



The Message of
THE QUR'AN
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TRANSLATED AND EXPLAINED

by

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DAR AL-ANDALUS

GIBRALTAR

None the less, We effaced this [sin of theirs], and vouchsafed unto Moses a clear proof [of the truth], (154) raising Mount Sinai high above them in witness of their solemn pledge. And We said unto them, "Enter the gate humbly";¹⁶⁷ and We told them, "Do not break the Sabbath-law"; and We accepted from them a most solemn pledge.

(155) And so, [We punished them¹⁶⁸] for the breaking of their pledge, and their refusal to acknowledge God's messages, and their slaying of prophets against all right, and their boast, "Our hearts are already full of knowledge" – nay, but God has sealed their hearts in result of their denial of the truth, and [now] they believe in but few things –;¹⁶⁹ (156) and for their refusal to acknowledge the truth, and the awesome calumny which they utter against Mary,¹⁷⁰ (157) and their boast, "Behold, we have slain the Christ Jesus, son of Mary, [who claimed to be] an apostle of God!"

However, they did not slay him, and neither did they crucify him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so;¹⁷¹ and, verily, those who hold conflicting views thereon are indeed confused, having no [real] knowledge thereof, and following mere conjecture. For, of a certainty, they did not slay him: (158) nay, God exalted him unto Himself¹⁷² – and God

ذَٰلِكَ وَءَاتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٥٤﴾ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ
الطُّورَ بِمِثْقٰلِ عِظْمٰتِ الْاَنْبِيَا۟ءِ وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُلْنَا
لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوا فِي السَّبْتِ وَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿١٥٥﴾
فِيَمَا نَقَضُوا مِثْقٰلَهُمْ وَاَكْفَرُوا بِآيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَقَتْلُوا
الْاَنْبِيَا۟ءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهَا
بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَكُفْرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ
عَلٰى مَرْيَمَ بِهِنْنٰنَا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٥٧﴾ وَقَوْلِهِمْ اِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيْحَ
عِيسٰى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ وَمَا صَلَّبُوْهُ وَلٰكِن
شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اَخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ
بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ اِلَّا اَتْبَاعُ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا ﴿١٥٨﴾ بَلْ
رَفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَكَنَّا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٥٩﴾ وَاِنَّ مِّنْ

167 See 2 : 58–59 and the corresponding notes.

168 The statement relating to their punishment – clearly implied here – is made explicit in verse 160.

169 See 2 : 88 and the corresponding notes.

170 The calumny referred to is the popular Jewish assertion that Jesus was an illegitimate child.

171 Thus, the Qurʾān categorically denies the story of the crucifixion of Jesus. There exist, among Muslims, many fanciful legends telling us that at the last moment God substituted for Jesus a person closely resembling him (according to some accounts, that person was Judas), who was subsequently crucified in his place. However, none of these legends finds the slightest support in the Qurʾān or in authentic Traditions, and the stories produced in this connection by the classical commentators must be summarily rejected. They represent no more than confused attempts at "harmonizing" the Qurʾānic statement that Jesus was *not* crucified with the graphic description, in the Gospels, of his crucifixion. The story of the crucifixion as such has been succinctly explained in the Qurʾānic phrase *wa-lākin shubbiha lahum*, which I render as "but it only appeared to them as if it had been so" – implying that in the course of time, long after the time of Jesus, a legend had somehow grown up (possibly under the then-powerful influence of Mithraistic beliefs) to the effect that he had died on the cross in order to atone for the "original sin" with which mankind is allegedly burdened; and this legend became so firmly established among the latter-day followers of Jesus that even his enemies, the Jews, began to believe it – albeit in a derogatory sense (for crucifixion was, in those times, a heinous form of death-penalty reserved for the lowest of criminals). This, to my mind, is the only satisfactory explanation of the phrase *wa-lākin shubbiha lahum*, the more so as the expression *shubbiha lī* is idiomatically synonymous with *khuyyila lī*, "[a thing] became a fancied image to me", i.e., "in my mind" – in other words, "[it] seemed to me" (see *Qāmūs*, art. *khayala*, as well as Lane II, 833, and IV, 1500).

172 Cf. 3 : 55, where God says to Jesus, "Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and shall exalt thee unto Me." The verb *rafaʿahu* (lit., "he raised him" or "elevated him") has always, whenever the

is indeed almighty, wise. (159) Yet there is not one of the followers of earlier revelation who does not, at the moment of his death, grasp the truth about Jesus;¹⁷³ and on the Day of Resurrection he [himself] shall bear witness to the truth against them.

(160) So, then, for the wickedness committed by those who followed the Jewish faith did We deny unto them certain of the good things of life which [aforetime] had been allowed to them;¹⁷⁴ and [We did this] for their having so often turned away from the path of God,¹⁷⁵ (161) and [for] their taking usury although it had been forbidden to them, and their wrongful devouring of other people's possessions. And for those from among them who [continue to] deny the truth We have readied grievous suffering.

(162) But as for those from among them who are deeply rooted in knowledge,¹⁷⁶ and the believers who believe in that which has been bestowed upon thee from on high as well as that which was bestowed from on high before thee, and those who are [especially] constant in prayer,¹⁷⁷ and spend in charity,

أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لِيُؤْمِنَ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا ﴿١٥٩﴾ فَيُظْلَمُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرْمًا
عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبَاتٍ أُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
كَثِيرًا ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَأَخَذَهُمُ الرِّبَا وَقَدْ نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكَلِهِمْ أَمْوَالَ
النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٦١﴾
لَكِنَّ الرَّاغِبِينَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ
إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَالْمُقِيمِينَ الصَّلَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ

act of *rafʿ* ("elevating") of a human being is attributed to God, the meaning of "honouring" or "exalting". Nowhere in the Qurʾān is there any warrant for the popular belief that God has "taken up" Jesus bodily, in his lifetime, into heaven. The expression "God exalted him unto Himself" in the above verse denotes the elevation of Jesus to the realm of God's special grace – a blessing in which all prophets partake, as is evident from 19:57, where the verb *rafaʿnāhu* ("We exalted him") is used with regard to the Prophet Idrīs. (See also Muḥammad ʿAbduh in *Manār* III, 316 f., and VI, 20 f.) The "nay" (*bal*) at the beginning of the sentence is meant to stress the contrast between the belief of the Jews that they had put Jesus to a shameful death on the cross and the fact of God's having "exalted him unto Himself".

173 Lit., "who does not believe in him before his death". According to this verse, all believing Jews and Christians realize at the moment of their death that Jesus was truly a prophet of God – having been neither an impostor nor "the son of God" (Zamakhsharī).

174 Most of the commentators assume that this refers to the severe dietary restrictions imposed on the Jews, which are alluded to in 3:93 and 6:146. Since, however, 3:93 clearly states that these restrictions and prohibitions were a punishment for evil deeds committed "before the Torah was bestowed from on high", while the verse which we are now discussing relates to their sinful behaviour in later times, we must conclude that the punishment spoken of here has another meaning: namely, the age-long deprivation of the Jewish people of the many "good things of life" which other nations enjoy – in other words, the humiliation and suffering which they have had to undergo throughout most of their recorded history, and particularly after the time of Jesus. It is on the basis of this interpretation that I have rendered the expression *ḥarramnā ʿalayhim* (lit., "We forbade them") as "We denied to them".

175 The verb *ṣadda* ("he turned away") can be transitive as well as intransitive, and the same applies to the noun *ṣadd* derived from it. In the former case, the sentence would read, "for their having turned away many [others] from the path of God"; in the latter case, "for their having [so] often turned away from the path of God". In view of the repeated stress, in the Qurʾān, on the refractory nature of the children of Israel – and the abundant evidence to this effect in the Old Testament – I prefer the intransitive rendering.

176 I.e., those from among the Jews who do not content themselves with a mere observance of rituals, but try to penetrate to the deepest meaning of faith.

177 According to the grammarians of the Baṣrah school, and especially Sībawayh, the use of

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الطُّورَ بِمِثْقٰلِ عِثْمِ الْكَافِرِ ۗ وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُلْنَا
لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوا فِي السَّبْتِ ۗ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِثْقٰلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٥٥﴾
فِيمَا نَقَضُوا مِثْقٰلَهُمْ ۖ وَكَفَرُوا بِآيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَقَتَلُوا
الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ۗ بَلْ طَمَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهَا
يَكْفُرَهُمْ ۖ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَكَفَرُوا بِقَوْلِهِمْ
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شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ۗ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اٰخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ ۗ مَا لَهُمْ
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