

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *Al-R'ad*, 13

The chronological place of this Sūra and the general argument of Sūras x. to xv. has been described in the Introduction to S. x.

The special argument of this Sūra deals with that aspect of Allah's revelation of Himself to man and His dealings with him, which is concerned with certain contrasts which are here pointed out. There is the revelation of the Prophets, which comes in spoken words adapted to the language of the various men and groups of men to whom it comes; and there is the parallel revelation or Signs in the constant laws of external nature, on this earth and in the visible heavens. There is the contrast between recurring life and death already in the external world: why should men disbelieve in the life after death? They mock at the idea of punishment because it is deferred: but can they not see Allah's power and glory in thunder and the forces of nature? All creation praises Him: it is the good that endures and the evil that is swept away like froth or scum. Not only in miracles but in the normal working of the world, are shown Allah's power and mercy. Even here there are Signs of the working of his law: plot or plan as men will, it is Allah's Will that must prevail. This is illustrated in Joseph's story in the preceding Sūra.

Summary.—The Book of Revelation is true, and is confirmed by the Signs to be seen in visible nature. Allah Who created such mighty forces in outer nature can raise up man again after death. Allah's knowledge is all-compassing: so are His power and goodness (xiii. 1-18).

The righteous seek the pleasure of Allah and find Peace; the evil ones break His Law, cavil and dispute, and reject faith; the wrath of Allah will take them unawares, but in His Own good time (xiii. 19-31).

So was it with Prophets before: they were mocked, but the mockers were destroyed, while the righteous rejoiced and were established (xiii. 32-43).

Al-Ra'd, or Thunder

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

1. A.L.M.R.¹⁷⁹⁸ These are
The verses¹⁷⁹⁹
Of the Book: that which
Hath been revealed unto thee
From thy Lord is the Truth;
But most men believe not.
2. Allah is He Who raised
The heavens without any pillars¹⁸⁰⁰
That ye can see;
Then He established Himself
On the Throne.¹⁸⁰¹
He has subjected the sun
And the moon!
Each one runs (its course)
For a term appointed.
He doth regulate all affairs,¹⁸⁰²
Explaining the Signs in detail,

سُورَةُ الرَّعْدِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْمَرَّةَ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ وَالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ
مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَى
عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَحَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ
مُسَمًّى يُدِيرُ الْأُمُورَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ
رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢﴾

1798. For abbreviated Letters generally see Appendix I.

1799. Cf. x. 1, n. 1382.

1800. Should we construe the clause "that ye can see" to refer to "pillars" or "to the heavens"? Either is admissible, but I prefer the former. The heavens are supported on no pillars that we can see. What we see is the blue vault of heaven, but there are invisible forces or conditions created by Allah, which should impress us with His power and glory.

1801. Cf. x. 3, and n. 1386. We must not think that anything came into being by itself or carries out its functions by itself. Allah is the Creator from Whom everything has its life and being and through Whom everything is maintained and supported, even though fixed laws are established for its regulation and government. The "term appointed" limits the duration of their functioning: its ultimate return is to Allah, as its beginning proceeded from Allah.

1802. Cf. x. 31, n. 1425. Where the laws of nature are fixed, and everything runs according to its appointed course, the government and regulation behind it is still that of Allah. Where there is limited free will as in man, yet the ultimate source of man's faculties is Allah. Allah cares for His creatures. He does not, as in the idea of polytheistic Greece, sit apart on Olympus, careless of His creatures.

That ye may believe with certainty
In the meeting with your Lord.¹⁸⁰³

3. And it is He Who spread out
The earth, and set thereon
Mountains standing firm,
And (flowing) rivers: and fruit
Of every kind He made
In pairs, two and two.¹⁸⁰⁴
He draweth the Night as a veil¹⁸⁰⁵
O'er the Day. Behold, verily
In these things there are Signs
For those who consider!

4. And in the earth are tracts
(Diverse though) neighbouring,
And gardens of vines
And fields sown with corn,
And palm trees—growing¹⁸⁰⁶

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا
وَمِنْ كُلِّ الشَّجَرِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشَى اللَّيْلُ
الْنَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢﴾

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُتَجَاوِرَاتٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ
وَزَرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنَوَانٌ وَغَيْرُ صِنَوَانٍ يُسْقَى بِمَاءٍ
وَاحِدٍ وَنُقُضَلُ بَعْضُهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْثَلِ

1803. One manifestation of His caring for His creatures, even where a limited amount of free-will is granted for their development, is that He is careful to explain His Signs both in nature and in express and detailed revelation through His Messengers, lest man should have any doubts whether he has to return ultimately to his Lord and account for all his actions during the "term appointed," when he was given some initiative by way of trial and preparation. If man attends carefully to the Signs, he should have no doubt whatever.

1804. I think that this refers to sex in plants, and I see M.P. has translated accordingly. Plants like animals have their reproductive apparatus,—male stamens and female pistils. In most cases the same flower combines both stamens and pistils, but in some cases these organs are specialised in separate flowers, and in some cases, even in separate trees. The date-palm of Arabia and the Papaya of India, are instances of fruit trees which are uni-sexual.

1805. Cf. vii. 54 and n. 1032. The whole passage there may be compared with the whole passage here. Both their similarity and their variation show how closely reasoned each argument is, with expressions exactly appropriate to each occasion.

1806. Does "growing out of single roots or otherwise" qualify "palm trees" or "vines" and "corn" as well? The former construction is adopted by the classical Commentators: in which case the reference is to the fact either that two or more palm trees occasionally grow out of a single root, or that palm trees grow sometimes as odd trees and sometimes in great thick clusters. If the latter construction is adopted, the reference would be to the fact that date-palm (and palms generally) and some other plants arise out of a single tap-root, while the majority of trees arise out of a net-work of roots that spread out extensively. Here is adaptation to soil and water conditions,—another Sign or wonder of Creation.

Out of single roots or otherwise:

Watered with the same water,
Yet some of them We make
More excellent than others to eat.¹⁸⁰⁷

Behold, verily in these things
There are Signs for those
Who understand!

5. If thou dost marvel

(At their want of faith),
Strange is their saying:
"When we are (actually) dust.¹⁸⁰⁸
Shall we indeed then be
In a creation renewed?" They are
Those who deny their Lord! They
Are those round whose necks
Will be yokes (of servitude).¹⁸⁰⁹
They will be Companions
Of the Fire, to dwell therein
(For aye)!

6. They ask thee to hasten on

The evil in preference to the good¹⁸¹⁰

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

وَإِنْ تَعْجَبَ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ أَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا
أَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
بِرَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ الْأَعْلَىٰ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ
أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١﴾

وَسْتَعِجْلُونَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ

1807. The date-palm, the crops of food-grains, and the grape-vine are all fed by the same kind of water, yet how different the harvests which they yield! And that applies to all vegetation. The fruit or eatable produce may vary in shape, size, colour, flavour, etc., in endless variety.

1808. After seeing the Signs in nature and the Signs in revelation, it is indeed strange that people should deny their Creator. But if they admit the Signs of the Creator, Who works marvels before their very eyes every day, why should they doubt that when they are reduced to dust, they can be raised up again? If one creation is possible, what difficulty can there be in accepting a renewed creation? It becomes then a question of an obstinate and rebellious will, for which the punishment is described.

1809. *Aglāl*: yokes (of servitude): Cf. vii. 157 and n. 1128. The punishment may be conceived of in two stages: immediately, yokes of servitude to superstition, falsehood, etc., as against the freedom in Faith; and finally, the Fire which burns the very soul.

1810. The Unbelievers by way of a taunt say: "If there is a punishment, let us see it come down now." The answer to it is threefold. (1) Why do you want to see the punishment rather than the mercy of Allah? Which is better? (2) Have you not heard in history of terrible punishments for evil? And have you not before your very eyes seen examples of wickedness brought to book? (3) Allah works not only in justice and punishment, but also in mercy and forgiveness, and mercy and forgiveness come first.

Yet have come to pass,
Before them, (many) exemplary
Punishments! But verily
Thy Lord is full of forgiveness
For mankind for their wrong-doing.
And verily thy Lord
Is (also) strict in punishment.

7. And the Unbelievers say:

"Why is not a Sign sent down
To him from his Lord?"¹⁸¹¹
But thou art truly
A warner, and to every people
A guide.¹⁸¹²

SECTION 2.

8. Allah doth know what
Every female (womb) doth bear,¹⁸¹³
By how much the wombs
Fall short (of their time
Or number) or do exceed.
Every single thing is with Him
In (due) proportion.

9. He knoweth the Unseen
And that which is open:

وَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ وَإِنْ رَبِّكَ
لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ لِّلنَّاسِ عَلَى ظُلُمِهِمْ
وَإِنْ رَبُّكَ لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٦﴾

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ
مِّن رَّبِّهِ إِنَّهُمْ أَنتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ﴿٧﴾

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمِ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَىٰ وَمَا تَغِيضُ
أَلْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزِدُّهُ وَمَا تَصُدُّ
عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ ﴿٨﴾

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ

1811. After all the Signs that have just been mentioned it is mere fractionousness to say, "Bring down a Sign." Al-Muṣṭafā brought Signs and credentials as other Prophets did, and like them, refused to satisfy mere idle curiosity.

1812. The last sentence of this verse has usually been interpreted to mean that the Prophet's function was merely to warn, and that guidance was sent by Allah to every nation through its Prophets. I think the following interpretation is equally possible: 'it is itself a Sign that Al-Muṣṭafā should warn and preach and produce the Qur-ān, and the guidance which he brings is universal guidance, as from Allah.

1813. The female womb is just an example, a type, of extreme secrecy. Not even the female herself knows what is in the womb,—whether it is a male young or a female young, whether it is one or more, whether it is to be born short of the standard time or to exceed the standard time. But the most hidden and apparently unknowable things are clear to Allah's knowledge: there is no mere chance; all things are regulated by Allah in just measure and proportion. The general proposition comes in the last sentence: "every single thing is with Him in (due) proportion."

He is the Great,
The most High.¹⁸¹⁴

10. It is the same (to Him)
Whether any of you
Conceal his speech or
Declare it openly;
Whether he lie hid by night
Or walk forth freely by day.¹⁸¹⁵

11. For each (such person)¹⁸¹⁶
There are (angels) in succession,
Before and behind him;
They guard him by command
Of Allah. Verily never
Will Allah change the condition
Of a people until they
Change what is in themselves¹⁸¹⁷
But when (once) Allah willeth
A people's punishment,
There can be no
Turning it back, nor
Will they find, besides Him,
Any to protect

الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ ﴿١﴾

سَوَاءٌ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَسَرَ الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهِ
وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍ بِاللَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ ﴿١٠﴾

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَتٌ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ
مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا يَقُومُ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا
مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ يَقُومَ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ
وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ ﴿١١﴾

1814. A verse of matchless rhythm in Arabic.

1815. Our most hidden thoughts and motives are known to Him at all times.

1816. See last verse. Every person, whether he conceals or reveals his thoughts, whether he skulks in darkness or goes about by day, -all are under Allah's watch and ward. His grace encompasses everyone, and again and again protects him, if he will only take the protection, from harm and evil. If in his folly he thinks he can secretly take some pleasure or profit, he is wrong, for recording angels record all his thoughts and deeds.

1817. Allah is not intent on punishment. He created man virtuous and pure; he gave him intelligence and knowledge; he surrounded him with all sorts of instruments of His grace and mercy. If, in spite of all this, man distorts his own will and goes against Allah's Will, yet is Allah's forgiveness open to him if he will take it. It is only when he has made his own sight blind and changed his own nature or soul away from the beautiful mould in which Allah formed it, that Allah's Wrath will descend on him and the favourable position in which Allah placed him will be changed. When once the punishment comes, there is no turning it back. None of the things which he relied upon - other than Allah - can possibly protect him.

12. It is He Who doth show you
The lightning, by way
Both of fear and of hope:¹⁸¹⁸
It is He Who doth raise up
The clouds, heavy
With (fertilising) rain!

هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمْ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا
وَيُنْشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ ﴿١٢﴾

13. Nay, thunder repeateth His
praises,¹⁸¹⁹
And so do the angels, with awe:¹⁸²⁰
He flingeth the loud-voiced
Thunder-bolts, and therewith
He striketh whomsoever He will...
Yet these (are the men)
The while they are
Disputing about Allah
He is Mighty in Power.¹⁸²¹

وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ
وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْحَالِ ﴿١٣﴾

14. To Him is due the true prayer¹⁸²²
Any others that they
Call upon besides Him hear them
No more than if they were
To stretch forth their hands
For water to reach their mouths
But it reaches them not:

لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ
لَهُمْ دَعْوَتُهُمْ إِلَّا كَبَسِطَ كَفْتَهُ إِلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُغَ فَاهُ
وَمَا هُوَ بِبَلِّغِهِ وَمَا دَعَا الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ ﴿١٤﴾

1818. Here then is the climax to the answer of the sarcastic challenge of the Unbelievers for punishment, in language of great sublimity. Why look to evil rather than to good?—to punishment rather than to mercy?—to the fear in the force and fire of the lightning rather than to the hope of good and abundant crops in the rain which will come behind the lightning clouds?

1819. Nay, thunder itself, which may frighten you, is but a tame and beneficent force before Him, declaring His praises, like the rest of creation. THUNDER thus aptly gives the name to this Sūra of contrasts, where what we may think terrible is shown to be really a submissive instrument of good in Allah's hands.

1820. And the angels, whom we think to be beautiful creatures of power and glory nearest to Allah, yet feel reverence and awe even as they praise His holy name.

1821. Who is puny man, to call Allah in question? Cf. some variations on this theme in the Book of Job, e.g. chapters 38 to 41.

1822. *Hāqq*=truth; right; what is due, befitting, proper. All these meanings are to be understood here. If we worship anything other than Allah (whether it is idols, stars, powers of nature, spirits, or deified men, or Self, or Power, or Wealth, Science or Art, Talent or Intellect), our worship is both foolish and futile.

For the prayer of those
Without Faith is nothing
But vain prayer.¹⁸²³

15. Whatever beings¹⁸²⁴ there are
In the heavens and the earth
Do prostrate themselves to Allah¹⁸²⁵
—with good-will

Or in spite of themselves:¹⁸²⁶
So do their shadows¹⁸²⁷
In the mornings and evenings.

16. Say: "Who is the Lord and
Sustainer¹⁸²⁸
Of the heavens and the earth?"
Say: "(It is) Allah."
Say: "Do ye then take
(For worship) protectors other

وَلِلّٰهِ يَسْجُدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ طَوْعًا
وَكَرْهًا وَظَلَّلَتْهُمْ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاَصَالِ ﴿١٥﴾

قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ قُلِ اللّٰهُ قُلْ اَفَاَتَّخِذُكُمْ
مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ اَوْلِيَاءَ لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ لِنَفْسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا
قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ اَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي
الظُّلُمٰتُ وَالنُّوْرُ اَمْ جَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَاءَ خَلَقُوْا كَخَلْقِهٖ

1823. Without Faith, it is obvious that prayer or worship has no meaning whatever. It is but an aberration of the mind. But there is a deeper meaning. You may have false faith, as in superstitions or in worshipping things other than Allah, as explained in the last note. In that case, too, you are pursuing mere phantoms of the mind. When you come to examine it, it is mere imbecility or futility. Worship and prayer are justified only to Allah, the One True God.

1824. Notice that the original of what I have translated "whatever being" is the personal pronoun *man*, not *mā*. This then refers to beings with a personality, e.g., angels, spirits, human beings, and possibly other things of objective (not necessarily material) existence, as contrasted with their Shadows or Simulacra or Appearances, or Phantasms, mentioned at the end of the verse. Both these Beings and their Shadows are subject to the Will of Allah. See notes 1825 and 1827.

1825. "Prostrate themselves": the posture means that they recognise their subjection to Allah's Will and Law, whether they wish it or not.

1826. "In spite of themselves": Satan and Evil. They would like to get away from the control of the All-good Allah, but they cannot, and they have to acknowledge His supremacy and lordship over them.

1827. Even the Shadows—creations of the Imagination, or projections from other things and dependent on the other things for their existence, as shadows are to substance—even such shadows are subject to Allah's Laws and Will, and cannot arise or have any effect on our minds except by His permission. The Shadows are longest and therefore most prominent when the sun is level, and tend to disappear as the sun approaches the zenith. But even when they are longest and most prominent, they are still subject to Allah's Will and Law.

1828. The meaning of "Rabb" is explained in n. 20, to i. 2.

Than Him, such as have
 No power either for good
 Or for harm to themselves?"¹⁸²⁹
 Say: "Are the blind equal
 With those who see?
 Or the depths of darkness
 Equal with Light?"
 Or do they assign to Allah¹⁸³⁰
 Partners who have created
 (Anything) as He has created,
 So that the creation seemed
 To them similar?
 Say: "Allah is the Creator
 Of all things: He is
 The One, the Supreme and
 Irresistible."

فَتَشْبِهُ الْخَالِقُ عَلَيْهِمُ قُلُوبُ اللَّهِ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٦٦﴾

17. He sends down water¹⁸³¹
 From the skies, and the channels
 Flow, each according to its measure:

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا
 فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِعًا وَمِمَّا يُؤْتُونَ عَلَيْهِ

1829. Cf. v. 76.

1830. This verse may be analysed into six parts, each two parts going together like question and answer. Each except the fifth part is introduced by the word "Say", which is equivalent in old Arabic to inverted commas. The fifth part, "or do they assign....similar?" is not introduced by "Say", because it is in the indirect form.

(1) Who is the Lord and Sustainer of the Worlds? It is Allah, (2) And yet you worship other gods? No, no one can be equal to Him, any more than darkness is equal to light. (3) Your other gods have created nothing by which you can be misled? No indeed; He is the only Creator, the One and Supreme.

1831. This verse is full of parables. (1) It is Allah Who sends rain and sends it to all. See how it flows in different channels according to their capacities. Some are sluggish; some have a swift current. Some form great rivers and irrigate wide tracts of country; some are clear crystal streams, perhaps in hilly tracts, with beds of clean pebbles which you can see through the water. Some produce delicious edible fish; and some are infested by crocodiles or injurious monsters. And there are degrees and degrees among brooks, streams, lakes, rivers, and seas. So with the rain of Allah's mercy and the knowledge and wisdom and guidance which He sends. All can receive it. Different ones will respond according to their capacities. (2) In the physical world, water is pure and beneficial. But froth and scum will gather according to local conditions. As the floods will carry off the scum and purify the water, so will the flood of Allah's spiritual mercy carry away our spiritual scum and purify the water. (3) The froth may make a greater show on the surface, but it will not last. So will there be frothy knowledge, which will disappear, but Allah's Truth will endure.

But the torrent bears away
The foam that mounts up
To the surface. Even so,
From that (ore) which they heat¹⁸³²
In the fire, to make ornaments
Or utensils therewith,
There is a scum likewise.
Thus doth Allah (by parables)
Show forth Truth and falsehood.
For the scum disappears
Like froth cast out;
While that which is for the good
Of mankind remains
On the earth. Thus doth Allah
Set forth parables.

18. For those who respond
To their Lord, are (all)
Good things. But those
Who respond not to Him,-
Even if they had all
That is in the heavens
And on earth, and as much more.
(In vain) would they offer it¹⁸³³
For ransom. For them
Will the reckoning be terrible:
Their abode will be Hell,-
What a bed of misery!

SECTION 3.

19. Is then one who doth know
That that which hath been
Revealed unto thee
From thy Lord is the Truth,

فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلَهُ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ
اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً
وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ
كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ ﴿٧﴾

لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَالَّذِينَ
لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُمْ مِثْلَ
وِشْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ
سُوءُ الْحِسَابِ وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسَّ لِلْهَادِ ﴿٨﴾

﴿٩﴾ أَفَمَنْ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ
هُوَ أَعْمَىٰ ۖ إِنَّمَا يَنْذَرُكَ أَتُوبُوا أَلَا تَنبَهُ ﴿١٠﴾

1832. In continuation of the last note, the fourth parable is that of metal ores: (4) the ore is full of baser admixture, but the fire will separate the gold from the dross for ornaments, or (5) some metal of household utility, with which you make every-day utensils, which the fire will separate from admixtures which you do not want. So the fire of Allah's test, either by adversity or by affluence, will search out the true metal in us and reject the dross. it will show us what is valuable or what is useful, all sorts of scum and vanity which we collect and miscall knowledge.

1833. Cf. iii 91 and x. 54.

Like one who is blind?¹⁸³⁴

It is those who are
Endued with understanding
That receive admonition;-

20. Those who fulfil the Covenant
Of Allah and fail not
In their plighted word;

21. Those who join together
Those things which Allah
Hath commanded to be joined,¹⁸³⁵
Hold their Lord in awe,
And fear the terrible reckoning;

22. Those who patiently persevere,
Seeking the countenance of their
Lord;
Establish regular prayers; spend,
Out of (the gifts) We have bestowed
For their sustenance, secretly
And openly; and turn off Evil
With good: for such there is
The final attainment
Of the (Eternal) Home,-¹⁸³⁶

23. Gardens of perpetual bliss:
They shall enter there,
As well as the righteous
Among their fathers, their spouses
And their offspring¹⁸³⁷

الَّذِينَ يُوْفُونَ بَعْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَنْفُضُونَ الْعَيْثَ

وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ

وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ

وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ

وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَدْرُءُونَ

بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ

وَذُرِّيَّتِهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يُدْخِلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ

1834. In this section the contrast between Faith and Righteousness on the one hand and Infidelity and Evil on the other is set out. The righteous man is known as one who (1) receives admonition; (2) is true to his covenants; (3) follows the universal Religion of Faith and Practice joined together; (4) is patient and persevering in seeking Allah; and in practical matters he is known to be; (5) regular in prayer; (6) generous in true charity, whether open or secret; and (7) not revengeful, but anxious to turn off evil with good, thus breaking the chain of evil which tends to perpetuate itself.

1835. That is, join faith with practice, love of God with love of man, and respect for all Prophets alike, i.e., follow the right Religion, and not odd bits of it.

1836. Their journey in this life was at best a sojourn. The Heaven is their eternal Home, which is further prefigured in the two following verses.

1837. The relationships of this life are temporal, but love in righteousness is eternal.

And angels shall enter unto them
From every gate
(with the salutation)

24. "Peace unto you for that ye
Persevered in patience! Now
How excellent is the final Home!"

25. But those who break
The Covenant of Allah, after
Having plighted their word thereto,
And cut asunder those things¹⁸³⁸
Which Allah has commanded
To be joined, and work mischief
In the land; - on them
Is the Curse; for them
Is the terrible Home!¹⁸³⁹

26. Allah doth enlarge, or grant
By (strict) measure, the
Sustenance¹⁸⁴⁰
(Which He giveth) to whomso
He pleaseth. (The worldly) rejoice
In the life of this world:
But the life of this world
Is but little comfort
Compared to the Hereafter.¹⁸⁴¹

SECTION 4.

27. The Unbelievers say: "Why

سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٤﴾

وَالَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ
وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ
فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ ﴿٢٥﴾

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ وَفَرَحُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا مَتَاعٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ

1838. This is the opposite of the things explained in xiii. 21 above, n. 1835.

1839. This is in contrast to the state of the blessed, described in xiii. 22-24 above. The Curse is the opposite of the Bliss, and the Terrible Home is the opposite of the Eternal Home, the Gardens of perpetual bliss.

1840. Allah, the Sustainer and Cherisher of all His creatures, gives sustenance to all. To some He grants it in abundance; to others He gives it in strict measure. No one can question Him, for His Will is supreme, and it is the measure of all good.

1841. Cf. ix. 38. The meaning here may also be: This present life is just a furniture, a convenience, a stepping stone, a probation, for the life to come. In itself it is less important than the Hereafter.

كَذَلِكَ أَرْسَلْنَاكَ فِي أُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا أُمَمٌ
لِيَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ

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In order that thou mightest
Rehearse unto them what We
Send down unto thee by inspiration;
Yet do they reject (Him),
The Most Gracious!
Say: "He is my Lord!
There is no god but He!
On Him is my trust,
And to Him do I turn!"¹⁸⁴⁶

31. If there were a Qur-ān
With which mountains were moved,
Or the earth were cloven asunder,
Or the dead were made to speak,
(This would be the one!)
But, truly, the Command is
With Allah in all things!¹⁸⁴⁷
Do not the Believers know,
That, had Allah (so) willed,
He could have guided
All mankind (to the Right)?

But the Unbelievers,—never
Will disaster cease to seize
Them for their (ill) deeds,
Or to settle close to their homes,
Until the promise of Allah
Come to pass, for, verily,
Allah will not fail
In His promise.¹⁸⁴⁸

يَا رَحْمَنُ قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ
وَإِلَيْهِ مَتَابِ ﴿٢٠﴾

وَلَوْ أَنَّ قُرْآنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ أَوْ قُطِعَتْ
بِهِ الْأَرْضُ أَوْ كَلِمَةٌ بِهِ الْمَوْتُ بَلْ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ جَمِيعًا
أَفَلَمْ يَأْتِنِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ لَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَهْدَى
النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا تُصِيبُهُمْ
بِمَا صَنَعُوا قَارِعَةٌ أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِنْ دَارِهِمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ
وَعْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿٢١﴾

1846. Faith tells us that no amount of opposition from Unbelievers can ever stop Allah's Plan.

1847. Everything is possible and in Allah's power. His Plan is beneficent and all-embracing. But it is not for His creatures to dictate to Him, or demand what He should do, or how He should do it. The Command is with Allah in all things. The Believers know His omnipotence, and they also know that He will order His world for the best.

1848. Let not the Unbelievers think that if they seem to prosper for a time, that is the end of the matter. They are warned about three things. (1) their ill deeds must carry evil consequences for them all the time, though they may not perceive them for a certain time. (2) Their homes, their places of resort, the circles in which they move, will also be haunted by their ill deeds and their consequences. For evil makes a complex =

SECTION 5.

32. Mocked were (many)

messengers¹⁸⁴⁹

Before thee: but I granted
Respite to the Unbelievers,
And finally I punished them:
Then how (terrible) was My
requit!¹⁸⁵⁰

وَلَقَدْ أَسْتَهْزِئُ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَمَلَيْتُ لِلَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ﴿٣٢﴾

33. Is then He Who standeth

Over every soul (and knoweth)
All that it doth,
(Like any others)? And yet
They ascribe partners to Allah.
Say: "But name them!"¹⁸⁵¹
Is it that ye will
Inform Him of something
He knoweth not on earth,
Or is it (just) a show
Of words?" Nay! to those
Who believe not, their devising¹⁸⁵²

أَفَمَن هُوَ قَائِمٌ عَلَى كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَجَعَلُوا
لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ قُلْ سَمُّوهُمْ أَمْ تُنَبِّئُونَهُ بِمَا لَا يَعْْلَمُ
فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ يَبْظَاهِرُونَ الْقَوْلَ بَلْ زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا مَكْرُهُمْ وَصُدُّوا عَنِ السَّبِيلِ
وَمَن يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن هَادٍ ﴿٣٣﴾

of its environment. The walls of Jericho, when they fall, must bring down all Jericho in its ruins. (3) The ultimate Disaster, the final Reckoning, must come, for Allah never fails in His promise. True values must eventually be restored: the good to the good, and the evil to the evil.

The Commentators draw illustrations from the life of the Prophet, his exile from Makkah, and his restoration. A similar miracle works in all history. But the Command is with Allah.

1849. Cf. vi. 10.

1850. The punishment was in many cases deferred. But when it did come, how terrible and exemplary it was!

1851. Cf. xii. 40. 'You have but to name your false gods, and you will see that they are nothing but names. There is no reality behind them, whereas Allah is the One great Reality. He penetrates everything through and through and knows all things. Do you dare to tell Him of something on earth that He does not know? Or is it just a trick or a show of words?

1852. All pretences and fancies seem attractive to their inventors, but alas! they are a great obstruction to the Path of Religion and Truth. However, if by their contumacy, they have cut themselves off from Allah's grace, who can guide them or reclaim them from their errors?

Seems pleasing, but they are
Kept back (thereby) from the Path.
And those whom Allah leads
Astray, no one can guide

34. For them is a Penalty
In the life of this world,¹⁸⁵³
But harder, truly, is the
Chastisement
Of the Hereafter: and defender
Have they none against Allah.

35. The parable of the Garden
Which the righteous are promised!-
Beneath it flow rivers:
Perpetual is the fruits thereof¹⁸⁵⁴
And the shade therein:¹⁸⁵⁵
Such is the End
Of the Righteous; and the End
Of Unbelievers is the Fire.¹⁸⁵⁶

36. Those to whom We have
Given the Book¹⁸⁵⁷ rejoice
At what hath been revealed

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلِعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَقُّ
وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَاكِفٍ ﴿٣١﴾

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وَعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ تَجْرِي
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ أُكُلُهَا دَائِمٌ وَظِلُّهَا تِلْكَ
عُقْبَى الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَعُقْبَى
الْكَافِرِينَ النَّارُ ﴿٣٥﴾

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنَتْهُمْ أَلْكِتَابُ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ
إِلَيْكَ وَمِنَ الْأَخْرَابِ مَنْ يُنْكِرُ بَعْضَهُ قُلْ إِنَّمَا

1853. The consequences of sin may be felt in this life itself, but they are nothing compared to the final penalties in the life to come.

1854. For the comprehensive meaning of the root *akala* (literally "to eat"), see v. 66, n. 776. In its derived meaning it means fruit and enjoyment of all kinds, spiritual as well as other. The joys of heaven are not like the joys of the earth, which fade away or cloy. The joys of heaven are pure, lasting, and without any of the drawbacks which we associate with the joys of the sense.

1855. *Zillun*: literally shade, hence, shelter, protection, security. All these meanings are implied. Shade is one of the delights of a garden. Cf. iv. 57 and n. 579.

1856. In this, as in other places, the Fire is contrasted with the Garden, as Misery is contrasted with Bliss. We can also imagine other incidents in contrast with those of the Garden, e.g., with the Fire will be drought, aridity, thirst, instead of beautiful rivers; pain and suffering, instead of perpetual delight; no protection against the fierceness of the heat, as contrasted with the cool shades ever deepening as you proceed in the Garden.

1857. *The Book*: in a general sense, Revelation. "Those to whom the Book hath been given" are both (1) the People of the Book of previous revelations, who study the new Revelation in Arabic without prejudice and find in it confirmation of what their ancestors had received and believed in it, and (2) the Muslims who receive the Qur-ān with such joy.

Unto thee: but there are
Among the clans¹⁸⁵⁸ those who reject
A part thereof. Say:
"I am commanded to worship
Allah, and not to join partners
With Him. Unto Him
Do I call, and
Unto Him is my return."

37. Thus have We revealed it
To be a judgment of authority¹⁸⁵⁹
In Arabic. Wert thou to follow
Their (vain) desires after the
knowledge
Which hath reached thee,
Then wouldst thou find
Neither protector nor defender¹⁸⁶⁰
Against Allah.

SECTION 6.

38. We did send messengers
Before thee, and appointed
For them wives and children:¹⁸⁶¹

أَمَرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَلَا أَشْرِكَ بِهِ إِلَهِهٖ أَدْعُوٓا
وَالِإِلَهِهٖ مَعَابٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أُنزِلَتْهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا وَلِيْنَ أَتَّبِعَتْ
أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ
مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا وَاقٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا
وَذُرِيَّةً وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِغَايَةٍ

1858. *Aḥzāb* (plural of *ḥizb* = parties, sects, troops, clans. The reference may be to the clans mentioned in xxx. 20 and 22 (that whole Sūra is called *Aḥzāb*). But we can understand it in a perfectly general sense. Among all sections of the people there are persons who would receive a portion of Allah's truth but reject whatever does not suit them or fall in with their selfish aims or vain desires. The proper answer to them is: Surely, Allah's command is universal,—to worship and serve Him and refuse to bend the knee to any other; the man of God finds his staff and support in it; but he must invite all to share in its blessings; it came from Allah, and to Allah shall we all return.

1859. The Qur-ān is in Arabic; therefore the Arabs, among whom it was promulgated, could have no difficulty in understanding its precepts and using it in judging of right and wrong in all their affairs. But it is also universal; therefore no one should give preference to his own vain fancies against this authoritative declaration.

1860. Cf. ii. 120. The variation is in the single word "*Wāq*" here in place of "*Naṣīr*" in ii. 120. In each case the apt word is chosen not only for the rhythm in its own passage but for the general meaning in the Argument.

1861. All the Prophets of whom we have any detailed knowledge, except one, had wives and children. The exception is Jesus the son of Mary. But his life was incomplete; his ministry barely lasted three years; his mission was limited; and he was not called upon =

And it was never the part
Of a messenger to bring a Sign
Except as Allah permitted¹⁸⁶²
(Or commanded). For each period
Is an appointment).¹⁸⁶³

39. Allah doth blot out
Or confirm what He pleaseth:
With Him is
The Mother of the Book.¹⁸⁶⁴

40. Whether We shall show thee
(Within thy life-time)
Part of what We promised them
Or take to Us thy soul
(Before it is all accomplished).
Thy duty is to make
(The Message) reach them:
It is Our part
To call them to account.

41. See they not that We
Gradually reduce the land
From its

إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ ﴿٣٨﴾

يَمْحُو اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ وَعِنْدَهُ
أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ ﴿٣٩﴾

وَإِنْ مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ
فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤٠﴾

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا وَاللَّهُ

= to deal with the many-sided problems that arise in a highly organised society or State. We pay equal respect to him, because he was Allah's Messenger; but that is not to say that his Message covers the same universal ground as that of Al-Muṣṭafā. There is no reproach for a normal human being if he lives a normal human life; there is glory if he beautifies it and sets a nobler example of virtue than other men, as did Al-Muṣṭafā.

1862. No Prophet performed any Miracle or showed forth any "Signs," except as Allah willed. Allah's Will (*Mashīyat*) is an all-wise, universal Plan, which is not formed for the benefit of one tribe or *millat* or of one age or country (see also next verse). The greatest Miracle in history was and is the Qur-ān. We can apprehend its beauty and grandeur to-day as much as did the people of Al-Muṣṭafā's day,—even more, as our collective knowledge of nature and of Allah's creation has increased.

1863. *Kitab*: means "a Law decreed" or "a Decree established."

1864. *Umm-ul-Kitāb*: Mother of the Book: the original foundation of all revelation; the Essence of Allah's Will and Law. Cf. iii. 7, and n. 347.

Outlying borders?¹⁸⁶⁵ (Where) Allah
Commands, there is none
To put back His command:
And He is Swift
In calling to account.

42. Those before them did (also)
Devise plots; but in all things
Allah is the devising altogether.¹⁸⁶⁶
He knoweth the doings
Of every soul: and soon
Will the Unbelievers know
Who gets home in the End.

43. The Unbelievers say: "No
messenger¹⁸⁶⁷
Art thou." Say: "Enough
For a witness between me
And you is Allah, and such
As have knowledge of the Book."¹⁸⁶⁸

يَحْكُمُ لَا مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ سَرِيعُ
الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤١﴾

وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلَّهِ الْمَكْرُ جَمِيعًا
يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ وَسِعَعِلُ الْكَفَرِ
لِمَنْ عُقِبِيَ الدَّارِ ﴿٤٢﴾

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلًا قُلْ
كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ
وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ ﴿٤٣﴾

1865. In the Prophet's ministry at Makkah, the Most stiff-necked opposition came from the seat and centre of power in Makkah. The humbler people—the fringe of Makkan society—came in readily, as also did some tribes round about Makkah. After the Hijrat there was a hard struggle between Makkah and Madinah and at last the bloodless conquest of Makkah in A.H. 8 made the Pagan structure finally collapse, though it had already been sapped to its foundations. So, generally, Truth finds easiest entrance through the humble and lowly, and not in the beginning at the headquarters of power, but in the fulness of time it makes its way everywhere with irresistible force.

1866. Cf. iii. 54 and n. 393.

1867. The enemies of Islam have to acknowledge that Al-Muṣṭafā was a great and noble character, but they deny his Prophethood. He could point to his credentials from Allah in the work which he achieved, and the Qur-ān which he brought.

1868. That is, those who have knowledge of revelation generally will recognise Allah's revelation in the holy Qur-ān. An alternative reading is "*min 'indi-hi*", which is written the same in Arabic, with only three vowel points different. If we adopt that, the last clause will be: "and from Him is (all) knowledge of the Book": i.e., 'as all knowledge of the Book comes from Allah, the Qur-ān also bears witness to me'.