

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *As-Ṣaff*, 61.

This is the fifth Sūra of the series of short Madinah Sūras beginning with S. lvii. Its subject-matter is the need for discipline, practical work, and self-sacrifice in the case of the Ummat. Its date is uncertain, but it was probably shortly after the battle of Uhud, which was fought in Shawwāl. A.H. 3.

Summary.—Allah's Glory shines through all Creation: but what discipline can you show to back your words with action? What lessons can you learn from the stories of Moses and Jesus? Help the Cause, and Allah's help will come with glorious results (lxi. 1-14).

Aṣ-Ṣaff, or Battle Array.

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

1. Whatever is ⁵⁴³¹
In the heavens and
On earth, declares
The Praises and Glory
Of Allah: for He is
The Exalted in Might,
The Wise.
2. O ye who believe!
Why say ye that
Which ye do not?⁵⁴³²
3. Grievously hateful is it
In the sight of Allah
That ye say that
Which ye do not.
4. Truly Allah loves those
Who fight in His Cause
In battle array, as if⁵⁴³³
They were a solid
Cemented structure.

سُورَةُ الصَّفِّ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

سَبِّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١﴾

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ
مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢﴾

كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا
مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣﴾

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ
صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَنٌ مَرْصُوصٌ ﴿٤﴾

5431. This verse is identical with lix. 1. The latter illustrated the theme of the wonderful working of Allah's providence in defeating the wiles of His enemies. Here the same theme is illustrated by showing the need for unshaken discipline if we are to receive the help of Allah.

5432. At Uhud there was some disobedience and therefore breach of discipline. People had talked much, but had failed to back up their resolution in words with firmness in action. See n. 442 to iii. 121. But on all occasions when men's deeds are not commensurate with their words, their conduct is odious in the sight of Allah, and it is only due to Allah's Mercy if they are saved from disaster.

5433. A battle array, in which a large number of men stand, march, or hold together against assault as if they were a solid wall, is a striking example of order, discipline, cohesion, and courage. "A solid cemented structure" is even a better simile than the usual "solid wall" as the "structure" or building implies a more diversified organisation held together in unity and strength, each part contributing strength in its own way, and the whole held together not like a mass but like a living organism. Cf. also xxxvii. 1 and n. 4031.

5. And remember, Moses said⁵⁴³⁴
To his people: "O my people!
Why do ye vex and insult
Me, though ye know
That I am the messenger
Of Allah (sent) to you?"
Then when they went wrong,⁵⁴³⁵
Allah let their hearts go wrong.
For Allah guides not those
Who are rebellious transgressors.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَتَقَوَّمُوا لِمَ تُؤْذُونَنِي
وَقَدْ نَعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ فَلَمَّا
زَاغُوا زَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي
الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٥﴾

6. And remember, Jesus,
The son of Mary, said:
"O Children of Israel!
I am the messenger of Allah
(Sent) to you,⁵⁴³⁶ confirming⁵⁴³⁷
The Taurat (which came)
Before me, and giving
Glad Tidings of a messenger
To come after me,
Whose name shall be Ahmad."⁵⁴³⁸
But when he came to them

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ
يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدٌ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا
هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٦﴾

5434. The people of Moses often rebelled against him, vexed his spirit, and insulted him. See xxxiii. 69, n. 3774, and (in the Old Testament) Num xii. 1-13. They did it not through ignorance, but from a selfish, perverse, and rebellious spirit, for which they received punishment. The Ummat of Islam should remember and take note of it, and should avoid any deviation from the Law and Will of Allah.

5435. The sinner's own will deviates, i.e., goes off from the right way, and he does wrong. That means that he shuts off Allah's grace. Allah then, after his repeated rebellion, withdraws the protecting Grace from him, and the sinner's heart is tainted: there is "a disease in his heart", which is the centre of his being: his spiritual state is ruined. Allah's guidance is withdrawn from him.

5436. The mission of Jesus was to his own people, the Jews. Cf. Matt. x. 5-6. See also Matt. xv. 24: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of Israel;" also Matt. xv. 26: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

5437. Cf. Matt. v. 17.

5438. "Ahmad", or "Muhammad, the Praised One, is almost a translation of the Greek word *Periclytos*. In the present Gospel of John. xiv. 16, xv. 26, and xvi. 7, the word "Comforter" in the English version is for the Greek word "*Paracletos*", which means "Advocate", "one called to the help of another, a kind friend", rather than "Comforter". =

With Clear Signs,⁵⁴³⁹

They said, "This is
Evident sorcery!"

7. Who doth greater wrong
Than one who forges
Falsehood against Allah,
Even as he is being invited⁵⁴⁴⁰
To Islām? And Allah
Guides not those
Who do wrong.

8. Their intention is
To extinguish Allah's Light
(By blowing) with their mouths.⁵⁴⁴¹
But Allah will complete
His Light,
Even though the Unbelievers
May detest (it).

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعَىٰ

إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٧﴾

يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ

وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨﴾

= Our doctors contend that Paracleots is a corrupt reading for Periclytos, and that in their original saying of Jesus there was a prophecy of our holy Prophet *Ahmad* by name. Even if we read Paraclete, it would apply to the holy Prophet, who is "a Mercy for all creatures" (xxi. 107) and "most kind and merciful to the Believers" (ix. 128). See also n. 416 to iii. 81.

5439. Our holy Prophet was foretold in many ways; and when he came, he showed forth many Clear Signs, for his whole life from beginning to end was one vast miracle. He fought and won against odds. Without learning from men he taught the highest wisdom. He melted hearts that were hard, and he strengthened hearts that were tender and required support. In all his sayings and doings men of discernment could see the working of Allah's hand; yet the ignorant Unbelievers called it all Sorcery!—called that unreal which became the most solid fact of human history!

5440. It is wrong in any case to uphold falsehoods and debasing superstitions, but it is doubly wrong when these are put forward in rivalry or opposition to the light of eternal Unity and Harmony which is Islam. Allah sends His guidance freely, but withdraws His Grace from those who wilfully do wrong.

5441. Allah's Light is unquenchable. A foolish, ignorant person who thinks of extinguishing it is like a rustic who wants to blow out electric light as he might blow out a rush candle! "*With their mouths*" also implies the babble and cackle of Ignorance against Allah's Truth. The more the foolish ones try to quench Allah's Light, the clearer it shines, to shame them!

9. It is He Who has sent
His Messenger with Guidance
And the Religion of Truth.
That He make it prevail
Over all religion,⁵⁴⁴²
Even though the Pagans
May detest (it).

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ
عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٩﴾

SECTION 2.

10. O ye who believe!
Shall I lead you
To a bargain⁵⁴⁴³ that will
Save you from
A grievous Chastisement?—
11. That ye believe in Allah
And His Messenger, and that
Ye strive (your utmost)
In the Cause of Allah,
With your wealth
And your persons:
That will be best for you,
If ye but knew!⁵⁴⁴⁴

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَخْرَجٍ يُنَجِّيكُمْ
مِّنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ ﴿١٠﴾

تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ
وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

5442. "Over all religion": in the singular: not over all other religions, in the plural. There is really only one true Religion, the Message of Allah submission to the Will of Allah: this is called Islam. It was the religion preached by Moses and Jesus; it was the religion of Abraham, Noah, and all the prophets, by whatever name it may be called. If people corrupt that pure light, and call their religions by different names, we must bear with them, and we may allow the names for convenience. But Truth must prevail over all. See also ix. 33, n. 1290, and lxviii. 28, n. 4912.

5443. *Tijarat*: bargain, trade, traffic, transaction: something given or done, in return for something which we desire to get. What we give or do on our part is described in verse 11 below, and what we get is described in verse 12. It is truly a wonderful bargain: what we are asked to give is so little; what we are promised in return is so much. There comes Allah's unbounded Bounty and Munificence. Cf. also ix. 111, where the bargain is stated in another way.

5444. It would indeed be a great and wonderful bargain to give so little and get so much, if we only knew and understood the comparative value of things—the sacrifice of our fleeting advantages for forgiveness, the love of Allah, and eternal bliss.

12. He will forgive you
Your sins, and admit you
To Gardens beneath which
Rivers flow, and to beautiful
Mansions in Gardens
Of Eternity: that is indeed
The supreme Triumph.

يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ
ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٢﴾

13. And another (favour
Will He bestow), which ye⁵⁴⁴⁵
Do love,—help from Allah
And a speedy victory.
So give the Glad Tidings
To the Believers.

وَأُخْرَىٰ يُحِبُّونَهَا نَصْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ
وَبَشِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

14. O ye who believe!
Be ye helpers of Allah:⁵⁴⁴⁶
As said Jesus the son of Mary⁵⁴⁴⁷
To the Disciples, "Who will be
My helpers to (the work
Of) Allah?" Said the Disciples,
"We are Allah's helpers!"
Then a portion of the Children
Of Israel believed, and
A portion disbelieved:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى
ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ
نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ فَأَمَّا بَعْضُ النَّاسِ فَمَنْ تَبَغَّى إِسْرَؤِيلَ

5445. The supreme Achievement has already been mentioned viz.; the Gardens of Eternity with Allah. But lest that seem too remote or abstract for the understanding of men not strong in faith, another good news is mentioned which the men who first heard this Message could at once understand and appreciate—"which ye do love": viz.: Help and Victory. For all striving in a righteous Cause we get Allah's help: and however much the odds against us may be, we are sure of victory with Allah's help. But all life is a striving or struggle,—the spiritual life even more than any other; and the final victory there is the same as the Garden of Eternity.

5446. If we seek Allah's help, we must first help Allah's Cause, i.e., dedicate ourselves to Him entirely and without reserve. This was also the teaching of Jesus, as mentioned in this verse.

5447. See iii. 52, and n. 392; and for the Biblical reference, see the last note. The names of the twelve Disciples will be found in Matt. x. 2-4.

But We gave power
To those who believed
Against their enemies,
And they became
The ones that prevailed.⁵⁴⁴⁸

وَكَفَرْتَ طَائِفَةٌ فَأَيْدِنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَىٰ عَدُوِّهِمْ
فَأَصْبَحُوا ظَاهِرِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

5448. A portion of the Children of Israel—the one that really cared for Truth—believed in Jesus and followed his guidance. But the greater portion of them were hard hearted, and remained in their beaten track of formalism and false racial pride. The majority *seemed* at first to have the upper hand when they thought they had crucified Jesus and killed his Message. But they were soon brought to their senses. Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70 and the Jews have been scattered ever since. "The Wandering Jew" has become a bye-word in many literatures. On the other hand, those who followed Jesus permeated the Roman Empire, brought many new races within their circle, and through the Roman Empire, Christianity became the predominant religion of the world until the advent of Islam. So is it promised to the people of Islām: they must prevail if they adhere to the Truth. Badr (A.H. 2) was a landmark against Pagan Arabia; Qādisiya (A.H. 14) and Madāin (A.H. 16) against the might of Persia; Yarmūk (A.H. 15) against the might of the Byzantine Empire in Christian Syria; and Heliopolis (A.H. 19) against the same Empire in Christian Egypt and Africa. These were symbols in external events. The moral and spiritual landmarks are less tangible, and more gradual, but none the less real. Mark how the arrogance and power of Priesthood have been quelled; how superstition and a belief in blind Fate have been checked; how the freedom of human individuals has been reconciled with the sanctity of marriage in the law of Divorce; how the civil position of women has been raised; how temperance and sobriety have been identified with religion; what impetus has been given to knowledge and experimental science; and how economic reconstruction has been pioneered by rational schemes for the expenditure and distribution of wealth.