severe condemnation of the use of false measures and weights to defraud people. According to scholarly opinion, it was revealed early in the Meccan period. Noldeke and Muir assign its revelation to about the fourth year of the Call. The preceding *Sūrah* had ended with a warning to disbelievers that they will have to render account of their deeds and to make up their spiritual loss themselves, the sacrifice or intercession of no one else being of any use to them on the Day of Judgment. In that *Sūrah* man's relations with his Creator were discussed. In the present *Sūrah*, however, stress has been laid on man's dealings with his fellow-beings with special reference to the cruel exploitation by powerful nations of weaker and less developed peoples after depriving them of their liberty of action. It ends on a note of stern warning to the unjust and dishonest people that they will not be allowed to go unpunished. The Day of Reckoning awaits them in all its frightfulness and severity.

Chapter 84

Al-Inshiqāq

الْإِنْشِقَاقُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Like the preceding three Chapters, the present one was revealed early at Mecca. These four Chapters very much resemble one another in style, composition and subject-matter. Noldeke and Muir agree with Muslim scholars about the early date of the revelation of this *Sūrah*. In fact, it completes the chain of *Sūrahs* of which the preceding three Chapters form the component parts. Towards the end of the last Chapter disbelievers were warned in emphatic terms that their power would break and their glory depart. In the present Chapter, however, it is stated that belief will take the place of disbelief and from the ruins of the old decadent and decrepit order a new, vigorous and vibrant order would emerge. The *Sūrah* continues the theme of *Sūrah* Al-Infīṭār, the intervening *Sūrah* At-Taṭfīf being merely its extension. *Sūrah* Al-Infīṭār had opened with the subject of the cleaving asunder of the heaven; and the present *Sūrah* begins with an analogous expression, with this difference that whereas in *Sūrah* Al-Infīṭār 'the cleaving asunder of the heaven' was connected with the false doctrines of Christianity, in the present *Sūrah* by 'the bursting asunder of the heaven' is meant the descent of Divine revelation and the emergence and spread of spiritual sciences. Thus, along with the three preceding Chapters, this *Sūrah* forms a chain of Chapters which deal with the subject of the renaissance of Islam in the Latter Days and with the sins and iniquities of the preceding period. It specifically deals with the renaissance of Islam while the preceding Chapters deal especially with Christian corruption and immorality.

Chapter 85

Al-Burūj

الْبُرُوجُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca in the first few years of the Call. Its connection with the preceding *Sūrah*, Al-Inshiqāq, is indicated by the fact that in that *Sūrah* the full moon was invoked as a witness, and in the present *Sūrah* 'mansions of stars' and 'the promised day' have been invoked to serve the same purpose. The "Burūj" or 'mansions of stars' may represent the twelve Divine Reformers (*Mujaddids*), each of whom was raised at the beginning of every century of the *Hijrah*, and the Promised Day stands for the 14th century of the *Hijrah*. The *Sūrah* seems to point to the severe persecution to which the followers of the Promised Messiah would be subjected, ending appropriately on the note that because in his time the integrity of the Qur'ān as God's revealed Word would be assailed from all quarters, particularly by Christian writers, he would devote all his energies and his great God-given powers to rebut their attacks and to prove its infallibility and inviolability.

Chapter 86

At-Ṭāriq

الطَّارِق

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Consensus of Muslim scholarly opinion assigns the *Sūrah* to the early period of the Holy Prophet's ministry. Noldeke and Muir among European scholars agree with this view. It is the last of the series of Chapters which started with *Sūrah Al-Infiṭār*. In all these Chapters the opening verse, in one form or another, furnishes an argument in support of the claim of the Reformer of the Latter Days. The intervening *Sūrah At-Taṭfīf*, which has a different opening is, in fact, a part of *Sūrah Al-Infiṭār*. The present *Sūrah* continues and completes the topics which were dealt with in *Sūrah Al-Infiṭār*, and in the following Chapters, and serves as a sort of *barzakh* between the Chapters that precede and those that follow it. From this *Sūrah*, however, begins a new subject.

Chapter 87

Al-A‘lā

الأعلى

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed very early in the Holy Prophet’s ministry at Mecca. Besides most Commentators of the Qur’ān, Muir and Noldeke hold this view; the latter (Noldeke) places its revelation after Chapter 78, while some Muslim scholars assign it the eighth place in the chronological order of revelation of the Qur’ān. The preceding *Sūrah* had ended on the note that the Qur’ān is a complete and perfect code of Divine laws, fully capable of meeting the needs and requirements of all mankind; and that at no time will it be subject to change, abrogation or interpolation. This Qur’ānic claim gives rise to the natural and inevitable question, viz. where was the need of a new Reformer to whom reference has been made in the preceding several Chapters in the presence of such a complete and perfect revelation? The present *Sūrah* answers this important question. It was further stated in *Sūrah* Aṭ-Ṭāriq that the development of man is subject to alternate periods of rise and fall. This fact again gives rise to another equally important question, viz. that after the revelation of a Law, complete in all respects, man’s progress should naturally become uniform and uninterrupted and immune against all possibility of retrogression. This being so, why was a complete *Sharī‘ah* not revealed in the beginning of the world; why was it deferred till the time of the Holy Prophet? The *Sūrah* supplies an answer to this question also. It possesses another intimate connection with the preceding Chapter. In that *Sūrah* it was stated that man is born of a fluid which issues forth from the loins of his father and gets his sustenance from the breast of his mother. This constituted a subtle hint about the gradual process of man’s physical development. We are told that like his physical development man’s spiritual development is also gradual. The Holy Prophet generally recited this and the next *Sūrah* in the Friday and ‘Īd Prayers.

Chapter 88

Al-Ghāshiyah

الْغَاشِيَةِ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah*, like the preceding one, was revealed early at Mecca. Eminent early Muslim scholars such as Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Zubair hold this view. The famous German Orientalist Noldeke places it in the fourth year of the Call. This and some of the preceding Chapters deal with the collective life of the Muslim Community in the time of the Holy Prophet and also in the Latter Days. This is why the Holy Prophet generally used to recite it in the Friday and the ‘Īd Prayers. In some previous Chapters it was stated that Islam will never prosper by the employment only of material means. When Muslims will decline and decay and the Qur’ān will, as it were, go up to Heaven, a Divine Reformer will appear who will bring it back to earth and will make its ideals and principles shine in resplendent glory. It was also stated that Islam will continue to have, in every age, sincere and devoted followers who will preach and propagate its Message, and that other unpredictable circumstances will also arise which will greatly contribute to its progress and prosperity. In the present *Sūrah*, it is stated that Muslims will have to face severe opposition and cruel persecution, and after they will have patiently stood the test, success will come to them. Though the *Sūrah* deals primarily with the vicissitudes through which Muslims have to pass in this life, it also refers, as its name shows, to the Day of Resurrection. On the Day of Reckoning whether in this or in the next life, when the scales are set up, some faces are downcast, covered with disgrace and ignominy, and some others beam with joy being pleased with the results of their labour.

Chapter 89

Al-Fajr

الفجر

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This Chapter was among the earliest *Sūrah*s which were revealed at Mecca. From historical data it appears to have been revealed sometime in the fourth year of the Call. Noldeke places it immediately after Al-Ghāshiyah, which was also revealed in the fourth year. The *Sūrah* contains a double prophecy which primarily applies to the Holy Prophet and secondarily to the Promised Messiah. In a beautiful allegory the *Sūrah* alludes to the last ten years of the Holy Prophet's life of hardship at Mecca and his Emigration to Medina, accompanied by his most faithful Companion, Abū Bakr, and to the first year of his life at Medina which was also full of strains and stresses. The *Sūrah* may also be taken as referring to the decline of Islam during the ten centuries after its first three hundred years of uniform success, and to the appearance of the Promised Messiah, as well as to the first century of trials and hardships for his mission and his followers. After this brief allegorical description of the vicissitudes and fluctuations of the fortunes of Islam in the time of the Holy Prophet and that of the Promised Messiah, the *Sūrah* mentions the case of Pharaoh as representing the opposition which the cause of Truth always encounters. Opposition to Truth (the *Sūrah* further states) springs from accumulation of power and wealth in the hands of a particular class, and the misuse of riches and authority by them brings about their decline and destruction. The *Sūrah* ends on the note that only a few fortunate people accept the Divine Message and by walking in the ways of righteousness succeed in winning God's pleasure, and consequently enjoy complete immunity from fear of failure or faltering, and after joining the company of His Elect, enter Heaven.

Chapter 90

Al-Balad

الْبَلَد

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah* is among the earliest Chapters to have been revealed at Mecca. According to Christian writers it was revealed in the first year of the Call. If not as early as that, it certainly was revealed towards the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth year. In *Sūrah* Al-Fajr it was stated that jibes, mockery and taunts, to which the Holy Prophet had been subjected in the first three years of his mission, were about to give place to determined, persistent and organized opposition and persecution, and that this persecution would continue for ten long years which allegorically were mentioned as "Ten Nights." In the *Sūrah* under comment, however, the Holy Prophet is told that it is in Mecca, his beloved native town, and by his own kith and kin, that he and his followers will be persecuted. It is further implied that centuries ago, in pursuance of Divine command, the Patriarch Abraham and his righteous son, Ishmael, had laid the foundations of this sacred town of Mecca and had prayed to God that it should become the Centre from where should emanate the light which should illumine the whole world. Both the father and the son made great sacrifices in carrying out the commands of God. Abraham's prayer was heard and the Holy Prophet appeared in the fullness of time and gave to the world the perfect Teaching in the form of the Qur'ān. The *Sūrah* further says that man chooses the easy path and refuses to attempt "the ascent" that leads to the achievement of his great goal. It ends on the note that only those, who place before them high ideals and live up to them, achieve their goal, while those, who possess no noble ideals and make no sacrifice for good causes, are condemned to a life of failure and frustration.

Chapter 91

Ash-Shams

الشَّمْسُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* admittedly belongs to the very early Meccan period. Some scholars regard it as having been revealed in the first year of the Call; others assign it to the second or the third year. The five *Sūrahs* (89-93) possess a striking similarity in the subject-matter. In all of them great stress has been laid on the development of good morals, especially those that intimately concern and affect the collective progress and prosperity of a community. Muslims have been exhorted to create an atmosphere and environment which should help to raise the standard and stature of the poor, depressed and suppressed section of their community and should enable them to take their proper share in its activities. The immediately preceding Chapter contained a hint about the supreme object for which Abraham and his son Ishmael had built the Ka‘bah. That supreme object is explained in 2:130. It is on the Prophet referred to in that verse (the Holy Prophet) and on his great moral qualities that some light is shed in the present *Sūrah*. Towards its close the *Sūrah* points out that moral greatness can be achieved by anyone who eschews evil and walks in the path of righteousness. It ends on the note that those, who choose to defy Divine laws and adopt evil ways, bring about their ruin with their own hands.

Chapter 92

Al-Lail

اللَّيْلُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Prominent Muslim scholars like Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Zubair hold the view that the *Sūrah* was revealed very early at Mecca. William Muir agrees with their opinion. The *Sūrah* possesses very close resemblance with some previous Chapters, especially with Al-Fajr and Al-Balad. In the immediately preceding *Sūrah*, Ash-Shams, it was hinted that the supreme object of the building of the Ka‘bah, which was the principal theme of *Sūrah* Al-Balad, could not have been achieved without a great Divine Messenger—the Spirit par excellence. In the present *Sūrah*, however, it is stated that when an ideal Teacher like the Holy Prophet is blessed with ideal disciples like his Companions, progress of the cause of Truth becomes doubly accelerated. It also mentions some of the prominent moral qualities that marked the Companions of the Holy Prophet. In contrast, two glaring bad qualities that lead to the undoing of a people are also mentioned.

Chapter 93

Ad-Duḥā

الضحى

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

After the first two or three Chapters had been revealed, Revelation ceased to come to the Holy Prophet for some time. The present *Sūrah* is among those Chapters which were revealed soon after Revelation had started coming again. Thus it should be deemed to have been revealed very early at Mecca. Noldeke places it after *Sūrah* Al-Balad, and Muir puts it near *Sūrah* Al-Inshirāḥ in chronological order. The *Sūrah* embodies a great prophecy that every morrow of the Holy Prophet will be better than his yesterday and this process will continue till his cause will meet with complete success. The prophecy was remarkably fulfilled by the mounting triumphs of the Holy Prophet. In subject-matter the *Sūrah* much resembles some of the previous ones. Like them it lays stress on the evils to which the Meccans were specially addicted, with this difference that whereas in this *Sūrah* the Holy Prophet and his followers have been enjoined to make proper use of their money, in the preceding *Sūrah* a contrast was instituted between the believers' and the disbelievers' treatment of the orphans and the needy. Moreover, in the preceding *Sūrah* it was briefly stated that the righteous believer spends his wealth in the way of God; in this *Sūrah* mention is made of the blessings which God bestows upon His chosen servants with particular reference to the Holy Prophet. Thus the *Sūrah* serves as a sequel to the one preceding it.

Chapter 94

Al-Inshirāḥ

الإنشراح

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Since the *Sūrah* is closely connected with the one preceding it so as to form an extension of its subject-matter, it was obviously revealed at Mecca, most probably in the second or third year of the Call. While the preceding *Sūrah* spoke of the increasing prosperity of the Holy Prophet's cause, the present *Sūrah* alludes to some distinguishing features and marks which constitute a sure guarantee of the ultimate triumph of one's mission and for that matter of the mission of every preacher of Truth: (a) First of all, he should be firmly convinced of the truth of his claim and should possess necessary means for propagating it; (b) he should be able to attract people's attention, and (c) the Divine decree should be working in his favour. In this *Sūrah* the Holy Prophet is described as being in possession of all these means in full measure. His cause is, therefore, bound to prevail.

Chapter 95

At-Tīn

التِّين

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed very early at Mecca. This is the view of Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Zubair. Noldeke places it after Chapter 85. In the preceding *Sūrah* arguments based on reason and common sense were given in support of the claim that the Holy Prophet will have a glorious future as he possesses all those qualities which are necessary for making a success of one’s mission. In the present *Sūrah* examples of some Divine Messengers have been cited to show that as the Holy Prophet’s own circumstances resembled their circumstances, so, like them, he, too, will achieve success. In Chapters 89-94 the Holy Prophet’s Emigration to Medina and his subsequent success were hinted at in one form or another—in some by implication, in others by oblique reference and in yet others in clear words. In the *Sūrah* under comment, it is implied that like the Holy Prophet the former Prophets also had to leave their homes for the sake of their missions.

Chapter 96

Al-‘Alaq

الْعَلَق

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The first five verses of the *Sūrah* are universally admitted to be the first revelation which descended upon the Holy Prophet in Cave Ḥirā' in a night in the month of Ramaḍān, 13 years before *Hijrah*. This date corresponds to 610 A.D. On that "Night of Destiny" when the Holy Prophet lay on the floor of the Cave, his mind locked in deep contemplation, these verses were revealed and the words became branded on his soul. "These verses are the first act of mercy with which God blessed His servants' (Kathīr). The connection of this *Sūrah*, with the one preceding it, consists in the fact that in that *Sūrah* it was stated that from time immemorial God had been sending His Messengers and Prophets to whom He revealed His Will. First came Adam who was followed by Noah, and after a succession of Prophets appeared Moses, the greatest of the Israelite Prophets, and last of all came the Holy Prophet. In this *Sūrah* it is stated that just as the birth of man is the result of a gradual process of development, so is his spiritual evolution. The Prophets whose examples were cited in the preceding *Sūrah* attained to different stages of spiritual development, but the Holy Prophet represents in his person the best specimen of man's complete spiritual evolution.

Chapter 97

Al-Qadr

الْقَدْر

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Some Commentators of the Qur'ān think that this *Sūrah* was revealed at Medina. This, however, is a mistaken view, being against all historical data. It is definitely a Meccan *Sūrah* and belongs to the very early years of the Call. Such eminent and respected authorities as Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Zubair and 'Ā'ishah subscribe to this view. Noldeke places it after Chapter 93, which was one of the earliest Chapters to have been revealed at Mecca. The preceding *Sūrah* had opened with the Divine command to the Holy Prophet to recite the Qur'ān and preach and proclaim its Message to the world. The present *Sūrah* deals with the high status, dignity and excellence of the Qur'ān itself which is declared in the opening verse to have been revealed in *Lailatul-Qadr*, i.e. the Night of Decree (or Dignity). This Night of Decree or Destiny has been described elsewhere in the Qur'ān, as the "Blessed Night" (44:4). The *Sūrah* has only five little verses, excluding the *Bismillāh* and yet its meaning and contents are of very deep spiritual significance.

Chapter 98

Al-Bayyinah

الْبَيِّنَات

(Revealed before Hijrah)*

Date of Revelation and Context

Scholars differ about the time of the revelation of this *Sūrah*. Ibn Mardawaih reports ‘Ā’ishah as saying that it was revealed at Mecca, while according to Ibn ‘Abbās, it was revealed in the early Medinite period. After taking all relevant facts into consideration, the majority of scholars have adhered to the view attributed to ‘Ā’ishah. The preceding several Chapters had dealt with the important subject of revelation of the Qur’ān and its incomparable beauty and excellence. The present *Sūrah* deals with the change that the Qur’ān was intended to bring about. At the very outset it states that the people of the Book and the idolaters would have continued to grope in the dark and to lead a life of sin and iniquity if the Qur’ān had not been revealed. It is the Holy Prophet who brought them out of the darkness of doubt and disbelief and led them to the path of right beliefs and righteous conduct.

* As mentioned in the above introduction to this *Sūrah* scholars differ about the time of the revelation of the *Sūrah*. The editor gives preference to the views of those who believe that the *Sūrah* was revealed before *Hijrah*. However, according to the latest scholarship, based on very conclusive evidence, the *Sūrah* was revealed after *Hijrah*. This has been amply substantiated by the late Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Bashīruddīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Second Successor of the Promised Messiah (May Allah be pleased with him), in his Urdu Commentary of the Qur’ān. [Publisher]

Chapter 99

Az-Zilzāl

الزَّلْزَال

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

There exists some difference of opinion about the time and place of the revelation of this *Sūrah*. Scholars like Mujāhid, ‘Aṭā’ and Ibn ‘Abbās are of the view that it was revealed at Mecca; some others think that it was revealed at Medina. The latter view is evidently not based on sound historical data. Whereas in the preceding *Sūrah* mention was made of the great moral revolution that was to be brought about by the Holy Prophet, in this *Sūrah* it is stated that a similar change will take place at a later date, in the time of the Great Deputy of the Holy Prophet, the Promised Messiah and Mahdī, when all human institutions will be shaken to their foundations, and new discoveries and inventions in the domain of science and knowledge will change the entire shape of things, and the ideals and ideas of men will acquire a new orientation.

Chapter 100

Al-‘Ādiyāt

الْعَادِيَات

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Jābir, ‘Ikrimah and Ibn Mas‘ūd, one of the earliest Companions of the Holy Prophet and a great authority on Qur’ānic chronology, are of the view that the *Sūrah* was revealed very early at Mecca. It takes its place in point of time next to the preceding one. In some of the foregoing Chapters conditions obtaining both in the time of the Holy Prophet and in the Latter Days were simultaneously mentioned. *Sūrah* Az-Zilzāl had dealt with the great advances that were to be made in science and knowledge, especially in the science of geology, and also with the vast changes that were to take place in the political, social and economic spheres in the Latter Days. The present *Sūrah* deals with the zeal and enthusiasm of the Companions of the Holy Prophet and with the great sacrifices they made and the battles they fought against heavy odds in the way of God. Some mystics take the *Sūrah* to refer to the constant war that the righteous believers have to wage against their evil passions and propensities, and to the heavenly light they receive as a result of the successful outcome of that fight.

Chapter 101

Al-Qāri‘ah

الْقَارِعَةُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed early at Mecca. All Commentators of the Qur’ān agree on this point. Noldeke and Muir, too, subscribe to this view. Like *Sūrah Az-Zilzāl* it primarily gives a brief but lucid description of the tremendous convulsions and catastrophic upheavals that would shake the foundations of the world in the Latter Days; the immediately preceding *Sūrah* having dealt with the great fight that the Companions of the Holy Prophet had put up against the forces of darkness. The *Sūrah* equally may apply to the Day of Judgment greater than which there could be no calamity for disbelievers.

Chapter 102

At-Takāthur

التكَاثُرُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

By common consent it is one of the earliest Chapters which were revealed at Mecca. In the preceding Chapters mention was made of the punishment that was to overtake disbelievers in the Holy Prophet's own time and in the subsequent long career of Islam, including the age of his Second Advent. The present *Sūrah* deals with the factors which engender in man an inclination to, or a liking for, disbelief and which divert his attention away from God. It deals with a very common but very deadly spiritual malady viz. vying with one another in amassing worldly goods and taking pride in their abundance. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the *Sūrah* was equal in weight and worth a thousand verses (Baihaqī & Dailamī), thus stressing its great importance.

Chapter 103

Al-'Aṣr

الْعَصْرُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

By general agreement the *Sūrah* was revealed in the early years of the Call. Western writers, besides Muslim Commentators of the Qur'ān, assign it to that period. The preceding *Sūrah* had dealt with man's strong passion for amassing wealth and worldly goods, and with its evil consequences. In the present *Sūrah* we are told that a purposeless life, having no good ideals to pursue goes waste; and that material progress and prosperity cannot save a people if they do not possess faith and do not lead clean and pure lives. This is the unfailing testimony of Time. Drunk with their great material resources and power, prestige and prosperity, disbelievers, especially the Western Christian nations, labour under the misconception that these things will never see decline or diminution. On the other hand, Muslims seem to have despaired of their future. The *Sūrah* relates particularly to the present time. It may, however, be taken to relate also to the Holy Prophet's own time, since by *Al-'Aṣr* is meant his time also.

Chapter 104

Al-Humazah

الهُمَزَة

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed very early at Mecca. It was, in fact, among the earliest *Sūrahs* to have been revealed. There is complete unanimity of opinion among the Commentators of the Qur'ān on this point, and Western Orientalists also agree with this view. In *Sūrah* At-Takāthur a warning was held out that unhealthy competition in amassing wealth and taking pride in it, is calculated to divert man's attention from God and true values of life; and in *Sūrah* Al-'Aṣr it was stated that only by adopting noble ideals and righteous conduct can man save himself from a life of "loss." In this *Sūrah* mention is made of the dreadful end of those disbelievers who, instead of spending their hoarded wealth in promoting good causes, indulge in finding fault with and in slandering good and righteous believers.

Chapter 105

Al-Fīl

الفيل

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

The *Sūrah* was revealed very early at Mecca. Its title is taken from the expression *Aṣḥābul-Fīl* (Owners of the Elephant), occurring in the 2nd verse; Abrahah's army was so called because there were one or more elephants in it. The *Sūrah* refers to the invasion of Mecca by Abrahah Ashram—the viceroy in Yemen of the Christian King of Abyssinia—who came with the intention of destroying the Ka'bah. In order to curry favour with the Negus, the King of Abyssinia, and to break the national unity of the Arabs, or, as tradition goes, to stem the apprehended tide of Arab nationalism under a great Prophet whose appearance was eagerly awaited and was expected to take place very soon, and in order also to divert the attention of the Arabs from the Ka'bah and to preach and disseminate Christianity in Arabia, Abrahah built a church at San'ā', capital of Yemen. When, however, he failed to cajole or coerce the Arabs into accepting the church at San'ā' in place of the Ka'bah as their central place of worship, he was stung with rage; and being intoxicated with great military power, he marched on Mecca with an army of 20,000 strong, in order to raze the Ka'bah to the ground. Arriving at a place, a few miles from Mecca, he sent for the leaders of the Quraish in order to negotiate with them about the fate of the Ka'bah. The Quraish deputation, led by the venerable 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib, grandfather of the Holy Prophet, met Abrahah who treated him with great honour. But to Abrahah's great surprise and contempt, 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib, instead of beseeching that the Ka'bah be spared, only requested that his two hundred camels, which Abrahah's men had seized, be restored. 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib, on being told by Abrahah that he had not expected such a paltry request from him when he had come to destroy their holy House of Worship, poured out the anguish of his heart and expressed his firm faith in the invulnerability of the Ka'bah in the words: "I am the master of the camels and the Ka'bah has a Master of its own Who will protect it" (Al-Kāmil, vol. I). Naturally, the negotiations broke down, and finding that they were too weak to offer effective resistance to Abrahah, 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib advised his compatriots to repair to the surrounding hills. Before leaving the city, 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib, holding the skirts of the Ka'bah, prayed to God in words, full of extreme pathos, of which the rendering in English is something like this: 'Just as a man protects his house and property from plunder, so do Thou, O Lord, defend Thine own House and suffer not the Cross to triumph over the Ka'bah' (Al-Kāmil & Muir). Abrahah's army had hardly moved when Divine scourge overtook them. 'A pestilential

distemper,' says Muir, 'had shown itself in the camp of Abrahah. It broke out with deadly pustules and blains which was probably an aggravated form of smallpox. In confusion and dismay his army commenced retreat. Abandoned by their guides, they perished among the valleys, and a flood swept multitudes into the sea. Scarcely anyone recovered who had once been smitten by it. And Abrahah himself, a mass of malignant and putrid sores, died miserably on his return to San'ā'. It is particularly to this incident that the *Sūrah* refers. The fact that the disease which destroyed Abrahah's army was smallpox in a virulently epidemic form is supported by the great historian Ibn Ishāq. He quotes 'Ā'ishah, the Holy Prophet's very noble and talented wife, as saying that she saw two blind beggars in Mecca and on enquiring who they were, she was told that they were the drivers of Abrahah's elephants (Manthūr).

Chapter 106

Quraish

قُرَيْشُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah*, like the preceding one, was revealed at Mecca in the early years of the Call. Though an independent *Sūrah*, complete in all respects, its subject-matter is so closely related to *Sūrah Al-Fīl* that it has been wrongly regarded by some Commentators as its component part. In *Sūrah Al-Fīl* a brief but graphic and forceful description was given of the utter annihilation of Abrahah's army (who had come to destroy the Ka'bah) by a heavenly scourge which took the form of a virulent variety of smallpox. In the present *Sūrah* God reminds the Quraish that it behoved them to worship 'the Lord of the House'—the House to serve which they were granted security from fear and hunger. In the preceding *Sūrah* mention was made of an enemy of the Ka'bah and of the Divine punishment that overtook him for his audacity to launch an attack on it. In this *Sūrah* it is stated, how in the utterly bleak and arid valley of Mecca God provided the custodians of this House with every kind of food and made them secure against fear and danger.

Chapter 107

Al-Mā‘ūn

الْمَاعُون

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah* is among those Chapters which were revealed very early at Mecca. In the preceding *Sūrah* the Quraish were told that God had granted them peace and security from danger and had provided them with all necessities of life, purely out of His special grace and mercy and not due to any effort on their part or because they deserved these favours. They were told, therefore, that as an act of gratitude they should have rendered sincere and devoted service to their Gracious Creator. Instead, they became engrossed in the pursuit of worldly affairs and took to idol-worship. In this *Sūrah* it is stated that love of the world caused nations to lose faith in the Hereafter and to consign God to oblivion. It also deals with the two basic principles of Islam whose neglect constitutes denial of Religion itself—worship of God and service of fellow human beings.

Chapter 108

Al-Kauthar

الْكَوْثَرُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

Being one of the earliest revelations the *Sūrah* constitutes a strong proof of the Qur'ān being the revealed Word of God, and also of the serial arrangement of its Chapters as having been adopted under Divine direction. For, while the *Sūrah* was revealed very early at Mecca, sometime in the first four years of the Call, it has been placed almost at the end of the Qur'ān. The order in which the Qur'ān exists today is different from the order in which it was revealed. It is, indeed, a miracle of the Qur'ān that the order in which the various Chapters were revealed was best suited to the needs of the period during which they were revealed, but they were arranged as its component parts in the order which was best suited to human needs for all time to come. The promise contained in this *Sūrah* was made at a time when the Holy Prophet was hardly known outside Mecca and his claim that he was the last Deliverer of humanity was looked upon by his compatriots as unworthy even of serious consideration. The promise was in emphatic terms. The words, 'We have bestowed upon thee, abundance of good,' show that the promised good had already been given to the Holy Prophet. It was in the fitness of things that, in order to prove the Divine origin of the Qur'ān, the *Sūrah* should have been revealed at a time when, humanly speaking, there was hardly any possibility of the fulfilment of the promise and should have been placed at its end when the promise had already been fulfilled.

The connection of the *Sūrah* with the preceding one consists in the fact that whereas in that *Sūrah* some prominent moral sins of the hypocrites were mentioned, in this *Sūrah* some corresponding virtues of the righteous believers have been referred to, viz. generosity, observance of daily Prayers, devotion to God, and willingness to make sacrifice for national causes.

Chapter 109

Al-Kāfirūn

الْكَافِرُونَ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

It is generally agreed that this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca. Ḥasan, ‘Ikrimah and Ibn Mas‘ūd are of this opinion. Noldeke places it in the beginning of the fourth year of the Call. The *Sūrah* has a deep connection with *Sūrah Al-Kauthar*. In that *Sūrah* it was stated that spiritual and material blessings will be bestowed upon the Holy Prophet such as have no parallel or precedent in human history. In this *Sūrah*, however, those disbelievers, against whom a Divine decree had gone forth that they would not accept Islam, are warned that when after having seen such manifest Signs in support of the Holy Prophet they had refused to accept him, how could they expect Muslims to give up their Faith and accept their foolish and fantastic beliefs? He is reported to have said that *Sūrah Ikhḷāṣ* 112th *Sūrah* was equal to 1/3 of the Qur’ān, and this *Sūrah* to 1/4 of it, and whosoever would frequently recite these two *Sūrahs* and give serious thought to their subject-matter would command great respect and prestige (Ibn Mardawaih), meaning that as *Sūrah Ikhḷāṣ* deals with a basic principle of Islam—Divine Unity—and as in the present *Sūrah* believers are enjoined courageously to stick to their Faith in an hostile environment and under adverse circumstances, so he, who will comprehend and realize the significance and importance of these two chapters, will necessarily command great respect.

Chapter 110

An-Naşr

النَّصْر

(Revealed at Mecca after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This is a Medinite *Sūrah* in the sense that it was revealed after *Hijrah* in the Medinite period, but is a Meccan *Sūrah* in the sense that it was revealed at Mecca on the occasion of the Last Pilgrimage, only about 70 or 80 days before the Holy Prophet's death. All relevant historical data, coupled with reliable traditions and supported by such eminent authority as 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar, one of the very early and distinguished Companions of the Holy Prophet, have assigned this date to its revelation. This was the last whole *Sūrah* to be revealed, though the last verse with which the Qur'ānic revelation came to an end was the 4th verse of *Sūrah* Al-Mā'idah. In the preceding *Sūrah*, disbelievers were plainly told that as their outlook on life, their ideals and principles, their religious practices and mode and manner of worship were quite different from those of believers, there was absolutely no possibility of a compromise between the two. They shall reap the consequences of their deeds while the Muslims will enjoy the fruits of their labour. In the present *Sūrah* believers are told that the victory promised to them has already come and people have begun to join the fold of Islam in large numbers. Therefore, they, particularly the Holy Prophet, should give thanks to his Lord, extol His praises and seek protection from Him against the shortcomings and moral weaknesses that generally find their way into a new Movement at a time when large groups of people join its fold, because, in view of the vast number of new converts and owing to lack of adequate number of experienced teachers to teach them the essentials of the new Movement, they fail to comprehend and assimilate properly its teachings and imbibe its spirit.

Chapter 111

Al-Lahab

اللَّهَب

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

There is complete unanimity of opinion among Muslim scholars and Commentators of the Qur'ān that this *Sūrah* was revealed at Mecca during the early years of the Call. Noldeke and Muir also subscribe to this view. Some scholars, however, are of the opinion that the *Sūrah* was the fifth to be revealed, the four *Sūrahs* Al-'Alaq, Al-Qalam, Al-Muzzammil and Al-Muddaththir preceding it. It seems to deal with the people having red-faces and fiery tempers; hence its title. In *Sūrah* Al-Kauthar the Holy Prophet was given a twofold promise about the great and rapid increase of his followers and about the failure of the machinations of his enemies against Islam. In the immediately preceding *Sūrah*—An-Naṣr—reference was made to the first part of the promise, the present *Sūrah* refers to its second part.

Chapter 112

Al-Ikhlāṣ

الْإِخْلَاصُ

(Revealed before Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

That this is one of the earliest Meccan Chapters is the view of Ḥasan, 'Ikrimah and above all Ibn Mas'ūd, one of the earliest Companions of the Holy Prophet. But Ibn 'Abbās, though much younger than Ibn Mas'ūd, and regarded as one of the most learned of the Companions, thinks that the *Sūrah* was revealed at Medina. In view of these conflicting opinions of the two very respected Companions of the Holy Prophet, some Commentators of the Qur'ān are inclined to think that the *Sūrah* was revealed twice, first at Mecca and then at Medina. Among Orientalists Muir places it among the earliest Meccan Chapters while Noldeke assigns it to the end of the first period—about the fourth year of the Call. In view of the importance of its subject-matter, the *Sūrah* has come to be known by several names, of which more important are: At-Tafrīd; At-Tajrīd; At-Tauḥīd; Al-Ikhlāṣ; Al-Ma'rifah; Aṣ-Ṣamad; Al-Aḥad; An-Nūr, etc. Because it deals with the basic belief of Islam—Unity of God—the *Sūrah* has the distinction of being called by the Holy Prophet as the greatest of all the Qur'ānic *Sūrahs* (Ma'āni). 'Ā'ishah is reported to have said that before going to bed the Holy Prophet used to recite this and the last two Chapters at least thrice (Dāwūd). The *Sūrah* is entitled Ikhlāṣ, because its recitation and deliberation over its subject-matter is calculated to foster in the reader a deep attachment to God. What adds to its great importance is the fact that while *Al-Fātiḥah* is considered to be the resume of the whole of the Qur'ān, the present *Sūrah*, together with the two following Chapters, repeats and rehearses the subject-matter of *Al-Fātiḥah*. It deals with the four principal transcendent Divine attributes while *Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah* deals with the four main attributes of similitude.

Chapter 113

Al-Falaq

الْفَلَق

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This and the next *Sūrah* are so closely linked together that though they are complete in themselves and independent of each other, yet the following *Sūrah* (An-Nās) may be regarded as complementary to the present *Sūrah*. The present *Sūrah* deals with one aspect of the same subject while the next *Sūrah* deals with the other. Both the *Sūrahs* together are called *Mu‘awwidhatān* meaning, 'the two that afford protection,' because both of them open with the expression, 'I seek refuge in the Lord.' There is a wide divergence of opinion among scholars regarding the time when these *Sūrahs* were revealed. Some scholars, including Ibn ‘Abbās and Qatādah, assign them to Medina, while according to Ḥasan, ‘Ikrimah, ‘Aṭā’ and Jābir, they were revealed at Mecca. Taking all relevant facts and historical data into consideration, the majority of Muslim scholars and Commentators are inclined to place them among the Meccan *Sūrahs*.

Subject-Matter

The connection of these two *Sūrahs* with *Sūrah* Al-Ikhlāṣ consists in the fact that in Al-Ikhlāṣ believers were enjoined to proclaim to the world that God is One and Unique, that He is far above anything or any person being a partner in His Divinity. In these two *Sūrahs* believers are told that they should not be afraid of any tyrant, dictator or ruler in the discharge of this sacred duty and should hold the firm belief that God is the Sole Director and Controller of the whole universe and that He has the power to protect His votaries from any harm or injury that the forces of darkness might seek to do them. Though constituting an integral part of the Qur’ān these two *Sūrahs* may be regarded as forming a sort of epilogue to it. The main body of the Qur’ān seems to end with *Sūrah* Al-Ikhlāṣ, which recapitulates, as it were, in a nutshell, the basic Qur’ānic principles; and in these two *Sūrahs* believers are enjoined to seek Divine protection against deviating from the right path and against the mischiefs and evils which might adversely affect their material well-being and spiritual development. The Holy Prophet used to recite them regularly before going to bed.

Chapter 114

An-Nās

النَّاس

(Revealed after Hijrah)

Date of Revelation and Context

This *Sūrah*, the second of the *Mu‘awwidhatān*, constitutes an extension of the subject-matter of the preceding one and is, in a way, complementary to it, in that in *Sūrah Al-Falaq* the believers were enjoined to seek protection from God against the hardships and privations of the physical life, in the present *Sūrah* protection is sought from trials and tribulations that hamper man’s spiritual development, and the protection is to be invoked not only by verbal solicitation but by deeds and actions that may draw God’s grace. This is the real significance of the commandment conveyed by the word *Qul* (say). The *Sūrah* is quite fittingly entitled *An-Nās*, since protection has been solicited from the Lord, King and God of mankind (*An-Nās*) against the mischief of whisperers from among jinn and men (*An-Nās*), who whisper evil thoughts into the hearts of men (*An-Nās*). The *Sūrah*, having been revealed at the same time as *Sūrah Al-Falaq*, constitutes, along with it, appropriate end of the *Qur’ān*.