

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *Al-Qalam*, 68.

This is a very early Makkan revelation. The general Muslim opinion is that a great part of it was second in order to revelation, the first being S. xcvi. (*Iqraa*), verses 1-5: see *Itqān*, Chapter 7.

The last Sūra having defined the true Reality in contrast with the false standards set up by men, this illustrates the theme by an actual historical example. Our holy Prophet was the sanest and wisest of men: those who could not understand him called him mad or possessed. So, in every age, it is the habit of the world to call Truth Falsehood and Wisdom Madness, and, on the other hand, to exalt Selfishness as Planning, and Arrogance as Power. The contrast is shown up between the two kinds of men and their real inner worth.

Summary.—Let the good carry on their work, in spite of the abuse of the Companions of Evil: let all remember Allah, before Whom all men are on trial (lxviii. 1-33).

True Judgment comes from Allah, and not from the false standards of men (lxviii. 34-52).

Al-Qalam, or the Pen, or Nūn
(see n. 5592).

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

1. Nūn.⁵⁵⁹² By the Pen⁵⁵⁹³
And by the (Record)
Which (men) write,—
2. Thou art not,
By the grace of thy Lord,
Mad or possessed.⁵⁵⁹⁴
3. Nay, verily for thee
Is a Reward unfailing.⁵⁵⁹⁵
4. And surely thou hast
Sublime morals.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ ﴿١﴾

مَا أَنْتَ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجْنُونٍ ﴿٢﴾

وَإِنَّ لَكَ لَأَجْرًا غَيْرَ مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٣﴾

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾

5592. *Nūn* is an Abbreviated Letter: see Appendix I at the end of S. ii.

Nūn may mean a fish, or an ink-holder, or it may be just the Arabic letter of the alphabet, N. In the last case, it may refer to either or both of the other meanings. Note also that the Arabic rhyme in this Sūra ends in N. The reference to ink would be an appropriate link with the Pen in verse 1. The reference to the fish would be appropriate with reference to the story of Jonah in verses 48-50. Jonah's title is "the Companion of the Fish", (Zun-Nūn, xxi. 87), as he was, in the story, swallowed by the Fish.

5593. The Pen and the Record are the symbolical foundations of the Revelation to man. The adjuration by the Pen disposes of the flippant charge that Allah's Messenger was mad or possessed. For he spoke words of power, not incoherent, but full of meaning, and through the Record of the Pen, that meaning unfolds itself, in innumerable aspects to countless generations. Muhammad was the living Grace and Mercy of Allah, and his very nature exalted him above abuse and persecution.

5594. People usually call any one mad whose standards are different from their own. And madness is believed to be due to demoniacal possession, an idea distinctly in the minds of the New Testament writers: for Luke speaks of a man from whom the "devils" were cast out, as being then "clothed, and in his right mind" (Luke, viii. 35).

5595. Instead of being out of his right mind, the Prophet of Allah had been raised to a great spiritual dignity, a reward that was not like an earthly reward that passes away, but one that was in the very core of his being, and would never fail him in any circumstances. He was really granted a nature and character far above the shafts of grief or suffering, slander or persecution.

5. Soon with thou see,⁵⁵⁹⁶
And they will see,
6. Which of you is
Afflicted with madness.
7. Verily it is thy Lord
That knoweth best,
Which (among men)
Hath strayed from His Path:
And He knoweth best⁵⁵⁹⁷
Those who receive
(True) Guidance.
8. So obey not
To those who
Deny (the Truth).⁵⁵⁹⁸
9. Their desire is that
Thou shouldst be pliant:
So would they be pliant.

فَسَبِّحْهُ وَبِحَمْدِهِ ۝٥

يَا أَيُّكُمْ الْمَقْتُولُ ۝٦

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ
بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ۝٧

فَلَا تَطِيعَ الْمُكْذِبِينَ ۝٨

وَدُّوا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُونَ ۝٩

5596. Though Al-Muṣṭafā's nature raised him above the petty spite of his contemporaries, an appeal is made to their reason and to the logic of events. Was it not his accusers that were really mad? What happened to Walid ibn Mugaira, or Abū Jahl, or Abū Lahab?—and to Allah's Messenger and those who followed his guidance? The world's history gives the answer. And the appeal is not only to his contemporaries, but for all time.

5597. Men set up false standards of judgment. The right standard is that of Allah. For His knowledge is complete and all-embracing; He reads hidden motives as well as things that appear before men's sight; and He knows the past history in which the roots of present actions are embedded, as well as the future consequences of present actions.

5598. The enemies of Allah's truth are sometimes self-deceived. But quite often they have a glimmering of the truth in spite of their desire to shut their eyes. Then they compromise, and they would like the preachers of inconvenient truths to compromise with them. On those terms there would be mutual laudation. This easy path of making the best of both worlds is a real danger or temptation to the best of us, and we must be on our guard against it if we would really enter into the company of the Righteous who submit their wills to the Will of Allah. Abū Jahl freely offered impossible compromises to the holy Prophet.

10. Obey not
Every mean,⁵⁵⁹⁹
Swearer,⁵⁶⁰⁰

وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾

11. A slanderer, going about
With calumnies,

هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّاءٍ بِنَمِيمٍ ﴿١١﴾

12. (Habitually) hindering (all) good,
Transgressing beyond bounds,
Deep in sin,

مَنَاجٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿١٢﴾

13. Violent (and cruel),⁵⁶⁰¹
With all that,
Of a doubtful birth,-

عُتُلٍ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ زَنِيمٍ ﴿١٣﴾

14. Because⁵⁶⁰² he possesses
Wealth and (numerous) sons.

أَن كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ وَبَنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

5599. The type of each of these hateful qualities is not uncommon, though the combination of all in one man makes him peculiarly despicable, as was Walid ibn Mugaira, who was a ringleader in calumniating our Prophet and who came to an evil end not long after the battle of Badr, in which he received injuries.

5600. It is only liars who swear on all occasions, small or great, because their ordinary word is not believed in. The true man's word, according to the proverb, is as good as his bond.

5601. Besides the self-deceiver and the easy-going man, there is a third type, even more degraded. He has no idea of truth or sincerity. He is ready to swear friendship with every one and fidelity to every cause. But at the same moment he will slander and backbite, and cause mischief even between good but credulous persons. Evil seems to be his good, and good his evil. He will not only pursue evil courses himself but prevent other people from doing right. When checked, he resorts to violence. In any case, he will intrude where he has no right, claiming relationship or power or consideration in circles which would gladly disown him. He is vain of his wealth or because he has a large following at his beck and call. Religion is to him merely old-fashioned superstition.

5602. "Because" may connect with *heed not* in verse 10, or with *"violent and cruel"* in verse 13. In the former case, we construe: 'Pay no attention to despicable men of the character described, simply because they happen to have wealth or influence, or much backing in man-power'. In the latter case, we construe: the fellow is violent and cruel, because he is puffed up with his wealth or riches or backing in man-power'. In the eyes of Allah such a man is in any case branded and marked out as a sinner.

15. When to him are rehearsed
Our Signs,⁵⁶⁰³
"Tales of the Ancients",⁵⁶⁰⁴
He cries!
16. Soon shall We brand
(The beast) on the snout!⁵⁶⁰⁵
17. Verily We have tried them
As We tried the People
Of the Garden,⁵⁶⁰⁶
When they resolved to gather
The fruits of the (garden)
In the morning,
18. But made no reservation,
("If it be Allah's Will").⁵⁶⁰⁷

إِذَا تَتْلَى عَلَيْهِ إِيْنُنَا قَالُوا أَسْطُورٌ
الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

سَنَسِمُهُ عَلَى الْخُرْطُومِ ﴿١٦﴾

إِنَّا بَلَوْنَهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ إِذْ أَقْسَمُوا
لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

وَلَا يَسْتَنْوُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

5603. Allah's Signs, by which He calls us, are everywhere—in nature and in our very heart and soul. In Revelation, every verse is a Sign, for it stands symbolically for far more than it says. "Sign" (*Āyat*) thus becomes a technical term for a verse of the Qur-ān.

5604. Cf. vi. 25.

5605. Literally, proboscis, the most sensitive limb of the elephant. The sinner makes himself a beast and can only be controlled by his snout.

5606. "Why do the wicked flourish?" is a question asked in all ages. The answer is not simple. It must refer to (1) the choice left to man's will, (2) his moral responsibility, (3) the need of his tuning his will to Allah's Will, (4) the patience of Allah, which allows the widest possible chance for the operation of (5) His Mercy, and (6) in the last resort, to the nature of the Punishment, which is not a merely abrupt or arbitrary act, but a long, gradual process, in which there is room for repentance at every stage. All these points are illustrated in the remarkable Parable of the People of the Garden, which also illustrates the greed, selfishness, and heedlessness of man, as well as his tendency to throw the blame on others if he can but think of a scapegoat. All these foibles are shown, but the Mercy of Allah is boundless, and even after the worst sins and punishments, there may be hope of an even better orchard than the one lost, if only the repentance is true, and there is complete surrender to Allah's Will. But if, in spite of all this, there is no surrender of the will, then, indeed, the punishment in the Hereafter is something incomparably greater than the little calamities in the Parable.

5607. We must always remember, in all our plans, that they depend for their success on how far they accord with Allah's Will and Plan. His universal Will is supreme over all affairs. These foolish men had a secret plan to defraud the poor of their just rights, but they were put into a position where they could not do so. In trying to frustrate others, they were themselves frustrated.

19. Then there came
On the (garden)
A visitation from thy Lord,⁵⁶⁰⁸
(Which swept away) all around,
While they were asleep.
20. So the (garden) became,
By the morning, like
A dark and desolate spot,
(Whose fruit had been gathered).
21. As the morning broke,
They called out,
One to another,-
22. "Go ye to your tilth
(Betimes) in the morning,⁵⁶⁰⁹
If ye would gather
The fruits."
23. So they departed, conversing
In secret low tones, (saying)-
24. "Let not a single indigent⁵⁶¹⁰
Person break in upon you
Into the (garden) this day."
25. And they opened the morning,
Strong in an (unjust) resolve.

فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَآئِفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

فَاصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيمِ ﴿٢٠﴾

فَتَنَادَوُا مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

أَنِ اغْدُوا عَلَىٰ حَرْثِكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَارِمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

فَانطَلَقُوا وَهُمْ يَخْفَوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾

أَن لَّا يَدْخُلْنَهَا الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَّرْشِكِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

وَعَادُوا عَلَىٰ حَرْدٍ قَدِيرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

5608. It was a terrible storm that blew down and destroyed the fruits and the trees. The whole place was changed out of all recognition.

5609. Awaking from sleep, they were not aware that the garden had been destroyed by the storm overnight. They were in their own selfish dreams: by going very early, they thought they could cheat the poor of their share. See next note.

5610. The poor man has a right in the harvest—whether as a gleaner or as an artisan or a menial in an Eastern village. The rich owners of the orchard in the Parable wanted to steal a march at an early hour and defeat this right, but their greed was punished, so that it led to a greater loss to themselves. They wanted to cheat but had not the courage to face those they cheated, and by being in the field before any one was up they wanted to make it appear to the world that they were unconscious of any rights they were trampling on.

26. But when they saw
The (garden), they said:
"We have surely lost our way."⁵⁶¹¹
27. "Indeed we are deprived
(Of the fruits of our labour)!"⁵⁶¹²
28. Said one of them,
More just (than the rest):⁵⁶¹³
"Did I not say to you,
'Why not glorify (Allah)?' "
29. They said: "Glory
To our Lord! Verily we
Have been doing wrong!"
30. Then they turned, one
Against another, in reproach.⁵⁶¹⁴
31. They said: "Alas for us!
We have indeed transgressed!"
32. "It may be that our Lord
Will give us in exchange
A better (garden) than this:
For we do turn to Him
(In repentance)!"⁵⁶¹⁵

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوا إِنَّا لَضَالُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

قَالَ أَوْسَطُهُمْ أَلَرَأَيْتُ لَكُمْ لَوْلَا آسِئِحُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

قَالُوا مُبِخَنَ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَلَمَّظُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

قَالُوا يَوَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

عَسَىٰ رَبَّنَا أَن يُبَدِّلَنَا خَيْرًا مِنْهَا إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا رَاغِبُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

5611. Their fond dreams were dispelled when they found that the garden had been changed out of all recognition. It was as if they had come to some place other than their own smiling garden. Where they had expected to reap a rich harvest, there was only a howling wilderness. They reflected. Their first thought was of their own personal loss, the loss of their labour and the loss of their capital. They had plotted to keep out others from the fruits: now, as it happened, the loss was their own.

5612. Cf. lvi. 67. Also see last note.

5613. This was not necessarily a righteous man, but there are degrees in guilt. He had warned them, but he had joined in their unjust design.

5614. When greed or injustice is punished people are ready to throw the blame on others. In this case, one particular individual may have seen the moral guilt of defying the Will of Allah and the right of man, but if he shared in the enterprise in the hope of profit, he could not get out of all responsibility.

5615. If the repentance was true, there was hope. For Allah often turns a great evil to our good. If not true, they only added hypocrisy to their other sins.

33. Such is the Punishment
(In this life); but greater
Is the Punishment⁵⁶¹⁶
In the Hereafter,-
If only they knew!

كَذَلِكَ الْعَذَابُ وَالْعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

SECTION 2.

34. Verily, for the Righteous,
Are Gardens of Delight,⁵⁶¹⁷
With their Lord.

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٍ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٣٤﴾

35. Shall We then treat
The People of Faith
Like the People of Sin?⁵⁶¹⁸

أَفَتَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفَاجِرِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

36. What is the matter
With you? How judge ye?

مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

37. Or have ye a Book
Through which ye learn-

أَمْ لَكُمْ كِتَابٌ فِيهِ تَدْرُسُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

= The Parable presupposes that the garden came into the possession of selfish men, who were so puffed up with their good fortune that they forgot Allah. That meant that they also became harsh to their fellow-creatures. In their arrogance they plotted to get up early and defeat the claims of the poor at harvest time. They found their garden destroyed by a storm. Some reproached others, but those who sincerely repented obtained mercy. The "better garden" may have been the same garden, flourishing in a future season under Allah's gift of abundance.

5616. Even in this life the punishment for heedless or selfish arrogance and sin comes suddenly when we least expect it. But there is always room for Allah's Mercy if we sincerely repent. If the Punishment in this life seems to us so stupefying, how much worse will it be in the Hereafter, when the Punishment will not be only for a limited time, and the time for repentance will have passed?

5617. The Garden is a joy, but the joy of this Garden is the sense of nearness to Allah.

5618. The spiritual arrogance which rejects faith in Allah is perhaps the worst Sin, because it makes itself impervious to the Mercy of Allah, as a bed of clay is impervious to the absorption of water. It sets up its own standards and its own will, but how can it measure or bind the Will of Allah? It sets up its own fetishes,-idols, priests, gods, or godlings. The fetishes may be even God-given gifts or faculties. Intellect or Science, if pushed up to the position of idols. If they are made rivals to Allah, question them: Will they solve Allah's mysteries, or even the mysteries of Life and Soul?

38. That ye shall have,
Through it whatever
Ye choose?⁵⁶¹⁹
39. Or have ye Covenants
With Us on oath,⁵⁶²⁰
Reaching to the Day
Of Judgment, (providing)
That ye shall have
Whatever ye shall demand?
40. Ask thou of them,
Which of them will stand
Surety for that!
41. Or have they some
"Partners" (in Godhead)?⁵⁶²¹
Then let them produce
Their "partners"
If they are truthful!
42. The Day that the Shin⁵⁶²²
Shall be laid bare,

إِنْ لَكُمْ فِيهِ لَمَّا تَخْتَارُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

أَمْ لَكُمْ أَيْمَانٌ عَلَيْنَا بَالِغَةٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ
إِنْ لَكُمْ لَمَّا تَعْتَكُمُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

سَأَلْتَهُمْ أَتَيْتُمْ بِذَلِكَ زَعِيمٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ ظَلَمُوا بِأَسْرَارِهِمْ إِنْ كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

يَوْمَ يَكْشَفُ عَنْ سَائِي وَيُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ
فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

5619. It is clearly against both logic and justice that men of righteousness should have the same End as men of sin. Even in this life, man cannot command whatever he chooses, though he is allowed a limited freedom of choice. How can he expect such a thing under a reign of perfect Justice and Truth?

5620. Nor can the Pagans plead that they have any special Covenants with Allah which give them a favoured position above other mortals. The "Chosen Race" idea of the Jews is also condemned. It is quite true that a certain race or group, on account of special aptitude may be chosen by Allah to uphold His truth and preach it. But this is conditional on their following Allah's Law. As soon as they become arrogant and selfish, they lose that position. They cannot have a perpetual and unconditional lease till the Day of Judgment.

5621. "*Partners*" in Godhead: as in the doctrine of the Trinity, or indeed in any form of polytheism. Such a doctrine destroys the cardinal doctrine of the Unity of Allah.

5622. "*The Day that the Shin shall be laid bare*", that is, when men are confronted with the stark reality of the Day of Judgment. On that occasion men will be summoned to adoration, not necessarily in words, but by the logic of facts, when the Reality will be fully manifest: the Glory will be too dazzling for the Unbelievers, whose past deliberate refusal, when they had freedom to choose, and yet rejected, will stand in their way.

And they shall be summoned
To prostrate,
But they shall not be able,-

43. Their eyes will be⁵⁶²³

Cast down,-ignominy will
Cover them; seeing that
They had been summoned
Aforetime to bow in adoration,
While they were whole,⁵⁶²⁴
(And had refused).

خَشِيعَةً أَبْصَرُهُمْ تَرَهِقُهُمْ ذُلُّهُ وَقَدْ كَانُوا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ
وَهُمْ سَالِمُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

44. Then leave Me⁵⁶²⁵ alone

With such as reject
This Message: by degrees
Shall We draw them
On little by little
From directions they perceive
not.⁵⁶²⁶

فَذَرْنِي وَمَنْ يُكَذِّبُ هَذَا الْحَدِيثَ سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ
مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

45. A (long) respite will I

Grant them: truly
Powerful is My Plan.

وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ ﴿٦٥﴾

5623. Their past memories, combined with their present position, will then fill them with a sense of the deepest dismay and humiliation. See last note.

5624. *Sālimūn*: whole, in full possession of the power of judgment and will; not constrained, as they now will be, by the Punishment staring them full in the face.

5625. Notice the transition between "Me" and "We" in this verse, and again to "I" and "My" in the next verse. The first person plural ordinarily used in the holy Qur-ān as Allah's Word, is the plural of respect. In Royal decrees the first person plural is similarly used. When the first person singular is used, it marks some special personal relation, either of Mercy or favours (as in ii. 38 or ii. 150) or of punishment, as here. (Cf. n. 56. to ii. 38).

5626. Cf. vii. 182. and n. 1154-A. We must not be impatient if we see the wicked flourish. It may be that the very appearance of flourishing here may be a part of the Punishment. There may be an eventual punishment by a sort of Cataclysm; but evolutionary punishment is gradual and sure. Allah may punish wicked people by granting them respite and providing them worldly benefits in abundance, which encourages them in sin and transgression. So when they are finally seized by the Wrath of Allah they are caught suddenly and utterly unprepared, as it were, red handed while engrossed in disbelief, a life of impiety and open revolt against their Lord!

46. Or is it that thou dost
Ask them for a reward,⁵⁶²⁷
So that they are burdened
With a load of debt?—

47. Or that the Unseen⁵⁶²⁸
Is in their hands, so that
They can write it down?

48. So wait with patience
For the Command
Of thy Lord, and be not
Like the Companion⁵⁶²⁹
Of the Fish,—when he
Cried out in agony.

49. Had not Grace
From His Lord
Reached him, he
Would indeed have been
Cast off on the naked⁵⁶³⁰
Shore, in disgrace.

أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ أَجْرًا فَهُمْ مِنْ مَغْرَمٍ مُثْقَلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

أَمْ عِنْدَهُمُ الْغَيْبُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَى
وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ ﴿٦٨﴾

لَوْلَا أَنْ تَدَارَكَهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَاءِ
وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ ﴿٦٩﴾

5627. Cf. lii. 40, n. 5074. It costs the Unbelievers nothing to hear the Prophet, for the Prophet asks for no reward, and indeed suffers for their benefit. Al-Muṣṭafā is addressed in the first instance, but there is always a universal interpretation. The righteous man asks for no reward for his preaching or example: if he did, the value would be too great for the world to pay for. The Unbelievers behave as if they had the secret of the Unseen, but they are empty triflers, for, if they only tried to formulate spiritual laws, they would fail.

5628. Cf. lii. 41, n. 5075. The Unseen is certainly not within their knowledge or control. If it were, they could clearly write it down for their own guidance or the guidance of others. They should listen to the words of inspiration, sent by the Knower of all things.

5629. This was *Zun-Nūn*, or Jonah, for whom see n. 2744 to xxi. 87-88. Cf. also xxxvii. 139-148 and the notes there. Jonah was asked to preach to the people of Nineveh, a wicked city. He met with hostility and persecution, fled from his enemies, and took a boat. He was caught in a storm and thrown into the sea. He was swallowed by a fish or whale, but he repented in his living prison, and was forgiven. But the people of Nineveh were also forgiven, for they, too, repented. Here is a double allegory of Allah's mercy and forgiveness, and a command to patience, and complete and joyful submission to the Will of Allah.

5630. Cf. xxxvii. 145-146, and n. 4126.

50. Thus did his Lord⁵⁶³¹

Choose him and make him
Of the company
Of the Righteous.⁵⁶³²

فَاجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ وَفَجَعَلَهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

51. And the Unbelievers
Would almost trip thee up⁵⁶³³
With their eyes when they
Hear the Message; and they
Say: "Surely he is possessed!"

وَإِنْ يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَرِهِمْ

لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّهُ لَمَنْجُونٌ ﴿٥١﴾

52. But it is nothing less
Than a Message⁵⁶³⁴
To all the worlds.

وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

5631. Jonah was chosen by Allah's Grace and Mercy to be Allah's Prophet to Nineveh. If in his human frailty he lost a little patience, he suffered his punishment, but his true and sincere repentance and recognition of Allah's goodness and mercy restored him from his physical and mental distress, and from the obscuration of the spiritual Light in him.

5632. Cf. iv. 69, n. 586. In the beautiful Company of the Righteous there is room for all, of every grade of spiritual advancement, from the highest to the most ordinary. But as in democratic politics every citizen's rights and status have complete recognition, so, in this Company, the badge of Righteousness is the bond, even though there may be higher degrees of knowledge or experience.

5633. The eyes of evil men look at a good man as if they would "eat him up", or trip him up, or disturb him from his position of stability or firmness. They use all sorts of terms of abuse—"madman" or "one possessed by an evil spirit", and so on. Cf. lxviii. 2 above, and n. 5594. But the good man is unmoved, and takes his even course. The Message of Allah is true and will endure, and it is a Message to all Creation.

5634. This is the extreme antithesis to madness or demoniacal possession. So far from the holy Prophet uttering words disjointed or likely to harm people, he was bringing the Message of true Reality, which was to be the cure of all evil, in every kind of world. For the different kinds of worlds see n. 20 to i. 2.