

Here we note a reference to God's grace in Abraham's reply, which fits with the beginning. An emphasis is also placed here on the fact that only those who go far astray despair of God's grace. They go far away from the road God has laid down for people to traverse, so they do not feel His mercy, compassion and care which He bestows on all His servants. On the other hand, a person whose heart is full of faith will never despair of God's grace, no matter what hardship and difficulties he is called on to endure. Even in the thickness of darkness and the gloom of adversity, they feel that God's grace is close at hand. It will never fail to be bestowed. God has the power to initiate the causes and bring about the results, changing the present and the future.

As Abraham feels reassured he becomes eager to know the purpose they have been sent to accomplish: "[Abraham] said: 'What is your business, you [heavenly] messengers?' They replied: 'We are sent to a guilty nation, except for Lot's household, all of whom we shall save, except for his wife. We have decreed that she should remain with those who stay behind.'" (Verses 57-60) The account we have here does not refer to Abraham's argument on behalf of Lot and his people, as mentioned in *Sūrah Hūd*. Instead, it moves on quickly from the angels' information to the realization of their mission. Abraham believes that God will bestow His grace on Lot and his household, with the exception of Lot's wife. Thus the business the angels have with Abraham is accomplished, and they proceed towards completion of their mission.

### **When All Values Are of Little Value**

*And when the messengers [of God] came to the house of Lot, he said: 'You are unknown here.' They answered: 'No, but we bring you news of that over which they have been disputing. We are bringing you the certainty [of its fulfilment], for we are speaking the truth indeed. Depart with your household in the dead of night, with yourself following them in the rear. Let none of you look back, but proceed to where you are commanded.' And We made plain the case to him, that the last remnant of those [wrongdoers] will be wiped out by the morning. (Verses 61-66)*

As indicated earlier, the *sūrah* states that the angels immediately reveal their true identity to Lot and that they have come to accomplish what his people disputed about their punishment for their misdeeds. That punishment comes in fulfilment of God's warnings, confirming the fact that when angels are sent to a community, their punishment is immediate.

"He said: 'You are unknown here.'" (Verse 62) He said this in irritation, as he was fully aware of the habits of his people and expected what they would try to do with his guests. He was a stranger among his people, and they were arrogant in their

immorality. Hence he tells his guests that it is unwise of them to come to a city when the reputation of its people is well known. *"They answered: 'No, but we bring you news of that over which they have been disputing. We are bringing you the certainty [of its fulfilment], for we are speaking the truth indeed.'"* (Verses 63-64) All these assertions serve to tell us the extent of Lot's alarm and distress, as he wants to be hospitable yet also protect his guests against the designs of his people. Hence, they reassure him time after time, before giving him his instructions: *"Depart with your household in the dead of night, with yourself following them in the rear. Let none of you look back, but proceed to where you are commanded."* (Verse 65) Thus Lot was to leave the town by night, before the break of dawn. He was to walk behind those who would be saved with him to make sure that no one was left behind, and no one looked behind, like displaced people unwilling to leave their homeland.

*"And We made plain the case to him, that the last remnant of those [wrongdoers] will be wiped out by the morning."* (Verse 66) It is God, then, who has revealed to Lot this very serious piece of news, which is expressed in the Qur'ān as the last one of those people would be destroyed by the morning. Well, if the last of them is destroyed, it follows that the whole lot are destroyed, with none spared. Hence, caution must be exercised, so that no one is left behind to suffer the fate which was sure to engulf the whole city.

The *sūrah* relates this part of the story first because it is more suited to its overall theme. It now fills in the details of what happened earlier when Lot's people heard that a number of handsome young men were visiting him. To them, that was a chance not to be missed: *"The people of the city came [to Lot] rejoicing."* (Verse 67)

The way this is expressed portrays to what low and abhorrent level those people had sunk in their eagerness to fulfil their perverse, uncontrolled desires. This is shown in the fact that the townsfolk came in a group, rejoicing at the presence of young men, openly declaring their intent to rape them in broad daylight. This shameful publicity of their wicked intentions, in addition to the filthy action itself, is so abhorrent and repulsive that we cannot imagine it, but it was certainly true. An individual may harbour some perverted desire, but he conceals the fact and tries to satisfy his perversion in secret. He is ashamed if others know of it. In fact, sound human nature prefers to keep such desire private even when it is with one's legitimate wife. Some animal species do not mate in public. But those wicked and evil people declare their lust shamelessly, come seeking it in groups, and rejoice as they expect to fulfil it. This is unparalleled perversion.

On the other side we see the Prophet Lot in distress, standing up to defend his guests and his honour. He tries to awaken in his people a sense of honour and fear of God. But he knew full well that they had no fear of God, and that such perverted natures would not respond to any compassionate, humanitarian appeal. Yet in his

distress he tries every avenue: *"Said he: 'These are my guests: so do not put me to shame. Fear God and do not bring disgrace on me.'"* (Verses 68-69) But his appeal awakens no feeling of honour or integrity. They had lost all such feelings. Instead, they rebuke Lot for entertaining any man as a guest, as if he is the offender by offering them the temptation: *"They replied: 'Have we not forbidden you to entertain any people?'"* (Verse 70)

Lot continues with his attempts, pointing out the proper line of desire, i.e. the other sex. It is women who hold natural attraction for men to satisfy their sexual urge, so that procreation continues and human life is preserved. *"He said: 'Here are these daughters of mine [to marry], if you must do [what you intend to do].'"* (Verse 71)

Lot, a prophet, does not offer his daughters in any adulterous relationship. He simply reminds the menfolk of the natural way to satisfy their urge. He knew that if they responded to his appeal they would not want to be adulterous. Hence, his offer sought recourse to their human nature, if only it would respond. But that was unlikely.

The *sūrah* portrays the scene with all the action taking place. At this moment, the mode of expression changes into an address to the Prophet who is observing it all. This takes the form of an oath, following the traditional method of Arabic emphasis: *"By your life, they were reeling in their drunkenness."* (Verse 72) This describes a state that had become part of their nature. In that state they were unlikely ever to wake up or listen to appeals based on personal integrity, fear of God or uncorrupted human nature. Hence they were doomed and God's punishment was to engulf them without delay: *"We never send down angels except in accordance with the truth. And then, [the unbelievers] would be given no further respite."* (Verse 8)

Now we face a scene of total destruction, two towns in complete ruin with particular features that are suited to the perverted natures of their dwellers: *"By your life, they were reeling in their drunkenness, when the blast [of punishment] overtook them at sunrise, and We turned those [towns] upside down, and rained on them stones of clay."* (Verses 72-74)

### **The Fate of Erring Communities**

The towns were ruined by a natural phenomenon which seems similar to that of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, which are sometimes accompanied by earth subsidence and a showering of stones. Sometimes complete villages and towns are so immersed. It is said that the Dead Sea was formed after this event, which witnessed the sinking of Sodom and Gomorrah, when the surface of the earth collapsed forming a lake that was later filled with water. We will not try to explain their particular punishment as an earthquake or a volcano, for our approach is based

instead on complete faith that does not admit such explanations.

We know for certain that all natural phenomena operate in accordance with a law that God has laid down for the universe. But no phenomenon or event occurs on the basis of inevitability. It occurs in fulfilment of God's will, which applies particularly to that situation. There is no conflict between the operation of God's law and the need for an act of God's will for every event. We also know for certain that in some cases God, in His wisdom, accomplishes a particular will of His through a certain event, in order to serve a certain purpose. What destroyed Lot's townships need not be an ordinary earthquake or volcano. God might have willed to inflict on them whatever scourge He might have chosen, at the time of His choice and by the method He determined. That is the approach to explain, on the basis of faith, all miraculous events that took place at the times of all prophets.

Those towns were on a road regularly traversed between Arabia and Syria. They contain good lessons for those who wish to learn from the end that befell earlier communities which defied and rejected God's messengers. But such lessons are of benefit only to those who are prepared to learn from them: *"Surely in this there are messages for those who read the signs. Those [towns] stood on a road that is trodden still. In all this there is a sign for true believers."* (Verses 75-77) Thus the warning came true. The sending of the angels was a signal for God's punishment which no one can prevent or avoid.

The same applied to the communities of the Prophets Shu`ayb and Ṣāliḥ: *"The dwellers of the wooded dales [of Madyan] were also wrongdoers, and so We punished them. Both these [communities] lived by an open highway, plain to see."* (Verses 78-79) The Qur'ān gives detailed accounts of the history of the Prophet Shu`ayb and his people in other *sūrah*s. Here we have only a reference to the injustice they were keen to perpetrate, and to their punishment. This comes as confirmation of God's punishment. As indicated at the beginning of the *sūrah*, when the time appointed for any community lapses, their punishment is inevitable if they persist in their rejection of God's messages. The city of Madyan and the wooded dales inhabited by Shu`ayb's people were not far from Lot's townships. The reference in the dual form, 'both', here may mean Madyan and the wooded lands, which were on a clearly marked road. Or it may mean the townships of Lot already mentioned and Shu`ayb's city of Madyan. They may be grouped together as they lie on the same road between Hijaz in today's Saudi Arabia and Syria. The doom that befalls cities and townships flourishing along a well traversed road provides a great reminder as it becomes a lesson to all that pass by. Life continues all around these towns which once flourished, but now lie in ruin.

The people of al-Ḥijr are the community to whom the Prophet Ṣāliḥ was sent. Their land lies in between Hijaz and Syria. Its ruins are still seen today, because they used to build their dwellings in the mountains, cutting space for themselves there.

This indicates a high level of progress and civilization, as well as recognized power: *"Likewise, the people of al-Ĥijr also denied [God's] messengers."* The fact is that those people only rejected the message of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ, but he was certainly a representative of all God's messengers. When they denied him, they belied all messengers.

*"We have given them Our signs, but they turned their backs on them."* (Verse 81)

Ṣāliḥ's special miraculous sign was the she-camel who had an equal share of water to drink as the whole town with all its cattle. But the signs available in the universe are numerous, and so are God's signs within ourselves. All of these are there for people to look upon and contemplate. God did not only give them the preternatural sign which Ṣāliḥ brought them, but instead they turned away from all God's signs. No reasonable person was ready to contemplate them and reflect on the message they carried.

*"Out of the mountains did they hew their dwellings, leading a life of security. But the blast [of punishment] overtook them at early morning. Of no avail to them was all that they had acquired."* (Verses 82-84) What we have here is a very quick move from the secure dwellings carved out in the mountains, to a blast that overwhelms them all, leaving nothing of what they earned, acquired or built. They are destroyed suddenly. This scene touches our hearts violently. No people feel more secure than those who hew their dwellings out of mountainous rocks. No community feels more at ease than early in the morning as the sun rises and sends its warming rays. But the people of Ṣāliḥ are overwhelmed by a blast at that very tranquil moment in their very secure dwellings. They lost everything. Nothing could protect them, for no fortress is immune from God's punishment. The blast, which was the sound of storms, or a thunderbolt, destroys them all.

Thus the scenes of punishment portrayed in very quick flashes come to an end. They show us how God's law is fulfilled, and how the people who reject God's messages are destroyed when their time is over. The end of this passage is seen to be in perfect harmony with the ending of the previous three passages. They all emphasize that God's law always operates, and His promises and warnings always come true.

5

## Keeping to the Path of Truth

*It was only with the truth that We have created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. The appointed Hour will certainly come. Hence overlook their faults in fair forbearance. (85)*

*Your Lord is the All-Knowing Creator. (86)*

*We have given you seven oft-repeated verses and this sublime Qur'an. (87)*

*Do not turn your eyes longingly to the good things We have granted to some among them, and do not grieve on their account, but spread the wings of your tenderness over the believers, (88)*

*and say: 'I am indeed the plain warner.' (89)*

*Just as We have bestowed from on high on those who later broke it into parts, (90)*

*and declare the Qur'an to be a confused medley. (91)*

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا  
بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَأَتِيَةٌ  
فَأَصْفَحْ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ ﴿٨٥﴾

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٨٦﴾

وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي  
وَالْقُرْءَانَ الْعَظِيمَ ﴿٨٧﴾

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ  
أَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاخْفِضْ  
جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾

وَقُلْ إِنِّي - أَنَا النَّذِيرُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٨٩﴾

كَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الْمُقْتَسِمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

الَّذِينَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْءَانَ عِضِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

*But, by your Lord, We will call them all to account (92)*

*for whatever they have done. (93)*

*Therefore, proclaim what you are bidden and turn away from those who associate partners with God. (94)*

*We shall suffice you against all who deride [this message] — all (95)*

*who claim that there are other deities beside God. They shall certainly come to know. (96)*

*We know that you are distressed by what they say. (97)*

*But extol your Lord's limitless glory and praise Him, and be among those who prostrate themselves before Him, (98)*

*and worship your Lord till the certainty [of death] comes to you. (99)*

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَسَعَلَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

فَأَصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ  
الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾

إِنَّا كَفَيْنَاكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾

الَّذِينَ تَجْعَلُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ  
فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا  
يَقُولُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُن مِّنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

وَأَعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ﴿٩٩﴾

## Overview

The general laws which govern life and the universe, communities and messages, right guidance and error, destiny, reckoning and reward are laws that never fail. Every passage in the *sūrah* ended with the confirmation of one of these laws or describing some aspects of it as it pertained to different situations. These laws testify to the inherent wisdom in every type of God's creation, and to the essential truth on which all creation is based.

Now in this final passage of the *sūrah* we have a statement outlining the great truth which is manifested in the creation of the heavens and the earth and all that is

in between them, and the nature of the Hour which is certain to come. It is also manifested in the nature of the message preached by God's messengers and brought to its complete fulfilment in the message given to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). These are all grouped together within the framework of the great truth which manifests itself in them all. This great truth, which is essential to all creation, originates with God, the Creator of the universe: *"Your Lord is the All-Knowing Creator."* (Verse 86)

Hence the truth will establish itself, and the message that is derived from the great truth will continue along its way, and the advocate of the truth should continue his efforts, ignoring the idolaters who ridicule his message: *"Proclaim what you are bidden and turn away from those who associate partners with God."* (Verse 94) God's laws will continue to operate without fail, relying on the great truth which originates with the All-Knowing Creator. This provides the grand finale of the *sūrah*.

### **Seven Verses of Special Standing**

*"It was only with the truth that We have created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. The appointed Hour will certainly come. Hence overlook their faults in fair forbearance. Your Lord is the All-Knowing Creator."* (Verses 8 5-86) The comment stating the truth which sustains the heavens and the earth, and which was the basis of their creation has great significance. It is given in a remarkable expression. Let us look at what this verse implies: *"It was only with the truth that We have created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them."* (Verse 85) It implies that the truth is central to the design, structure and management of the universe, central to its destiny and the destiny of all that it contains.

This means that the universe has not been created as an act of idle play, nor has there been in its design and origin any element of deception, fraud or falsehood. Whatever evil there is in it, is incidental, and not an essential ingredient. Moreover, the truth is genuine in its constitution. That it is made of the constituent elements making it up is true. There is no trickery or deception. The laws that govern these elements and bring them together are also part of the truth which is firm, constant, unchanging. It is immune to any vain desire, defect or conflict. The truth is also deep in the management of the universe. It is on the basis of the truth that its affairs are conducted, according to those laws that follow the truth and justice. Besides, the truth determines its destiny. Every result occurs in accordance with its just and constant laws. Any change in the heavens and the earth is accomplished in accordance with the truth and for the truth. Every reward is based on absolute truth, without favouritism.

This provides a link between the truth which is the basis of the creation of the

heavens and the earth and the Last Hour which is most certain to come at its appointed time. This Last Hour is a part of the truth which sustains the universe. This means that the Hour itself is true and it will come to establish the truth.

*"Hence overlook their faults in fair forbearance."* (Verse 85) Do not allow grudges and ill-feelings to remain in your heart. The truth will certainly triumph. *"Your Lord is the All-Knowing Creator."* (Verse 86) He knows who and what He has created. In fact all creation is originated by Him, which, by necessity means that the truth is of its essence, and that everything in it will return to the truth from which it originated. That truth is essential in all creation. Whatever differs with it is false and incidental. Hence it will disappear, leaving the great solid truth well established in the conscience of the whole universe.

Closely linked to this great truth is the message preached by the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), and the Qur'ān revealed to him: *"We have given you seven oft-repeated verses and this sublime Qur'ān."* (Verse 87) The Arabic term, *mathānī*, translated here as 'the oft-repeated verses' refers to the opening *sūrah*, al-Fātiḥah, composed of seven short verses. This is the more probable meaning of the term, although some commentators maintain that it refers to the seven longest *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān. These seven verses are often repeated as they are required to be read in every prayer, and they extol God's praises, which is a term derived from the same root as *mathānī*. The term, 'this sublime Qur'ān', refers to the rest of the Qur'ānic revelations.

What is important to note here is that this statement comes immediately after mentioning the creation of the heavens and the earth on the basis of the truth and the certainty of the Last Hour. This suggests a very close link between the Qur'ān and the truth that forms the basis of the existence of the universe and the coming of the Last Hour. Indeed the Qur'ān is part of that truth, as it refers to the laws of creation, draws people's attention to them, points out the signs God has placed in their own creation and in the expanse of the universe, and urges people to recognize and respond to these. Furthermore, it points out the reasons which make people follow right guidance or go astray, the destiny of the truth and falsehood, good and evil. It then belongs to the truth and helps to illuminate it. It is as well established as the truth that forms the basis for the creation of the heavens and the earth. It is also as constant as the laws of existence and is linked to them. The Qur'ān is by no means a fleeting incidence or something that is certain to disappear. It remains influential in the direction and conduct of human life, whatever liars may say, and long as the followers of falsehood may deride it. Indeed falsehood is the incidental element that is certain to disappear.

The man who has been given these oft-repeated verses and the sublime Qur'ān which is derived from, and linked to, the great truth will not allow his eyes to hanker

after some pleasures of this life that are certain to come to an end. Nor will he worry about the destiny of stray people or care about what happens to them. He continues to follow the way of truth: *"Do not turn your eyes longingly to the good things We have granted to some among them, and do not grieve on their account, but spread the wings of your tenderness over the believers, and say: "I am indeed the plain warner."* (Verses 88-89)

*"Do not turn your eyes longingly to the good things..."* Literally, the instruction given to the Prophet is that he must not stretch his eyes towards such enjoyments. Yet it is not the eye that is stretched, but rather the eyesight. However, the picturesque style of the Qur'ān depicts the eye itself as being stretched. It is a funny picture when we imagine it. What it means is that the Prophet should not care about the pleasures that God has allowed some people, men and women, to enjoy as part of the test they have to go through. He should not even give them much importance, or care what they do, or wish for something similar to what they enjoy. All this is of little consequence. He has the everlasting truth in those seven oft-repeated verses and the sublime Qur'ān.

### **When the Prophet is in Distress**

This remark is sufficient to contrast the great truth and favours God's Messenger has with the little enjoyment that glitters despite its being of little consequence. This is followed by a directive to the Prophet to ignore those lost in their worldly enjoyments and to care only for the believers. For these are the ones who follow the truth which he preaches, the truth which sustains the heavens and the earth and all that is in between. The other group follow falsehood which is incidental in the universe, not part of its design.

*"And do not grieve on their account."* (Verse 88) You must not trouble yourself over their miserable fate which is dictated by God's justice and by the great truth. You should leave them to face the truth. On the other hand, the Prophet is told to show kindness to the believers. The Qur'ān expresses this sentence in a figurative way, telling the Prophet to *"spread the wings of your tenderness over the believers."* (Verse 88) This is an image denoting gentle treatment and good care of the believers. The Prophet is also instructed to say: *"I am indeed the plain warner."* This is the essential method of advocating the divine message. The warning is mentioned here on its own without adding the rejoinder of giving good and happy news. The warning is more suited here as the context mentions those who deride the truth, indulge in their worldly enjoyments and never contemplate the truth which is the basis of both the divine message and the existence of the universe.

*"And say: 'I am indeed the plain warner.'" (Verse 89)* This is the word every messenger has said to his people, including those who remain from old communities

to whom messengers were sent with a reminder similar to the one Muḥammad (peace be upon him) brought. Among such people in Arabia were some Christians and Jews who were not ready to accept the Qur'ān with complete submission. They accepted parts of it and rejected others, as their prejudice dictated. These are the ones whom God describes here as the ones who break [God's revelation] into parts.

*"Just as We have bestowed from on high on those who later broke it into parts, and declare the Qur'ān to be a confused medley. But, by your Lord, We will call them all to account for whatever they have done."* (Verses 90-93) This *sūrah* is a Makkan revelation, but the Qur'ān addresses mankind generally. These were human beings who divided the Qur'ān into parts, and they are responsible for their actions. The Qur'ān has served a clear warning on them, as did their own scriptures. The Qur'ān and the Prophet were not unfamiliar to them. God had formerly revealed scriptures to them. Therefore, they should have received the new revelations with acceptance and submission.

At this point the address turns directly to the Prophet, instructing him to continue along the way defined for him, proclaiming what God has commanded him to convey to people. Making the proclamation is described in Arabic as, *iṣḍā`*, a term which also means 'break', to denote a strong and solid stand. He must not be deterred from making such a proclamation or be deflected from his way by the unbelief of an idolater or the ridicule of those who deride his message. God will protect him against these: *"Proclaim what you are bidden and turn away from those who associate partners with God. We shall suffice you against all who deride [this message] – all who claim that there are other deities beside God. They shall certainly come to know."* (Verses 94-96)

The Prophet is a human being who cannot help but be distressed when he hears people ascribing divinity to beings other than God, or deriding his message. He is eager to defend the truth and his message, and is upset at all the falsehood and idolatry around him. He is, therefore, instructed to glorify his Lord and praise Him. Such glorification and worship will shield him against the evil he hears. Hence he should not stop praising his Lord and extolling His glory until that which is absolutely certain, i.e. death, arrives and he is gathered to His Lord: *"We know that you are distressed by what they say. But extol your Lord's limitless glory and praise Him, and be among those who prostrate themselves before Him, and worship your Lord till the certainty [of death] comes to you."* (Verses 97-99)

Thus the finale of this *sūrah* is an instruction to turn away from the unbelievers, and seek God's protection. As for the unbelievers themselves, there will come to them a day when they will wish they had submitted themselves to God.

Proclaiming the truth of this faith of Islam and making clear all of its components and requirements are a necessary part of its advocacy. A strong proclamation will shake an inactive human nature and awaken placid feelings. It will also put the

argument clear for people to consider, "so that anyone who was destined to perish might perish in clear evidence of the truth and anyone destined to live might live in clear evidence of the truth." (8: 42) A soft approach which requires an advocate of Islam to declare one part of it and conceal another, so as not to offend tyrants or alienate the masses, is contrary to the correct line of advocacy of this powerful message.

A strong proclamation of this truth means neither rigidity nor rudeness, nor the adoption of an insensitive or impolite manner. Nor does a gentle approach mean too subtle a method or the concealment of any aspect of faith, cutting the Qur'an into parts. Good proclamation means stating all the facts about the Islamic faith clearly and plainly, but with wisdom and friendly address that shows a preference for ease over hardship.

It is not the role of Islam to achieve a *modus vivendi* with the un-Islamic states and situations that prevail on earth. This was not its role when it was first revealed, and it will never be its role at any time. An un-Islamic situation is one that turns away from submission to God alone and ignores the code of living God has chosen for mankind. It seeks to derive its laws, regulations, traditions, standards and values from a source other than the divine source. Islam, on the other hand, is a message which aims to turn people from a state of *jāhiliyyah* and ignorance into submission to God alone. This is the great truth which must be proclaimed clearly by the advocates of Islam, even in the face of persecution by tyrants and rejection by the masses: "We know that you are distressed by what they say. But extol your Lord's limitless glory and praise Him, and be among those who prostrate themselves before Him, and worship your Lord till the certainty [of death] comes to you." (Verses 97-99)