

RELEVANCE OF AL-QURTUBI'S EXEGETICAL DISCOURSE TO RITUAL KILLING FOR WEALTH ACQUISITION IN NIGERIA

Saheed Adewale BADMUS, Ph.D.

Department of Islamic Studies, Al-Hikmah Univeristy, Ilorin
Phone Contact: 08039810724 **Email:** ibnsirooj1431@gmail.com.

ABDULSALAM Olaide Issa

Department of Islamic Studies, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin
Phone Contact: 08039114690 **Email:** Abdulsalamolayide88@gmail.com.

Jalaludeen Shuaib ASSAYOUTI, Ph.D.

Department of Islamic Studies, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin
Phone Contact: 08069359281 **Email:** jalahopeyemi@gmail.com.

Abstract

Ritual killings for financial gain and spiritual benefit have emerged as a significant social menace in Nigeria, fueled by deep-rooted superstitions, economic and spiritual desperation, as well as glorification of wealth. This obscene act has proved many efforts of both government and individuals abortive making it to be the talk of the society. Thus, this study explores the relevance of al-Qurtubī's exegesis in ameliorating the rampant nature of money-making ritual in the country, which has devalued the sanctity of human life. To achieve this, the paper adopts historical and exegetical methods of research. The biography of al-Qurtubī and the trends of money-making ritual killing in Nigeria are explored through historical method. Exegetical method is used to bring out the discourse of al-Qurtubī in relation to Nigeria and money-making ritual killing. The paper finds out that greed, superstitious beliefs, societal pressure for wealth and societal glorification of material wealth are the major reasons why people involve in ritual killing for sustenance. It is concluded that ritual killing in general and money-making ritual killing in particular are prohibited by *Sharī'ah*. The paper, therefore, recommends a multidisciplinary approach of both legal action where judicial homicide is decided without any delay; and religious perspective where awareness is created on the significance and the sanctity of human life and the consequence of devaluing it in both lives; this life and the hereafter.

Introduction

In Nigeria, killings take various forms, including extrajudicial actions by security forces, insurgent attacks, and communal violence. Reports indicate that between 2011 and 2021, security agencies were responsible for the unlawful deaths of 13,241 individuals, reflecting a troubling trend of extrajudicial killings (Ejekwonyilo, 2021). In 2023 alone, the Nigeria Police Force documented 1,702 murder cases nationwide, with the North-Central region reporting the highest number at 436 incidents. Insurgent groups such as Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram have deliberately targeted civilians, leading to thousands of deaths and widespread displacement (Nigeria Mourns, 2023). This troubling phenomenon underscores the complex interplay of poverty, crime, and cultural misconceptions, necessitating public education and stronger law enforcement to address the root causes of such acts.

Greed remains a fundamental reason why people engage in money rituals, as a significant dimension of killings in Nigeria includes ritual killings for monetary gain, often fueled by superstitious beliefs and societal pressures for wealth. Researchers like Ayodeji Olukoju have documented how these practices are rooted in cultural traditions, and the problem was made worse by economic disparities. (Olukoju et al, 2018). Insatiable desire for wealth drives individuals to seek quick and unethical means of achieving financial success. Many are lured by promises of prosperity without labour, an activity which is orchestrated by societal glorification of material wealth. Bloodless money rituals, which involve spiritual consultations or sacrifices without human harm, are often seen as the "lesser evil" but still stem from greed and reliance on superstition. However, blood money-making ritual killings—where victims are gruesomely murdered to satisfy perceived spiritual demands—are the most sinister manifestation of this practice. Oke O.P (2024) points out that these practices reflect a cultural fixation on shortcuts to wealth and the dire consequences of moral decay in society (Olufemi, 2024).



However, despite various initiatives by Nigerian authorities to combat ritual killings, these efforts have often fallen short. For instance, in February 2022, the Nigerian House of Representatives urged the federal government of Nigeria to declare a state of emergency on the prevalence of ritual killings and called for increased surveillance and intelligence gathering to apprehend perpetrators. However, the persistence of such crimes indicates that these measures have been insufficient (Ebenezer, 2022 and Salihu, Isiaka & Abdulaziz, 2019)

Islam forbids unjustifiable killing and frowns at rituals that misrepresent monotheistic beliefs. Several scholars of Islamic Science keep to the position of Islam while explaining its disposition. Al-Qurṭubī, an exegetic, posited extensively on killing, within the context of Islamic law, emphasizing its strict regulations, moral constraints, and the necessity of divine justice, ensuring it is not misused for personal or unjust purposes. It is against this background that the paper is set to advance al-Qurṭubī's exegetical discourse to money-making ritual killings in Nigeria in order to expiate its consequences and curb its further proliferation.

Brief Information on Al-Qurṭubī and His *Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*

His name was Muhammad bn Ahmad bn Abī Bakr bn Farḥī al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī al-Andalusī al-Qurṭubī al-Mālikī. His name as Abu Abdullah was his honorific title (*kunya*). He was born at Cordoba (Al-Qurṭubah), Spain, around 600 A.H during the reign of Abbasid caliph Muhammad an-Nāṣir Al-Manṣūr (reigned between 595 - 610 A.H). Al-Qurṭubī received his early education in Islamic sciences and later traveled to Egypt and Syria to further his studies. He authored several influential works, including his magnum opus, "*Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*" (The Comprehensive Book on the Rulings of the Qur'ān), an encyclopedic commentary on the glorious Qur'ān. Al-Qurṭubī's scholarship had a profound impact on Islamic thought and jurisprudence, earning him a revered place among Islamic scholars (Uyun, n.d).

Throughout his life, al-Qurṭubī made significant contributions to Islamic scholarship, particularly in the field of *tafsīr*. His most famous work, *al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, is an encyclopedic *tafsīr* that provides a comprehensive analysis of Qur'anic verses, including legal, linguistic, and technical interpretations. This work of his remains one of the authoritative exegeses in the Sunni tradition. Apart from *tafsīr*, he also wrote on various subjects, including hadith, *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and theology. His scholarly contributions played a crucial role in reforming the latter Islamic thought, and his works continue to be referenced by scholars and students of Islamic sciences (Al-Qurtubi, 1994).

As a mature scholar, al-Qurṭubī was known for his piety, asceticism, and humility. Despite his scholarly stature, he lived a simple and devout life, dedicating himself to worship and teaching. However, he faced numerous challenges, particularly due to the political and religious turmoil of his time. The fall of Muslim Córdoba and the subsequent Christian conquest of Andalusia forced him into exile, disrupting his academic environment. Nevertheless, he remained steadfast in his scholarship, using his circumstances to further his intellectual and spiritual pursuits (Al-Dhahabi, 1985).

Al-Qurṭubī wrote *Al-Jami' li-Aḥkam al-Qur'ān* during his later years in Egypt, likely in the mid-13th century. The book reflects his deep understanding of Islamic law, theology, and linguistics, making it a cornerstone of Qur'anic exegesis. Written in a period of great transition for the Muslim world, his work aimed to preserve and clarify Islamic teachings amid socio-political commotions. His meticulous approach to interpretation and jurisprudence ensured that his *tafsīr* became a timeless reference for scholars and legal experts across generation (Uyun, n.d).

There is little documentation of information on Al-Qurṭubī's personal life, including his marital status or children. Most historical records emphasize on his scholarly contributions rather than his family life. After he has spent all his life on learning, writing, and worshipping, Al-Imam Al-Qurṭubī died in Munya Bani Khusayb in the lower Egypt in 671 A.H/1273 C.E., it was on Monday of the night of the 9th day of Shawwal (Kannike, 2018). In his book Salman (1993), claimed that Al-Qurṭubī died on the 8th day of Shawwal. He was buried in the same place, also called Ard Sultan, where his tomb is still extant and venerated. In 1971 a very big and large mosque bearing his name was erected over the site.

Ritual: A Conceptual Definitions

A **ritual** is a structured, repetitive, and symbolic set of actions performed within a specific cultural, religious, or social context, often to convey meaning, reinforce beliefs, or mark significant events such as rites of passage, worship, or communal traditions. Ritual killing refers to the intentional taking of life as part of a structured religious, cultural, or ceremonial practice, often performed to appease deities, fulfill spiritual obligations, ensure cosmic balance, or mark significant societal transitions. It is deeply rooted in historical traditions and varies across different cultures and belief systems (EBSCO Research Starters, 2024).

Ritual Killing in Nigeria

Ritual killing in Nigeria has become a widespread menace, spreading like wildfire due to deep-rooted superstitions, economic desperation, and the quest for quick wealth. Individuals, including internet fraudsters (*Yahoo boys*), traditionalists, and even politicians, engage in these gruesome acts, believing that human sacrifices can bring financial prosperity and supernatural protection. The influence of social media, which glorifies sudden wealth without questioning its source, has further fueled this practice, especially among the youth. Poor policing, corruption, and a failing judicial system allow perpetrator to act with impunity. Despite government efforts to curb ritual killings, they persist due to societal pressures, highlighting the urgent need for efficient laws, community vigilance and widespread public enlightenment (Leo, 2012).

Money-making ritual killing is a gruesome practice where individuals sacrifice human lives, believing it will bring them supernatural wealth and success. This phenomenon is deeply rooted in traditional African spiritualism, where human blood and body parts are thought to possess mystical powers that can attract fortune. In modern times, economic hardship, unemployment, and the glorification of sudden wealth, especially on social media—have fueled the rise of ritual killings, particularly among desperate youths and fraudsters (*Yahoo boys*). Weak law enforcement, corruption, and societal pressure to attain material success further perpetuate this crime. Addressing this issue requires stricter laws, public enlightenment, and tackling the economic inequalities that push individuals toward such desperate measures (Salihu, Isiaka & Abdulaziz, 2019).

Consequently, money-making ritual killings in Nigeria have profound social, psychological, and economic effects, deeply impacting individuals, communities, and the nation at large. These practices erode societal values by promoting the belief that wealth can be acquired through unethical and supernatural means. The ripple effect of this belief is the loss of trust within communities and heightened fear of victimization. Families of victims often experience long-term trauma, while society becomes desensitized to violence, further diminishing the value of human life (Salihu, Isiaka & Abdulaziz, 2019).

To stress this malaise of ritual killings further, numerous real-life cases highlight the severity of ritual killings in Nigeria, but a few will suffice in establishing this claim. In February 2025, Abdulrahman Bello, a 25-year-old self-proclaimed Islamic cleric from Ilorin, Kwara State, was apprehended for the alleged murder of 24-year-old Lawal Hafsah Yetunde, a student at the Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin. The two reportedly met on Facebook, where Bello initiated contact and invited Yetunde to his residence. Tragically, during her visit, Bello killed and dismembered her body, purportedly for ritualistic purposes aimed at financial gain. Upon investigation, authorities discovered the body parts, a plastic bottle containing the victim's blood, and various implements believed to have been used in the crime at Bello's residence. The Kwara State Council of Ulama has condemned the act, urging thorough investigation and justice for the victim (Daily Trust, 2025).

An arrest of a 19-year-old man was made in Akinyele, Oyo State. He was accused of a series of murders in the said place. He confessed to his crime of receiving food and 500 NGN from an herbalist for each of his victims. Similarly, three suspected money ritualists were arrested by law enforcement agents in the Boluwaji community of Ibadan in with the allegation of killing a 73-year-old man. One of the suspects admitted to killing the victim and also to being a human parts seller. In



June 2021, a suspected ritualist confessed after his arrest that he was an accomplice with his friend in the killing of his girlfriend because he was promised parts of the body by his friend for money ritual purposes (Vanguard News, 2020).

People engage in ritual killing for various reasons. Some do it due to spiritual beliefs, thinking it pleases deities or spirits. Others are driven by the desire for wealth, power, or social status, believing that human sacrifices can bring financial success and influence. In some cases, individuals are recruited or coerced into ritual killings for monetary gain. For instance, in March 2020, a woman was murdered on her farm in the Oku Abak community in the Abak Council Area, and the culprits were arrested. A suspect confessed to mutilating her corpse and he was paid 150,000 NGN by a prophetess seeking human heads for rituals. Another unfortunate incident occurred on 23 February 2020 in Otuo, in the Owan-East area, where three men and a female herbalist, suspected of kidnapping and killing a female student for money ritual purposes, were set ablaze by a mob right in front of the community police station (Vanguard News, 2020). These cases underscore the deep-rooted dangers of ritual killings in Nigeria, revealing how criminal networks exploit vulnerable individuals and manipulate cultural beliefs for financial and personal gains.

Others believe it brings wealth, success, or political power. In some cultures, it is considered part of ancient traditions. An example of this is *Abobaku* title of Yoruba tradition whereby the *Abobaku* is afforded with his best life and enjoy life as freebies, while at the demise of the king, he is killed and buried with the king. In other scenarios, power tussle and certain superstition also drive people to commit ritual killings, as they may believe it removes curses or offers protection. Some individuals see it as a form of healing or magic, believing that human sacrifices have special powers. Additionally, secret societies and criminal groups may perform ritual killings as part of their activities. In some cases, people use it to gain social or political influence, controlling others through fear (Vanguard News, 2024).

The diminishing effect ritual killing has on the Nigerian economic sphere is that it deters investments and free commercial activities in affected areas as they create an environment of insecurity. Ironically, the pursuit of quick wealth through rituals perpetuates poverty, as individuals neglect legitimate opportunities in favor of superstition (Council on Foreign Relation, 2022). Moreover, this phenomenon exposes weaknesses in Nigeria's judicial and law enforcement systems, as corruption and lack of accountability often allow perpetrators to evade justice. In furtherance, ritual killings distort cultural practices and damage their true meaning, creating a negative perception of certain traditions. They also contribute to religious conflicts as blame is often shifted to specific groups or beliefs. Youths are particularly affected, as unemployment and peer pressure lure them into these criminal practices, creating a cycle of violence and moral decay (National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, 2025).

Ritual killings for wealth acquisition, commonly termed "money rituals," have become a disturbing phenomenon in Nigeria. Many perpetrators believe that sacrificing human lives can bring supernatural wealth. This belief contradicts the teachings of Islam, which emphasize lawful earnings and the sanctity of human life (Famuyiwa, 2022). The *Tafsīr al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkāmī'l-Qur'ān* by Imām Qurṭubī provides significant moral and legal guidelines that counteract such practices (Al-Qurtubi, 1999).

Relevance of Al-Qurṭubī's Exegetical Discourse to Ritual Killings in Nigeria

Al-Imām al-Qurṭubī's discussion on ritual killings is evident in his exegetical explanation of Qur'ān verses that expounds on the sanctity of a human's life (Q5:32), Islamic stance on wealth acquisition (Q25:20), as well as the counterargument to money-ritual (Q17:31). These discussions of his are exclusive to volume 5 and volume 9 of the Maktabatuṣ-Ṣafā's publication of al-Qurṭubī's *Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkāmī'l-Qur'ān*. These discussions are presented topically as follow:

I. Al-Qurṭubī's View on the Sanctity of Human Life

In the chapter 5 verse 32 of the Qur'ān that appraises the sanctity of human life which reads:

من أجل ذلك كتبنا على بني إسرائيل أنه من قتل نفسا بغير نفس أو فساد في الأرض فكأنما قتل الناس جميعا
ومن أحياها فكأنما أحيا الناس جميعا ولقد جاءهم رسلنا بالبينات ثم إن كثيرا منهم بعد ذلك في الأرض
لمسرفون

For this reason did We prescribe to the children of Israel that whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men; whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men; and certainly Our Messengers came to them with clear arguments, but even after that many of them certainly act extravagantly in the land.

Al-Qurtubī (1999) posited in the below excerpt thus:

وقد حرم الله القتل في جميع الشرائع إلا بثلاث خصال: كفر بعد إيمان، زنى بعد إحصان، أو قتل نفس ظلما
وتعديا، وشرك أو قطع طريق، أي أن يقتل نفسا ويستحق القتل، اضطرب لفظ المفسرين في ترتيب هذا التشبيه
لأجل أن عقاب من قتل الناس جميعا أكثر من عقاب من قتل واحدا؛ فروي عن ابن عباس أنه قال: المعنى من
قتل نبيا أو إمام عادل فكأنما قتل الناس جميعا، ومن أحياه بأن شدد عضده ونصره، فكأنما أحيا الناس جميعا.
وقال مجاهد: المعنى أن الذي يقتل النفس المؤمنة متعمدا جعل الله جزاءه جهنم وغضب عليه ولعنه وأعد له عذابا
عظيما¹

Almighty Allah forbids killing in all Islamic injunctions except on three occasions, namely: apostasy, committing adultery while being married, and killing a person unjustly and transgressively. Also included are shirk and armed robbery, (i.e., to kill a soul that is deserved to be killed). Quran exegesis are divergent in their expository on the making of such likening. However, the penalty for whoever kills the generality of mankind is greater than that of a killer of one soul. Ibn cAbbās was reported to have said that; “the meaning of this is that whoever kills a Prophet or a just Imām is as though he has killed the entirety of mankind, and whoever keeps him alive, either by strengthening or assisting him, it is as though he keeps all men alive.” Mujāhid argues the meaning to be that; “whoever deliberately kills a believer, Allah will make hellfire to be his reward, His wrath and curses will be on him, and he is promised a severe punishment.”

From the above extract of al-Qurtubī, he asserts that even though there are instances and avenue where killing of human being is lawful, such as *ar-Riddah* (apostasy), *az-Zinā* (adultery) and *qatlu'l-ʿAmd* (intentional killing), Islam does not permit the taking of human life and holds it in high esteem. To ascertain this claim, al-Imām al-Qurtubī further expatiated on the reason behind the likening of killing of a soul to equate the killing of the entirety of mankind. While doing so, he presented the opinion of Ibn ʿAbbās on the subject matter that the kind of soul being referred to is the soul of Prophets and Imāms. Ibn ʿAbbās opines that whoever kills such souls has succeeded in annihilating human race and the punishment for such a person will be as great as that. And whoever gives supporting hands to such souls and help their course is acting in equivalence of keeping the human race alive.

In another breath, al-Qurtubī cited the opinion of Mujāhid that he referred to the soul to mean a believing Muslim and whoever deliberately kills such a person, he will not only be admitted into hellfire, but Allah's wrath and curses will upon such a person and a severe punishment awaits him on the Day of Judgment. This is in consonance to the injunction of *Sūratu-n-Nisā'* verse 93 which reads:



ومن يقتل مؤمنا متعمدا فجزاؤه جهنم خالدا فيها وغضب الله عليه ولعنه وأعد له عذابا عظيما

And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his punishment is hell; he shall abide in it, and Allah will send His wrath on him and curse him and prepare for him a painful torment.

The above verse also entails the prohibition of taking any human life unjustly and transgressively whether it is a believer or non-believer. This is in accordance with the aforesaid position of al-Qurṭubī asserting the prohibition of killing except on three occasions, one of which is killing of whoever takes a soul unjustly and transgressively. It is apposite, therefore, to note that al-Qurṭubī appraised the sanctity and importance of human life. This exemplifies a major factor why human life must not be taken for any form of ritual as obtainable in the Nigerian society. The Nigerian society, which is overwhelmed by ritual killings, is not living by these Islamic ordinances explained above, thereby living contrarily to the objectives of Allah's creation of human beings.

II. Islam's Stance on Wealth Acquisition

In the chapter 25 verse 20 of the Qur'an that emphasizes the need for acquiring wealth for self-sustenance which read:

وما أرسلنا قبلك من المرسلين إلّا إنهم ليأكلون الطعام ويمشون في الأسواق وجعلنا بعضهم لبعض فتنة
أتبصرون وكان ربك بصيرا

And We have not sent before you any apostle but they most surely ate food and went about in the markets; and We have made some of you a trial for others; will you bear patiently? And your Lord is ever Seeing.

Al-Qurṭubī (1999) interpreted the verses thus:

نزلت جوابا للمشركين حيث قالوا: ما لهذا الرسول يأكل الطعام ويمشي في الأسواق. وقال ابن عباس: لما عير المشركون رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بالفاقة وقالوا: ما لهذا الرسول يأكل الطعام الآية حزن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم لذلك فترلت تعزية له؛ فقال جبريل عليه السلام: السلام عليك يا رسول الله! الله ربك يقرئك السلام ويقول لك: "وما أرسلنا قبلك من المرسلين إلّا إنهم ليأكلون الطعام ويمشون في الأسواق" أي يبتغون المعيش في الدنيا، هذا الآية أصل في تناول الأسباب وطلب المعاش بالتجارة والصناعة وغير ذلك ٢

It was revealed as a response to the polytheists when they said: "what is the matter with this Prophet that he eats food and goes about in the markets." And Ibn cAbbās asserts that when the polytheists were mocking the Messenger of Allah ﷺ of lack while they say "what is the matter with this Prophet that he eats food". The Messenger of Allah ﷺ became sad for that and the verse was revealed to console him. Angel Jubrīl says: Peace be upon you, O messenger of Allah! Your Lord greets you and say unto you: "And We have not sent before you any Messenger but they must surely ate food and went about in the markets." i.e. they seek livelihood in this world. The verse is the basis for discussing the necessity of seeking livelihood through engaging in trade and manufacturing, among others.

From the above quotation, al-Qurṭubī (1999) laid emphasis on the reason for the revelation of Qur'an 25 verse 20 asserted by Ibn cAbbās on the claim of the unbelievers who are not expecting a Messenger of Allah to traverse in the markets or eat food, thereby mocking him of these attributes of



eating and engaging in economic activities. The verse was revealed in consolation of the Prophet to stand firm and not wither as this is indifferent to the Prophets and Messengers before him. He is thus encouraged to have the means of livelihood through seeking to engage in trade. To buttress this claim further, the view of Sayyid Qutb (n.d) regarding the verse under discussion has it that the verse was revealed to affirm the fact that the Prophet Muhammad's attributes of eating and walking about in the markets are inherent characteristics of the previous Prophets of Allah and his is not a special case.

Similarly, ash-Shawkānī in a grammatical approach to the verse asserts that a hidden subject in the verse is the pronoun '*aḥdan*' which means 'anyone', except that they are “eaters and walkers” (Ash-Shawkani, 2001). This exemplifies the uniformity of human race regardless of background or social status. In a more comprehensible way, Ibn Kathīr as cited by Khan (1997) submits that the previous Messenger of Allah ate food because they need its nourishment. They went about in the markets to engage in trading activities and earn a livelihood for themselves, which did not affect their position as Messengers of Allah, as Allah has given them laudable characters and made them to speak in good manners and gave them clear proofs. This claim is more elaborate in Qur'an chapter 12 verse 109 which reads thus”

وما أرسلنا من قبلك إلا رجالاً نوحي إليهم من أهل القرى

And We sent not before you (as Messengers) any but men whom We inspired from among the people of the townships.

In corroboration of the above exegetical argument, it is recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥu'l-Bukhārī* that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to Miqdām thus:

ما أكل أحد طعاماً قط خيراً من أن يأكل من عمل يده، فإن نبي الله داود عليه السلام كان يأكل من عمل يده.

Nobody has ever eaten a better meal than that which one has earned by working with one's own hands. The Prophet of Allah, Dawud (*‘aleihi-s-salām*) used to eat from the earnings of his manual labour.

From the above arguments, it can be deduced that, Almighty Allah sent His Messengers from among human beings as warmers and givers of glad-tiding to the world. This sacred assignment should not, however, stop them from possessing the natural attributes of a human being, which include eating, drinking, walking around, sleeping, marrying and procreating, among other things. These exposed how important the act of seeking livelihood as well as acquiring wealth in a lawful and permissible manner are in the sight of Allah. If Allah's Messengers to whom divine responsibilities are given are enjoined to seek livelihood and acquire wealth in lawful and modest manner, a common human being who is not Allah's Messenger is therefore enjoined to seek lawful livelihood and acquire wealth in a way that does not counteract with the dictates of Almighty Allah.

III. Counter arguments to Money Rituals

In the chapter 17 verse 31 of the Qur'ān that warns against killing unjustly for the fear of poverty which reads:

ولا تقتلوا أولادكم خشية إملاق نحن نرزقهم وإياكم إن قتلهم كان خطئاً كبيراً

And do not kill your children for fear of poverty; We give them sustenance and yourself (too); surely to kill them is a great wrong.



Al-Qurṭubī (2018) commentary on the verses reads thus:

قد مضى الكلام في هذه الآية في الأنعام، والحمد لله. "والإملاق": الفقر وعدم الملك. أَمْلَقَ الرَّجُلُ أَي: لم يبق له إلا المَلَقَاتُ، وهي الحجارة العظام المُلْسُ. "خِطَأٌ" أَي: إذا أتى الذَّنْبُ على عمد.

Discussion had come earlier on this (*wala taqtulū 'awlādakum khashyata imlāq*) in *sūratu'l-An'ām* and Glory be to Allah. *Imlāq* denotes poverty and lack of fund. "He becomes destitute" means that "nothing is left with him except *Malaqāt*". And *Al-Malaqāt* means "smooth bone stones". "*Khiṭ'an*" connotes perpetrating evil intentionally.

In the above argument of Al-Qurṭubī (1999) on the verse in question, he exempts further explanation on *qatlun-Nafs* because he had earlier discussed it in *sūratu'l-An'ām*. He exemplified the need to avoid killing one's child for the fear of poverty. This portrayed the significance of human soul explained in the Glorious Qur'ān. It is apposite to note that corporal punishment is not applied to a person who takes the soul of his child (Salim, n.d). But, that has not guaranteed anyone to take his child's life intentionally, because it is considered a "great wrong", which the magnitude of its punishment in the sight of Almighty Allah is unknow. Judging from this viewpoint, killing an innocent person illegitimately is adjudged to be a great sin, hence the opportunity to generalize the soul referred to in the above verse became imminent.

Money ritual killing in Nigeria is wholesomely triggered by greed which is heralded by abject poverty. This claim is not to justify the ritual killing but to establish the reason for its prevalence among the Nigerian populace. Imam Qurṭubī explains *Imlāq* to mean 'poverty' and 'lack of fund'. At the height of it, he exemplified it to mean that "*nothing is left of the person*", also referring generally to abject poverty. The people who kill human being for the purpose of money ritual are indeed doing a great wrong and are worthy of judicial homicide. This will serve, firstly as the punishment for their wrong doing, and secondly as deterrent to other people. A society that devalues human life inevitably suffers from moral decay, leading to increased violence, injustice, and instability. On the other hand, a community that upholds the sanctity of life and trusts in divine provision and not live life with greed, fosters peace, progress, and strong social bonds (Brill, 1683).

CONCLUSION

So far, an attempt has been made to discuss ritual killings that have become widespread in the contemporary Nigerian society. It has been discussed that the ritual killings are evils perpetrated by people for different purposes, however, the focus of this paper is on money-making ritual killing which is presently one of the reasons for the insecurity in the Nigerian society. The paper explored the trends of killings in Nigeria caused by the insurgent groups such as Boko Haram, Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) among others. The paper further explained that greed, superstitious belief and societal pressures for wealth, as well as societal glorification of material wealth remain the reasons for involvement of the people in money-making ritual killings in Nigeria. The discussion also focused on the efforts that were put in place by the Nigerian government but have fallen short. It was discussed that Islam forbids unjustifiable killing as explained by al-Qurṭubī in his *Tafsīr* entitled: "*Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkāmī'l-Qur'ān*." although his expenses of some verses such as Q5:32 and Q4:93. The paper revealed that human life is sacred in Islam and should not be killed unjustifiably.

Taking cognisance of the foregoing discourse, the paper proffers the following recommendations:

- i. Sensitization of the communities on the significance and sanctity of human life as well as the consequences of devaluing it in both lives.
- ii. Application of judicial homicide on the money-making ritual killers without any delay of justice.
- iii. Provision of job opportunities and infrastructural facilities in the society to reduce the level of involvement of Nigerian youth in ritual killing.



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