

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *Hūd*, 11

For the chronological place of this Sūra and the general argument of Sūras x. to xv. see Introduction to S. x.

In subject-matter this Sūra supplements the preceding one. In the last Sūra stress was laid on that side of Allah's dealings with man which leans to Mercy: here stress is laid on the side which deals with justice and the punishment of Sin when all Grace is resisted.

Summary.—Allah's revelation of mercy, His dealing with man, and His patience are contrasted with man's ingratitude, his love of falsehood and vanity, and his crookedness (xi. 1-24).

Noah's unselfishness and humility in teaching his people the Truth of Allah were traduced by the ungodly, and his Message ridiculed and rejected. But he built his Ark under directions from Allah, and was saved, with peace and blessings, while his rejecters perished (xi. 25-49).

The prophet Hūd preached to his people 'Ād against false gods, and the prophet Ṣāliḥ to his people Thamūd against dishonouring the symbol of Allah's bounty. In both cases Allah's Signs were rejected, and the rejecters were blotted out (xi. 50-68).

Lot's people were given to abominations: Abraham pleaded for them, and Lot was sent out to them, but they went deeper and deeper into sin and suffered the Penalty. Shu'aib's people, the Midianites, were warned against fraud and mischief, but they reproached him with helplessness and were themselves destroyed (xi. 69-95).

It is arrogant leaders like Pharaoh who mislead men, and men bring ruin on themselves. But Allah is Just. The penalty for sin is real and abiding; therefore shun all wrong doing, and serve Allah whole-heartedly (xi. 96-123).

Hūd (The Prophet Hūd).

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

1. A. L. R.¹⁴⁹²

(This is) a Book,
With verses fundamental¹⁴⁹³
(Of established meaning),
Further explained in detail,—
From One Who is Wise
And Well-Acquainted (with all
things):

2. (It teacheth) that ye should
Worship none but Allah.
(Say:) "Verily I am¹⁴⁹⁴
(Sent) unto you from Him
To warn and to bring
Glad tidings:
3. "(And to preach thus), 'Seek ye
The forgiveness of your Lord,
And turn to Him in repentance;
That He may grant you
Enjoyment, good (and true).
For a term appointed,
And bestow His abounding grace
On all who abound in merit!¹⁴⁹⁵
But if ye turn away,
Then I fear for you
The Chastisement of a Great Day:

سُورَةُ هُودٍ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الرَّكَعَاتُ أُنْعِمْتَ إِلَيْنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ فَصَّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ
حَكِيمٍ خَيْرٍ ﴿١﴾

أَلَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي لَكُرْسِيُّ نَذِيرٌ وَنَشِيرٌ ﴿٢﴾

وَأَنْ أَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُعْطِكُمْ مَنَّاً
حَسَنًا إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى وَتُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ
وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ ﴿٣﴾

1492. For the meaning of these Letters, see App. I.

1493. See n. 347 to iii. 7. Every basic principle is included in Allah's Revelation, and it is further illustrated and explained in detail.

1494. Al-Mustafā's Message—as was the Message of all apostles—was to warn against evil, and to bring the glad tidings of Allah's Mercy and Grace to all who would receive it in Faith and trust in Allah. This double Message is preached illustratively in this Sūra.

1495. The enjoyment of all good and true things in life refers, I think, to the present life with its limited term, and the abounding Grace refers to the higher reward, which begins here but is completed in the life to come.

4. "To Allah is your return,
And He hath power
Over all things."
5. Behold! they fold up¹⁴⁹⁶
Their hearts, that they may lie
Hid from Him! Ah! even
When they cover themselves
With their garments, He knoweth
What they conceal, and what
They reveal: for He knoweth
Well the (inmost secrets)
Of the hearts.¹⁴⁹⁷
6. There is no moving creature
On earth but its sustenance¹⁴⁹⁸
Dependeth on Allah: He knoweth
Its resting place and its
Temporary deposit:¹⁴⁹⁹
All is in a clear Record.¹⁵⁰⁰
7. He it is Who created
The heavens and the earth
In six Days¹⁵⁰¹-and His Throne

إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ يَنْتُونُ صُدُورَهُمْ لِيَسْتَخْفُوا مِنْهُ أَلَا حِينَ
يَسْتَعِشُونَ رَبَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ
إِنَّهُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ فِي الْإِثْمِ وَالْغَدْرِ ﴿٢﴾

﴿٣﴾ وَمِمَّنْ دَاخَعْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا
وَيَعْلَمُ مَسْقَرَهَا وَمَنْ نُسَوِّدْهَا أَوْ نُفَجِّرْهَا
فَكُلٌّ فِي كِتَابِ
مُبِينٍ ﴿٤﴾

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ
أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ

1496. The heart (literally *breast* in Arabic) is already well guarded in the body; and secrets are supposed to be hidden in the heart or breast. Foolish persons might further cover up their hearts with cloaks, but even so, nothing can be hidden from Allah.

1497. Cf. iii. 119.

1498. Cf. vi. 59. Nothing happens in Creation except by the Word of Allah and with the knowledge of Allah. Not a leaf stirs but by His Will. Its maintenance in every sense is dependent on His Will.

1499. *Mustaqarr* = definite abode; where a thing stops or stays for some time, where it is established. *Mustauda* = where a thing is laid up or deposited for a little while. Referring to animals, the former denotes its life on this earth; the latter its temporary pre-natal existence in the egg or the womb and its after-death existence in the tomb or whatever state it is in until its resurrection.

1500. Cf. vi. 59 and n. 880, and x. 61 and n. 1450.

1501. See n. 1031 to vii. 54.

Was over the Waters—¹⁵⁰²
 That He might try you,¹⁵⁰³
 Which of you is best
 In conduct. But if
 Thou wert to say to them,
 "Ye shall indeed be raised up
 After death", the Unbelievers
 Would be sure to say,¹⁵⁰⁴
 "This is nothing but
 Obvious sorcery!"

8. If We delay the chastisement
 For them for a definite term,
 They are sure to say,
 "What keeps it back?"¹⁵⁰⁵
 Ah! On the day it (actually)
 Reaches them, nothing will
 Turn it away from them,
 And they will be completely
 Encircled by that which
 They used to mock at!

SECTION 2.

9. If We give man a taste
 Of mercy from Ourselves,
 And then withdraw it from him,

لَيَسْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَلَئِنْ قُلْتِ
 إِنَّكُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٧﴾

وَلَئِنْ أَخَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابَ إِلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ مَعْدُودَةٍ
 لَيَقُولَنَّ مَا يَجِئُهُ الْآيُومَ بِأَيِّهِمْ لَيْسَ
 بِمَصْرُوفٍ عَنْهُمْ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا
 بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٨﴾

وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَاهَا
 مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ لَيَكْفُرُ بِهَا كُفُورًا ﴿٩﴾

1502. It is scientifically correct to say that all life was evolved out of the waters, and this statement also occurs in the Qur-ān, xxi. 30. Some such meaning, I think, also attaches to the Gen. i. 2. The past tense "was" refers to the time before life developed in solid forms, on land and in air.

1503. The Creation we see around us is not idle sport or play (in Hindi, *Lila*) or whim on the part of Allah. It is the medium through which our spiritual life is to develop, with such free-will as we have. This life is our testing time.

1504. The Unbelievers, who do not believe in a Future life, think all talk of it is like a sorcerer's talk, empty of reality. But in this they show their ignorance, and they are begging the question.

1505. As much as to say: "Oh! all this talk of punishment is nonsense. There is no such thing!"

Behold! he is in despair
And (falls into) ingratitude,¹⁵⁰⁶

وَلَمَّا أَذَقْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً بَعْدَ ضَرَاءٍ مَسَتْهُ لَيَقُولَنَّ
ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ ﴿١١﴾

10. But if We give him a taste
Of (Our) favours after
Adversity hath touched him,
He is sure to say,
"All evil has departed from me:"¹⁵⁰⁷
Behold! he falls into exultation
And pride.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ
لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿١٢﴾

11. Not so do those who show
Patience and constancy, and work¹⁵⁰⁸
Righteousness; for them
Is forgiveness (of sins)
And a great reward.

فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضُ مَا يُوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ
وَضَاقُ بُرْهَانُكَ أَنْ يَقُولُوا الْوَلَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ كُتُبًا
أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٣﴾

12. Perchance thou mayest (feel
The inclination) to give up
A part of what is revealed¹⁵⁰⁹
Unto thee, and thy heart
Feeleth straitened because they say,
"Why is not a treasure sent down
Unto him, or why does not
An angel come down with him?"

1506. He does not realise that some kinds of chastening are good for discipline and the training of our spiritual faculties.

1507. He takes it as a matter of course, or as due to his own merit or cleverness! He does not realise that both in good and ill fortune there is a beneficent purpose in the Plan of Allah.

1508. Their attitude is the right one: to take ill-fortune with fortitude and good fortune with humility, and in either case go on persevering in good deeds to their fellow-creatures.

1509. Every Prophet of Allah, when he not only encounters opposition, but is actually accused of falsehood and those very evils which he is protesting against, may feel inclined, in his human weakness, to ask himself the question. "Supposing I omit this little point, will Allah's Truth then be accepted more readily? Or he may think to himself, "If I had only more money to organise my campaign, or something which will draw people's attention, like the company of an angel, how much better can I push my Message?" He is told that truth must be delivered as it is revealed, even though portions of it may be unpalatable, and that resources and other means to draw people to him are beside the point. He must use just such resources and opportunities as he has, and leave the rest to Allah.

But thou art there only to warn!
It is Allah that arrangerth
All affairs!

13. Or they may say, "He forged it."
Say. "Bring ye then ten Sûras
Forged, like unto it, and call
(To your aid) whomsoever
Ye can, other than Allah!-
If ye speak the truth!"¹⁵¹⁰
14. "If then they (your false gods)
Answer not your (call),
Know ye that this Revelation
Is sent down (replete) with the
knowledge
Of Allah, and that there is
No god but He! Will ye
Even then submit (to Islam)?"
15. Those who desire
The life of the Present
And its glitter,-to them
We shall pay (the price
Of) their deeds therein,-
Without diminution.¹⁵¹¹
16. They are those for whom
There is nothing in the Hereafter
But the Fire: vain
Are the designs they frame therein,
And of no effect
Are the deeds that they do!
17. Can they be (like) those
Who accept a Clear (Sign)
From their Lord and followed by

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَيْنَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ
مُفْتَرِيْنَ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتِطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ
اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾

فَاِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْا اَنْمَّا اُنْزِلَ بِعِلْمِ
اللّٰهِ وَاَنْ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزَيَّنَّهَا نُوْفِ الْنَيْمِ
اَعْمَلْنٰهُمْ فِيْهَا وَهَمَّرْنَا لِاَيُّحْسُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا النَّارُ
وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوْا فِيْهَا وَبَطُلَ
مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾

اَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ يَنْبَغٍ مِنْ رَبِّهٖ وَيَتْلُوْهُ شٰهِدٌ مِّنْهُ
وَمِنْ قَبْلِهٖ كُتِبَ مُوسٰى اِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً اُولٰٓئِكَ

1510. Cf. ii. 23 and x. 38.

1511. If worldly men desire the glitter of this world, they shall have it in full measure, but it is false glitter, and it involves the negation of that spiritual life which comes from the guidance of the inner light and from the revelation of Allah, as described in verse 17 below.

A witness from Him¹⁵¹²

And before him is the Book

Of Moses—a guide¹⁵¹³

And a mercy? They believe

Therein; but those of the Sects

That reject it,—the Fire

Will be their promised

Meeting-place. Be not then

In doubt thereon: for it is

The Truth from thy Lord:

Yet many among men

Do not believe!

18. Who doth more wrong

Than those who forge a lie

Against Allah? They will be

Brought before their Lord,

And the witnesses

Will say, "These are the ones

Who lied against their Lord!

Behold! the Curse of Allah

Is on those who do wrong!—

19. "Those who hinder (men)

From the path of Allah

And wish it,

To be crooked: these were

They who denied the Hereafter!"¹⁵¹⁴

20. They will not escape in earth,

Nor have they protectors

يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ، وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ، مِنَ الْأَخْرَابِ فَلَنَارَ

مَوْعِدُهُ، فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ

وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أُولَٰئِكَ

يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُولُ الْأَشْهَادُ هَٰؤُلَاءِ

الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ آلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ

عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا

وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

أُولَٰئِكَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ

لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ يُضْعِفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ

1512. "A witness from Himself": i.e., the Book which was given to Al-Mustafā, the Holy Qur-ān, which is compared to the original Revelation given to Moses. We make no difference between one true and genuine Message and another, nor between one apostle and another,—for they all come from the One True God.

1513. "Guide": the Arabic word here is *Imām*, a leader, a guide, one that directs to the true Path. Such a direction is an instance of the Mercy and Goodness of Allah to man. The Qur-ān and the Prophet Muḥammad are also called, each, a Guide and a Mercy, and so are these epithets applicable to previous Books and Prophets.

1514. Cf. vii. 45.

Besides Allah! Their chastisement¹⁵¹⁵
Will be doubled! They could not hear,
Nor they could see!

21. They are the ones who
Have lost their own souls:
And the (fancies) they forged
Have left them in the lurch!
22. Without a doubt, these
Are the very ones who
Will lose most in the Hereafter!
23. But those who believe
And work righteousness,
And humble themselves
Before their Lord—¹⁵¹⁶
They will be Companions
Of the Garden, to dwell
Therein for aye!
24. These two kinds (of men)
May be compared to
The blind and deaf,
And those who can see
And hear well. Are they
Equal when compared?
Will ye not then take heed?

مَا كَانُوا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ السَّمْعَ وَمَا

كَانُوا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ

مَا كَانُوا يَفْقَرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

لَا جَرَمَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ الْآخَسَرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَخْبَتُوا

إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ

هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

﴿٢٤﴾ مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْأَصْمَىٰ

وَالْبَصِيرَ وَالسَّمِيعَ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا

أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

1515. Cf. vii. 38. In this context, it is implied that they committed a two-fold wrong: (1) in inventing falsehoods against Allah, which deadened their own soul, and (2) in leading others astray or hindering them from Allah's path. Thus they lost the faculty of hearing, which they might have used to hear the Word of Allah, and they blinded the faculty of sight by shutting out Allah's light.

1516. Note that the humility is to be "before their Lord," i.e., in Allah's sight. There is no virtue, quite the contrary, in rubbing our noses to the ground before men. We are not to be arrogant even before men because we are humble as in Allah's sight. Nor does true humility lose self-confidence; for that self-confidence arises from confidence in the support and help of Allah.

SECTION 3.

25. We sent Noah to his People
(With a mission); "I have come
To you as a clear warner.
26. "That ye serve none but Allah:
Verily I do fear for you
The punishment of a Grievous
Day."¹⁵¹⁷
27. But the Chiefs of the Unbelievers
Among his People said:
"We see (in) thee nothing
But a man like ourselves:
Nor do we see that any
Follow thee but the meanest
Among us, apparently
Nor do we see in you (all)
Any merit above us:
In fact we think ye are liars!"¹⁵¹⁸
28. He said: "O my People!
See ye if (it be that)
I have a Clear Sign
From my Lord and that He
Hath sent Mercy unto me
From Him, but
That the Mercy hath been

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِتِي لَكُمْ

نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ

يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

فَقَالَ الْمَلَأَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا نَرَنِكَ

إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرَنِكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ

هُمْ أَرَادُوا لَكَ بَاذِيَ الرَّأْيِ وَمَا نَرَىٰ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا

مِنْ فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَنظُّكُمْ كَذِبِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ يَدَيْنِ مِنْ رَبِّي

وَأَنْتُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِهِ فَعُمِيتَ عَلَيْكُمْ

أَنْزِلْ بِكُمْ هَاوَاتِمَهُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَاذِبُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

1517. Noah's mission was to a wicked world, plunged in sin. The mission had a double character, as in the mission of all Prophets of Allah: it had to warn men against evil and call them to repentance, and it had to give them the glad tidings of Allah's Grace in case they turned back to Allah: it was a Guidance and Mercy.

1518. The Unbelievers were impelled by three powerful human motives of evil to resist Grace: (1) jealousy of other men; they said, "Why, you are no better than ourselves," half perceiving the Prophet's superiority, and half ignoring it; (2), contempt of the weak and lowly, who are often better intellectually, morally, and spiritually; they said, "We cannot believe or do what these fellows, our inferiors in social rank, believe or do!"; (3) arrogance and self-sufficiency, which is a vice cognate to (2), looked at from a different angle; they said, "We are really better than the lot of you!" Now the claim made on behalf of Allah's Message attacked all these three attitudes. And all they could say against it was to abuse it impatiently, and call it a lie.

Obscured from your sight?¹⁵¹⁹

Shall we compel you
To accept it when ye
Are averse to it?

29. "And O my People!
I ask you for no wealth
I return: my reward
Is from none but Allah:¹⁵²⁰
But I will not drive away
(In contempt) those who believe:
For verily they are
To meet their Lord, and ye
I see are the ignorant ones!

30. "And O my People!
Who would help me against Allah
If I drove them away?
Will ye not then take heed?¹⁵²¹

31. "I tell you not that¹⁵²²
With me are the Treasures¹⁵²³

وَيَقُولُوا لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَا لَا إِنِ اجْرِي
إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّهُمْ
مُلْكُوا مِنْهُمْ وَلِكَيْفَ أَرْكُزُ قَوْمًا
يَجْهَلُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

وَيَقُولُوا مَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ
أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ

1519. Noah's answer (like that of the Prophet of Allah who spoke in later ages in Makkah and Madinah is a pattern of humility, gentleness, firmness, persuasiveness, truth, and love for his own people. First, he meekly (not exultingly) informs them that he has got a Message from Allah. Secondly, he tells them that it is a Message of Mercy even in its warning, though in their arrogance the Mercy may be hidden from them. Thirdly, he tells them plainly that there can be no compulsion in Religion: but will they not accept with goodwill what is for their own benefit? He pleads with them as one of their own.

1520. The fourth point in Noah's address meets their accusation that he was a liar, implying that he was serving some selfish end of his own: on the contrary, he says, he seeks no reward from them but will bear any insults they heap on him, for he looks to Allah rather men. But, fifthly if they insult the poor and needy who come to him in Faith, and think that he would send them away in order to attract the great ones of the land, he tells them plainly that they are mistaken. In fact, (sixthly), he has no hesitation in telling the blunt truth that *they* are the ignorant ones, and not the poor who came to seek Allah's Truth!

1521. But (seventhly) again he pleads, with as much earnestness as ever, that he is one of themselves, and just doing his truest duty. Would they have him do less? Indeed, would they not themselves see the Truth and come into the goodly company of Believers?

1522. The eighth point that Noah urges is that he is not a mere vulgar soothsayer pretending to reveal secrets not worth knowing, nor an angel living in another world, with no ties to them. He is their real well-wisher, delivering a true Message from Allah.

1523. Cf. vi. 50 and n. 867.

Of Allah, nor do I know
What is hidden,
Nor claim I to be
An angel. Nor yet
Do I say, of those whom
Your eyes do despise¹⁵²⁴
That Allah will not grant them
(All) that is good:
Allah knoweth best
What is in their souls:
I should, if I did,
Indeed be a wrong-doer."

وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدِرِي
أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ إِنِّي إِذًا لَمِنَ الْفَٰلِطِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

32. They said: "O Noah!
Thou hast disputed with us,
And (much) hast thou prolonged
The dispute with us: now
Bring upon us what thou
Threatenest us with, if thou
Speakest the truth!?"¹⁵²⁵

قَالُوا يٰنُوحُ قَدْ جَدَلْتَنَا فَاكْفَرْتَ جَدَلْنَا
فَإِنَّا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِن كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

33. He said: "Truly, Allah
Will bring it on you
If He wills,-and then,
Ye will not be able
To frustrate it!"¹⁵²⁶

قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ إِن شَاءَ
وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

1524. But Noah will not close his argument without defending the men of Faith, whom the Chiefs despise because they are lacking in worldly goods. He tells them plainly that Allah perhaps sees in them something in which they, the arrogant Chiefs, are lacking. Their spiritual faculties can only be appreciated truly by Him to Whom all the secrets of the spirit are open. But he, Noah, must declare boldly his own Faith, and this is the ninth point in his argument.

1525. To Noah's address the worldly Chiefs give a characteristic reply. In its aggressive spirit it is the very antithesis of the gentle remonstrances of Noah. Because he had gently and patiently argued with them, they impatiently accuse him of "disputing with them" and "prolonging the dispute". They are unable to deal with his points. So they arrogantly throw out their challenge, which is a compound of hectoring insolence, unreasoning scepticism, and biting irony. "You foretell disaster to us if we don't mend our ways! Let us see you bring it on! Now, if you please! Or shall we have to call you a liar?"

1526. To the blasphemous challenge addressed to Noah his only answer could be: "I never claimed that I could punish you. All punishment is in the hands of Allah, and He knows best when His punishment will descend. But this I can tell you! His punishment is sure if you do not repent, and when it comes, you will not be able to ward it off!"

34. "Of no profit will be
My counsel to you,
Much as I desire
To give you (good) counsel,
If it be that Allah
Willeth to leave you astray:¹⁵²⁷
He is your Lord!
And to Him will ye return!"

وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي إِنْ أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ
اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُغْوِيَكُمْ هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ وَإِلَيْهِ
تَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

35. Or do they say,
"He has forged it"? Say:
"If I had forged it,
On me were my sin!
And I am free
Of the sins of which
Ye are guilty!"¹⁵²⁸

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَيْنَاهُ قُلْ إِنْ افْتَرَيْتُهُ، فَعَلَىٰ إِجْرَامِي
وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

SECTION 4.

36. It was revealed to Noah:
"None of thy People will believe"¹⁵²⁹
Except those who have believed
Already! So grieve no longer
Over their (evil) deeds.

وَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ
إِلَّا مَن قَدْ آمَنَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

1527. But Noah's heart bleeds for his people. They are preparing their own undoing! All his efforts are to be vain! Obstinate as they are, Allah's grace must be withdrawn, and then who can help them, and what use is any counsel? But again he will try to remind them of their Lord, and turn their face to Him. For their ultimate return to His judgment-seat is certain, to answer for their conduct.

1528. The fine narrative of dramatic power is here interrupted by a verse which shows that the story of Noah is also a Parable for the time and the ministry of Muhammad the Prophet. The wonderful force and aptness of the story cannot be denied. The enemy therefore turns and says, "Oh! but you invented it!" The answer is, "No! but it is Allah's own truth! You may be accustomed to dealing in falsehoods, but I protest that I am free from such sins." The place of this verse here corresponds to the place of verse 49 at the end of the next Section.

While understanding this verse to refer to Al-Mustafā, as most of the accepted Commentators understand it, it is possible also, I think, to read it into the story of Noah, for all Prophets have similar experience.

1529. The story of Noah is resumed. A point was reached, when it was clear that there was no hope of saving the sinners, who were courting their own destruction. It was to be a great Flood. So Noah was ordered to construct a great Ark or Ship, a heavy vessel to remain afloat in the Flood, so that the righteous could be saved in it.

37. "But construct an Ark
Under Our eyes and Our¹⁵³⁰
Inspiration, and address Me
No (further) on behalf
Of those who are in sin:
For they are about to be
Overwhelmed (in the Flood)."

38. Forthwith he (starts)
Constructing the Ark:
Every time that the Chiefs
Of his People passed by him,
They threw ridicule on him.¹⁵³¹
He said: "If ye ridicule
Us now, we (in our turn)
Can look down on you
With ridicule likewise!"¹⁵³²

39. "But soon will ye know
Who it is on whom
Will descend a Chastisement
That will cover them
With shame,—on whom will be
Unloosed a Chastisement lasting.:"

40. At length, behold!
There came Our Command,

وَأَصْنَعِ الْفُلَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحِّينَا وَلَا تَخْطِبْنِي
فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُغْرَقُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

وَبَصَّعُ الْفُلَ كُلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأَ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ
سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُوا مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ
كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

فَسَوْفَ نَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ
عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُورُ قُلْنَا احْمِلْ فِيهَا

1530. It was to be built under the special instructions of Allah, to serve the special purpose it was intended to serve.

1531. The ridicule of the sinners, from their own point of view, was natural. Here was a Prophet turned carpenter! Here was a plain in the higher reaches of the Mesopotamian basin, drained by the majestic Tigris, over 800 to 900 miles from the sea Arabian Gulf in a straight line! Yet he talks of a flood like the Sea! All material civilisations pride themselves on their Public Works and their drainage schemes. And here was a fellow relying on Allah! But did not their narrow pride seem ridiculous also to the Prophet of Allah! Here were men steeped in sin and insolence! And they pit themselves against the power and the promise of Allah! Truly a contemptible race is man!

1532. The Arabic Aorist may be construed either by the present tense or the future tense, and both make good sense here. Following Zamakhshari, I construe in the present tense, because the future is so tragic for the sinners. For the time being the worldly ones looked down on the Believers as they always do: but the Believers relied on Allah, and pitied their critics for knowing no better!—for their arrogance was really ridiculous.

And the fountains of the earth¹⁵³³
Gushed forth! We said:
"Embark therein, of each kind
Two, male and female,¹⁵³⁴
And your family—except
Those against whom the Word
Has already gone forth,—¹⁵³⁵
And the Believers."
But only a few
Believed with him.

41. So he said: "Embark ye
On the Ark
In the name of Allah,
Whether it move
Or be at rest!
For my Lord is, be sure,
Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!"
42. So the Ark sailed
With them on the waves
(Towering) like mountains,¹⁵³⁶
And Noah called out
To his son, who had
Separated himself (from the rest):

مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَن سَبَقَ
عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ ءَامَنَ وَمَا ءَامَنَ
مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ﴿١١﴾

﴿١١﴾ وَقَالَ أَرُكِبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ يُجْرِنَهَا
وَمُرْسِنَهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

وَهُى تَجْرِ يَمُّهُنَّ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ وَنَادَى نُوحٌ
أَبْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَقَرٍّ لِّبْنِي أَرُكِبَ مَعَنَا
وَلَا تَكُن مَعَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

1533. *Fār-at-tannūru*. Two interpretations have been given: (1) the fountains or the springs on the surface of the earth bubbled over or gushed forth; or (2) the oven boiled over. The former has the weight of the best authority behind it and I prefer it. Moreover, the same phrase occurs in xxiii. 27, where it is a clause coordinated (as here) with the coming of Allah's Command. These two passages may be compared with liv. 11-12, where it is said that water poured forth from the skies and gushed forth from the springs. This double action is familiar to any one who has seen floods on a large scale. The rain from above would saturate the great Ararat Plateau, and give great force to the springs and fountains in the valley of the Tigris below.

1534. *Zaujaini*: the dual number refers to the two individuals in each pair of opposite sexes. Some of the most authoritative Commentators (e.g., Imām Rāzī) construe in this sense, though others construe it to mean two pairs of each species.

1535. A disobedient and recalcitrant son (or step-son or grandson) of Noah is mentioned below (xi. 42-43, 45-56). A member of the family, who breaks away from the traditions of the family in things that matter, ceases to share in the privileges of the family.

1536. The simile of mountains applies to the waves, which were mountain high,—literally, for the peaks were being submerged.

"O my son! embark
With us, and be not
With the Unbelievers!"

43. The son replied: "I will
Betake myself to some mountain:¹⁵³⁷
It will save me from
The water." Noah said:
"This day nothing can save,
From the Command of Allah,
Any but those on whom
He hath mercy!"—
And the waves came
Between them, and the son
Was among those
Who were drowned.

قَالَ سَآوِي إِلَىٰ جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ قَالَ
لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ وَحَالَ
بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

44. Then the word went forth:¹⁵³⁸
"O earth! swallow up
Thy water, and O sky!
Withhold (thy rain)!"
And the water abated,
And the matter was ended.
The Ark rested on Mount¹⁵³⁹
Jūdī, and the word

وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكِ وَنَسَمَاءَ أَقْلِي وَغِيصَ
الْمَاءُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَاسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ وَقِيلَ
بَعْدَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

1537. The Unbelievers refuse to believe in Allah, but have great faith in material things! This young man was going to save himself on mountain peaks, not knowing that the peaks were themselves being submerged.

1538. A wonderful passage. The whole picture is painted in just a few words. The chain of material facts are linked together, not only in their relations to each other, but also in their relation to the spiritual forces that control them, and the spiritual consequences of Sin and wrong-doing. The drowning in the material sense was the least part of the Penalty. A whole new world came into existence after the Deluge.

1539. Let us get a little idea of the geography of the place. The letters J.B. and K are philologically interchangeable, and Jūdī, Gūdī, Kūdī are sounds that can pass into each other. There is no doubt that the name is connected with the name "Kurd", in which the letter r is a later interpolation, for the oldest Sumerian records name a people called Kūtī or Gūtū as holding the middle Tigris region not later than 2000 B.C. (see E.B., Kurdistan). That region comprises the modern Turkish district of Bohtan, in which Jabal Jūdī is situated (near the frontiers of modern Turkey, modern 'Irāq, and modern Syria), and the town of Jazīrat ibn 'Umar, (on the present Turco-Syrian frontier), and it extends into 'Irāq and Persia. The great mountain mass of the Ararat plateau dominates this district. This mountain system "is unique in the Old World in containing great sheets of =

Went forth: "Away
With those who do wrong!"

45. And Noah called upon

His Lord and said:

"O my Lord! surely
My son is of my family
And Thy promise is true,
And Thou art
The Justest of Judges!"

46. He said: "O Noah!

He is not of thy family.¹⁵⁴⁰

For his conduct is unrighteous.

So ask not of Me

That of which thou

Hast no knowledge!

I give thee counsel, lest

Thou become one of the ignorants!"

47. Noah said: "O my Lord!

I do seek refuge with Thee,

From asking Thee for that

Of which I have no knowledge

And unless Thou forgive me

And have Mercy on me,

وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي
وَإِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنْتَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

قَالَ يَنْوُحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ
فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنِّي أَعِظُكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ
مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ
لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُنْ
مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

= water that are bitter lakes without outlets, Lake Van and Lake Urumiya being the chief" (E.B., Asia). Such would be the very region for a stupendous Deluge if the usual scanty rainfall were to be changed into a very heavy downpour. A glacier damming of Lake Van in the Ice Age would have produced the same result. The region has many local traditions connected with Noah and the Flood. The Biblical legend of Mount Ararat being the resting place of Noah's Ark is hardly plausible, seeing that the highest peak of Ararat is over 16,000 feet high. If it means one of the lower-peaks of the Ararat system, it agrees with the Muslim tradition about Mount Jüdi (or Gûdi), and this is in accordance with the oldest and best local traditions. These traditions are accepted by Josephus, by the Nestorian Christians, and indeed by all the Eastern Christians and Jews, and they are the best in touch with local traditions. See (Viscount) J. Bryce, "*Transcaucasia and Ararat*," 4th ed., 1896. p. 216.

1540. See n. 5135 above. Like all Prophets of Allah, Noah was kind-hearted, but he is told that there can be no compromise with evil. And Noah acknowledges the reproof. There was a wife of Noah, who was also an unbelieving woman (lxvi. 10), and she suffered the fate of Unbelievers.

I should indeed be among
the losers!¹⁵⁴¹

48. The word came: "O Noah!
Come down (from the Ark)
With Peace from Us,
And Blessing on thee
And on some of the Peoples
(Who will spring) from those
With thee: but (there will be
Other) Peoples to whom We
Shall grant their pleasures¹⁵⁴²
(For a time), but in the end
Will a grievous Chastisement
Reach them from Us."¹⁵⁴³

49. Such are some of the stories
Of the Unseen, which We
Have revealed unto thee:
Before this, neither thou
Nor thy People knew them.
So persevere patiently:
For the End is for those
Who are righteous.¹⁵⁴⁴

قِيلَ يٰنُوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْكَ
وَعَلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّمَّنْ مَعَكَ وَأُمَمٌ سَنَسْتَعْتِبُهُمْ
ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُمْ مِنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾

تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ
تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَٰذَا
فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

1541. Noah, in his natural affection and respect for ties of relationship, was overcome with human weakness in wishing to reverse the Decree of Allah. It was not sin but ignorance. His ignorance was corrected by divine inspiration, and he immediately saw the full Truth, acknowledged his error, and asked for Allah's forgiveness and mercy. This is the standard set for us all.

1542. Cf. ii. 126.

1543. Those who truly seek Allah's light and guidance and sincerely bend their will to His Will are freely admitted to Allah's grace. Notwithstanding any human weaknesses in them, they are advanced higher in the stage on account of their Faith, Trust, and Striving after Right. They are given Allah's Peace, which gives the soul true calmness and strength, and all the blessings that flow from spiritual life. This was given not only to Noah and his family but to all the righteous people who were saved with him. And their descendants were also promised those blessings on condition of righteousness. But some of them fell from grace, as we know in history. Allah's grace is not a social or family privilege. Each people and each individual must earnestly strive for it and earn it.

1544. Cf. n. 1528 to xi. 35. The sum of the whole matter is that the righteous, who work for Allah and their fellow-men, may be traduced, insulted, and persecuted. But they will be sustained by Allah's Mercy. They must go on working patiently, for the End will all be for them and their Cause.

SECTION 5.

50. To the 'Ād People
(We sent) Hūd, one
Of their own brethren.
He said: "O my people!
Worship Allah! ye have
No other god but Him.¹⁵⁴⁵
You are only forgers.
51. "O my people! I ask of you
No reward for this (Message).
My reward is from none
But Him who created me:
Will ye not then understand?
52. "And O my people! Ask
Forgiveness of your Lord,
And turn to Him (in repentance):
He will send you the skies¹⁵⁴⁶
Pouring abundant rain,
And add strength
To your strength.¹⁵⁴⁷

وَالْإِلَٰهَ عَادِ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا قَالَ يَنْقُورُ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ
مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ إِن أَنْتُمْ
إِلَّا مُفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

يَنْقُورُ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ أَجْرِيَ
إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

وَيَنْقُورُ أَسْتَغْفِرُكُمْ وَأَرْبَابَكُمْ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ
السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا وَيزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً
إِلَى قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

1545. Cf. the story of Hūd the Messenger of the 'Ād People, in vii. 65-72. There the argument was how other Peoples treated thier prophets as the Makkans were treating Al-Muṣṭafā. Here we see another point emphasized: the insolence of the 'Ād in obstinately adhering to false gods after the true God had been preached to them, Allah's grace to them, and finally Allah's justice in bringing them to book while the righteous were saved.

The locality in which the 'Ād flourished is indicated in n. 1040 to vii. 65.

1546. The beautiful metaphor about the skies coming down with rain has been obscured unnecessarily in most translations. The country of the 'Ād was an arid country, and rain was the greatest blessing they could receive. We can imagine this being said in a time of famine, when the people performed all sorts of superstitious rites and invocations instead of turning to the true God in faith and repentance. Further, when we remember that there were, in this tract in ancient times, dams like that at Maārib, for the storage of rain water, the effect is still further heightened in pointing to Allah's care and mercy in His dealing with men.

1547. Adding strength to strength may refer to increase of population, as some Commentators think. While other parts of Arabia were sparsely populated, the irrigated lands of the 'Ād supported a comparatively dense population and added to their natural strength in the arts of peace and war. But the term used is perfectly general. They were a powerful people in their time. If they obeyed Allah and followed the law of righteousness, they would be still more powerful, for "righteousness exalteth a nation."

So turn ye not back
In sin!"

53. They said: "O Hūd!
No Clear (Sign) hast thou
Brought us, and we are not
The ones to desert our gods
On thy word! Nor shall we
Believe in thee!"¹⁵⁴⁸

قَالُوا يَا هُودُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ
بِتَارِكِي آلِهَتِنَا عَنْ قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ
بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

54. "We say nothing but that
(Perhaps) some of our gods
May have seized thee!"¹⁵⁴⁹
With evil." He said:
"I call Allah to witness,
And do ye bear witness,
That I am free from the sin
Of ascribing, to Him,

إِنْ نَقُولُ إِلَّا اعْتَرَاكَ بَعْضُ آلِهَتِنَا بِسُوءٍ قَالَ إِنِّي
أَشْهَدُ اللَّهَ وَأَشْهَدُوا أَنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

55. "Other gods as partners!
So scheme (your worst) against me,
All of you, and give me
No respite."¹⁵⁵⁰

مِنْ دُونِهِ فَكِيدُونِي جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنْظِرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

56. "I put my trust in Allah,
My Lord and your Lord!
There is not a moving
Creature, but He hath

إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ
أَخِذُّ بِأَصْنَافِهَا إِنْ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٦﴾

1548. The argument of the Unbelievers is practically this: "We are not convinced by you: we don't want to be convinced: we think you are a liar,—or perhaps a fool!" (See next verse).

1549. See n. 1548 above. Continuing their argument, the Unbelievers make a show of making all charitable allowances for Hūd, but in reality cut him to the quick by bringing in their false gods. "To be quite polite," said they, "we will not say that you are exactly a liar! Perhaps you have been touched with imbecility! Ah yes! You rail against what you call our false gods! Some of them have paid you out, and made you a fool! Ha! ha!" This mockery is even worse than their other false accusations. For it sets up false gods against the One True God, even in dealing with Hūd. So Hūd replies, with spirit and indignation: "At least keep Allah's name out of your futile talk! You know as well as I do, that I worship the One True God! You pretend that your false gods can smite a true Prophet of Allah! I accept the challenge. Scheme and plot against me as you may, all of you—you and your gods! See if you have any power! I ask for no quarter from you! My trust is in Allah!"

1550. Cf. vii. 195 and n. 1168.

Grasp of its fore-lock.¹⁵⁵¹

Verily, it is my Lord

That is on a straight Path.¹⁵⁵²

57. "If ye turn away,-

I (at least) have conveyed
The Message with which I
Was sent to you. My Lord
Will make another People
To succeed you, and you
Will not harm Him¹⁵⁵³

In the least. For my Lord
Hath care and watch
Over all things."

58. So when Our decree

Issued, We saved Hūd

And those who believed

With him, by (special) Grace¹⁵⁵⁴

From Us: We saved them

From a severe Chastisement.

59. Such were the 'Ād People:

They rejected the Signs

Of their Lord and Cherisher;

Disobeyed His Messengers;

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ إِلَيْكُمْ
وَسَتَخْلُفُ رَبِّي قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ شَيْئًا
إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيفٌ ﴿٥٧﴾

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُودًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ
بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ ﴿٥٨﴾

وَذَلِكَ عَادٌ فَجَعَلُوا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَنُوحًا وَآدَمَ
رُسُلَهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ ﴿٥٩﴾

1551. *Grasp of the fore-lock*; an Arabic idiom, referring to a horse's fore-lock. The man who grasps it has complete power over the horse, and for the horse the fore-lock is as it were the crown of his beauty, the sum of his power of self-assertion. So Allah's power over all creatures is unlimited and no one can withstand His decree. Cf. xcvi. 15-16.

1552. That is, the standard of all virtue and righteousness is in the Will of Allah, the Universal Will that controls all things in goodness and justice. You are on a crooked Path. Allah's Path is a straight Path.

1553. Hūd was dealing with a people of pride and obstinate rebellion. He tells them that their conduct will only recoil on themselves. It can do no harm to Allah or in any way frustrate the beneficent Plan of Allah. He will only put some other people in their place to carry out His Plan. That Plan is referred to in the next sentence as "care and watch" over all his Creation.

1554. A few just men might suffer for the iniquities of the many. But Allah's Plan is perfect and eventually saves His own people by special Grace, if they have Faith and Trust in Him.

And followed the command
Of every powerful, obstinate
Transgressor.¹⁵⁵⁵

60. And they were pursued
By a Curse in this Life,-
And on the Day of Judgment.
Ah! Behold! For the 'Ād
Rejected their Lord and Cherisher!
Away with
'Ād the People of Hūd!

SECTION 6.

61. To the Thamūd People
(We sent) Ṣāliḥ, one
Of their own brethren¹⁵⁵⁶
He said: "O my People!
Worship Allah: ye have
No other God but Him.
It is He Who hath produced you¹⁵⁵⁷
From the earth and settled you
Therein: then ask forgiveness

وَاتَّبِعُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ أَلَا إِنَّ عَادًا
كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ أَلَا بُعْدَ الْعَادِ قَوْمِ هُودٍ ﴿١١﴾

وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَنْقُورُ اعْبُدُوا
اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
وَأَسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي
قَرِيبٌ مُجِيبٌ ﴿١٢﴾

1555. Instead of following the beneficent Lord who cherished them, they followed every rebel against Allah's Law, if he only obtained a little power to dazzle them.

1556. The story of Ṣāliḥ and the Thamūd people has been told from another point of view in vii. 73-79. The difference in the point of view there and here is the same as in the story of Hūd: see n. 1545 to xi. 50. Note how the story now is the same, and yet new points and details are brought out to illustrate each new argument. Note, also, how the besetting sin of the 'Ād—pride and obstinacy—is distinguished from the besetting sin of the Thamūd—the oppression of the poor, as illustrated by the test case and symbol of the She-camel: see n. 1044 to vii. 73. All sin is in a sense pride and rebellion; yet sins take particular hues in different circumstances, and these colours are brought out as in a most artistically painted picture—with the greatest economy of words and the most piercing analysis of motives. For the locality and history of the Thamūd see n. 1043 to vii. 73.

1557. For *Anshaa* as process of creation see n. 923 to vi. 98 and the further references given there. As to his body, man has been produced from earth or clay, and his settlement on earth is a fact of his material existence. Therefore we must conform to all the laws of our physical being, in order that through our life on this earth we may develop that higher Life which belongs to the other part of our being, our spiritual heritage. Through the use we make of our health, of our tilth, of our pastures, of material facts of all kinds, will develop our moral and spiritual nature.

Of Him, and turn to Him
(In repentance): for my Lord
Is (always) near, ready
To answer."

62. They Said: "O Ṣāliḥ!
Thou hast been of us!-
A centre of our hopes¹⁵⁵⁸
Hitherto! Dost thou (now)
Forbid us the worship
Of what our fathers worshipped?
But we are really
In suspicious (disquieting)
Doubt as to that to which
Thou invitest us."

63. He said: "O my people!
Do ye see?-If I have
A Clear (Sign) from my Lord
And He hath sent Mercy
Unto me from Himself,-who¹⁵⁵⁹
Then can help me
Against Allah if I were
To disobey Him? What
Then would ye add
To my (portion) but perdition?

64. "And O my people!
This she-camel of Allah is

قَالُوا يَصْلِحُ فَذَكُتْ فِينَا مَرْجُوا قَبْلَ هَذَا
أَنَّهُمْ أَنَا نَعْبُدُ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ
مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ ﴿٦٢﴾

قَالَ يَنْفَوِرُ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي
وَأَتَيْتُ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَنْ يَقْضِي مِنِّي أَلَّهُ
إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ فَمَا تَزِيدُونَنِي غَيْرَ تَخْسِيرٍ ﴿٦٣﴾

وَيَنْفَوِرُ هَذِهِ نَافَةٌ لَّكُمْ ءَايَةٌ

1558. Ṣāliḥ's life with his people has been so righteous (like that of al-Amin in later times) that he might have been chosen leader or king if he had only conformed to their superstitions and supported their sins. But he was born for a higher mission-that of a preacher of truth and righteousness and an ardent opponent of selfish privilege and a champion of the rights of humanity on Allah's free earth by the symbol of the she-camel: see n. 1044 to vii. 73.

1559. "Allah has been good to me and bestowed on me His light and the inestimable privilege of carrying His mission to you. Don't you see that if I fail to carry out his mission. I shall have to answer before Him? Who can help me in that case? The only thing which you can add to my misfortunes would be total perdition in the Hereafter." Cf. xi. 28.

A sign to you.¹⁵⁶⁰

Leave her to feed

On Allah's (free) earth,

And inflict no harm

On her, or a swift Punishment

Will seize you!"

65. But they did ham-string her.
So he said: "Enjoy yourselves
In your homes for three days:¹⁵⁶¹
(Then will be your ruin):
(Behold) there a promise
Not to be belied!"

66. When Our Decree issued,
We saved Ṣāliḥ and those
Who believed with him,
By (special) Grace from Us¹⁵⁶²
And from the Ignominy
Of that Day. For thy Lord-
He is the Strong One, and
The Mighty.

67. The (mighty) Blast¹⁵⁶³ overtook
The wrong-doers, and they
Lay prostrate in their homes
Before the morning.-

فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا
بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذْكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٦٥﴾

فَعَقَرُوهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوا فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ
أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوبٍ ﴿٦٦﴾

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صَالِحًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَمِنْ خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ ﴿٦٧﴾

وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا
فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَثِيمًا ﴿٦٨﴾

1560. Ṣāliḥ does not merely take up a negative attitude. He puts forward the she-camel as a sign see n. 1044 to vii. 73. "Give up your selfish monopoly. Make Allah's gifts on this free earth available to all. Give the poor their rights, including grazing rights on common lands. Show your penitence and your new attitude by leaving this she-camel to graze freely. She is a Symbol, and therefore sacred to you. "But their only reply was to defy the appeal and ham-string the camel. And so they went the way of all sinners—to total perdition.

1561. Just three days' time for further thought and repentance! But they paid no heed. A terrible earthquake came by night, preceded by a mighty rumbling blast (probably volcanic), such as is well-known in earthquake areas. It came by night and buried them in their own fortress homes, which they thought such places of security! The morning found them lying on their faces hidden from the light. How the mighty were brought low!

1562. Cf. xi. 58 above and n. 1554. For 'Azīz, see n. 2818 to xxi 40.

1563. Cf. xi 78 and n. 1047,—also n. 1561 above.

68. As if they had never
Dwelt and flourished there.
Ah! Behold! For the Thamūd
Rejected their Lord and Cherisher!
So away with the Thamūd¹⁵⁶⁴

SECTION 7.

69. There came Our Messengers
To Abraham with glad tidings.
They said, "Peace!" He answered,
"Peace!" and hastened
To entertain them
With a roasted calf.¹⁵⁶⁵
70. But when he saw
Their hands not reaching
Towards the (meal), he felt
Some mistrust of them,
And conceived a fear of them.^{1565-A}
They said: "Fear not:

كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا ۚ الْآلَ إِنَّ ثَمُودَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ
الْأَبْعَدَ لِثَمُودَ ﴿١٨﴾

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى قَالُوا
سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ فَمَا لِيَتْ أَنْ جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ
حَنِيمٍ ﴿١٩﴾

فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ
وَأَوَّجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أَتَيْنَا
إِلَى قَوْمِ لُوطَ ﴿٢٠﴾

1564. Cf. xi. 60 above.

1565. According to the sequence of Sūra vii, the next reference should be to the story of Lūt, and that story commences at xi. 77 below, but it is introduced by a brief reference to an episode in the life of his uncle Abraham, from whose seed sprang the peoples to whom Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad Al-Muṣṭafā were sent with the major Revelations. Abraham had by this time passed through the fire of persecutions in the Mesopotamian valleys: he had left behind him the ancestral idolatry of Ur of the Chaldees; he had been tried and he had triumphed over the persecution of Nimrūd: he had now taken up his residence in Canaan, from which his nephew Lot (Lūt) was called to preach to the wicked Cities of the Plain east of the Dead sea which is itself called Baḥr Lūt. Thus prepared and sanctified, he was now ready to receive the Message that he was chosen to be the progenitor of a great line of Prophets, and that Message is now referred to.

Can we localise Nimrūd? If local tradition in place-names can be relied upon, this king must have ruled over the tract which includes the modern Nimrūd, on the Tigris, about twenty miles south of Mosul. This is the site of Assyrian ruins of great interest, but the rise of Assyria as an Empire was of course much later than the time of Abraham. The Assyrian city was called Kalakh (or Calah), and archaeological excavations carried out there have yielded valuable results, which are however irrelevant for our Commentary.

1565-A. Abraham received the strangers with a salutation of Peace, and immediately placed before them a sumptuous meal of roasted calf. The strangers were embarrassed. They were angels and did not eat. If hospitality is refused, it means that those who refuse =

We have been sent
Against the people of Lūt.¹⁵⁶⁶

وَأَمْرَانَهُ فَأَبْمَهٗ فَصَجِكَ فَبَشَّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ
وَمِنْ وَرَاءَ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ ﴿٧١﴾

71. And his wife was standing
(There), and she laughed:¹⁵⁶⁷
But We gave her
Glad tidings of Isaac,
And after him, of Jacob.

قَالَتْ يَوْنِلَيَّْ أَلِدٌ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا
إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ ﴿٧٢﴾

72. She said: "Alas for me!¹⁵⁶⁸
Shall I bear a child,
Seeing I am an old woman,
And my husband here
Is an old man?
That would indeed
Be a wonderful thing!"

73. They said: "Dost thou
Wonder at Allah's decree?
The grace of Allah
And His blessings on you,
O ye people of the house!¹⁵⁶⁹
For He is indeed
Worthy of all praise,

قَالُوا أَنْتَعَجِبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ رَحِمْتُ اللَّهَ
وَبَرَكْنَاهُ عَلَيْهِكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ ﴿٧٣﴾

= it meditate no good to the would be host. Abraham therefore had a feeling of mistrust and fear in his mind, which the strangers at once set at rest by saying that their mission was in the first place to help Lūt as a warner to the Cities of Plain. But in the second place they had good news for Abraham: he was to be the father of great peoples!

1566. *The people of Lūt* means the people to whom Lūt was sent on his mission of warning, the people of the wicked Cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah.

1567. The narrative is very concise, and most of the details are taken for granted. We may suppose that the angels gave the news first to Abraham, who was already, according to Gen. xxi 5, a hundred years of age, and his wife Sarah was not far short of ninety (Gen. xvii. 7). She was probably screened. She could hardly believe the news. In her scepticism (some say in her joy) she laughed. But the news was formally communicated to her that she was to be the mother of Isaac, and through Isaac, the grandmother of Jacob. Jacob was to be a fruitful tree, with his twelve sons. But hitherto Abraham had had no son by her, and Sarah was past the age of child-bearing. "How could it be?" she thought.

1568. This is as much a sigh of past regrets as of future wistfulness!

1569. *Ahl-ul-bait* = people of the house, a polite form of addressing the wife and members of the family. Blessings are here invoked on the whole family.

Full of all glory!¹⁵⁷⁰

74. When fear had passed
From (the mind of) Abraham
And the glad tidings¹⁵⁷¹
Had reached him, he
Began to plead with Us
For Lût's people.

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبُشْرَى
يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ ﴿٧٤﴾

75. For Abraham was,
Without doubt, forbearing
(Of faults), compassionate,
And given to penitence.¹⁵⁷²

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ ﴿٧٥﴾

76. O Abraham! Seek not this.
The decree of thy Lord
Hath gone forth: for them
There cometh a Chastisement
That cannot be turned back!¹⁵⁷³

يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ
وَرَأَيْتُمْ آيَاتِهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

77. When Our Messengers
Came to Lût, he was
Grieved on their account
And felt himself powerless
(To protect) them. He said:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِئَاءَ يَوْمٍ وَقَافٍ بِهِمْ
ذَرَعَاوًا قَالَ هَذَا يَوْمُ عَصِيبٍ ﴿٧٧﴾

1570. This little episode of Abraham's life comes in fitly as one of the illustrations of Allah's wonderful providence in His dealings with man. Abraham had had a tussle with his father on behalf of Truth and Unity (vi. 74); he had passed through the fire unscathed (xxi. 68-69); he had travelled to far countries, and was now ready to receive his great mission as the fountain-head of prophets in his old age. Humanly speaking it seemed impossible that he should have a son at his age, and yet it came to pass and became a corner-stone of sacred history.

1571. *Glad-tidings*: not only that he was to have a son, but that he was to be a fountain-head of prophets. So he now begins to plead at once for the sinful people to whom Lot was sent as a warner.

1572. Like Al-Muṣṭafā, Abraham had three qualities in a pre-eminent degree, which are here mentioned: (1) he was long-suffering with other people's faults: (2) his sympathies and compassion were very wide: and (3) for every difficulty or trouble he turned to Allah and sought Him in prayer.

1573. This is a sort of prophetic apostrophe. 'O Abraham! All your warning. O Lût, will be unheeded! Alas! they are so deep in sin that nothing will reclaim them!' This is illustrated in verse 79 below. And now we proceed to Lût and how he was dealt with by the wicked.

"This is a distressful day."¹⁵⁷⁴

78. And his people came
Rushing towards him,
And they had been long
In the habit of practising
Abominations. He said:
"O my people! Here are
My daughters: they are purer
For you (if ye marry)!¹⁵⁷⁵
Now fear Allah, and cover me not
With disgrace about my guests!
Is there not among you
A single right-minded man?"

79. They said: "Well dost thou
Know we have no need
Of thy daughters: indeed
Thou knowest quite well
What we want!"

80. He said: "Would that I
Had power to suppress you
Or that I could betake
Myself to some powerful support".¹⁵⁷⁶

وَجَاءَهُ قَوْمُهُ مُهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ قَالَ يَنْفَوْرُهُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي
هُنَّ أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تَخْزَوْا فِي صَیْفِي
أَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَشِيدٌ ﴿٧٨﴾

قَالُوا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا فِي بَنَاتِكَ مِنْ حَیٍّ
وَإِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا تُرِيدُ ﴿٧٩﴾

قَالَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةٌ أَوْ آوَى إِلَيَّ رَكْنٌ شَدِيدٌ ﴿٨٠﴾

1574. The story of Lot, as referred to in vii. 80-84, laid emphasis on the rejection of Lot's mission by men who practised unnatural abominations. See n. 1049 to vii. 80. Here the emphasis is laid on Allah's dealings with men—in mercy for true spiritual service and in righteous wrath and punishment for those who defy the laws of nature established by Him;—also on men's dealings with each other and the contrast between the righteous and the wicked who respect no laws human or divine.

1575. The Biblical narrative suggests that the daughters were married and their husbands were close by (Gen. xix. 14) and that these same daughters afterwards committed incest with their father and had children by him (Gen. xix. 31). The holy Qur-ān nowhere suggests such abominations. Some Commentators suggest that "my daughters" in the mouth of a venerable man like Lût, the father of his people, may mean any young girls of those Towns. "My son" (*waladi*) is still a common mode of address in Arabic-speaking countries when an elderly man addresses a young man.

1576. Lot seemed helpless in the situation in which he found himself,—alone against a rabble of people inflamed with evil passions. He wished he had had the strength to suppress them himself or had had some powerful support to lean on! But the powerful support was there, though he had not realised it till then. It was the support of Allah. His guests were not ordinary men, but Angels who had come to test the people before =

81. (The Messengers) said: "O Lūt!
We are Messengers from thy Lord!
By no means shall they
Reach thee! Now travel
With thy family while yet
A part of the night remains,
And let not any of you
Look back: but thy wife¹⁵⁷⁷
(Will remain behind):
To her will happen
What happens to the people.
Morning is their time appointed:
Is not the morning nigh?"

82. When Our decree issued,
We turned (the cities)
Upside down, and rained down
On them brimstones¹⁵⁷⁸
Hard as baked clay,¹⁵⁷⁹
Spread, layer on layer, -

83. Marked from thy Lord;¹⁵⁸⁰

قَالُوا يَلُوطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَصِلُوا إِلَيْكَ
فَأَنْسِرْ بَأَهْلِكَ يَقْطِيعُ مِنَ الْآئِلِ وَلَا يَلْنَفَتْ
مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا أَمْرًا أَنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا
مَا أَصَابَهُمْ إِنْ مَوْعِدُهُمُ الصُّبْحُ
الْيَسْرُ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيبٍ (٨١)

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰهَا سَافِلَهَا
وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ
مَّنْضُودٍ (٨٢)

مُسَوَّمَةً عِندَ رَبِّكَ وَمَاهِي مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ
بَعِيدٍ (٨٣)

= they inflicted the punishment. They now declared themselves, and gave him directions to get away before the morning, when the punishment would descend on the doomed Cities of the Plain.

1577. Even in Lot's household was one who detracted from the harmony of the family. She was disobedient to her husband, and he was here obeying Allah's Command. She looked back and shared the fate of the wicked inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain: see also lxvi. 10. The Biblical narrative suggests that she was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. xix. 26).

1578. Cf. vii. 84 and n. 1052.

1579. *Sijjil*, a Persian word Arabicised, from *Sang-o-gil*, or *Sang-i-gil*, stone and clay, or hard as baked clay, according to the Qāmūs. Sodom and Gomorrah were in a tract of hard, caky, sulphurous soil, to which this description well applies. Cf. li. 33, where the words are "stones of clay" (*hijarat min tin*) in connection with the same incident. On the other hand, in cv. 4, the word *sijjil* is used for pellets of hard-baked clay in connection with Abraha and the Companions of the Elephant.

1580. If we take the words literally, they would mean that the showers of brimstones were marked with the destiny of the wicked as decreed by Allah.

Nor are they¹⁵⁸¹ ever far
From those who do wrong!

SECTION 8.

84. To the Madyan people¹⁵⁸²
(We sent) Shu'aib, one
Of their own brethren: he said:
"O my people! worship Allah:
Ye have no other god
But Him. And give not
Short measure or weight:
I see you in prosperity,¹⁵⁸³
But I fear for you
The Chastisement of a Day
That will compass (you) all round.
85. "And O my people! give
Just measure and weight,
Nor withhold from the people
The things that are their due:¹⁵⁸⁴
Commit not evil in the land
With intent to do mischief.

وَإِلَى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُ شُعَيْبًا قَالَ يَنْفَوْرُ أَغْبُدُوا
اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ وَلَا تَنْقُصُوا
الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ إِنِّي أَرَبُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ
وَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ تُحِيطُ

وَيَنْفَوْرُ أَوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ
وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْتُوا
فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ

1581. *They*: Arabic, *hiya*: some Commentators take the pronoun to refer to the wicked cities so destroyed: the meaning then would be: those wicked cities were not so different from other cities that do wrong, for they would all suffer similar punishment! Perhaps it would be better to refer "they" to the stones of punishment by a metonymy for "punishment": 'punishment would not be far from any people that did wrong.'

1582. Cf. vii. 85-93. The location of Madyan is explained in n. 1053 to vii. 85 and the chronological place of Shu'aib in n. 1064 to vii. 93. The point of the reference here is different from that in S. vii. Here the emphasis is on Allah's dealings with men and men's crooked and obstinate ways: there the emphasis was rather on their treatment of their Prophet, thus throwing light on some of the sins of the Makkans in later times.

1583. The Midianites were a commercial people, and their besetting sin was commercial selfishness and fraudulent dealings in weights and measures. Their Prophet tells them that that is the surest way to cut short their "prosperity", both in the material and the spiritual sense. When the Day of Judgment comes, it will search out their dealings through and through: "it will compass them all round," and they will not be able to escape then, however much they may conceal their frauds in this world.

1584. Both Plato and Aristotle define justice as the virtue which gives every one his due. From this point of view Justice becomes the master virtue, and includes most other virtues. It was the lack of this that ruined the Midianites. Their selfishness was "intent on mischief," i.e., spoiling other people's business by not giving them their just dues.

86. 'That which is left you
By Allah is best for you,¹⁵⁸⁵
If ye (but) believed!
But I am not set
Over you to keep watch!"
87. They said: "O Shu'aib!
Does thy prayer
Command thee that we
Leave off the worship which
Our fathers practised, or
That we leave off doing
What we like with our property?¹⁵⁸⁶
Truly, thou art the one
That forbearth with faults
And is right-minded!"¹⁵⁸⁷
88. He said: "O my people!
See ye whether I have
A Clear (Sign) from my Lord,
And He hath given me
Sustenance (pure and) good¹⁵⁸⁸
As from Himself? I wish not,

يَقِيْتُ اللَّهَ خَيْرَ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ
وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿٨٦﴾

قَالُوا يَشْعِبُ أَصْلُوكَ تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ تَتْرَكَ
مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا أَوْ أَنْ تَفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا
مَا نَشَاءُ إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ ﴿٨٧﴾

قَالَ يَنْقُورُ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَى يَدَيْنِهِ مِنْ رَبِّي
وَرَزَقَنِي مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَخْلِفَ لَكُمْ
إِلَّا مَا أَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ

1585. Allah's Law does not require that a man should deprive himself of the things that are necessary for his own well-being and development. If he follows Allah's Law, what is left him after he renders to others their just dues will be not only enough, but will be the best possible provision for his own physical and spiritual growth. Even the kindness and consideration which Allah's Law inculcates are in the best interests of the man's own soul. But of course the kindness and consideration must be spontaneous. It must flow from the man's own will, and cannot be forced on him by the Prophet who come from Allah to show him the way.

1586. It is the way of selfish and material minded people (1) to scoff at spiritual things like prayer and worship and (2) to hug their own property rights as if there were not other rights even greater than those of property!

1587. They grow sarcastic against Shu'aib. In effect they say: "You are a fine man! You teach us that we must be kind and forbearing with other people's faults, and now get at what you call our sins! You think you are the only right minded man!"

1588. Shu'aib's answer is gentle and persuasive. First, he would ask them not to fly into a passion but satisfy themselves that he had a mission from Allah, and was working in the discharge of his mission: he was not merely finding fault with them. Secondly, though he was a poor man, he asked them to note that he was happy and comfortable: Allah had given him good sustenance, material and spiritual, as from Himself, though he =

In opposition to you, to do
That which I forbid you to do.
I only desire (your) betterment
To the best of my power;
And my success (in my task)
Can only come from Allah.
In Him I trust,
And unto Him I turn

مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ
وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ ﴿٨٨﴾

89. "And O my people!
Let not my dissent (from you)¹⁵⁸⁹
Cause you to sin,
Lest ye suffer
A fate similar to that
Of the people of Noah
Or of Hūd or of Ṣāliḥ,
Nor are the people of Lūt
Far off from you!"¹⁵⁹⁰

وَنَقُومُ لَكُمْ لَا يَجْعَلُ مِنكُمْ شِقَاقِي أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ مِثْلُ
مَا أَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوحٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ هُودٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ صَالِحٍ
وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوطٍ مِنْكُمْ بِبَعِيدٍ ﴿٨٩﴾

90. "But ask forgiveness
Of your Lord, and turn
Unto Him (in repentance):
For my Lord is indeed
Full of mercy and loving-kindness."

وَأَسْتَغْفِرُكُمْ ثُمَّ يَوْدُ إِلَيْهِ إِنْ رَأَى
رَجِيمًا وَدُودًا ﴿٩٠﴾

91. They said: "O Shu'aib!
Much of what thou sayest

قَالُوا يَسْعَيْبُ مَا نَفَقَهُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا نَقُولُ

did not resort to the sort of tricks which they considered necessary for their prosperity. Thirdly, if he forbade them anything he wished to apply the same standards to himself. Fourthly, all the advice which he is giving them is for their own good, which he desires to advance to the utmost of his powers. Fifthly, he is humble for himself; he would not set himself up to be their teacher or guide, or expect to be obeyed; the success of any of his efforts on their behalf must come from Allah's grace; will they not therefore turn to Allah, so that Allah's grace can heal them?

1589. Finally, Shu'aib appeals to them as man to man. "Because I differ from you, do not think I do not love you or feel for you. Let it not drive you into obstinacy and sin. I see things that you do not. My vision takes in the fate of previous generations who sinned, and perished on account of their sins. Turn therefore to Allah in repentance."

1590. The generation of Lūt was not far off from the generation of Shu'aib chronologically if Shu'aib was only in the fourth generation from Abraham (see n. 1064 to vii. 93). Nor was its habitat geographically far from that of Shu'aib, as the Midianites wandered about from Sinai Peninsula to the Jordan valley (see n. 1053 to vii. 85).

We do not understand!¹⁵⁹¹

In fact among us we see
That thou hast no strength!
Were it not for thy family,
We should certainly
Have stoned thee!
For thou hast among us
No great position!¹⁵⁹²

92. He said: "O my people!
Is then my family
Of more consideration with you
Than Allah? For ye cast Him
Away behind your backs
(With contempt). But verily
My Lord encompasseth
All that ye do!"¹⁵⁹³

93. "And O my people
Do whatever ye can:
I will do (my part).¹⁵⁹⁴
Soon will ye know
Who it is on whom
Descends the Chastisement
Of ignominy, and who
Is a liar!
And watch ye!
For I too am watching
With you!"¹⁵⁹⁵

وَإِنَّا لَنَرُّكَ فِيْنَا ضَعِيفًا وَلَوْ لَا رَهْطُكَ
لَرَجَمْنَاكَ وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيزٍ ﴿١١﴾

قَالَ يَنْقُورِ أَرَهْطَى أَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ
وَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُ وَرَاءَكُمْ ظَهْرًا إِنَّ رَبِّي
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ ﴿١٢﴾

وَيَنْقُورِ أَعْمَلُوا عَلَى مَكَانَيْكُمْ إِنِّي عَمِلٌ
سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ
وَمَنْ هُوَ كَذِبٌ وَأَرْتَقِبُوا
إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ رَقِيبٌ ﴿١٣﴾

1591. Spiritual things are easy to understand if we bring the right mind to them. But those who are contemptuous of them deliberately shut their eyes to Allah's Signs, and then pretend in their superior arrogance that they are 'quite beyond them'!

1592. What they do understand is brute strength. They practically say: "Don't you see that we have all the power and influence, and you, Shu'aib, are only a poor Teacher? We could stone you or imprison you or do what we like with you! Thank us for our kindness that we spare you —, for the sake of your family. It is more than you yourself deserve!"

1593. Cf. viii. 47.

1594. Cf. vi. 135 and n. 957.

1595. If the wicked will continue to blaspheme and mock, what can the godly say but this?—"Watch and wait! Allah's Plan works without fail! I have faith, and I too will watch with you for its fulfilment." Cf. x 102, and n. 1484.

94. When Our decree issued,
We saved Shu'aib and those
Who believed with him,
By (special) Mercy from Us:¹⁵⁹⁶
But the (mighty) Blast did seize
The wrong-doers, and they
Lay prostrate in their homes
By the morning,-

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَأَخَذَتِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ
فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيارِهِمْ جَثِيصِينَ ﴿١١﴾

95. As if they had never
Dwelt and flourished there!¹⁵⁹⁷
So away with Madyan
As were Thamud gone away.

كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا الْأَبْعَدُ الْمَدِينِ كَمَا بَعْدَتْ
نَعْمُودُ ﴿١٢﴾

SECTION 9.

96. And we sent Moses,¹⁵⁹⁸
With our Clear (signs)
And an authority manifest,
97. Unto Pharaoh and his Chiefs:
But they followed the Command¹⁵⁹⁹
Of Pharaoh, and the command
Of Pharaoh was not rightly guided.
98. He will go before his people
On The Day of Judgment,

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾
إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ، فَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ
وَمَا أَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيدٍ ﴿١٤﴾
يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فَأَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ

1596. Cf. xi. 66 and xi. 58, n. 1554.

1597. Cf. xi. 67-68. The blast was probably the tremendous noise which accompanies volcanic eruptions.

1598. The story of Moses and Pharaoh is referred to in many places in the Qur-ān, each in connection with some special point to be illustrated. Here the point is that Allah's dealings with man are in all things and at all times just. But man falls under false leadership by deliberate choice and perishes along with his false leaders accordingly. In exercise of the intelligence and choice given him, man should be particularly careful to understand his own responsibilities and to profit from Allah's Signs, so as to attain to Allah's Mercy and blessings.

1599. Pharaoh is the type of the arrogant, selfish, and false leader, who poses as a power in rivalry with that of Allah. Such an attitude seems to attract unregenerate humanity, which falls a willing victim, in spite of the teaching and warning given by the men of Allah and the many moral and spiritual forces that beckon man towards Allah's Grace.

And lead them into the Fire¹⁶⁰⁰
But woeful indeed will be
The place to which they are led!

99. And they are followed
By a curse in this (life)
And on the Day of Judgment:
And woeful is the gift
Which shall be given
(Unto them)!

100. These are some of the stories
Of communities which We
Relate unto thee: of them
Some are standing,¹⁶⁰¹ and some
Have been mown down
(By the sickle of time).¹⁶⁰²

101. It was not We that wronged them:
They wronged their own souls:
The deities, other than Allah,
Whom they invoked, profited them
No whit when there issued
The decree of thy Lord:¹⁶⁰³
Nor did they add aught
(To their lot) but perdition!

وَيَسِّرَ الْوَرْدَ الْمَرْوَدَ ﴿٩٨﴾

وَأَتَّبِعُوا فِي هَذِهِ لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ يَسِّرَ
الرِّقْدَ الْمَرْفُودَ ﴿٩٩﴾

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْقُرَى نَقِصُهُ عَلَيْكَ
مِنْهَا قَائِمٌ وَحَصِيدٌ ﴿١٠٠﴾

وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَمَا أَغْنَتْ
عَنْهُمْ إِلَهُهُمْ الَّتِي يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ
لَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ وَمَا زَادُوهُمْ غَيْرَ تَتْنِيبٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

1600. *Awrada* = to lead, as cattle, down to their watering place. The metaphor is apt. The true herdsman is trusted by his normal flock, and he leads them in the heat of the day down to pleasant and cool watering places in order that they may slake their thirst and be happy. The false leader does the opposite: he takes them down to the fire of eternal misery! And yet men sin against their own intelligence, and follow the false leader like cattle without intelligence!

1601. *Some are standing*: like corn, which is ready to be reaped. Among the communities which remained was, and is, Egypt, although the Pharaoh and his wicked people have been swept away. The simile of standing corn also suggests that at no time can town or community expect permanency, except in the Law of the Lord.

1602. Nations grow and ripen and are mown down. If they disobeyed Allah, their end is evil; if they were true and godly, their harvest was good.

1603. All false and fleeting shadows must vanish before the reality and permanence of the decree of Allah. If we worshipped the false, we earned nothing but perdition.

102. Such is the chastisement
Of thy Lord when He chastises
Communities in the midst of
Their wrong: grievous, indeed,
And severe is His chastisement.
103. In that is a Sign
For those who fear
The Chastisement of the Hereafter;
That is a Day for which mankind
Will be gathered together:
That will be a Day
Of Testimony.¹⁶⁰⁴
104. Nor shall We delay it
But for a term appointed.
105. The day it arrives,
No soul shall speak¹⁶⁰⁵
Except by His leave:
Of those (gathered) some
Will be wretched and some
Will be blessed.¹⁶⁰⁶
106. Those who are wretched
Shall be in the Fire:
There will be for them

وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْذُ رَبِّكَ إِذَا أَخَذَ الْقُرَىٰ وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ
إِنَّ أَخْذَهُ أَلِيمٌ شَدِيدٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّمَن خَافَ عَذَابَ الْآخِرَةِ ذَلِكَ
يَوْمٌ مُّجْمُوعٌ لَّهُ النَّاسُ وَذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّشْهُودٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾

وَمَا نُؤَخِّرُهُ إِلَّا لِأَجَلٍ مُّعَدَّدٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾

يَوْمَ يَأْتِ لَا تَكَلَّمُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ
شَقِيٌّ وَسَعِيدٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُوا فَيُنَادُونَ النَّارَ لِهَمِّهَا

1604. *Yaumun mashhūd*: To suggest the comprehensive meaning of the Arabic I have translated, "a Day of Testimony". I proceed to explain the various shades of meaning implied: (1) a Day to which all testimony points from every quarter; (2) a Day when testimony will be given before Allah's Judgment-seat, by all who are relevant witnesses, e.g., the Prophets that preached, the men or women we benefited or injured, the angels who recorded our thoughts and deeds, or our thoughts and deeds personified; (3) a Day which will be witnessed, i.e., seen by all, no matter how or where they died.

1605. *Speak i.e.*, either in self-defence or in accusation of others or to intercede for others, or to enter into conversation or ask questions, one with another. It will be a solemn Day, before the Great Judge of all, to whom everything will be known and whose authority will be unquestioned. There will be no room for quibbling or equivocation or subterfuge of any kind, nor can any one lay the blame on another or take the responsibility of another. Personal responsibility will be enforced strictly.

1606. *Shaqī* (wretched) and *Sa'id* (blessed) have become almost technical theological terms. They are explained in the four following verses.

Therein (nothing but) the heaving
Of sighs and sobs:¹⁶⁰⁷

107. They will dwell therein¹⁶⁰⁸
So long as
The heavens and the earth
Endure, except as thy Lord
Willeth: for thy Lord
Is the (sure) Accomplisher
Of what He planneth.

108. And those who are blessed
Shall be in the Garden:
They will dwell therein¹⁶⁰⁹
So long as
The heavens and the earth
Endure, except as thy Lord
Willeth: a gift without break.¹⁶¹⁰

109. Be not then in doubt
As to what these men

زَفِيرٌ وَشَهيقٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ
إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ ﴿١٠٧﴾

﴿١٠٨﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ سُعِدُوا فَفِي الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ
عَطَاءٌ غَيْرَ يُجَدُّوْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّمَّا يَعْبُدُ هَؤُلَاءِ مَا يَعْبُدُونَ

1607. The first word, *Zafir*, translated "sighs", is applied to one part in the process of the braying of an ass, when he emits a deep breath. The second, *Shahiq*, translated "sobs", is the other process in the braying of an ass, when he draws in a long breath. This suggestion of an animal proverbial for his folly implies that the wicked, in spite of their arrogance and insolence in this world below, will at last realise that they have been fools after all, throwing away their own chances whenever they got them. In lxvii. 7 the word *Shahiq* is applied to the tremendous roaring in-take or devouring of Hell-fire.

1608. *Khalidin*: This is the word which is usually translated "dwell for ever" or "dwell for aye". Here it is definitely connected with two conditions, viz: (1) as long as the heavens and the earth endure, and (2) except as Allah wills. Some Muslim theologians deduce from this the conclusion that the penalties referred to are not eternal, because the heavens and the earth as we see them are not eternal, and the punishments for the deeds of a life that will end should not be such as will never end. The majority of Muslim theologians reject this view. They hold that the heavens and the earth here referred to are not those we see now, but others that will be eternal. They agree that Allah's Will is unlimited in scope and power, but that It has willed that the rewards and punishments of the Day of Judgment will be eternal.

1609. Exactly the same arguments apply as in the last note.

1610. The felicity will be uninterrupted, unlike any joy or happiness which we can imagine in this life and which is subject to chances and changes, as our daily experience shows.

Worship. They worship nothing¹⁶¹¹
 But what their fathers worshipped
 Before (them): but verily
 We shall pay them back
 (In full) their portion¹⁶¹²
 Without (the least) abatement.

SECTION 10.

إِلَّا كَمَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَإِنَّا لَمَوْفُوهُمْ
 نَصِيبُهُمْ غَيْرُ مَنْقُوصٍ ﴿١٠٩﴾

110. We certainly gave the Book
 To Moses, but differences
 Arose therein: had it not been
 That a Word had gone forth
 Before from thy Lord the matter
 Would have been decided¹⁶¹³
 Between them: but they
 Are in suspicious doubt
 Concerning it.¹⁶¹⁴

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ
 وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ
 وَإِنَّهُمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مُرِيبٍ ﴿١١٠﴾

111. And, of a surety, to all
 Will your Lord pay back
 (In full the recompense)
 Of their deeds: for He
 Knoweth well all that they do.¹⁶¹⁵

وَإِنْ كَلَّا لَمَا لِيَوقِنَهُمْ رَبُّكَ
 أَعْمَلُهُمْ إِنَّهٗ جَمَّاعٌ لِّمَا يَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١١١﴾

1611. Their worship is not based on any spiritual attitude of mind. They merely follow the ways of their fathers.

1612. Allah will take fully into account all their motives in such mummery as they call worship, and they will have their full spiritual consequences in the future.

1613. Cf. x. 19. Previous revelations are not to be denied or dishonoured because those who nominally go by them have corrupted and deprived them of spiritual value by their vain controversies and disputes. It was possible to settle such disputes under the flag, as it were, of the old Revelations, but Allah's Plan was to revive and rejuvenate His Message through Islam, amongst a newer and younger people, unhampered by the burden of age long prejudices.

1614. Cf. xi. 62. There is always in human affairs the conflict between the old and the new,—the worn-out system of our ancestors, and the fresh living spring of Allah's inspiration fitting in with new times and new surroundings. The advocates of the former look upon this latter not only with intellectual doubt but with moral suspicion, as did the People of the Book upon Islam, with its fresh outlook and vigorous realistic way of looking at things.

1615. Cf. xi. 109 above, with which the argument is now connected up by recalling the characteristic word ("pay back") and leading to the exhortation (in the verses following) to stand firm in the right path freshly revealed.

112. Therefore stand firm (in the straight Path) as thou art commanded,-
Thou and those who with thee
Turn (unto Allah); and transgress

not

(From the Path): for He seeth
Well all that ye do.

113. And incline not to those
Who do wrong, or the Fire
Will touch you; and ye have
No protectors other than Allah,
Nor shall ye be helped.

114. And establish regular prayers
At the two ends of the day¹⁶¹⁶
And at the approaches of
the night:¹⁶¹⁷

For those things that are good
Remove those that are evil:¹⁶¹⁸
That is a reminder
For the mindful

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا
إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١١٢﴾

وَلَا تَزْكُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ
وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ
لَا تُنصَرُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفَا مِنْ أَيْلٍ
إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ
ذَلِكَ ذِكْرٌ لِلذَّكْرِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾

1616. *The two ends of the day*: Morning and afternoon. The morning prayer is the *Fajr*, after the light is up but before sunrise: we thus get up betimes and begin the day with the remembrance of Allah and of our duty to Him. The early afternoon prayer, *Zuhr*, is immediately after noon: we are in the midst of our daily life, and again we remember Allah. There is no disagreement among scholars regarding which prayer is meant by one of these two ends of the day. They agree that it is *Fajr* prayer which may be performed from dawn until a little before sunrise. There is disagreement, however, regarding the prayer which ought to be performed at the other end of the day. It is said variously that the reference is to *Aṣr* or *Maghrib* prayer.

1617. *Approaches of the night*: *Zulafun*, plural of *Zulfatun*, an approach, something near at hand. As Arabic has, like Greek, a dual number distinct from the plural, and the plural number is used here, and not the dual, it is reasonable to argue that at least three "approaches of the night" are meant. The late afternoon prayer, *Aṣr*, can be one of these three, and the evening prayer, *Magrib*, just after sunset, can be the second. The early night prayer, *Ishā*, at supper time when the glow of sunset is disappearing, would be the third of the "approaches of the night", when we commit ourselves to Allah before sleep. These are the five canonical prayers of Islam.

1618. "*Those things that are good*": in this context the words refer primarily to prayers, but they include all good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. It is by them that we keep away everything that is evil, whether referring to the past, the present, or the future.

115. And be steadfast in patience;
For verily Allah will not suffer
The reward of the righteous
To perish.

وَأَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾

116. If only there had been
Of the generations before you,
Men of righteousness¹⁶¹⁹
Who prohibited men
From mischief in the earth
(But there were none)
Except a few among them
Whom We saved (from harm)?¹⁶²⁰
But the wrong-doers pursued
The enjoyment of the good things
Of life which were given them,
And persisted in sin.

فَلَوْلَا كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوا بَقِيَّةٍ
يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
مِمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ
ظَلَمُوا مَا أَتَرَفُوا فِيهِ وَكَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾

117. Nor would thy Lord be
The One to destroy
The towns unjustly¹⁶²¹
While their people are
Righteous.

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى بِظُلْمٍ
وَأَهْلُهَا مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾

1619. *Baqiyat*: some virtue or faculty that stands assault and is lasting; balanced good sense that stands firm to virtue and is not dazzled by the lusts and pleasures of this world, and is not deterred by fear from boldly condemning wrong if it was fashionable or customary. It is leaders possessed of such character that can save a nation from disaster or perdition. The scarcity of such leaders—and the rejection of the few who stood out—brought ruin among the nations whose example has already been set out to us as a warning.

In xi. 86 the word has a more literal meaning.

1620. The exceptional men of firm virtue would have been destroyed by the wicked to whom they were an offence, had they not been saved by the grace and mercy of Allah. Or perhaps, but for such grace, they might themselves have succumbed to the evil around them, or been overwhelmed in the general calamity.

1621. There are different shades of interpretation for this verse. According to Baiḍhāwī, *zulmin* here means "a single wrong". He thinks that the wrong referred to is *shirk*.

118. If thy Lord had so willed,
He could have made mankind¹⁶²²
One People: but they
Will not cease to differ,

119. Except those on whom thy Lord
Hath bestowed His Mercy:
And for this did He create
Them: and the Word
Of thy Lord shall be fulfilled:
"I will fill Hell with jinns
And men all together."¹⁶²³

120. All that we relate to thee
Of the stories of the messengers,—
With it We make firm
Thy heart: in them there cometh
To thee the Truth, as well as
An exhortation and a message
Of remembrance to those who
believe.¹⁶²⁴

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً

وَلَا يَرْأُونَ مَخْلُوفِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾

إِلَّا مَن رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ

رَبِّكَ لَا أَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ

أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

وَكُلًّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِن أَنبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ

فُؤَادَكَ وَجَاءَ لَكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ

وَذِكْرٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

1622. Cf. x. 19. All mankind might have been one. But in Allah's Plan man was to have a certain measure of free-will, and this made difference inevitable. This would not have mattered if all had honestly sought Allah. But selfishness and moral wrong came in, and people's disputations became mixed up with hatred, jealousy, and sin, except in the case of those who accepted Allah's grace, which saved them. The object of their creation was to raise them up spiritually by Allah's grace. But if they will choose the path of evil and fall into sin, Allah's decree must be fulfilled, and His justice will take its course. In the course of that justice Hell will be filled with men and jinns, such is the number of those who go astray.

1623. Cf. vii. 18 and vii. 179. If Satan and his evil soldiers tempt men from the path of rectitude, the responsibility of the tempted, who choose the path of evil, is no less than that of the tempters, and they will both be involved in punishment together.

1624. The stories of the Prophets in the Qur-ān are not mere narratives or histories: they involve three things: (1) they teach the highest spiritual Truth; (2) they give advice, direction, and warning, as to how we should govern our lives, and (3) they awaken our conscience and recall to us the working of Allah's Law in human affairs. The story of Joseph in the next Sūra is an illustration in point.

121. Say to those who do not
Believe: "Do whatever ye can:
We shall do our part;^{1624-A}
122. "And wait ye!
We too shall wait."¹⁶²⁵
123. To Allah do belong
The unseen (secrets)
Of the heavens and the earth,
And to Him goeth back
Every affair (for decision):¹⁶²⁶
So worship Him,
And put thy trust in Him:
And thy Lord is not
Unmindful of aught
That ye do.

وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ أَعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ

إِنَّا عَمِلُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

وَأَنْتُمْ تَرْوُونَ إِنَّا مُنْظِرُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

وَلِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ

الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ

وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

1624-A. Cf. xi. 93 and vi. 135, n. 957. The worst that ye can will not defeat Allah's Plan; and as for us who believe, our obvious duty is to do our part as taught to us by Allah's revelation.

1625. Cf. xi. 93, n. 1595, and x. 102, n. 1484. If the wicked only wait, they will see how Allah's Plan unfolds itself. As for those who believe, they are glad to wait in perfect confidence, because they know that Allah is good and merciful, as well as just and true.

1626. Cf. ii. 210. There is nothing, secret or open, in our world or in Creation, which does not depend ultimately on Allah's Will and Plan. Every affair goes back to Him for decision. Therefore we must worship Him and trust Him. Worship implies many things: e.g., (1) trying to understand His nature and His Will; (2) realising His goodness and glory, and His working in us; as a means to this end, (3) keeping Him in constant remembrance and celebrating His praise, to whom all praise is due; and (4) completely identifying our will with His, which means obedience to His Law, and service to Him and His creatures in all sincerity.