

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE  
HOLY QURAN

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ENGLISH TAFSEER  
CHAPTER 21  
SURAH AL-ANBYA

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

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By  
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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**HOLY QURAN**

**CHAPTER**

**021**

**SURAH AL-ANBYA**

*ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI*

### **Introduction and Summary**

The last Surah dealt with the individual story (spiritual) of Moses and Aaron, and contrasted it with the growth of evil in individuals like the Pharaoh and the Samiri, and ended with a warning against Evil, and an exhortation to the purification of the soul with prayer and praise.

This Surah begins with the external obstacles placed by Evil against such purification, and gives the assurance of Allah's power to defend men, illustrating this with reference:

- to Abraham's fight against idolatry,
- Lut's fight against injustice and failure to proclaim Allah's glory by making full use of man's God-given faculties and powers,
- that of Job against impatience and want of self-confidence,
- that of Ismail, Idris, and Dhu al Kifl against want of steady perseverance,
- that of Dhu al Nun against hasty anger,
- that of Zakariya against spiritual isolation, and
- that of Mary against the lusts of this world.

In each allusion there is a special point about the soul's purification. The common point is that the Prophets were not, as the vulgar suppose, just irresistible men. They had to win their ground inch by inch against all kinds of resistance from evil.

The chronology of this Surah has no significance. It probably dates from the middle of the Makkan period of inspiration.

**Summery-** Man treats, as he has always treated, the serious things of life with jest or contempt: but the Judgement must come, and Truth must triumph (21:1-29, and C. 147).

Unity of Design, and certainty of Allah's Promise: Allah's protection and Mercy, and His justice (21:30-50, and C. 148).

How Abraham triumphed over idols, as did others among Allah's chosen ones over various forms of evil (21:51-93, and C. 149).

Work righteousness while it is yet time, for the Judgement will come, and only the righteous will inherit (21:94-112, and C. 150).

## C.147 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(21:1-29)

*Men may lightly treat Allah's Signs  
As jests, but the Judgement must come  
Inevitably. His Message is true,  
And delivered by Allah's Prophet, as from  
Man to men. Truth must triumph  
And all false gods and false worship  
Must come to naught: for Allah is One,  
And His Truth has been one throughout the ages.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

اَقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ ...

1. Closer and closer to mankind comes their Reckoning:

**C2662.** Every minute sees them nearer to their doom, and yet they are sadly heedless, and even actively turn away from the Message that would save them.

... وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مَّعْرُضُونَ (١)

yet they heed not and they turn away.

مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ مُّحَدَّثٍ إِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ (٢)

2. Never comes (aught) to them of a renewed Message from their Lord, but they listen to it as in jest --

**C2663.** In each age, when the Message of Allah is renewed, the very people who should have known better and welcomed the renew and the sweeping away of human cobwebs, either receive it with amused self-superiority, which later turns to active hostility, or with careless indifference.

لَاهِيَةً قُلُوبُهُمْ...

3. Their hearts toying as with trifles.

...وَأَسْرَوْا النَّجْوَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ...

The wrongdoers conceal their private counsels, (saying),

**C2664.** Allah's Message is free and open, in the full light of day. His enemies plot against it in secrecy, lest their own false motives be exposed. Their jealousy prevents them from accepting a "man like themselves" as a teacher or warner or guide.

... هَلْ هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ...

"Is this (one) more than a man like yourselves?"

...أَفَتَأْتُونَ السَّحْرَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ (٣)

Will ye go to witchcraft with your eyes open?"

**C2665.** Literally, "in a state in which you (actually) see (that it is witchcraft)".

When Allah's Messenger is proved to be above them in moral worth, in true insight, in earnestness and power of eloquence, they accuse him of witchcraft, a word which may mean nothing, or perhaps some mysterious deceitful arts.

.... قَالَ

4. Say:

**C2666.** Notice that in the usual Arabic texts (that is, according to the *qira'ah* of *Hafs*) the word **qala** is here and in 21:112 below, as well as in 23:112, spelt differently from the usual spelling of the word in other places (e.g. in 20:125-126).

**Qul** is the reading of the Basra *Qira'ah*, meaning, "Say thou" in the imperative. If we construe "he says", the pronoun refers to "this (one)" in the preceding verse, viz.: the Prophet.

But more than one Commentator understands the meaning in the imperative, and I agree with them. The

point is merely one of verbal construction. The meaning is the same in either case.

See n. 2948 to 23:112. (R).

... رَبِّي يَعْلَمُ الْقَوْلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

"My Lord knoweth (every) word (spoken) in the heavens and the earth:

**C2667.** Every word, whether whispered in secret (as in 21:3 above) or spoken openly, is known to Allah. Let not the wrong-doers imagine that their secret plots are secret to the Knower of all things.

... وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٤)

He is the One that heareth and knoweth (all things)."

بَلْ قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ...

5. "Nay,"

they say, "(these are) medleys of dreams! --

... بَلْ افْتَرَاهُ بَلٌّ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ...

nay, he forged it! --

nay, he is (but) a poet!

**C2668.** The charges against Allah's inspired Messenger are heaped up,

"Magic!" says one: that means, "We don't understand it!" Says another, "Oh! but we know! he is a mere dreamer of confused dreams!" If the "dreams" fit in with real things and vital experiences, another will suggest, "Oh yes! why drag in supernatural agencies? he is clever enough to forge it himself!" Or another suggests, "He is a poet! Poets can invent things and say them in beautiful words!" Another interposes, "What we should like to see is miracles, like those we read of in stories of the Prophets of old!"

... فَلْيَأْتِنَا بآيَةٍ كَمَا أُرْسِلَ الْأَوْلُونَ (٥)

Let him then bring us a Sign like the ones that were sent to (prophets) of old!"

مَا آمَنَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا...

6. (As to those) before them, not one of the populations which We destroyed believed:

...أَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٦)

will these believe?

**C2669.** 'If such miracles as you read of failed to convince Unbelievers of old, what chance is there that these Unbelievers will believe?

Miracles may come, but they are no cures for Unbelief.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ...

7. Before thee, also, the Messengers we sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration:

...فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٧)

if ye realize this not, ask of those who possess the Message.

**C2670.** See 16:43 and n. 2069.

This answers the Unbelievers' taunt, "he is just a man like ourselves!"

True, but all messengers sent by Allah were men, not angels or another kind of beings, who could not understand men or whom men could not understand.

وَمَا جَعَلْنَاهُمْ جَسَدًا لَّا يَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ...

8. Nor did We give them bodies that ate no food

...وَمَا كَانُوا خَالِدِينَ (٨)

nor were they exempt from death.

**C2671.** As men they were subject to all the laws governing the physical bodies of men. They ate and drank, and their bodies perished in death.

ثُمَّ صَدَقْنَاهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُمْ وَمَنْ نَّشَاءُ...

9. In the end We fulfilled to them Our promise, and We saved them and those whom We pleased,

...وَأَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِينَ (٩)

but We destroyed those who transgressed beyond bounds.

**C2672.** But, however difficult (or impossible) their mission may have appeared to them, or to the world at first, they won through eventually, even those who seemed to have been defeated. Examples are given in the latter part of this Surah, especially in [21:51-93](#).

They were delivered from the Wrath which overtook the Unbelievers, as were those with them who accepted Allah's Message and placed themselves in conformity with His Will and Plan.

That is the meaning of "whom We pleased."

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ...

10. We have revealed for you (O men!) a book in which is a Message for you:

...أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (١٠)

will ye not then understand?

## Section 2

وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً...

11. How many were the populations we utterly destroyed because of their iniquities,

...وَأَنْشَأْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ (١١)

setting up in their places other peoples!

فَلَمَّا أَحَسُّوا بَأْسَنَا إِذَا هُمْ مِنْهَا يَرْكُضُونَ (١٢)

12. Yet, when they felt Our Punishment (coming), behold, they (tried to) flee from it.

**C2673.** When they had every chance of repentance and reform, they rejected Allah's Message, and perhaps even put up an open defiance.



When they actually began to feel the Wrath coming, they began to flee, but it was too late! Besides, where could they flee to from the Wrath of Allah?

Hence the ironical appeal to them in the next verse: better go back to your luxuries and what you thought were your permanent homes!

Cf. Christ's saying in the present Gospel of St. Matthew (3:7):

"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the Wrath to come?"

لَا تَرْكُضُوا وَارْجِعُوا إِلَى مَا أَثْرَقْتُمْ فِيهِ وَمَسَاكِينِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْأَلُونَ (١٣)

13. Flee not, but return to the good things of this life which were given you, and to your homes, in order that ye may be called to account.

**C2674.** See last note.

'You thought your homes so comfortable: why don't you go back to them? You will be called to account. Perhaps there may be rewards to be given you, who knows?

This irony is itself the beginning of the Punishment. But the ungodly now see how wrong they had been. But their signs and regrets now avail them nothing. It is too late. They are lost, and nothing can save them.

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (١٤)

14. They said: "Ah! woe to us! We were indeed wrongdoers!"

فَمَا زَالَتْ تِلْكَ دَعْوَاهُمْ حَتَّىٰ جَعَلْنَاهُمْ حَصِيدًا خَامِدِينَ (١٥)

15. And that cry of theirs ceased not, till We made them as a field that is mown, as ashes silent and quenched.

**C2675.** The two similes present two different aspects of the lamentation of the ungodly.

When they really see the Wrath to come, there is a stampede, but where can they go to?

Their lamentation is now the only mark of their life. But it dies away, as corn vanishes from a field that is being

mown, or as a dying fire is slowly extinguished! They do not die. They wish they were dead! (78:40).

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ (١٦)

16. Not for (idle) sport did We create the heavens and the earth and all that is between!

**C2676.** The Hindu doctrine of Lila, that all things were created for sport, is here negated.

But more: with Allah we must not associate any ideas but those of Truth, Righteousness, Mercy, Justice, and the other attributes implied in His Beautiful Names. He does not jest nor play with His creatures.

لَوْ أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ لَهُوَآ لَاتَّخَذْنَاهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا إِنْ كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ (١٧)

17. If it had been Our wish to take (just) a pastime, We should surely have taken it from the things nearest to Us, if We would do (such a thing)!

**C2677.** If such an idea as that of play or pastime had been possible with regard to Allah, and if He had wished really to indulge in pastime, He would have done it with creatures of Light nearest to Him, not with the lowly material creation that we see around us.

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ...

18. Nay, We hurl the Truth against falsehood, and it knocks out its brain, and behold, falsehood doth perish!

...وَالكُمُ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُونَ (١٨)

Ah! woe be to you for the (false) things ye ascribe (to Us).

**C2678.** Such as that;

- Allah has partners (21:22), or
- that He has begotten a son (21:26), or
- has daughters (16:57), or
- any other superstitions derogatory to the dignity and glory of Allah.

وَلَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

19. To Him belong all (creatures) in the heavens and on earth:

...وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُونَ (١٩)

even those who are in His (very) Presence are not too proud to serve Him,

nor are they (ever) weary (of His service):

**C2679.** The pure angelic hosts, whom we imagine to be glorious creatures of light, high in Heavens, near the Throne of Allah Himself, are yet His creatures, and serve Him without ceasing, and are proud to do so.

Such is the majesty of Allah Most High.

يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ (٢٠)

20. They celebrate His praises night and day,  
nor do they ever flag or intermit.

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا آلِهَةً مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ...

21. Or have they taken (for worship) gods from the earth

**C2680.** The different kinds of false gods whom people raise from their imagination are now referred to.

In verses 21-23, the reference is to the gods of the earth, whether idols or local godlings, or deified heroes, or animals or trees or forces of the nature around us, which men have from time to time worshipped. These, as deities, have no life except what their worshippers give to them.

... هُمْ يُنْشِرُونَ (٢١)

who can raise (the dead)?

**C2681.** The answer of course is "no".

No one but Allah can raise the dead to life.

The miracle in the story of Jesus (3:49 and 5:113) was "by Allah's leave". It was a miracle of Allah, not one of Jesus by his own power or will.

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا...

22. If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both!

**C2682.** After the false gods of the earth (verse 21), are mentioned the false gods in the heavens and the earth, like those in the Greek Pantheon (verse 22), who quarreled and fought and slandered each other and made their Olympus a perfect bear-garden!

...فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ...

But glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne:

... عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (٢٢)

(high is He) above what they attribute to Him!

لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ (٢٣)

23. He cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned (for theirs).

**C2683.** Allah is Self-Subsisting. All His creatures are responsible to Him and dependent on Him there is no other being to whom He can be responsible or on whom He can be dependent.

...أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً...

24. Or have they taken for worship (other) gods besides Him?

**C2684.** See above. n. 2682, where two kinds of false worship are noted.

Now we are warned against a third danger, the worship of false gods of any sort. Pagan man is prolific of creating abstract images for worship, including Self or abstract Intelligence or Power.

In verse 26 below is mentioned a fourth kind of false worship, which imagines that Allah begets sons or daughters.

...قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ...

Say, "Bring your convincing proof:

...هَذَا ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ مَّعِيَ وَذِكْرٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِي...

this is the Message of those with me and the Message of those before me."

**C2685.** This verse should be read with the next.

All reason revolts against the idea of conflicting gods, and points to Unity in Creation and Unity in Godhead. This is not only the Message of Islam ("those with me") but the message of all prophets who came before the holy Prophet Muhammad ("those before me"), and the line of prophets was closed with him.

The Message given to every prophet in all ages was that of Unity as the fundamental basis of Order and Design in the world, material, moral, and spiritual.

...بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْحَقَّ فَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ (٢٤)

But most of them know not the Truth, and so turn away.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ...

25. Not a Messenger did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him:

...لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ (٢٥)

that there is no god but I;

therefore worship and serve Me.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا...

26. And they say: "(Allah) Most Gracious has begotten offspring."

**C2686.** This refers both to the Trinitarian superstition that Allah has begotten a son, and to the Arab superstition that the angels were daughters of Allah. All such superstitions are derogatory to the glory of Allah.

The prophets and the angels are no more than servants of Allah: they are raised high in honour, and therefore they deserve our highest respect, but not our worship.

...سُبْحَانَهُ...

Glory to Him!

...بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ (٢٦)

they are (but) servants raised to honor.

...لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ ...

27. They speak not before He speaks,

**C2687.** They never say anything before they receive Allah's command to say it, and their acts are similarly conditioned.

This is also the teaching of Jesus as reported in the Gospel of St. John (12:49-50):

"For I have not spoken of myself: but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

If rightly understood, "Father" has the same meaning as our "Rabb", Sustainer and Cherisher, not Begetter or Progenitor.

... وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٧)

and they act (in all things) by His command.

...يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ...

28. He knows what is before them, and what is behind them,

...وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ ارْتَضَى...

and they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable,

**C2688.** Cf. 20:109. Those who have conformed to the Will of Allah and obeyed His Law, thus winning the stamp of His approval.

...وَهُمْ مِّنْ حَسْبِهِ مُسْفُونَ (٢٨)

and they stand in awe and reverence of His (glory).

**C2689. They:** the usual interpretation refers the pronoun to the servants of Allah who intercede:

it may also refer to those on whose behalf intercession is made: they do not take it as a matter of course, but stand in due awe and reverence of Allah's great glory and mercy.

وَمَنْ يَفُلْ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي إِلَهُ مِّنْ دُونِهِ فَذَلِكَ نَجْزِيهِ جَهَنَّمَ...

29. If any of them should say, "I am a god besides Him,"  
such a god We should reward with Hell:

...كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ (٢٩)

thus do We reward those who do wrong.

### C.148 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(21:30-50)

*Look at Allah's Creation: contemplate  
Its unity of Design and benevolence  
Of Purpose. Death must come to all,  
But life and faith are not objects of ridicule.  
Truth will outlast all mockery: 'tis Allah  
Who calls, because he cares for you,  
And on His Judgement Seat will weigh  
Each act, each thought, each motive, great  
Or small, with perfect justice. Come,  
Ye all, reject not His blessed Message.*

### Section 3

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَفَقَّنَاهُمَا...

30. Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of Creation), before We clove them asunder?

**C2690.** The evolution of the ordered worlds as we see them is hinted at.

As man's intellectual gaze over the physical world expands, he sees more and more how Unity is the dominating note in Allah's wonderful Universe.

Taking the solar system alone, we know that the maximum intensity of sun-spots corresponds with the maximum intensity of magnetic storms on this earth. The universal law of gravitation seems to bind all mass together. Physical facts point to the throwing off of planets from vast quantities of diffused nebular matter, of which the central condensed core is a sun.

...وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ...

We made from water every living thing.

**C2691.** About 72 per cent, of the surface of our Globe is still covered with water, and it has been estimated that if the inequalities on the surface were all leveled, the whole surface would be under water, as the mean elevation of land sphere-level would be 7,000-10,000 feet below the surface of the ocean.

This shows the predominance of water on our Globe. That all life began in the water is also a conclusion to which our latest knowledge in biological science points. Apart from the fact that protoplasm, the original basis of living matter, is liquid or semi-liquid and in a state of constant flux and instability, there is the fact that land animals, like the higher vertebrates, including man, show, in their embryological history, organs like those of fishes, indicating the watery origin of their original habitat. The constitution of protoplasm is about 80 to 85 per cent of water.



...أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٣٠)

Will they not then believe?

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيًا أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِهِمْ...

31. And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with them,

**C2692.** Cf. 16:15 and n. 2038.

**Lest it should shake with them:** here "them" refers back to "they" at the end of the preceding verse, meaning "Unbelievers".

It might be mankind in general, but the pointed address to those who do not realise and understand Allah's mercies is appropriate, to drive home to them the fact that it is Allah's well-ordered providence that protects them normally from cataclysms like earthquakes, but that they could for their iniquities be destroyed in an instant, as the 'Ad and the Thamud were destroyed before them.

As pointed out in [n. 2691 above](#), if the surface of the earth were leveled up, it would all be under water, and therefore the firm mountains are a further source of security of life which has evolved in terrestrial forms.

Though the mountains may seem impassable barriers, yet Allah's providence has provided broad passes between them to afford highways for human communications.

...وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ (٣١)

and We have made therein broad highways (between mountains) for them to pass through: that they may receive guidance.

**C2693.** In both the literal and the figurative sense. Literally these natural mountain highways direct men in the way they should go. Figuratively, these wonderful instances of Allah's providence should turn men's thoughts to the true guidance of Allah in life and spiritual progress.

وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَفَقًا مَحْفُوظًا...

32. And We have made the heavens as a canopy well-guarded:

**C2694.** Canopy well guarded: the heavens form a canopy that is secure from falling down: they also form a sublime spectacle and a Mystery that man can only faintly reach.

Cf. also 15:17.

...وَهُمْ عَن آيَاتِهَا مُعْرِضُونَ (٣٢)

Yet do they turn away from the Signs which these things (point to)!

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ...

33. It is He Who created the Night and the Day, and the sun and the moon:

...كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ (٣٣)

all (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course.

**C2695.** I have indicated, unlike most translators, the metaphor of swimming implied in the original words: how beautiful it is to contemplate the heavenly bodies swimming through space (or ether) in their rounded courses before our gaze!

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ الْخَالِدِينَ...

34. We granted not to any man before thee permanent life (here):

**C2696.** Life on this planet without death has not been granted to any man. The taunt of the Unbelievers at the holy Prophet was therefore futile.

Could any of them live without death at some time or other?

Could they name any one who did?

...أَفَإِن مَّتَّ فَهُمْ الْخَالِدُونَ (٣٤)

if then thou shouldst die, would they live permanently?

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ...

35. Every soul shall have a taste of death:

**C2697.** Cf. 3:185. and n. 491.

The soul does not die, but when it separates from the body at the death of the body, the soul gets a taste of death.

In our life of probation on this earth, our virtue and faith are tested by many things: some are tested by calamities, and some by the good things of this life. If we prove our true mettle, we pass our probation with success.

In any case all must return to Allah, and then will our life be appraised at its true value.

...وَتَبْلُوَكُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً...

and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial:

...وَالْيَنَّا تُرْجَعُونَ (٣٥)

to Us must ye return.

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِن يَتَّخِذُونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوًا...

36. When the Unbelievers see thee, they treat thee not except with ridicule.

...أَهَذَا الَّذِي يَذْكُرُ آلِهَتَكُمْ...

"Is this," (they say), "the one who talks of your gods?"

**C2698.** To the godly man the issue between false worship and true worship is a very serious matter.

To the skeptics and unbelievers it is only a joke. They take it lightly, and laugh at the godly man. They not only laugh at him, but they blaspheme when the name of the One True God is mentioned.

The reply to this is in the next verse.

...وَهُمْ يَذْكُرُ الرَّحْمَنَ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٣٦)

And they blaspheme at the mention of (Allah) Most Gracious!

## خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ...

### 37. Man is a creature of haste:

**C2699.** Haste is in the very bone and marrow of man. If he is granted respite for his own sake, in order that he may have a further chance of repentance and coming back to Allah, he says impatiently and incredulously:

"Bring on the Punishment quickly, that I may see if what you say is true!"

Alas, it is too true! When the Punishment actually comes near and he sees it, he will not want it hastened. He will want more time and further delay! Poor creature of haste!

...سَأْرِيكُمْ آيَاتِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُون (٣٧)

soon (enough) will I show you My Signs: then ye will not ask Me to hasten them!

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣٨)

### 38. They say: "When will this promise come to pass, if ye are telling the truth?"

لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا حِينَ لَا يَكْفُونَ عَنْ وُجُوهِهِمُ النَّارَ وَلَا عَنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ...

### 39. If only the Unbelievers knew (the time) when they will not be able to ward off the Fire from their faces, nor yet from their backs,

**C2700.** They would not be so unreasonable if they only realized the terrible future for them! The Fire will envelop them on all sides, and no help will then be possible.

Is it not best for them now to turn and repent?

The Punishment may come too suddenly, as is said in the next verse.

...وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٣٩)

and (when) no help can reach them!

بَلْ تَأْتِيهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ...

### 40. Nay, it may come to them all of a sudden and confound them:

...قَلَّا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ رَدَّهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ (٤٠)

no power will they have then to avert it,  
nor will they (then) get respite.

وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَىٰ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ...

41. Mocked were (many) Messengers before thee;

...بِحَقِّكَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ (٤١)

but their scoffers were hemmed in by the thing that they mocked.

**C2701.** The same verse occurs at 6:10, where see n. 843.

'What they are mocking at now will be in a position to mock them in due time.'

## Section 4

قُلْ مَنْ يَكْلُؤُكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ...

42. Say,

"Who can keep you safe by night and by day from (the Wrath of) (Allah) Most Gracious?"

**C2702.** 'Allah is most Gracious: if, in spite of His great mercy, you are so rebellious and depraved as to incur His Wrath, who is there who can save you?

His Wrath can descend on you at any time, by night or by day.'

...بَلْ هُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ (٤٢)

Yet they turn away from the mention of their Lord.

أَمْ لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ تَمْنَعُهُمْ مِّن دُونِنَا لَا...

43. Or have they gods that can guard them from Us?

...يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ مَتَّأ يُصْحَبُونَ (٤٣)

They have no power to aid themselves,  
nor can they be defended from Us.

**C2703. Ashaba:** to join as companion: with 'an or min it has also the meaning of to defend or remove from someone.

The full signification can only be got by a long paraphrase: 'they are not fit to be mentioned in the same breath with Us, nor can they be defended from Us.'

بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هَؤُلَاءِ وَأَبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ...

44. Nay,

We gave the good things of this life to these men and their fathers until the period grew long for them;

**C2704.** 'Umr or 'Umur: age, generation, period, time, life.

Here "period" is most appropriate, as it covers many generations, "these men and their fathers."

...أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا...

see they not that we gradually reduce the land (in their control) from its outlying borders?

**C2705.** Cf. 13:41 and n. 1865.

The particular signification is that Islam spread from the outer borders, social and geographical, gradually inwards.

The social fringe was the humbler people, such as slaves and poor men.

The geographical reference is to Madinah and tribes away from the Makkah centre. The proud and unbelieving Quraish were the last to come in when the circle was gradually drawn tighter and tighter around them.

The general signification applies to all times. Allah's Truth makes its way first among the poor and the lowly, those whose minds are unsoiled by prejudices of false pride or false knowledge, but it gradually hems in the obstinate, until it prevails in the end.

...أَفَهُمُ الْعَالِيُونَ (٤٤)

Is it then they who will win?

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنذَرُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ...

45. Say, "I do but warn you according to revelation":

...وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا مَا يُنذَرُونَ (٤٥)

but the deaf will not hear the call, (even) when they are warned!

**C2706.** According to the English saying. "none is so deaf as those who will not hear".

When they deliberately shut their ears to warning from the Merciful Allah, meant for their own good, the responsibility is their own. But their cowardice is shown in the next verse by their behaviour when the first breath of the Wrath reaches them.

وَلَيْنَ مَسَّئُهُمْ نَفْحَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ...

46. If but a breath of the Wrath of thy Lord do touch them, they will then say,

...يَا وَيَلْنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (٤٦)

"Woe to us! we did wrong indeed!"

وَتَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا...

47. We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least.

...وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا...

And if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it (to account):

**C2707.** Not the smallest action, word, thought, motive, or predilection but must come into the account of Allah.

Cf. Browning (in Rabbi Ben Ezra):

"But all, the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main  
account; All instincts immature.  
All purposes unsure. That weighed  
not as his work, yet swelled

the man's account; Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act. Fancies that broke through  
language and escaped; All I could never be, All,  
men ignored in me, This, I was worth to God,  
Whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

...وَكَفَىٰ بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ (٤٧)

and enough are We to take account.

**C2708.** The literalism of Sale has here excelled itself: he translates, "and there will be sufficient accountants with us"!

What is meant is that when Allah takes account, His accounting will be perfect: there will be no flaw in it, as there may be in earthly accountants, who require other people's help in some matters of account which they do not understand for want of knowledge of that particular department they are dealing with.

Allah's knowledge is perfect, and therefore His justice will be perfect also; for He will not fail to take into account all the most intangible things that determine conduct and character. See last note.

There is no contradiction between this and 18:104-105, where it is said that men of vain works, i.e., shallow hypocritical deeds, will have no weight attached to their deeds, In fact the two correspond.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَاءَ وَذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (٤٨)

48. In the past We granted to Moses and Aaron the Criterion (for judgment), and a Light and a Message for those who would do right --

**C2709.** Cf. 2:53 and n. 68, where the meaning of **Furqan** is discussed. Here three things are mentioned as given to Moses and Aaron:

1. **The Criterion for judgment:** this might well be the wonderful Proofs they saw of Allah's goodness and glory from which they could have no doubt as to Allah's will and command;



2. **the Light**; this was the inner enlightenment of their soul, such as comes from inspiration: and
3. **the Message**, the Book, the original Book of Moses, which Aaron as his lieutenant would also use as a guide for his people.

الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُونَ (٤٩)

49. Those who fear their Lord in their most secret thoughts, and who hold the Hour (of Judgment) in awe.

**C2710.** Note the three kinds of fear mentioned in 21:48-49.

- **Taqwa** is the fear of running counter to the will of Allah; it is akin to the love of Him; for we fear to offend those we love; it results in right conduct, and those who entertain it are "those who would do right".
- Then there is **Khayat**, the fear of Allah, lest the person who entertains it may be found, in his inmost thoughts, to be short of the standard which Allah wishes for him; this is also righteous but in a less high degree than **Taqwa** which is akin to love.
- And thirdly, there is the fear of consequences on the Day of Judgment (**ishfaq**); this also may lead to righteousness, but is on a still lower plane. Perhaps the three correspond to the Criterion, the Light, and the Message (or Warning) of the last verse.

وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبَارَكٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ...

50. And this is a blessed Message which We have sent down:

...أَفَأَنْتُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ (٥٠)

will ye then reject it?

**C2711.** Here is a Prophet and a Book, greater than Moses and his Book. Are you going to reject him and it? (R).

## C.149 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(21:51-93)

*The great examples of virtue conquered  
Evil, each according to his circumstances:  
Abraham stood staunch in the fire  
Of persecution, unhurt: Lut was bold  
In reproving abominations; Noah survived  
The Flood by his faith, in a world of Unbelief;  
David sought justice, and sang Allah's praises;  
Solomon by wisdom subdued the refractory;  
Job was patient in suffering; Ismail,  
Idris, and Dhu al Kifl were true in constancy  
Amid temptation; Jonah turned to Allah  
After a short misunderstanding; Zakariya  
And his family were exemplars of devoutness;  
And Mary of chastity. All men and women  
Of God form one united Brotherhood.*

### Section 5

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ ...

51. We bestowed aforetime on Abraham his rectitude of conduct,

**C2712. Rushd:** right conduct, corresponding in action to the quality expressed in the epithet **Hanif** (sound or true in Faith) applied to Abraham in 2:135 and elsewhere.

... وَكُنَّا بِهِ عَالِمِينَ (٥١)

and well were We acquainted with him.

**C2713.** Hence Abraham's title "Friend of Allah" (Khalil-ullah): 4:125.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ ...

52. Behold! he said to his father and his people,

**C2714.** Reference is made to Abraham in many places. In 19:42-49 it was with reference to his relations to his father: the problem was how a righteous man should deal with his father, when his duty to his father conflicts with his duty to Allah.

Here the problem is: how a righteous man should deal with evil and overcome it; how he should fight against evil, and if he is subjected to the fire of persecution, how his firmness draws Allah's Mercy, and the very troubles he is placed in become his comfort and joy.

... مَا هَذِهِ التَّمَاثِيلُ الَّتِي أَنْتُمْ لَهَا عَاكِفُونَ (٥٢)

"What are these images, to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?"

قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا لَهَا عَابِدِينَ (٥٣)

53. They said, "We found our father worshipping them."

قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٥٤)

54. He said, "Indeed ye have been in manifest error-ye and your fathers."

قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنْتَ مِنَ اللَّاعِبِينَ (٥٥)

55. They said, "Have you brought us the Truth, or are you one of those who jest?"

**C2715.** Abraham looked at life with a serious eye, and his people took it light-heartedly. He was devoted to Truth, and they cared more for ancestral custom, In the conflict he seemed to be in their power. But he was fearless, and he triumphed by Allah's Grace.

قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ...

56. He said, "Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He Who created them (from nothing):

**C2716.** For the various words for "creation" see n. 120 to 2:117, where **fatara** is explained and differentiated from other words of similar meaning.

...وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَلِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٥٦)

and I am a witness to this (truth).

وَقَالَهُ لَأُكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ (٥٧)

57. And by Allah, I have a plan for your idols after ye go away and turn your backs"...

**C2717.** He wants to convince them of the powerlessness of their idols. But he does not do it underhand. He tells them that he is going to do something when once they are gone and their backs are turned to the idols,-as much as to say that the idols are dependent on their care and attention. Apparently the people are amused and want to see what he does. So they leave him to his own devices.

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُودًا إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ (٥٨)

58. So he broke them to pieces, (all) but the biggest of them, that they might turn (and address themselves) to it.

**C2718.** He was enacting a scene, to make the people ashamed of worshipping senseless stocks and stones. He left the biggest idol untouched and broke the others to pieces, as if a fight had taken place between the idols, and the biggest had smashed the others. Would they turn to the surviving idol and ask him how it all happened?

قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥٩)

59. They said,

"Who has done this to our gods?

He must indeed be some man of impiety!"

قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذُكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ (٦٠)

60. They said,

"We heard a youth talk of them: he is called Abraham."

**C2719.** Different groups of people are speaking. Those who were not present at Abraham's speech in verse 57 ask, "who has done this?"

Those who were, at once name him, whereupon a formal council of the people was held, and Abraham was arraigned.

قَالُوا فَاتُوا بِهِ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ (٦١)

61. They said, "Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness:"

قَالُوا أَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِالْهَيْتَانَا يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ (٦٢)

62. They said, "Art thou the one that did this with our gods, O Abraham?"

**C2720.** They asked him the formal question. There was no mystery about it. He had already openly threatened to do something to the idols, and people who had heard his threats were there. He now continues his ironic taunt to the idol-worshippers.

'You ask me! Why don't you ask the idols?

Doesn't it look as if this big fellow has smashed the smaller ones in a quarrel?'

If they do not ask the idols, they confess that the idols have not intelligence enough to answer! This argument is developed in verses 64-67.

Note that while the false worshippers laughed at his earnestness, he pays them out by a grim practical joke, which at the same time advances the cause of Truth.

قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ (٦٣)

63. He said:

"Nay, this was done by -- this is their biggest one! Ask them, if they can speak intelligently!"

فَرَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٦٤)

64. So they turned to themselves and said, "Surely ye are the ones in the wrong!"

**C2721.** Abraham's biting irony cut them to the quick.

What could they say?

They turned to each other. Some among them thought he had the best of the argument. They were not keen on idolatry, and they told their fellows that it was useless arguing with Abraham. They all hung their heads in shame. But presently they thought they would face out Abraham, and take his words literally.

They said, "You know quite well that idols do not speak!"

This was precisely what Abraham wanted them to say, and he delivered his final blow!

See [n. 2723](#) below.

ثُمَّ نُكِسُوا عَلَى رُؤُوسِهِمْ ...

65. Then were they confounded with shame: (they said),

**C2722.** Literally, "they were turned down on their heads" which may suggest a metaphorical somersault, i.e., they recovered from their dawning shame for idolatry and were prepared to argue it out with the youth Abraham.

But I think there is better authority for the interpretation I have adopted.

... لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِفُونَ (٦٥)

"Thou knowest full well that these (idols) do not speak!"

قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَّا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ (٦٦)

66. (Abraham) said,

"Do ye then worship, besides Allah, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm?"

أَفَ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

67. "Fie upon you, and upon the things that ye worship besides Allah!"

**C2723.** As soon as they admitted in so many words that the idols could not speak, Abraham delivered his final attack:

'Then why do you worship useless impotent creatures?'

After that, there remains nothing but the argument of violence, which they proceed to exercise, being the party in power. 'Burn him at the stake' is an easy cry!

But it was not Abraham that suffered: it was his persecutors (21:70).

...أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٧)

have ye no sense?"...

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ (٦٨)

68. They said, "Burn him and protect your gods, if ye do (anything at all)!"

...فُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا ...

69. We said, "O fire! be thou cool,

**C2724.** The nature of fire, by all the physical laws of matter, is to be hot. The supremacy of mind over matter is a phrase much used, but the supremacy of the spiritual over the material is not so commonly understood. And yet it is the greatest factor in the estimate of Reality. The material is ephemeral and relative. The spiritual is eternal and absolute. Through all the fire of persecution and hatred Abraham remained unhurt. The fire became cool, and a means of safety for Abraham.

... وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (٦٩)

and (a means of)) safety for Abraham!"

**C2725.** Can we form any idea of the place where he passed through the furnace, and the stage in his career at which this happened?

He was born in Ur of the Chaldees, a place on the lower reaches of the Euphrates, not a hundred miles from the Persian Gulf. This was the cradle, or one of the cradles, of human civilisation. Astronomy was studied here in very ancient times, and the worship of the sun, moon, and stars was the prevailing form of religion.

Abraham revolted against this quite early in life, and his argument is referred to in 6:74-82.

They also had idols in their temples, probably idols representing heavenly bodies and celestial winged creatures. He was still a youth (21:60) when he broke the idols. This was stage No. 2.

After this he was marked down as a rebel and persecuted. Perhaps some years passed before the incident of his being thrown into the Fire (21:68-69) took place.

Traditionally the Fire incident is referred to a king called Nimrud, about whom see n. 1565 to 11:69. If Nimrud's capital was in Assyria, near Nineveh (site near modern Mosul), we may suppose either that the king's rule extended over the whole of Mesopotamia, or that Abraham wandered north through Babylonia to Assyria.

Various stratagems were devised to get rid of him (21:70), but he was saved by the mercy of Allah.

The final break came when he was probably a man of mature age and could speak to his father with some authority. This incident is referred to in 19:41-48.

He now left his ancestral lands, and avoiding the Syrian desert, came to the fertile lands of Aram or Syria, and so south to Canaan, when the incident of 11:69-76 took place.

It is some years after this that we may suppose he built the Ka'bah with Isma'il (2:124-29), and his prayer in 14:35-41 may be referred to the same time.

His visit to Egypt (Gen. 12:10) is not referred to in the Quran

وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ (٧٠)

70. Then they sought a stratagem against him:  
but We made them the ones that lost most!

**C2726.** As they could not get rid of him by open punishment, they tried secret plans, but were foiled throughout. It was not he that lost, but they.



On the contrary he left them and prospered and became the progenitor of great peoples.

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلَوْطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ (٧١)

71. But We delivered him and (his nephew) Lut (and directed them) to the land which We have blessed for the nations.

**C2727.** The land of Aram or Syria, which in its widest connotation includes Canaan or Palestine. Syria is a well-watered fertile land, with a Mediterranean sea-coast, on which the famous commercial cities of Tyre and Sidon were situated. Its population is very mixed, as it has been a bone of contention between all the great kingdoms and empires of Western Asia and Egypt, and European interest in it dates from the most ancient times. (R).

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً...

72. And We bestowed on him Isaac and, as an additional gift, (a grandson), Jacob,

**C2728. Nafilat** has many meanings:

- booty;
- extra work or prayer;
- extra or additional gift;
- grandson.

The two last significations are implied here. Not only was Abraham given a son in his old age; he was given not only Isaac, but several sons, the chief being Isma'il and Isaac, who both joined in burying him (Gen. 25:9); and he also saw grandsons. Isma'il is specially mentioned later (21:85) apart from Isaac's line, on account of his special importance for Islam.

...وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ (٧٢)

and We made righteous men of every one (of them).

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أئِمَّةً يَهْتَدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا...

73. And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command,

...وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ...

and We sent them inspiration

- = to do good deeds,
- to establish regular prayers, and
- to practice regular charity;

...وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ (٧٣)

and they constantly served Us (and Us only).

**C2729.** The spiritual lesson from this passage may be recapitulated. The righteous man makes no compromise with evil. If the votaries of evil laugh at him he pays them in their own coin, but he stands firmly by his principles.

His firmness causes some confusion among the followers of evil, and he openly declares the faith that is in him. They try, openly and secretly, to injure or kill him, but Allah protects him, while evil perishes from its own excesses.

وَلَوْطًا أَنبَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا...

74. And to Lut, too, we gave Judgment and Knowledge,

...وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ الْخَبَائِثَ...

and We saved him from the town which practiced abominations:

...إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَاسِقِينَ (٧٤)

truly they were a people given to Evil, a rebellious people.

**C2730.** Lut's people were given to unspeakable abominations. His mission was to preach to them. He withstood Evil, but they rejected him. They were punished, but he and his followers were saved.

See 15:61-74; 11:77-82; and 7:80-84.

وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٧٥)

75. And We admitted him to Our Mercy: for he was one of the Righteous.

## Section 6

وَأُوحِيَ إِذْ نَادَى مِنْ قَبْلُ...

76. (Remember) Noah, when he cried (to Us) aforetime:

**C2730a.** The date of Noah was many centuries before that of Abraham. (R).

...فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَجَئَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ (٧٦)

We listened to his (prayer) and delivered him and his family from great distress.

**C2731.** The contemporaries of Noah were given to Unbelief, oppression of the poor, and vain disputations. He carried Allah's Message to them, and standing fast in faith, built the Ark, in which he was saved with his followers from the Flood, while the wicked were drowned.

See 11:25-48.

وَنَصَرْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا...

77. We helped him against people who rejected Our Signs:

...إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٧٧)

truly they were a people given to Evil: so We drowned them (in the Flood) all together.

وَدَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ إِذْ يَحْكُمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ...

78. And remember David and Solomon, when they gave judgment in the matter of the field

...إِذْ نَفَسَتْ فِيهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شَاهِدِينَ (٧٨)

into which the sheep of certain people had strayed by night:

We did witness their judgment.

فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ...

79. To Solomon We inspired the (right) understanding of the matter:

**C2732.** The sheep, on account of the negligence of the shepherd, got into a cultivated field (or vineyard) by

night and ate up the young plants or their tender shoots, causing damage, to the extent of perhaps a whole year's crop.

David was king, and in his seat of judgment he considered the matter so serious that he awarded the owner of the field the sheep themselves in compensation for his damage. The Roman law of the Twelve Tables might have approved of this decision, and on the same principle was built up the Deodand doctrine of English Law, now obsolete.

His son Solomon, a mere boy of eleven, thought of a better decision, where the penalty would better fit the offence. The loss was the loss of the fruits or produce of the field of vineyard: the corpus of the property was not lost. Solomon's suggestion was that the owner of the field or vineyard should not take the sheep altogether but only detain them long enough to recoup his actual damage, from the milk, wool, and possibly young of the sheep, and then return the sheep to the shepherd.

David's merit was that he accepted the suggestion, even though it came from a little boy:

Solomon's merit was that he distinguished between corpus and income, and though a boy, was not ashamed to put his case before his father.

But in either case it was Allah Who inspired the true realisation of justice. He was present and witnessed the affair, as He is present everywhere.

...وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا...

to each (of them) We gave Judgment and Knowledge;

...وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُودَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ...

it was Our power that made the hills and the birds celebrate Our praises with David:

**C2733.** Whatever is in the heavens and the earth celebrates the praises of Allah: 17:44; 57:1; 16:48-50.

Even the "thunder repeateth His praises": 13:13.

All nature ever sings the praises of Allah. David sang in his Psalms, 148:7-10: "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye ... mountains and all hills; ... creeping things and flying fowl!" All nature sings to Allah's glory, in unison with David, and angels, and men of God.

Cf. 34:10 and 38:18-19. (R).

...وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ (٧٩)

it was We Who did (these things).

وَعَلَّمَنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَّكُمْ لِنُحَصِّنَكُمْ مِّنْ بِأْسِكُمْ...

80. It was We Who taught him the making of coats of mail for your benefit, to guard you from each others violence:

**C2734.** The making of coats of mails is attributed to David.

It is defensive armour, and therefore its discovery and supply is associated with deeds of righteousness in 34:10-11, in contrast with the deadly weapons which man invents for offensive purposes.

Indeed, all fighting, unless in defence of righteousness, is mere "violence."

...فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ شَاكِرُونَ (٨٠)

will ye then be grateful?

**C2735.** David's good work then was:

- he was open to learn wisdom wherever it came from;
- he sang the praises of Allah, in unison with all nature;
- he made defensive armour.

But all these things he did, because of the faculties which Allah had given him, and we must be grateful for this and for all things to Allah.

وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ ...

81. (It was Our power that made) the violent (unruly) wind flow (tamely) for Solomon, to his order,

**C2736.** Cf. 34:12, and 38:36-38,

This has been interpreted to mean that Solomon had miraculous power over the winds, and he could make them obey his order.

Rationalists say that he had naval power on the Mediterranean, and through the Gulf of 'Aqabah on the Red Sea, and that he therefore figuratively commanded the winds, and we may say the same of airmen at the present day.

In any case the power behind was, and is, from Allah, Who has granted man intelligence and the faculties by which he can tame the more unruly forces of nature.

... إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا...

to the land which We had blessed:

**C2737.** Evidently Palestine, in which was Solomon's capital, though his influence extended for north in Syria, and perhaps far south in Arabia and Ethiopia.

In the Roman ruins of Baalbek, fifty miles north of Damascus, is still shown a quarry of huge stones supposed to have been cut for Solomon. I have seen them with my own eyes. this local tradition is interesting, even if invented.

...وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَالِمِينَ (٨١)

for We do know all things.

وَمِنَ الشَّيَاطِينِ مَنْ يَغُوصُونَ لَهُ وَيَعْمَلُونَ عَمَلًا دُونَ ذَلِكَ...

82. And of the evil ones, were some who dived for him, and did other work besides;

**C2738.** As in [n. 2736](#), the literalists and the rationalists take different views.

- The former say that Solomon had power over supernatural being of evil, whom he compelled to dive for pearls and do other hard tasks.
- Rationalists refer this to hostile unruly races whom he subjected to his sway.

It was Allah's power ultimately, Who granted him wisdom. Solomon tamed the Jinns with Wisdom.

وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حَافِظِينَ (٨٢)

and it was We Who guarded them.

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ...

83. And (remember) Job when he cried to his Lord,

أَلَيْسَ مَسْنِي الضُّرِّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ (٨٣)

"Truly distress has seized me, but Thou art the Most Merciful of those that are merciful."

**C2739.** Job (Ayub) was a prosperous man, with faith in Allah, living somewhere in the north-east corner of Arabia.

He suffers from a number of calamities:

- his cattle are destroyed,
- his servants slain by the sword,
- and his family crushed under his roof.

But he holds fast to his faith in Allah.

As a further calamity he is covered with loathsome sores from head to foot. He loses his peace of mind, and he curses the day he was born. His false friends come and attribute his afflictions to sin.

These "Job's comforters" are no comforters at all, and he further loses his balance of mind, but Allah recalls to him all His mercies, and he resumes his humility and gives up self-justification.

He is restored to prosperity, with twice as much as he had before; his brethren and friends come back to him; he had a new family of seven sons and three fair daughters. He lived to a good old age, and saw four generations of descendants.

All this is recorded in the Book of Job in the Old Testament.

Of all the Hebrew writings, the Hebrew of this Book comes nearest to Arabic. The account given in the Biblical sources and the image that it projects of Prophet Job is decidedly different from that found in the Quran and the Hadith, which present him as a prophet and brilliant example of dignified patience becoming of a great Prophet of Allah ever trustful in Him and His promises.

Nothing could be farther from truth than saying that he lost his peace of mind or resorted to curses during the period of his trial. (R).

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ...

84. So We listened to him:

We removed the distress that was on him,

وَأَتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِلْعَابِدِينَ (٨٤)...

and We restored his people to him, and doubled their number -- as a Grace from Ourselves,

and a thing for commemoration, for all who serve Us.

**C2740.** Job is the pattern of humility, patience, and faith in Allah. It was with these weapons that he fought and conquered evil.

وَأِسْمَاعِيلَ ...

85. And (remember) Isma'il,

**C2741.** Isma'il is mentioned specially, apart from the line which descended through Isaac (21:72), as he was the founder of a separate and greater Ummah.

His sufferings began in infancy (see n. 160 to 2:158); but his steady constancy and submission to the will of Allah were specially shown when he earned the title of "Sacrifice to Allah" (see n. 2506 to 19:54). That was the particular quality of his constancy and patience.

... وَإِدْرِيسَ ...

Idris,



**C2742.** For Idris see n. 2508 to 19:56.

He was in a high station in life, but that did not spoil him. He was sincere and true, and that was the particular quality of his constancy and patience,

... وَذَا الْكِفْلِ ...

and Dhu al Kifl,

**C2743.** Dhu al Kifl would literally mean "possessor of, or giving, a double requital or portion"; or else, "one who used a cloak of double thickness," that being one of the meanings of Kifl.

The Commentators differ in opinion as to who is meant, why the title is applied to him, and the point of his being grouped with Isma'il and Idris for constancy and patience.

I think the best suggestion is that afforded by Karsten Niebuhr in his *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabian*, Copenhagen, 1778, ii. 264-266, as quoted in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* under "Dhul-Kifl".

He visited Meshad 'All in 'Iraq, and also the little town called Kefil, midway between Najaf and Hilla (Babylon). Kefil, he says, is the Arabic form of Ezekiel. The shrine of Ezekiel was there, and the Jews came to it on pilgrimage.

If we accept "Dhul al Kifl" to be not an epithet, but an Arabicised form of "Ezekiel", it fits the context, Ezekiel was a prophet in Israel who was carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar after his second attack on Jerusalem (about B.C. 599). His Book is included in the English Bible (Old Testament). He was chained and bound, and put into prison, and for a time he was dumb (Ezekiel, 3:25-26).

He bore all with patience and constancy, and continued to reprove boldly the evils in Israel.

In a burning passage he denounces false leaders in words which are eternally true: "Woe be to the

shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken ..... etc. (Ezekiel, 34:2-4).

Dhu al Kifl is again mentioned in [38:48](#) along with Isma'il and Elisha.

كُلُّ مَنْ الصَّابِرِينَ (٨٥)...

all (men) of constancy and patience;

وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٨٦)

86. We admitted them to Our Mercy: for they were of the Righteous ones.

وَدَا النُّونَ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ...

87. And remember Dhu al Nun, when he departed in wrath: he imagined that We had no power over him!

**C2744.** Dhu al Nun. "the man of the Fish or the Whale", is the title of Jonah (Yunus), because he was swallowed by a large Fish or Whale.

He was the prophet raised to warn the Assyrian capital Nineveh. For Nineveh see [n. 1478 to 10:98](#).

His story is told in [37:139-149](#). When his first warning was unheeded by the people, he denounced Allah's wrath on them. But they repented and Allah forgave them for the time being.

Jonah, meanwhile, departed in wrath, discouraged at the apparent failure of his mission. He should have remained in the most discouraging circumstances, and relied on the power of Allah; for Allah had power both over Nineveh and over the Messenger He had sent to Nineveh. He went away to the sea and took a ship, but apparently the sailors threw him out as a man of bad omen in a storm.

He was swallowed by a big Fish (or Whale), but in the depth of the darkness, he cried to Allah and confessed his weakness.

...فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ...

But he cried through the depths of darkness,

The "**darkness**" may be interpreted both physically and spiritually;

- physically, as the darkness of the night and the storm and the Fish's body;
- spiritually as the darkness in his soul, his extreme distress in the situation which he had brought on himself.

Allah Most Gracious forgave him. He was cast out ashore; he was given the shelter of a plant in his state of mental and physical lassitude. He was refreshed and strengthened, and the work of his mission prospered. Thus he overcame all his disappointment by repentance and Faith, and Allah accepted him.

أَنْ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٨٧)

"There is no god but Thou: Glory to Thee:  
I was indeed wrong!"

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْعَمِّ...

88. So We listened to him: and delivered him from distress:

...وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨٨)

and thus do We deliver those who have faith.

وَزَكَرِيَّا إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ ...

89. And (remember) Zakariya, when he cried to his Lord:

**C2745.** See 19:2-15, and 3:38-41.

Zakariya was a priest; both he and his wife were devout and punctilious in their duties. They were old, and they had no son. He was troubled in mind, not so much by the vulgar desire to have a son to carry on his line, but because he felt that his people were not unselfishly devout, and there would be no sincere work for Allah unless he could train up someone himself.

He was given a son Yahya (John the Baptist), who added to the devout reputation of the family, for he is called "noble, chaste, and a prophet," (3:39). All three, father, mother, and son, were made worthy of each other, and they repelled evil by their devout emulation in virtue.

... رَبِّ لِمَا تُدْرِنِي فَرْدًا ...

"O my Lord! leave me not without offspring,

... وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ (٨٩)

though Thou art the best of inheritors.

**C2746.** 'It is not that I crave a personal heir to myself: all things go back to Thee, and Thou art the best of inheritors: but I see no one around me sincere enough to carry on my work for Thee; wilt Thou give me one whom I can train?'

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ زَوْجَهُ ...

90. So We listened to him: and We granted him Yahya:

We cured his wife's (barrenness) for him.

**C2747. Aslaha:** to improve to mend, to reform, to make better. Here, with reference to Zakariya's wife, the signification is twofold:

1. that her barrenness would be removed, so that she could become a mother; and
2. her spiritual dignity should be raised in becoming the mother of John the Baptist; and by implication his also, in becoming the father of John.

...إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا...

These three were ever quick in emulation in good works:  
they used to call on Us with love and reverence,

...وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ (٩٠)

and humble themselves before Us.

وَالَّتِي أَحْصَانَتْ فَرْجَهَا ...

91. And (remember) her who guarded her chastity:

**C2748.** Mary the mother of Jesus.

Chastity was her special virtue: with a son of virgin birth, she and Jesus became a miracle to all nations. That was the virtue with which they (both Mary and Jesus) resisted evil.

... فَنفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا ...

We breathed into her of Our Spirit,

... وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ (٩١)

and We made her and her son a Sign for all peoples.

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ...

92. Verily, this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood,

**C2749. Ummah:** this is best translated by Brotherhood here.

"Community", "race", and "nation." and "people" are words which import other ideas and do not quite correspond to "Ummah".

"Religion" and "Way of Life" are derived meanings, which could be used in other passages, but are less appropriate here.

Our attention has been drawn to people of very different temperaments and virtues, widely different in time, race, language, surroundings, history, and work to be performed, but forming the closest brotherhood as being men and women united in the highest service of Allah.

They prefigure the final and perfected Brotherhood of Islam.

... وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ (٩٢)

and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other).

وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ...

93. But (later generations) cut off their affair (of unity), one from another:

**C2750.** Allah's Message was and ever is one; and His Messengers treated it as one. It is people of narrower views who come later and trade on the earlier names, that break up the Message and the Brotherhood into jarring camps and sects.

...كُلُّ إِلَيْنَا رَاجِعُونَ (٩٣)

(yet) will they all return to Us.

### C.150 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose) (21:94-112)

*No good deed is fruitless; work  
While yet there's time; for with Judgement  
The door will be closed to repentance.  
No false gods of fancy can help.  
The Righteous will have no fear; for them  
The angelic greetings will truly open  
A new world, which they will inherit.  
This was Allah's Message of old, and the same  
Is Allah's Message renewed; for Allah  
Is one, and so is His Message, proclaimed  
For all, freely and in loving Truth.*

## Section 7

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنْ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهِ...

94. Whoever works any act of righteousness and has Faith -- his endeavour will not be rejected:

...وَأَنَا لَهُ كَاتِبُونَ (٩٤)

We shall record it in his favor.

**C2751.** Allah gives credit for every act of righteousness, however small: when combined with sincere Faith in Allah, it becomes the stepping stone to higher and higher things. It is never lost.

وَحَرَامٌ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ (٩٥)

95. But there is a ban on any population which We have destroyed: that they shall not return.

**C2752.** But when wickedness comes to such a pass that the Wrath of Allah descends, as it did on Sodom, the case becomes hopeless.

The righteous were warned and delivered before the Wrath descended. But those destroyed will not get another chance, as they flouted all previous chances. They will only be raised at the approach of the Day of Judgment.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ ...

96. Until the Gog and Magog (people) are let through (their barrier),

**C2753.** For Gog and Magog see n. 2439 to 18:94.

The name stands for wild and lawless tribes who will break their barriers and swarm through the earth. This will be one of the prognostications of the approaching Judgment.

... وَهُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ (٩٦)

and they swiftly swarm from every hill.

وَأَقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ فَإِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ أَبْصَارُ...

97. Then will the True Promise draw nigh (of fulfillment):

then behold! the eyes of the Unbelievers will fixedly stare in horror:

**C2754.** Cf. 14:42.

...الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا...

"Ah! woe to us! we were indeed heedless of this;

...بَلْ كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (٩٧)

nay, we truly did wrong!"

إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ...

98. Verily ye, (Unbelievers), and the (false) gods that ye worship besides Allah, are (but) fuel for Hell!

...أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَارِدُونَ (٩٨)

To it will ye (surely) come!

لَوْ كَانَ هَؤُلَاءِ آلِهَةً مَا وَرَدُّوهَا...

99. If these had been gods, they would not have got there!

**C2755.** The ultimate proof of Truth and Falsehood will be that Truth will endure and come to its own, while Falsehood will be destroyed.

And so the men who worshipped Truth will come to their own, while those who worshipped Falsehood will be in a Fire of Punishment they could scarcely have imagined before. In that state there will be nothing but regrets and sighs and groans, and these evil sounds will drown everything else.

...وَكُلٌّ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٩٩)

But each one will abide therein.

لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ (١٠٠)

100. There, sobbing will be their lot, nor will they there hear (aught else).



إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ (١٠١)

101. Those for whom the Good (Record) from Us has gone before, will be removed far therefrom.

**C2756.** In contrast to the misery of those who rejected Truth and Right, will be the happiness of those who accepted it.

The good will not hear the least sound of the groans of evil. Their true soul's desires will be fulfilled-not temporarily as in this world, but in a permanent form.

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ حَسِيسَهَا...

102. Not the slightest sound will they hear of Hell:

...وَهُمْ فِي مَا اشْتَهَتْ أَنفُسُهُمْ خَالِدُونَ (١٠٢)

what their souls desired, in that will they dwell.

لَا يَخْزُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ وَتَتَلَفَأَهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ...

103. The Great Terror will bring them no grief: but the angels will meet them (with mutual greetings):

**C2757.** The Judgment and balancing of accounts will be a mighty Terror to the evil-doers.

But it will cause, to the righteous, not grief or anxiety, but hope and happiness, for now they will be in a congenial atmosphere, and will see the fulfilment of their ideals in the meeting and greeting of the angels, preparatory to their enjoyment of the supreme Bliss-seeing the Face of Allah.

...هَذَا يَوْمُكُمْ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ (١٠٣)

"This is your Day -- (the Day) that ye were promised."

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ...

104. The Day that we roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books (completed) --

...كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ...

even as We produced the first Creation, so shall We produce a new one:

**C2758.** The world-the universe-as we know it, will be folded up like a scroll of parchment, for it will have done its work.

If Allah created all this world out of nothing, He can create an entirely new heaven and a new earth, on a plane of which we can form no conception in our present life.

And He will do so, for that is His promise.

Some Commentators understand **Sijill** to be the name of the Recording Angel who closes the Book of a man Deeds after the man's death.

وَعَدَّا عَلَيْنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ (١٠٤)

a promise We have undertaken: truly shall We fulfil it.

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ ...

105. Before this We wrote in the Psalms,

**C2759. Zabur:** the Book of the Psalms of David.

The name of David is expressly mentioned in connection with the **Zabur** in 4:163 and 17:55, although there the indefinite article is applied to the word as meaning a Book of Scripture.

See Psalms 25:13, "his seed shall inherit the earth";

37:11, "the meek shall inherit the earth" (quoted by Jesus in Matt. 5:3); and

37:29, "the righteous shall inherit the land." (R).

... مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ....

after the Message (given to Moses):

**C2760.** The same promise occurs in the Pentateuch, Exod. 32:13.

"they shall inherit it (the land) forever."

...أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ (١٠٥)

My servants, the righteous, shall inherit the earth."

إِنَّ فِي هَذَا لَبَلَاغًا لِّقَوْمٍ عَابِدِينَ (١٠٦)

106. Verily in the (Qur'án) is a Message for people who would (truly) worship Allah.

**C2761.** The culmination of Allah's Revelation is in the Quran, which confirms previous scriptures, corrects the errors which men introduced into them, and explains many points in detail for all who seek for right worship and service to Allah-whether they inherit the previous Books ("People of the Book") or not. It is a universal Message.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (١٠٧)

107. We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures.

**C2762.** There is no question now of race or nation, of a "chosen people" or the "seed of Abraham"; or the "seed of David"; or of Hindu Arya-varta; of Jew or Gentile, Arab or 'Ajam (non-Arab), Turk or Tajik, European or Asiatic, White or Coloured; Aryan, Semitic, Mongolian, or African; or American, Australian, or Polynesian.

To all men and creatures other than men who have any spiritual responsibility, the principles universally apply.

فَلْإِنَّمَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ...

108. Say:

"What has come to me by inspiration is that your Allah is One Allah:

...فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُونَ (١٠٨)

will ye therefore bow to His Will (in Islam)?"

**C2763.** 'Not my God only, but also your God; for there is but One God, the Universal Lord, Who made and loves and cherishes all.'

فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَعَلْنَا آذَنُكُمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ...

109. But if they turn back, say:

"I have proclaimed the Message to you all alike and in truth;

...وَإِن أَدْرِي أَقْرِبُ أَمْ بَعِيدٌ مَّا تُوعَدُونَ (١٠٩)

but I know not whether that which ye are promised is near or far.

**C2764.** 'If you do not realise the significance of the Message, I at least have done my duty. I have given the Good News for the Righteous and the Warning for the Unjust, without favour or partiality, and without abating one jot of the truth, openly and squarely for all.

Do not ask me when the Good News and the Warning will be fulfilled. That is for Allah to decide, not for me or for you to know.'

إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْتُمُونَ (١١٠)

110. "It is He Who knows what is open in speech and what ye hide (in your hearts).

**C2765.** The Messenger of Allah freely and impartially teaches all how to carry out Allah's Will and live a good life.

If some of them are hypocrites and come into the Ummah (Brotherhood) from baser motives and not the pure motives of the love of Allah, their motives and conduct will be judged by Allah and not by men.

وَأِنْ أَدْرِي لَعَلَّهُ فِتْنَةٌ لَكُمْ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ (١١١)

111. "I know not but that it may be a trial for you, and a grant of (worldly) livelihood (to you) for a time.

**C2766.** In the same way if men who come into the Brotherhood from pure motives and yet feel aggrieved that those outside are better off from a worldly point of view, they are wrong.

It may be that the fleeting enjoyment of this world's goods is but a trial, and they should be grateful for being saved from temptation.

قَالَ ...

112. Say:

**C2767.** See above, [n. 2666 to 21:4](#).

The better reading is "Say" in the imperative, rather than "He (the Prophet) said (or says)" in the indicative mood.

Note that, on that construction, there are three distinct things which the Prophet is asked to say: viz.:

1. the statement in verses 109-111, addressed to those who turn away from the Message;
2. the prayer addressed to Allah in the first part of verse 112; and
3. the advice given indirectly to the Believers, in the second part of verse 112 I have marked these divisions by means of inverted commas.

... رَبِّ احْكُم بِالْحَقِّ ...

"O my Lord! judge Thou in truth!"

**C2768.** That is, Allah's judgment as between the Teacher and those who refuse his Message, or between the righteous and those who taunt them for their poverty, will be the true one, and both the Teacher and the Ummah must leave the judgment to Allah.

... وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحْمَنُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ (١١٢)

"Our Lord Most Gracious is the One Whose assistance should be sought against the blasphemies ye utter!"

**C2769.** Blasphemy is a dreadful sin. We must guard ourselves from it.

But as regards others, if we cannot prevent it, we must pray to Allah for assistance and not rely upon carnal weapons.