

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *Al-Aḥqāf*, 46.

This is the seventh and last Sūra of the *Ḥā Mim* series. For the general theme and chronological place of these Sūras see the Introduction to S. xl.

The *Aḥqāf* (mentioned in verse 21) are the long and winding crooked tracts of sand-hills, characteristic of the country of the 'Ād people, adjoining Ḥadhramaut and Yaman: see vii. 65, n. 1040. These people had, at that time, probably a fertile irrigated country, but their sins brought on the calamity mentioned in xlv. 24-25. The lesson of this Sūra is that if the Truth is challenged, the challenge will be duly answered, and Truth vindicated.

Summary.—All Creation has a Purpose behind it: Truth and Revelation will be vindicated, and those who question it will be undone by the very means by which they set such store: the righteous should wait in patience and constancy (xlv. 1-35).

Al-Ahqāf, or Winding Sand-tracts.

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

1. *Hā-Mīm.*⁴⁷⁷⁴
2. The revelation⁴⁷⁷⁵
Of the Book
Is from Allah
The Exalted in Power,
Full of Wisdom.
3. We created not⁴⁷⁷⁶
The heavens and the earth
And all between them
But for just ends, and
For a term appointed:
But those who reject Faith
Turn away from that
Whereof they are warned.
4. Say: "Do ye see"⁴⁷⁷⁷
What it is ye invoke
Besides Allah? Show me
What it is they
Have created on earth,

سُورَةُ الْأَحْقَافِ قُلْ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حَمْدٌ

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ

مَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ
وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَمَّا أُنذِرُوا

مُعْرِضُونَ

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا
مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ أَتُنَبِّئُونَ بِكِتَابٍ

4774. See Introduction to S. xl.

4775. This verse is the same as the second verse of the last Sūra, but the theme is worked out differently in the two Sūras. In S. xlv. was shown how deniers of Revelation will at last be humbled until they can no longer deny its truth and power. In this Sūra is shown how Truth and Revelation will be vindicated by patience and constancy (xlvi. 35).

4776. Cf. xlv. 22. Many things may appear to us in the present world as strange and inexplicable. But everything made by Allah has a just purpose which must be fulfilled. Nothing in this world is permanent: everything is for an appointed term. The Word of Allah alone abides. All else will pass away after it has fulfilled its purpose. But Unbelievers refuse to face the danger of which they are warned.

4777. Some people may rush thoughtlessly into false worship, because it is the fashion or an ancestral custom, etc. They are asked to pause and see for themselves. Have the false gods or falsehood created anything? (They destroy much). Or have they any share or lot in the things we associate with the heavens,—spiritual well-being, etc.?

Or have they a share
In the heavens?
Bring me a Book⁴⁷⁷⁸
(Revealed) before this,
Or any remnant of knowledge
(Ye may have), if ye
Are telling the truth!

5. And who is more astray⁴⁷⁷⁹
Than one who invokes,
Besides Allah, such as will
Not answer him to the Day
Of Judgment, and who
(In fact) are unconscious
Of their call (to them)?

6. And when mankind
Are gathered together
(At the Resurrection),
They will be hostile
To them and deny
That (men) had worshipped them.

7. When Our Clear Signs
Are rehearsed to them,
The Unbelievers say,
Of the Truth
When it comes to them:⁴⁷⁸⁰
"This is evident sorcery!"

مَنْ قَبْلَ هَذَا أَزْنُرُكُمْ عَلِيمَانِ كُنْتُمْ

صَدِيقَيْنِ ﴿٤﴾

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّن يَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُ
لَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَهُمْ عَنْ دُعَائِهِمْ غَفِلُونَ ﴿٥﴾

وَإِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوا لَهُمْ أَعْدَاءً وَكَانُوا

بِعَادَتِهِمْ كَافِرِينَ ﴿٦﴾

وَإِذَا نُتِلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ
لَمَآ جَاءَهُمْ هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٧﴾

4778. 'Or is there any warrant for you from any earlier revelation, assuming that you do not believe in this Revelation? Or can you point to the least scrap or remnant of real knowledge on which you can base what We condemn as your false life?' No, you cannot.

4779. As there is no argument at all in favour of your sham worship, what sense is there in it? Either your false gods are senseless stocks and stones which will never answer you to the end of Time, being themselves devoid of understanding, or they are real objects which will disown you at the last. If you worshipped Self, your own misused faculties will witness against you at the last (xli. 20-23). If you worshipped good men or prophets, like Jesus, they will disown you (v. 119). Similarly, if you worshipped angels, they will disown you (xxxiv. 40-41).

4780. When the truth is actually brought to their doors, they call it sorcery! Cf. xxxvii. 12-15, and n. 4042.

8. Or do they say,
 "He has forged it"?
 Say: "Had I forged it,
 Then ye have
 No power to help me
 Against Allah.⁴⁷⁸¹ He knows best
 Of that whereof ye talk
 (So glibly)! Enough is He
 For a witness between me
 And you! And He is
 Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

9. Say "I am not an innovation⁴⁷⁸²
 Among the messengers, nor
 Do I know what will
 Be done with me or
 With you. I follow
 But that which is revealed
 To me by inspiration;
 I am but a Warner
 Open and clear."

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ أَفْتَرَنَاهُ قُلْ إِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَلَا تَمْلِكُونَ
 لِي مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا نَفِيضُونَ فِيهِ كَفَى بِهِ
 شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٨﴾

قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدْعًا مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي
 مَا يُفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنِ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَىٰ
 وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٩﴾

4781. 'If I forged a message from myself as one purporting to come from Allah, you would not be able to see me enjoy any of the blessings from Allah which I enjoy: you would not see me calm and relying on Allah, nor would you see me bear the reputation of being a trustworthy man. A liar comes to an evil end. But what about those who talk so glibly and freely about things which they know not? Allah knows all and He is my witness! According to Ibn Kathīr, the verse means that if the Prophet's claim to be Allah's messenger would have been a false one, he would have been stricken by a severe punishment from Allah and none had the power to avert that punishment.

4782. 'What is there to forge? All prophets have taught the Unity of Allah and our duty to mankind. I bring no new fangled doctrine, but eternal truths that have been known to good men through the ages. It is to reclaim you that I have come. I do not know what will be your fate for all this callousness, nor what you will do to me. But this I know, that I am preaching truth and righteousness as inspired by Allah. My duty is only to proclaim aloud and clearly the Message entrusted to me by Allah. The rest I leave to Allah.'

10. Say: "See ye?"⁴⁷⁸³

If (this teaching) be
From Allah, and ye reject it,
And a witness from among
The Children of Israel testifies
To its similarity⁴⁷⁸⁴
(With earlier scripture),
And has believed
While ye are arrogant,
(How unjust ye are!)
Truly, Allah guides not
A people unjust."

SECTION 2.

11. The Unbelievers say

Of those who believe:
"If (this Message) were⁴⁷⁸⁵
A good thing, (such men)
Would not have gone
To it first, before us!"

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ
وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ يَلْعَنُ عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ ۖ فَتَآمَنَ
وَأَسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا
مَا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ ۚ وَإِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ
فَسَيَقُولُونَ هَذَا إِفْكٌ قَدِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

4783. Another side of the argument is now presented. 'You pagan Arabs! You are puffed up with pride, though you are an ignorant nation. Among Israel there are men who understand the previous scriptures, and who find in the Qur-ān and its Preacher a true confirmation of the previous scriptures. They accept Islam as a fulfilment of the revelation of Moses himself! (See Deut. xviii. 18-19). And yet you hold back, though the Qur-ān has come in your own language, in order to help you to understand. How unjust and how shameful! In that case, with what face can you seek guidance from Allah?'

4784. There were learned Jews (and Christians) who saw in the holy Prophet the Messenger of Allah foreshadowed in previous Revelations, and accepted Islam. As this is a Makkan Sūra we need not construe this as a reference to 'Abdullāh ibn Salām, whose conversion was in Madinah only two years before the Prophet's death, unless we accept this particular verse to be so late in date. The sincere Jews were in a position to understand how this Revelation fitted in with all they had learnt about Revelation.

4785. A great many of the early Muslims were in humble positions, and were despised by the Quraish leaders. 'If such men could see any good in Islam, they said, 'there could be no good in it: if there had been any good in it, we should have been the first to see it!' The spiritually blind have such a good conceit of themselves! As they reject it, and as the Revelation is proved to have historic foundations, they can only call it "an old, old falsehood"!

And seeing that they
Guide not themselves thereby,
They will say, "This is
An (old,) old falsehood!"

12. And before this, was⁴⁷⁸⁶
The Book of Moses
As a guide and a mercy:
And this Book confirms (it)
In the Arabic tongue;
To admonish the unjust,
And as Glad Tidings
To those who do right.

13. Verily those who say,⁴⁷⁸⁷
"Our Lord is Allah",
And remain firm
(On that Path),-
On them shall be no fear,⁴⁷⁸⁸
Nor shall they grieve.

14. Such shall be Companions
Of the Garden, dwelling
Therein (for aye): a recompense
For their (good) deeds.

وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَى إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً
وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانِ عَرَبِيٍّ لِّيُذَكِّرَ
الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَيُؤْتِي لِّلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَمُوا فَلَا خَوْفٌ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

4786. The last revealed Book which was a Code of Life (*Shari'at*) was the Book of Moses: for that of Jesus was not such a Code, but merely moral precepts to sweep away the corruptions that had crept in. The Qur-ān has the same attitude to it as the teaching of Jesus had to the Law. Jesus said (Matt. v. 17): "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." But the corruptions took new forms in Christian Churches: an entirely new *Shari'at* became necessary, and this was provided in Islam.

4787. To say, "Our Lord is Allah" is to acknowledge that we owe no service to any creature, and shall render none: Allah shall have our exclusive devotion. "To remain firm on that Path" is shown by our conduct: we prove that we love Allah and all His creatures, and will unflinchingly do our duty in all circumstances.

4788. Cf. ii. 38. The phrase occurs in numerous other places, with a new application on each occasion. Here, if our claim is true that 'our Lord is Allah', what fear can possibly come on us, or what calamity can there be to cause us grief? For our Lord is our Cherisher, Defender, and Helper, our Hope and our Comfort, which can never fail.

15. We have enjoined on man⁴⁷⁸⁹
Kindness to his parents:
In pain did his mother
Bear him, and in pain
Did she give him birth.
The carrying of the (child)
To his weaning is
(A period of) thirty months.⁴⁷⁹⁰
At length, when he reaches
The age of full strength⁴⁷⁹¹
And attains forty years,
He says, "O my Lord!
Grant me that I may be
Grateful for Thy favour
Which Thou hast bestowed
Upon me, and upon both
My parents, and that I
May work righteousness
Such as Thou mayest approve;

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا
وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفِصْلُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا
حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ
أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ
وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ
وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي بُنْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي
مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

4789. Cf. xxix. 8 and xxxi. 14.

4790. In xxxi. 14 the time of weaning was stated to be at the age of two years, i.e., 24 months. See also ii. 233. That leaves six months as the *minimum* period of human gestation after which the child is known to be viable. This is in accordance with the latest ascertained scientific facts. The *average* period is 280 days, or ten times the inter-menstrual period, and of course the average period of weaning is much less than 24 months.

The maximum period of breast-feeding (2 years) is again in accordance with the time that the first dentition is ordinarily completed in a human child. The lower milk incisors in the centre come out between the 6th and 9th months; then come out the milk teeth at intervals, until the canines appear. The second molars come out at about 24 months, and with them the child has a complete apparatus of milk teeth. Nature now expects him to chew and masticate and be independent of his mother's milk completely. On the other hand it hurts the mother to feed from the breast after the child has a complete set of milk teeth. The permanent teeth begin at the sixth year, and the second molars come at 12 years. The third molars are the wisdom teeth, which may appear at 18 to 20 years, or not at all.

4791. The age of full strength (*ashudd*) is held to be between 18 and 30 or 32. Between 30 and 40 the man is in his best manhood. After that he begins to look to his growing issue, and rightly commends the new generation to Allah. Perhaps his spiritual faculties also gain the upper hand after 40.

And be gracious to me
In my issue. Truly
Have I turned to Thee
And truly do I submit
(To Thee) in Islām.”

16. Such are they from whom
We shall accept the best⁴⁷⁹²
Of their deeds and pass by
Their ill deeds: (they shall
Be) among the Companions
Of the Garden: a promise
Of truth, which was
Made to them
(In this life).

17. But (there is one)⁴⁷⁹³
Who says to his parents,
“Fie on you! Do ye
Hold out the promise
To me that I
Shall be raised up,
Even though generations
Have passed before me
(Without rising again)?”
And they two seek
Allah's aid, (and rebuke
The son): “Woe to thee!
Have Faith! For the promise
Of Allah is true.”

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ نَقَبْلُ عَنْهُمْ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا
وَنَجَاوَزُ عَنْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ فِي أَصْحَابِ الْجَنَّةِ
وَعَدَ الصِّدْقِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

وَالَّذِي قَالَ لَوْلَدَيْهِ أُفٍ لَكُمَا أَعِدَانِي أَنْ أُخْرَجَ
وَقَدْ خَلَّتِ الْقُرُونُ مِنْ قَبْلِي وَهُمَا يَسْتَعْجِلَانِ اللَّهَ
وَيْلَكُمْ ءَايِنِ إِن وَعَدَ اللَّهُ حَقًّا فَيَقُولُ
مَا هَذَا إِلَّا آسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

4792. Cf. xxix. 7 and n. 3429.

4793. A godly man often has an ungodly son, who flouts all that the father held sacred, and looks upon his father himself as old-fashioned and unworthy of respect or regard. The contrast in an individual family may be matched by the contrast in the passing and the rising generations of mankind. All this happens as a passing phase in the normal evolution of mankind, and there is nothing in this to be despondent about. What we have to do is for the mature generations to bring up their successors in godly ways, and for the younger generations to realise that age and experience count for something, especially in the understanding of spiritual matters and other matters of the highest moment to man.

But he says, "This is
Nothing but tales
Of the ancients!"

18. Such are they against whom⁴⁷⁹⁴
The word proved true
Among the previous generations
Of Jinns and men, that have
Passed away; for they will
Be (utterly) lost.

19. And to all⁴⁷⁹⁵
Are (assigned) degrees
According to the deeds
Which they (have done),
And in order that (Allah)
May recompense their deeds;
And no injustice will be done
To them.

20. And on the Day that
The Unbelievers will be
Placed before the Fire,
(It will be said to them):
"Ye squandered your good things"⁴⁷⁹⁶
In the life of the world,

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمِّ
فَدَخَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ
إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا خَسِرِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَةٍ مِمَّا عَمِلُوا وَلِيُوفيَهُمْ أَعْمَلُهُمْ وَهُمْ
لَا يَظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ أَدَهَبْتُمْ طَبِيبَتَكُمْ
فِي حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهَا فَالْيَوْمَ يُجْزَوْنَ

4794. Cf. xli. 25 and n. 4494. Each individual, each generation, and each people is responsible for its own good deeds or misdeeds. The law of actions and their fruits applies: you cannot blame one for another. The only remedy lies in seeking for Allah's Grace and Mercy, not only for ourselves but for others in brotherly or fatherly love.

This verse is in balanced contrast to verse 16 above.

4795. There is fine grading in the Hereafter. Every deed, good or bad, is judged and weighed to the minutest degree, with its motives, intentions, results, and relevant circumstances. It is not a mere rough classification. The fruits of evil will be exactly according to the degree of evil. But, as stated in other passages (e.g., xxviii. 84), the reward of good deeds will be far beyond their merits, on account of the Mercy and unbounded Bounty of Allah.

4796. "Squandered your good things" implies (in Arabic) grabbing at them, being greedy of them, seeking them as fleeting pleasures rather than the more serious things of life, sacrificing the spiritual for the material.

And ye took your pleasure
Out of them: but to-day
Shall ye be recompensed⁴⁷⁹⁷
With a Chastisement of humiliation:
For that ye were arrogant
On earth without just cause,
And that ye (ever) transgressed."

SECTION 3.

21. Mention (Hūd)

One of 'Ād's (own) brethren:⁴⁷⁹⁸
Behold, he warned his people
Beside the winding Sand-tracts:⁴⁷⁹⁹
But there have been Warners
Before him and after him:
"Worship ye none other
Than Allah: truly I fear
For you the Chastisement
Of a Mighty Day."

22. They said: "Hast thou come⁴⁸⁰⁰

In order to turn us aside
From our gods? Then bring

عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

وَإِذْ كُنَّا عَادٌ إِذْ أَنْذَرَ قَوْمَهُ بِالْأَحْقَافِ
وَقَدْ خَلَّتِ النُّذُرُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ
أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ
عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٢١﴾

قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لِنَافِكَا عَنْ إِلٰهِنَا فَإِنَّا
بِمَا تَعْبُدْنَآ إِن كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

4797. They will be told: 'You took your choice, and you must pay the price. You did wrong in a rebellious spirit, and prided yourselves on your wrong-doing, not occasionally, but of set purpose and constantly. Now you will be humbled in the dust, as a fitting punishment.'

4798. Cf. vii. 65. and note 1040. The point is that the Warner who was raised among the 'Ād people—as among other peoples—was not a stranger, but one of their own brethren, even as the holy Prophet began his preaching with a call to his own brethren the Quraish.

4799. *Winding Sand-tracts*: *Ahqāf*: see Introduction to this Sūra. The very things, which, under irrigation and with Allah's Grace, gave them prosperity and power, were to be their undoing when they broke Allah's Law and defied His Grace. See verses 24-26 below.

4800. They were too much wedded to their evil ways—to the false gods that they worshipped—to appreciate the sincere advice of the prophet of Allah. They defied him and defied Allah Who had sent him. Mockingly they challenged him to bring on the threatened punishment! For they did not believe a word of what he said.

Upon us the (calamity)
With which thou dost
Threaten us, if thou
Art telling the truth!"

23. He said: "The Knowledge⁴⁸⁰¹
(Of when it will come)
Is only with Allah: I
Proclaim to you the mission
On which I have been sent:
But I see that ye
Are a people in ignorance!"...

24. Then, when they saw⁴⁸⁰²
A cloud advancing towards
Their valleys,
They said, "This cloud
Will give us rain!"
"Nay, it is the (calamity)
Ye were asking to be
Hastened!—a wind
Wherein is a Grievous Chastisement!"

قَالَ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأُبَلِّغُكُمْ مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ
وَلَكِنِّي أَرِيتُمْ قَوْمًا يَجْهَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُسْتَقِيلًا أَوْدَيْنَاهُمْ قَالُوا
هَذَا عَارِضٌ مُمْطِرُنَا بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ
بِهِ رِيحٌ فِيهَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

4801. The coming of the Punishment for evil was (and is always) certain. At what particular time it would come he could not tell. It is not for the prophet, but for Allah, to bring on the Penalty. But he saw that it was useless to appeal to them on account of the ignorance in which they were content to dwell.

4802. The Punishment came suddenly, and when they least expected it. They wanted rain, and they saw a cloud and rejoiced. Behold, it was coming towards their own tracts, winding through the hills. Their irrigation channels would be full, their fields would be green, and their season would be fruitful. But no! What is this? It is a tremendous hurricane, carrying destruction on its wings! A violent blast, with dust and sand! Its fury destroys everything in its wake! Lives lost! Fields covered with sand-hills! The morning dawns on a scene of desolation! Where were the men who boasted and defied their Lord! There are only the ruins of their houses to witness to the past!

25. "Everything will it destroy
By the command of its Lord!"
Then by the morning they—⁴⁸⁰³
Nothing was to be seen
But (the ruins of) their houses!
Thus do We recompense
Those given to sin!
26. And We had firmly established
Them in a (prosperity and) power
Which We have not given
To you (ye Quraish!)
And We had endowed them
With (faculties of)⁴⁸⁰⁴
Hearing, seeing, heart and intellect:
But of no profit to them
Were their (faculties of)
Hearing, sight, and heart
And intellect, when they
Went on rejecting the Signs⁴⁸⁰⁵
Of Allah: and they were
(Completely) encircled⁴⁸⁰⁶
By that which they
Used to mock at!

تُدْمِرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَأَصْبَحُوا لَا يُرَى
إِلَّا مَسْكِنُهُمْ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّهُمْ فِيمَا إِنْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِيهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ
سَمْعًا وَأَبْصَارًا وَفُؤَادَةً فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ
وَلَا أَبْصَارُهُمْ وَلَا فُؤَادُهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ
إِذْ كَانُوا يَجْحَدُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ
وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

4803. Here is the figure of speech known in rhetoric as aposiopesis, to heighten the effect of the suddenness and completeness of the calamity. In the Arabic text, the verb *aṣḥaḥū*, in the third person plural, leads us to expect that we shall be told what they were doing in the morning. But no! They had been wiped out, and any small remnant had fled (see n. 1040 to vii. 65). Nothing was to be seen but the ruins of their houses.

4804. The 'Ād and their successors the Thamūd were more richly endowed with the faculties of the arts, sciences, and culture than ever were the Quraish before Islam. "Hearing and seeing" refer to the experimental faculties; the word "heart" in Arabic includes intellect, or the rational faculties, as well as the instruments of feeling and emotion, the æsthetic faculties. The Second 'Ād, or Thamūd, have left interesting traces of their architecture in the country round the Hijr: see n. 1043 to vii. 73, and notes 2002-2003 to xv. 80-82.

4805. The highest talents and faculties of this world are useless in the next world if we reject the laws of Allah and thus become outlaws in the Hereafter.

4806. See n. 4770 to xlv. 33. They used to mock at Allah's Signs, but those were the very things which hemmed them in, and showed that they had more power and effectiveness than anything else.

SECTION 4.

27. We destroyed aforetime
Towns round about you;⁴⁸⁰⁷
And We have shown
The Signs in various ways,
That they may turn (to Us).
28. Why then was no help
Forthcoming to them from those
Whom they worshipped as gods,
Besides Allah, as a means
Of access (to Allah)? Nay,
They left them in the lurch:
But that was their
Falsehood and their invention.⁴⁸⁰⁸
29. Behold, We turned
Towards thee a company⁴⁸⁰⁹
Of Jinns (quietly) listening
To the Qur-ān: when they
Stood in the presence
Thereof, they said, "Listen
In silence!" When the (reading)
Was finished, they returned
To their people, to warn them.
30. They said, "O our people!
We have heard a Book
Revealed after Moses,

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَ كَرَمِ الْقُرَىٰ وَصَرَفْنَا
الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

فَلَوْلَا نَصْرُهُمُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قُرْبَانًا
إِلَٰهَةً بَلْ ضَلُّوا عَنْهُمْ وَذَلِكَ إِفْكُهُمْ
وَمَا كَانُوا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

وَإِذْ صَرَفْنَا إِلَيْكَ نَفَرًا مِنَ الْجِنِّ يَسْتَمِعُونَ
الْقُرْآنَ إِن فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوهُ قَالُوا أَنْصِتُوا
فَلَمَّا قُضِيَ وَلَوْ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ مُنْذِرِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

قَالُوا يَا قَوْمَنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتَابًا أُنزِلَ
مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ وَإِلَى طَرِيقٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

4807. In Arabian history and tradition alone, to say nothing of Allah's Signs elsewhere, sin inevitably suffered its Punishment, and in various ways. Would not the later people take warning?

4808. The false things that they worshipped were figments of their imagination. If they had had any existence in fact, it was not of the kind they imagined.

4809. A company of Jinns. Nafar (company) may mean a group of from three to ten persons. For Jinns, see n. 929 to vi. 100. They listened to the reading of the Qur-ān with great respect. The next verse shows that they had heard of the Jewish religion, but they were impressed with the Message of Islam, and they seem to have gone back to their people to share the Good News with them.

Confirming what came
Before it: it guides
To the Truth and
To a Straight Path.

31. "O our people, hearken
To the one who invites⁴⁸¹⁰
(You) to Allah, and believe
In him: He will forgive
You your faults,
And deliver you from
A Chastisement Grievous.

32. "If any does not hearken
To the one who invites
(Us) to Allah, he cannot⁴⁸¹¹
Escape in the earth,
And no protectors can he have
Besides Allah: such
Are in manifest error."

33. See they not that
Allah, Who created the heavens
And the earth, and never
Wearied with their creation,⁴⁸¹²
Is able to give life
To the dead? Yea, verily
He has power over all things.

يَقَوْمَنَا أَجِيبُوا دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ وَآمِنُوا بِهِ يَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ
مِنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْيَمِّ ﴿٣١﴾

وَمَنْ لَا يُجِيبْ دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعِجِزٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَلَيْسَ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءٌ أُولَٰئِكَ
فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٣٢﴾

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
وَلَمْ يَتَّعِ بِخَلْقِهِنَّ بِقَدَرٍ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَىٰ بَلَىٰ
إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

4810. The one who invites all to Allah is the holy Prophet. He invites us to Allah: if we believe in Allah and His Prophet, Allah will forgive us our sins on our repentance and amendment of our lives, and save us the Penalty of the future life.

4811. If a person refuses to believe the Truth, or opposes it, it has not the least effect on Allah's holy Plan, which will go on to its completion; but it will deprive him of Grace and of any protection whatever; he will wander about as an outlaw in manifest helplessness.

4812. Cf. ii. 255 (Verse of the Throne): "His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feebleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them." He Whose power is constant and unwearied in creating and preserving all things in heaven and earth can surely give life to the dead at the Resurrection.

34. And on the Day that⁴⁸¹³

The Unbelievers will be
Placed before the Fire,
(They will be asked,)

"Is this not the Truth?"

They will say, "Yea,
By our Lord"

(He will say:)

"Then taste ye⁴⁸¹⁴

The Chastisement, for that ye
Were wont to deny (Truth)!"

35. Therefore patiently persevere,
As did (all) messengers
Of firm resolution;
And be in no haste
About the (Unbelievers). On the
Day

That they see the (Punishment)⁴⁸¹⁵

Promised them, (it will be)

As if they had not

Tarried more than an hour

In a single day. (Thine

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ أَلَيْسَ هَذَا بِالْحَقِّ
قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّنَا قَالَ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ
تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرْنَا وَلَوْ أَلْعَزَمْنَا مِنَ الرَّسُلِ
وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا يُوعَدُونَ
لَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنْ نَّهَارٍ بَلَّغَ فَبَلَ يَهْلِكُ
إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

4813. Cf. xlv. 20, where the argument was closed about the undutiful son of a good father. After that the example of the 'Ād and of the believing Jinns was cited, and now is closed that argument in similar terms.

4814. The Truth which they denied is now all too clear to them. They are out of the Light of Truth, out of the Light of Allah's Countenance. And that in itself is a terrible Penalty.

4815. All good work proceeds in its own good time. We should never be impatient either about its success or about the punishment which is bound to come for those who oppose it or wish to suppress it. The inevitable punishment is spoken of as the *Punishment promised*. It will come so soon and so suddenly that it will appear as if there was not the delay of a single hour in a single day! Time is a great factor in our affairs in this world, but it hardly counts in the next world.

But) to deliver the Message.⁴⁸¹⁶

But shall any be destroyed

Except those who transgress?

4816. The Preacher's duty is to proclaim the Message in unmistakable terms. If any human beings come in the way, it will be to their own destruction; but none but rebellious transgressor will be punished. There is always hope and forgiveness for repentance and amendment.