

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE  
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER  
CHAPTER 27  
SURAH AN-NAML

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By  
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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**HOLY QURAN**

**CHAPTER**

**027**

**SURAH AN-NAML**

*ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI*

**Introduction and Summary**

This Surah is cognate in subject to the one preceding it and the two following it. Its chronological place is also in the same group of four, in the middle Makkan period.

Here there is much mystic symbolism. Wonders in the physical world are types of greater wonders in the spiritual world. The Fire, the White Hand, and the Rod, in the story of Moses; the speech of birds, the crowds of Jinns and men pitted against a

humble ant, and the Hoopoe and the Queen of Sheba, in Solomon's story; the defeat of the plot of the nine wicked men in the story of Salih; and the crime of sin with open eyes in the story of Lut-lead up to the lessons of true and false worship and the miracles of Allah's grace and revelation.

**Summery-** Wonderful in Revelation, like the Fire which Moses saw, which was a glimpse of Allah's Glory, and His Miracles, which searched out those who refused Faith in spite of the light they had received (27:1-14, and C. 169).

Solomon knew the speech of Birds and had hosts of Jinns and men; yet the wise ant had ample defence against them: the Hoopoe who was absent of his muster, was yet serving him: the Queen of Sheba had a kingdom, but it submitted with conviction to the Wisdom of Solomon and the Kingdom of Allah (27:15-44, C.170).

Fools ascribe ill-luck to godliness as in Salih's story, or fall into the lusts with their eyes open, as in Lut's story; but their plots and their rage will be foiled by Allah (27:45-58, and C.171).

Allah's glory and goodness are supreme over all Creation: Unfaith will yield to Faith in the final adjustment of values: so follow Revelation, serve Allah, and trust Him, (27:59-93, and C. 172).

### **C.169 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

**(27:1-14)**

*Revelation shows us a glimpse of the spiritual  
World, guides us in life, and gives us  
The Hope of eternal Bliss in the Hereafter.  
It works a complete transformation in us,  
As it did with Moses when he saw  
The mystic fire and was given the Signs  
With which to reclaim a people lost  
In superstition and sin, and proud of sin.*

# بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

طس...

1. Ta Sin.

**C3240.** See 3137 to 26:1.

... تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (١)

These are verses of the Qur'án -- a Book that makes (things) clear;

هُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢)

2. A Guide; and Glad Tidings for the Believers --

**C3241.** Revelation is here presented in three aspects:

1. it explains things, the attributes of Allah, our own position, and the world around;
2. it directs us to right conduct and keeps us from evil; and
3. to those who have Faith and accept its guidance, it gives the good news of forgiveness, purification, and the achievement of salvation. (R).

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ...

3. Those who establish regular prayers and give in regular charity,

... وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ (٣)

and also have (full) assurance of the Hereafter.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (٤)

4. As to those who believe not in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds pleasing in their eyes; and so they wander about in distraction.

**C3242.** Those who reject Allah and follow Evil have a good conceit of themselves. Their deeds are pleasing to no one else.

As they have rejected Allah's guidance, they are allowed to hug their own self-conceit, and given further respite for repentance. But they follow their own whims and wander about in distraction, as they have no standards such as guide the godly.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ وَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ الْأَخْسَرُونَ (٥)

5. Such are they for whom a grievous Penalty is (waiting): and in the Hereafter theirs will be the greatest loss.

**C3243.** The account will then be made up, and they will be found to be terribly in loss. They will be the worst in loss, for all their self-complacency.

وَإِنَّكَ لَلتَّالِقَى الْفُرْآنَ مِن لَّدُنْ حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ (٦)

6. As to thee, the Qur'án is bestowed upon thee from the presence of One Who is Wise and All-Knowing.

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا...

7. Behold! Moses said to his family: "I perceive a fire;

**C3244.** Cf. 20:9-24.

Both there and here there is a reference to the dawn of Revelation in the heart of Moses. The points there emphasised will be found in the notes to that passage.

Here the emphasis is on the wonderful nature of the Fire and the wonderful way in which Moses was transformed at the touch of the Light. He was travelling in the Sinai desert with his family. Seeking ordinary light, he came upon a Light which took him to the highest signs of Allah.

No doubt all his inner history had prepared him for his great destiny. It is the inner history that matters, and not the place or position of a man in the eyes of his ordinary fellows.

... سَأَتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ...

soon will I bring you from there some information,

... أَوْ آتِيكُمْ بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْنُطُونَ (٧)

or I will bring you a burning brand to light our fuel, that ye may warm yourselves."

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَنْ بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا...

8. But when he came to the (Fire), a voice was heard:

"Blessed are **those** in the Fire and those around:

**C3245. Those:** in the original the pronoun is in the singular, "man", which is often used with a plural meaning.

The Commentators usually construe it to mean that this was not a physical fire, but it was the glory of the Angels, a reflection of the Glory of Allah. Hence the exclamation at the end of the verse.

... وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٨)

and Glory to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!

يَا مُوسَى إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٩)

9. "O Moses! verily, I am Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Wise!...

وَأَلْقِ عَصَاكَ...

10. "Now do thou throw thy rod!"

**C3246.** Moses was now transported into an entirely new world. What he had taken to be an ordinary fire was a gleam of the heavenly light.

His own rod or staff was no longer the dead piece of wood that had hitherto supported him. It became instinct with life, a life that moved, and had the power of offence and defence in it, as all living Good must have in its fight with Evil.

His own transformation is described in the next note.

... فَلَمَّا رَأَاهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ...

But when he saw it moving (of its own accord) as if it had been a snake, he turned back in retreat, and retraced not his steps:

... يَا مُوسَىٰ لَا تَخَفْ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَيَّ الْمُرْسَلُونَ (١٠)

"O Moses (it was said),

"fear not: truly, in My presence, those called as messengers have no fear --

**C3247.** In this great, new, wonderful world, that was opening out to Moses, he had to get his vision adjusted to his new surroundings, as an ordinary man has to adjust his sight before he can see in any very strong light that is new to him.

The staff which had become alive as a snake frightened him: yet it was to be his own instrument of work in his new mission. All fear was to be cast out of his mind, as befitted a man chosen by Allah.

إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ فَإِنِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١١)

11. "But if any have done wrong and have thereafter substituted good to take the place of **evil**, truly, I am Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

**C3248.** His slaying the Egyptian (n. 3146 to 26:14), however defensible from certain aspects, was yet something from his past that had to be washed off, and Allah, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, did it out of His abounding Grace.

Nay, more; he was given a pure, Radiant Hand, as a Sign from Allah, as stated in the next verse.

وَأَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيْضًا مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ...

12. "Now put thy hand into thy bosom, and it will come forth white without stain (or harm):

**C3249.** Cf. 20:22. There the expression is: "Draw thy hand close to thy side." As far as the physical act is concerned, the expressions there and here mean the same thing.

Moses had a loose-fitting robe. If he put his hand within the folds of the robe, it would go to his bosom on the side of his body opposite to that from which his hand came; i.e., if it was his right hand it would go to the left

side of his bosom. The hand comes out white and radiant, without a stain.

Ordinarily if the skin becomes white it is a sign of disease or leprosy. Here it was the opposite. It was a sign of radiance and glory from the higher Light.

... فِي تَسْعِ آيَاتٍ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهِ ...

(these are) among the nine Signs (thou wilt take) to Pharaoh and his people:

**C3250.** The nine Signs: see n. 1091 to 7:133.

... إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (١٢)

for they are a people rebellious in transgression.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ آيَاتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٣)

13. But when our Signs came to them, that should have opened their eyes, they said:

"This is sorcery manifest!"

**C3251.** The Signs should have clearly opened the eyes of any persons who honestly examined them and thought about them. Those who rejected them were perverse and were going against their own light and inner conviction. That was the aggravating feature of their sin.

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا ...

14. And they rejected those Signs in iniquity and arrogance, though their souls were convinced thereof:

... فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (١٤)

so see what was the end of those who acted corruptly!

### **C.170 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

(27:15-44)

*No less were David and Solomon versed  
In knowledge and mystic wisdom. Even*



*Solomon could appreciate the wisdom  
Of the humble Ant. He used all his power  
And resources in extending the Kingdom  
Of Allah. In wonderful ways did he lead  
The Queen of Sheba to the Light of Faith  
Of Unity, and confirmed her pure  
Worship, the worship of the Lord of the Worlds.*

## Section 2

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا...

15. We gave (in the past) knowledge to David and Solomon:

**C3252.** Cf. 21:78-82.

**"Knowledge"** means such knowledge as leads up to the higher things in life, the Wisdom that was shown in their decisions and judgments, and the understanding that enabled them to fulfil their mission in life.

They were both just men and prophets of Allah. The Bible, as we have it, is inconsistent: on the one hand it calls David "a man after God's own heart" (I Samuel, 13:14, and Acts 13:22); and the Christians acclaim Christ as a son of David; but on the other hand, horrible crimes are ascribed to him, which, if he had committed them, would make him a monster of cruelty and injustice.

About Solomon, too, while he is described as a glorious king, there are stories of his lapses into sin and idolatry. The Muslim teaching considers them both to be men of piety and wisdom, and high in spiritual knowledge.

... وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٥)

and they both said:

"Praise be to Allah, Who has favored us above many of His servants who believe!"

**C3253.** They ascribed, as was proper, their knowledge, wisdom, and power to the only true Source of all good, Allah.

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمَانُ دَاوُودَ...

16. And Solomon was David's heir.

**C3254.** The point is that Solomon not only inherited his father's kingdom but his spiritual insight and the prophetic office, which do not necessarily go from father to son.

... وَقَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلَّمْنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ ...

He said: "O ye people! we have been taught the speech of Birds,

**C3255. Speech of Birds.** The spoken word in human speech is different from the means of communication which birds and animals have between each other. But no man can doubt that they have means of communication with each other, if he only observes the orderly flight of migratory birds or the regulated behaviour of ants, bees, and other creatures who live in communities.

The wisdom of Solomon consisted in understanding these things-in the animal world and in the lower fringes of human intelligence.

... وَأَوْتَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

and on us has been bestowed (a little) of all things:

**C3256. "A little of all thing":**

Solomon was a king of power and authority; outside his kingdom he had influence among many neighbouring peoples; he had knowledge of birds, and beasts and plants; he was just and wise, and understood men; and above all, he had spiritual insight, which brought him near to Allah.

Thus he had something of all kinds of desirable gifts. And with true gratitude he referred them to Allah, the Giver of all gifts.

... إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِينُ (١٦)

this is indeed Grace manifest (from Allah)."

وَحُسْبَرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودُهُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ ...

17. And before Solomon were marshalled his hosts -- of Jinns and men and birds,

... فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ (١٧)

and they were all kept in order and ranks.

**C3257.** Besides the literal meaning, there are two symbolical meanings.

1. All his subjects of varying grades of intelligence, taste, and civilization, were kept in due order and cooperation, by his discipline, justice, and good government.
2. The gifts of various kinds, which he possessed (see last note), he used in proper order and coordination, as if they were a well disciplined army, thus getting the best possible results from them.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَوْا عَلَىٰ وَادِي النَّمْلِ...

18. At length, when they came to a (lowly) valley of ants,

... قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا مَسَاكِنَكُمْ لَا...

one of the ants said: "O ye ants, get into your habitations,

... يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (١٨)

lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under foot) without knowing it."

**C3258.** This verse and the next, read together, suggest the symbolical meaning as predominant.

The ant, to outward appearance, is a very small and humble creature. In the great pomp and circumstances of the world, she (generic feminine in Arabic) may be neglected or even trampled on by a people who mean her no harm. Yet, by her wisdom, she carries on her own life within her own sphere ("habitations") unmolested, and makes a useful contribution to the economy of the

world. So there is room for the humblest people in the spiritual world.

فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّن قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ...

19. So he smiled, amused at her speech; and he said:

رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي  
أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيَّ

"O my Lord! so order me that I may be grateful for Thy favors, which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents,

**C3259.** The counterpart to the position of the humble ant is the position of a great king like Solomon.

He prays that his power and wisdom and all other gifts may be used for righteousness and for the benefit of all around him. The ant being in his thoughts, we may suppose that he means particularly in his prayer that he may not even unwittingly tread on humble beings in his preoccupations with the great things of the world.

... وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ ...

and that I may work the righteousness that will please Thee:

**C3260.** The righteousness which pleases the world is often very different from the righteousness which pleases Allah.

Solomon prays that he may always take Allah's Will as his standard, rather than the standards of men.

... وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٩)

and admit me, by Thy Grace, to the ranks of Thy righteous Servants."

**C3261.** In the Kingdom of Allah, righteousness is the badge of citizenship.

And although there are great and noble grades (see n. 586 to 4:69), the base of that citizenship is the universal brotherhood of righteousness. The greatest in that Kingdom are glad and proud to pray for that essential badge.

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِيَ لَا أَرَى الْهُدُودَ...

20. And he took a muster of the Birds; and he said: "Why is it I see not the hoopoe?"

... أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ (٢٠)

Or is he among the absentees?

**C3262.** Solomon was no idle or easy-going king. He kept all his organisation strictly up to the mark, both his armies literally and his forces (metaphorically). His most mobile arm was the Birds, who were light on the wing and flew and saw everything like efficient scouts. One day he missed the Hoopoe in his muster.

The Hoopoe is a light, graceful creature, with elegant plumage of many colours, and a beautiful yellow crest on his head, which entitles him to be called a royal bird.

لَأَعَذِّبَهُ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَأَذْبَحَنَّهُ...

21. "I will certainly punish him with a severe Penalty, or execute him,

... أَوْ لِيَأْتِيَنِّي بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢١)

unless he bring me a clear reason (for absence)."

فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ نَحِطْ بِهِ...

22. But the hoopoe tarried not far:

he (came up and) said: "I have compassed (territory) which thou hast not compassed,

... وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ (٢٢)

and I have come to thee from Saba with tidings true.

**C3263.** Saba may reasonably be identified with the Biblical Sheba ( I Kings 10:1-10).

It is further referred to in the Surah called after its name: 34:15-20.

It was a city in Yemen, said to have been three days' journey (say 50 miles) from the city of San'a. A recent German explorer, Dr. Hans Helfritz, claims to have located it in what is now Hadhramaut territory. The famous dam of Maarib made the country very prosperous, and enabled it to attain a high degree of civilization ("provided with every requisite" in the next verse).

The Queen of Sheba therefore rightly held up her head high until she beheld the glories of Solomon.

إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ...

23. "I found (there) a woman ruling over them

**C3264.** The Queen of Sheba (by name Bilqis in Arabian tradition) came apparently from Yemen, but she had affinities with Abyssinia and possibly ruled over Abyssinia also.

The Habasha tribe (after whom Abyssinia was named) came from Yemen. Between the southern coast of Yemen and the north-eastern coast of Abyssinia there are only the Straits of Bab-al-Mandab, barely twenty miles across.

In the 10th or 11th century B.C. there were frequent invasions of Abyssinia from Arabia, and Solomon's reign of 40 years is usually synchronised with B.C. 992 to 952. The Sabaean and Himyarite alphabets in which we find the south Arabian pre-Islamic inscriptions, passed into Ethiopic, the language of Abyssinia.

The Abyssinians possess a traditional history called "The Book of the Glory of Kings" (Kebra Nagast), which has been translated from Ethiopic into English by Sir E.A. Wallis Budge (Oxford, 1932). It gives an account of the Queen of Sheba and her only son Menyelek 1, as founders of the Abyssinian dynasty. (R).

... وَأَوْثَيْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ...

and provided with every requisite;

**C3265. Provided with every requisite:**

I take this to refer not only to the abundance of spices and gems and gold in her country, but to sciences and arts, and perhaps the spiritual possibilities which made her accept the religion of Unity and Truth (27:44).

... وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ (٢٣)

and she has a magnificent throne.

وَجَدْتُمُهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ...

24. "I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides Allah:

**C3266.** The ancient religion of the people of Saba (the Himyar or Sabaeans) consisted in the worship of the heavenly bodies, the sun, the planets, and the stars. Possibly the cult was connected with that of Chaldea, the home-land of Abraham: see 6:75-79 and notes thereon.

Yemen had easy access to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf by way of the sea, as well as with Abyssinia. That accounts for the Christians of Najran and the Jewish dynasty of kings (e.g. Zu-Nuwas, d. 525 A.D.) who persecuted them in the century before Islam, -also for the Christian Abyssinian Governor Abraha and his discomfiture in the year of the Prophet's birth (Surah 105), say 570 A.D. Jewish-Christian influences were powerful in Arabia in the sixth century of the Christian era.

The religion of these Sabaeans (written in Arabic with a Sin) should not be confounded with that of the Sabians (with a Sad), as to whom see n. 76 to 2:62.

... وَرَزَيْنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ ...

Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing in their eyes, and has kept them away from the Path --

... فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ (٢٤)

so they receive no guidance -

أَلَا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبَاءَ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

25. "(Kept them away from the Path), that they should not worship Allah, Who brings to light what is hidden in the heavens and the earth,

**C3267.** The false worship of the Sabaeans is here exposed in three ways:

1. that they were self-satisfied with their own human achievements, instead of looking up to Allah;
2. and that the light of the heavenly bodies which they worshipped was only dependent on the true Light of Allah, which extends over heaven and earth; the Creator should be worshipped rather than His Creation;
3. and Allah knows the hidden secrets of men's minds as well as the objects which they openly profess: are false worshippers really only worshipping their own selves, or the "sins they have a mind to" and are therefore afraid to go to Allah, Who knows all?

...وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ (٢٥)

and knows what ye hide and what ye reveal.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢٦)

26. "Allah! -- there is no god but He! -- Lord of the Throne Supreme!"

**C3268.** The messenger (Hoopoe) is a pious bird, as befits a messenger of Solomon. After mentioning the false worship of the Sabaeans, he pronounces the Creed of Unity, and emphasises Allah's attribute as Lord of the Great Throne, in order to make it clear that whatever may be the magnificence of a human throne such as he has described (in verse 23), he is not in any way misled from his loyalty to Solomon, the exponent of the true Religion of Liberty.

قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٢٧)

27. (Solomon) said:

"Soon shall we see whether thou hast told the truth or lied!



**C3269.** Solomon does not doubt his messenger's plea that he has scouted a new country, but wants to test whether he has loosened the rein of his imagination in describing its splendours or its worship.

اذْهَبْ بِكِتَابِي هَذَا فَأَلِّقَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ...

28. "Go thou, with this letter of mine, and deliver it to them:

...ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ...

then draw back from them,

...فَانظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ (٢٨)

and (wait to) see what answer they return"...

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَيُّ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ (٢٩)

29. (The Queen) said: "Ye chiefs! here is -- delivered to me -- a letter worthy of respect.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ ...

30. "It is from Solomon, and is (as follows):

... بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (٣٠)

'In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful:

**C3270.** Solomon expressly begins his letter with the formula of the true and universal Religion of Unity, and he invites to the true Faith the new people with whom he establishes honourable relations, not for worldly conquest but for the spreading of the Light of Allah.

لَا تَعْلُوا عَلَيَّ وَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ (٣١)

31. "Be ye not arrogant against me but come to me in submission to the true Religion."

### Section 3

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي...

32. She said:

"Ye chiefs! advise me in (this) my affair:

...مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُون (٣٢)

no affair have I decided except in your presence."

قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَوْلَا قُوَّةٍ وَأَوْلُوا بِأَسْ شَدِيدٍ...

33. They said: "We are endued with strength, and given to vehement war:

...وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكَ فَانظُرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِينَ (٣٣)

but the command is with thee; so consider what thou wilt command."

قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذْلَةً...

34. She said: "Kings, when they enter a country, despoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest:

**C3271.** The character of Queen Bilqis, as disclosed here, is that of a ruler enjoying great wealth and dignity, and the full confidence of her subjects. She does nothing without consulting her Council, and her Council are ready to carry out her commands in all things. Her people are manly, loyal, and contented, and ready to take the field against any enemy of their country.

But their queen is prudent in policy, and is not willing to embroil her country in war. She has the discrimination to see that Solomon is not like ordinary kings who conquer by violence. Perhaps in her heart she has a ray of the divine light already, though her people are yet Pagans. She wishes to carry her people with her in whatever she does, because she is as loyal to them as they are to her. An exchange of presents would probably establish better relations between the two kingdoms. And perhaps she anticipates some spiritual understanding also, a hope which was afterwards realised.

In Bilqis we have a picture of womanhood, gentle, prudent, and able to tame the wider passions of her subjects. (R).

...وَكَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٤)

thus do they behave.

وَأَيُّ مُرْسِلَةٍ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهِدِيَّةٍ فَنَاطِرَةٌ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٣٥)

35. "But I am going to send him a present, and (wait) to see with what (answer) return (my) ambassadors."

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَ بِمَالٍ...

36. How when (the embassy) came to Solomon, he said:

"Will ye give me abundance in wealth?"

...فَمَا آتَانِيَ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا آتَاكُمْ...

But that which Allah has given me is better than that which He has given you!

...بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بِهِدِيَّتِكُمْ تُفْرِحُونَ (٣٦)

Nay it is ye who rejoice in your gift!

**C3272.** Poor Bilqis! she thought she had arranged with womanly tact to conciliate Solomon, and at the same time pacify her warlike subjects! But the effect of the embassy with presents was the very opposite.

Solomon took it as an insult that she should send her presents instead of her submission to the true Religion! He flung back the presents at her, as much as to say,

"Let these baubles delight your own hearts! Allah has blessed me with plenty of worldly goods, and something infinitely better, viz.; His Light and Guidance! Why do you say nothing about that?"

Will you only understand the argument of armies and violence?"

Or perhaps his speech was only meant for the Sabaean crowd. For when she accurately came, he treated her kindly, and she accepted the religion of Unity.

ارْجِعْ إِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُودٍ لَّا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا...

37. "Go back to them, and be sure we shall come to them with such hosts as they will never be able to meet:

...وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهْم مِّنْهَا أَذِلَّةً وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ (٣٧)

we shall expel them from there in disgrace, and they will feel humbled (indeed)."

قَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ...

38. He said (to his own men): "Ye Chiefs!

...أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِي بَعْرَشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ (٣٨)

which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?"

**C3273.** The throne is symbolical of power and dignity. So far her throne was based on material wealth: Solomon is going to alter it to a basis of Faith and the Religion of Unity.

قَالَ عَفْرَيْتُ مَنْ الْجِنِّ ...

39. Said an Ifrit, of the Jinns:

**C3274. Ifrit:** a large, powerful jinn, reputed to be wicked and crafty; hence he is anxious to be recognised as one that "could be trusted".

... أَنَا أَتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَقَامِكَ ...

"I will bring it to thee before thou rise from thy Council:

... وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ أَمِينٌ (٣٩)

indeed I have full strength for the purpose, and may be trusted."

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ ...

40. Said one who had knowledge of the Book:

**C3275.** The symbolic meaning still continues.

The big 'Ifrit had boasted of his brute strength, and his reliability. But this is not enough to transform a power (throne) based on materialism into one based on inward knowledge, knowledge of the heart and spirit, the sort of knowledge that comes from the Book of the Grace of Allah, the spirit of truth and benevolence which is the invisible magic of Prophets of Allah.

Even if worldly power and common honesty may be able to effect some good, it will take a comparatively long time, while the magic of spiritual love acts instantaneously.

Solomon was thankful to Allah that he had men endowed with such power, and he had the throne of Bilqis transported to his Court and transformed as he desired, without Bilqis even knowing it. (R).

...أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ...

"I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of an eye!"

فَلَمَّا رَأَهُ مُسْتَوْرًا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ...

Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said:

...هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي أَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ...

"This is by the grace of my Lord! -- to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful!

**C3276.** If Solomon had been ungrateful to Allah, i.e., if he had worked for his own selfish or worldly ends, he could have used the brute strength of 'Ifrīt to add to his worldly strength and glory.

Instead of it he uses the higher magic of the Book,-Of the Spirit-to transform the throne of Bilqis for her highest good, which means also the highest good of her subjects, by the divine Light.

He had the two alternatives, and he chooses the better, and he thus shows his gratitude to Allah for the Grace He had given him.

...وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ...

And if any is grateful, truly his gratitude is (a gain) for his own soul;

...وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ (٤٠)

but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Free of All Needs, Supreme in Honor!"

**C3277.** Man's gratitude to Allah is not a thing that benefits Allah, for Allah is high above all needs: it benefits a man's own soul and gives him higher rank in the life to come.

Per contra, man's ingratitude will not detract from Allah's Glory and Honour or the value of Allah's generous gifts to man: for Allah is supreme

- in honour,
- glory, and
- generosity.

**Karim** in Arabic involves all three significations.

قَالَ نَكِّرُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا...

41. He said: "Transform her throne out of all recognition by her:

...نَنْظُرُ أَتَهْتَدِي أَمْ تَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ (٤١)

let us see whether she is guided (to the truth) or is one of those who receive no guidance."

**C3278.** The throne having been transformed, it will be a test to see whether Bilqis recognises it as her own and accepts it of her own free will as her own, or rejects it as something alien to her, something she will not accommodate herself to.

So in our life.

We get used to certain habits and customs and certain ways of thought. Allah's message comes to transform us and set us on a different kind of throne, with our own active and willing consent. If we are wise, we feel honoured and grateful. If we are "obstinately rebellious", we reject it as not our own, and pine for the old slavery, as the Israelites pined for Egypt when they were under Allah's guidance in the wilderness.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ قِيلَ أَهَكَذَا عَرْشُكَ...

42. So when she arrived, she was asked, "Is this thy throne?"

...قَالَتْ كَأَنَّهُ هُوَ...

She said, "It was just like this;

**C3279.** Bilqis stands the test. She knows it was her throne, yet not exactly the same, for it was now much better.

And she is proud of her good fortune, and acknowledges, for herself and her people, with gratitude, the light which was given to them by Allah, by which they recognised Allah's prophet in Solomon, and received the true Religion with all their will and heart and soul.

...وَأَوْتَيْنَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِينَ (٤٢)

and knowledge was bestowed on us in advance of this, and we have submitted to Allah (in Islam)."

وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَعْبُدُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ...

43. And he diverted her from the worship of others besides Allah:

**C3280.** Some Commentators and Translators adopt an alternative construction for the last clause of the last verse and the first clause of this verse.

They understand the former to be spoken by Solomon and to mean,

'we had knowledge of Allah's Message and accepted it before her.'

They understand the latter to mean,

'the worship of others besides Allah diverted her (from the true Religion).'

If we accept the construction adopted in this Translation, the visit to Solomon confirmed the true Faith of Bilqis and prevented her from lapsing into her ancestral false worship.

...إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ (٤٣)

for she was (sprung) of a people that had no faith.

قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ...

44. She was asked to enter that lofty Palace:

**C3281.** Bilqis, having been received with honour on her arrival, and having accepted the transformation of her

throne, placed presumably in an outer building of the Palace, is asked to enter the great Palace itself.

Its floor was made of slabs of smooth polished glass, that glistened like water. She thought it was water, and tucked up her clothes to pass through it, showing her bare feet and ankles. This was a very undignified position for a woman, especially one of the position of a Queen.

Solomon immediately told her the real facts, when she felt grateful, and joined herself with Solomon in praising Allah.

...فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَكَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقَيْهَا...

but when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she (tucked up her skirts), uncovering her legs.

قَالَ إِنَّهُ صَرْحٌ مُّمَرَّدٌ مِّنْ قَوَارِيرَ ...

He said: "This is but a palace paved smooth with slabs of glass."

...قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي ...

She said: "O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul:

**C3282.** In symbolic language, a new entrant into the Palace of divine knowledge, may yet carry in his mind many of the illusions of the lower world, the transparent crystal of Truth he may yet mistake for the unstable water of worldly vanity, which soils the vestments of those who paddle in it. This leads to many undignified positions and mistakes.

But a gentle leader points out the truth.

Instead of resenting it, the new entrant is grateful; acknowledges his own mistake freely and frankly; and heartily joins with the Teacher in the worship of Allah, the Source of all truth and knowledge.

... وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٤)

I do (now) submit (in Islam), with Solomon, to the Lord of the Worlds."



## C.171 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(27:45-58)

*In Salih's pure preaching the evil Thamud  
Found omens of ill to themselves; in secret  
They plotted to take his life, and like cowards  
They made a league to cover their crime  
While lies. Lo! on themselves recoiled  
The plot; they perished in utter ruin.  
The men admonished the nature given  
Them by Allah, and mocked the Message of Purity.  
Lo! they were buried in a shower of brimstone!*

### Section 4

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ...

45. We sent (aforetime), to the Thamud, their brother Salih, saying, "Serve Allah":

**C3283.** The main story of the Thamud, who were broken up into two factions, the rich oppressing the poor and keeping them out of the good things of life and the test case of the She-camel, will be found in 26:141-159 and the notes thereon.

The point here is the secret plot of the nine men against the Prophet of Allah, whose teaching, they thought, brought them ill-luck; but what they called ill-luck was the just punishment from Allah for their own ill-deeds.

Their plot was foiled, and the whole community, which was involved in evil, was destroyed. (R).

...فَإِذَا هُمْ فَرِيقَانِ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٤٥)

but behold, they became two factions quarrelling with each other.

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ...

46. He said:

"O my people! why ask ye to hasten on the evil in preference to the good?

**C3284.** Cf. 13:6.

The evil-doers were really hastening on their own punishment by their feuds against the poor. The advocates of justice were not bringing ill-luck to them. They were showing the way to ward it off. Their own injustice was bringing on their disaster.

...لَوْ لَّا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (٤٦)

If only ye ask Allah for forgiveness, ye may hope to receive mercy."

قَالُوا اطَّيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَبِمَن مَّعَكَ...

47. They said: "Ill omen do we augur from thee and those that are with thee."

...قَالَ طَائِرُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ... ..

He said: "Your ill omen is with Allah;

...بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ (٤٧)

yea, ye are a people under trial."

**C3285.** All evil unpunished is not evil condoned, but evil given a chance for reform. They are on trial, by the mercy of Allah. What they call "ill omen" is really the just punishment for their ill-deeds, and that punishment rests with Allah.

وَكَانَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ...

48. There were in the City nine men of a family

...يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ (٤٨)

who made mischief in the land, and would not reform.

**C3286.** They had made up their minds to wage a relentless war against justice. They did not destroy justice, but justice destroyed them.

قَالُوا تَقَاسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَهُ وَأَهْلَهُ...

49. They said:

"Swear a mutual oath by Allah that we shall make a secret night attack on him and his people,

**C3287.** A most dastardly plot, because

- it was to be secret,
- by night,
- taking their victims unawares,
- and because careful provision was made that they should all tell lies together, saying that they knew nothing about it, in order to evade the vengeance which Salih's heirs (if any were left) or his tribe might want to exact!

And yet such were exactly the plots laid against the holy Prophet himself.

...ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهِ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ أَهْلِهِ...

and that we shall then say to his heir (when he seeks vengeance): "We were not present at the slaughter of his people,

...وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ (٤٩)

and we are positively telling the truth."

وَمَكْرُؤًا مَكَرًّا وَمَكْرَئًا مَكَرًّا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٥٠)

50. They plotted and planned, but We too planned, even while they perceived it not.

**C3288.** Cf. 3:54.

Their secret plotting is all known to Allah, but of Allah's just and beneficent plans they know nothing. And the wicked must come to an evil end.

فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مَكْرِهِمْ...

51. Then see what was the end of their plot! --

...أَنَا دَمَّرْنَا هُمْ وَقَوْمَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٥١)

this, that we destroyed them and their people, all (of them).

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةً بِمَا ظَلَمُوا...

52. Now such were their houses -- in utter ruin -- because they practiced wrongdoing

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٥٢)

Verily in this is a Sign for people of knowledge.

وَأَنْجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ (٥٣)

53. And We saved those who believed and practiced righteousness.

وَلُوطًا ...

54. We also sent Lut (as a messenger):

**C3289.** The story of Lut is referred to elsewhere. The passages to which reference may be made here are: 26:160-175, and 7:80-84.

But the point emphasised here is that the crime of the Cities of the Plain was against their own nature, and they saw its enormity, and yet they indulged in it. Can degradation go further?

His wife was not apparently a Believer. Her previous sympathy with the sinful people "destined her" ([verse 57 below](#)) to a miserable end, as she lagged behind and shared in the destruction of her kinsfolk.

... إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ (٥٤)

behold, he said to his people, "Do ye do what is shameful though ye see (its iniquity)?"

... أَلَيْسَ لَكُمْ لِلرِّجَالِ شَهْوَةٌ مِّنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ...

55. "Would ye really approach men in your lusts rather than women?"

...بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُجْهَلُونَ (٥٥)

Nay, ye are a people (grossly) ignorant!"

**C3290.** The ignorance referred to here is the spiritual Ignorance, the Ignorance of how grossness and sins that

bring shame on their own physical and moral nature are doomed to destroy them: it is their own loss.

That they knew the iniquity of their sins has already been stated in the last verse. That knowledge makes their spiritual Ignorance all the more culpable, just as a man consciously deceiving people by half-truths is a greater liar than a man who tells lies inadvertently.

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا...

56. But his people gave no other answer but this: they said,

...أَخْرِجُوا آلَ لُوطٍ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ...

"Drive out the followers of Lut from your city:

...إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُونَ (٥٦)

these are indeed men who want to be clean and pure!"

**C3291.** Cf. 7:82-84.

Instead of being ashamed on account of the consciousness of their own guilt, they attack the pure ones with their sarcasms, as if not they but the pure ones were in the wrong in trying to set them on the right way.

فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَّرْنَا هَا مِنْ الْغَابِرِينَ (٥٧)

57. But We saved him and his family, except his wife:

her We destined to be of those who lagged behind.

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا...

58. And We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone):

...فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (٥٨)

and evil was the shower on those who were admonished (but heeded not)!

## C.172 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(27:59-93)

*Allah's goodness and mercy are manifest  
Through all nature and in the heart and conscience  
Of man. He alone knows all: our knowledge  
Can at best be partial. Yet we can travel  
Through space and time and see how Evil  
Never proposed. Allah teaches us good,  
But how can we see if we make ourselves blind?  
At the end of all things shall we know how small  
Is our state, but for Allah's Grace: let us bow  
To His Will and accept His true guidance:  
Let us praise Him and trust Him-now and forever!*

### Section 5

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَىٰ...

59. Say:

Praise be to Allah, and Peace on His servants whom He has chosen (for his Message).

**C3292.** Allah's revelation having been described as Light, Guidance, and Mercy, we ought all to be grateful to Allah for vouchsafing His revelation.

We ought also to appreciate the services of Allah's Messengers, who are chosen to deliver His Message: we ought to send salutations of Peace on them, instead of plotting, as the wicked do, for their removal or persecution, or banishment or death. For these Prophets of Allah undergo every kind of hardship and forego every kind of advantage or pleasure in life for serving mankind.

And Allah is truth and goodness, and all our fancies of false worship are falsehoods and evils. Shall we prefer falsehood and evil to truth and goodness? (R).

...اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ أَمَا يُشْرِكُونَ (٥٩)

(Who) is better? -- Allah or the false gods they associate with Him?

أَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ...

60. Or, who has created the heaven and the earth,

**C3293.** The order, beauty, and grandeur of the Universe are appealed to. They show unity of design and purpose.

How can unjust, ignorant, foolish, heedless, false men think of a multiplicity of gods, or of any god, besides the One True God?

...وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً...

and who sends you down rain from the sky?

...فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ حَدَائِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ...

Yea, with it We cause to grow well-planted orchards full of beauty and delight:

...مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُنْبِتُوا شَجَرَهَا...

it is not in your power to cause the growth of the trees in them.

**C3294.** To make a single seed germinate and grow into a tree is beyond man's power. When it comes to a great well-laid-out garden of beauty and delight, no one would think it grew up of itself without a Gardener's consummate art.

And the orchard is more than the trees in it: there is design and beauty in their arrangement: proper spaces have to be left between them for the growth of their roots, for the aeration of the soil beneath them, and for the penetration of air and sunlight between their branches.

How can any one then think of the wonderful Universe as a whole, without thinking of the far higher Unity of Design, the evidence of the One True Allah? (R).

...أَلِلَّهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ ...

(Can there be another) god besides Allah?

...بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَعْدِلُونَ (٦٠)

Nay, they are a people who swerve from justice.

...أَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا...

61. Or, who has made the earth firm to live in;

...وَجَعَلَ خِلَالَهَا أَنْهَارًا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِيَ...

made rivers in its midst; set thereon mountains immovable;

**C3295.** Cf. 16:15 and notes 2038 and 2039.

The *terra firma*, the flowing water, and the cycle of water circulation-sea, vapour, clouds, rain, rivers, and sea again,-all one and yet all distinct, with a sort of wonderful barrier between salt water and fresh water: can man see all this and yet be ignorant of Allah?

... وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا...

and made a separating bar between the two bodies of flowing water?

**C3296.** Cf. 25:53 and n. 3111 and n. 3112.

...أَلَيْهَ مَعَ اللَّهِ...

(Can there be another) god besides Allah?

...بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٦١)

Nay, most of them know not.

...أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ...

62. Or, who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him,

...وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ...

and who relieves its suffering,

**C3297.** Besides the evidence of external nature, there is the still more intimate evidence in man's inner conscience and heart.

Allah listens to man's cry of agony and **relieves his suffering**, and He has given him superiority over other



creation on this earth, through his mind and soul. Is man then going to run after inferior beings and forget Allah?

... وَيَجْعَلْكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ ...

and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth?

**C3298.** Cf. 6:165, n. 988.

... أَلِلَّةٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ ...

(Can there be another) god besides Allah?

... قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٦٢)

Little it is that ye heed!

... أَمَّنْ يَهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ...

63. Or, who guides you through the depths of darkness on land and sea,

... وَمَنْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَّاحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ ...

and who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy?

**C3299.** Cf. 25:48, n. 3104.

After external nature, our attention was drawn to our inner consciousness; after that, it is drawn here to our social and collective life, in which we use the forces of nature for international intercourse, trade, agriculture, production, and economic well-being generally.

In the next verse, we are asked to contemplate creation from its primeval stages, through its intermediate processes, to the final Destiny in a new Creation—a new heaven and a new earth.

... أَلِلَّةٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ ...

(Can there be another) god besides Allah? --

... تَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٣)

high is Allah above what they associate with Him!

أَمَّنْ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ...

64. Or, who originates Creation, then repeats it,

**C3300.** Cf. 10:34, and n. 1428.

...وَمَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

and who gives you sustenance from heaven and earth?

**C3301. Sustenance:** of course in the spiritual as well as the material sense.

...أَلِلَّهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ...

(Can there be another) god besides Allah?

...قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٦٤)

Say, "Bring forth your argument, if ye are telling the truth!"

**C3302.** All the arguments point to the Unity of Allah: there is none whatever against it.

قُلْ لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ...

65. Say: None in the heavens or on earth, except Allah, knows what is hidden:

**C3303.** The existence of Allah is certain. But nothing else can be known with certainty to our knowledge. He has told us of the Hereafter, and therefore we know it is true.

But those who do not believe in Allah,-what knowledge or certainty can they have?

Even when it is actually coming, they will not have the sense to perceive it.

...وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ (٦٥)

nor can they perceive when they shall be raised up (for Judgment).

بَلْ أَدَارِكْ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ...

66. Still less can their knowledge comprehend the Hereafter:

...بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا...

nay, they are in doubt and uncertainty thereanent;

...بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا عَمُونَ (٦٦)

nay, they are blind thereunto!

**C3304.** The Unbelievers are generally materialists, who cannot go beyond the evidence of their physical senses. As to a spiritual vision of the future, their physical senses would only leave them in doubt and uncertainty, while their rejection of the spiritual light makes them blind altogether to the next world.

## Section 6

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَيُّدَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَأَبَاؤُنَا أَيُّدَا لَمُخْرَجُونَ (٦٧)

67. The Unbelievers say:

"What! when we become dust, -- we and our fathers -- shall we really be raised (from the dead)?"

لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا هَذَا نَحْنُ وَأَبَاؤُنَا مِن قَبْلُ...

68. "It is true we were promised this -- we and our fathers before (us):

...إِن هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٦٨)

these are nothing but tales of the ancients."

فَلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٦٩)

69. Say: "Go ye through the earth and see what has been the end of those guilty (of sin)."

**C3305.** Even if the Unbelievers are unwilling to take any doctrine, they have only to observe what has actually happened on the earth, and they will see that evil always came to an evil end, and that Truth and righteousness ultimately won.

وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُن فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ (٧٠)

70. But grieve not over them, nor distress thyself because of their plots.

**C3306.** Cf. 16:127, and n. 2164.

'The righteous need not worry over the unjust. The plots of the unjust can never defeat or deflect the purpose of Allah.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٧١)

71. They also say: "When will this promise (come to pass)? (Say) if ye are truthful."

فَلْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ رَدِفَ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (٧٢)

72. Say: "It may be that some of the events which ye wish to hasten on may be (close) in your pursuit!"

**C3307.** The Unbelievers -or even men of half-hearted faith- may say, "Why worry over distant future events? Take the day as it comes!"

But that is a fallacy. Judgment is certain, and it may be that this very hour may be the hour of doom for any given individual.

This is the hour of repentance and amendment. For Allah wishes well to all mankind in spite of their ingratitude.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَدُوٌّ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٧٣)

73. But verily thy Lord is full of grace to mankind: yet most of them are ungrateful.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ (٧٤)

74. And verily thy Lord knoweth all that their hearts do hide, as well as all that they reveal.

وَمَا مِنْ غَائِبَةٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (٧٥)

75. Nor is there aught of the Unseen, in heaven or earth, but is (recorded) in a clear record.

**C3308.** Cf. 22:70, 36:12, 57:22. [Eds].

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَفْصُّ عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَكْثَرَ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (٧٦)

76. Verily this Qur'an doth explain to the Children of Israel most of the matters in which they disagree.

**C3309.** The Jews had numerous sects. Some were altogether out of the pale, e.g., the Samaritans, who had a separate Tawrah of their own: they hated the other Jews and were hated by them. But even in the orthodox body, there were several sects, of which the following may be mentioned:

1. the Pharisees, who were literalists, formalists, and fatalists, and had a large body of traditional literature, with which they overlaid the Law of Moses;
2. the Sadducees, who were rationalists, and seemed to have doubted the doctrine of the Resurrection or of a Hereafter;
3. the Essenes, who practised a sort of Communism and Asceticism and prohibited marriage.

About many of their doctrines they had bitter disputes, which were settled by the Quran, which supplemented and perfected the Law of Moses. It also explained clearly the attributes of Allah and the nature of Revelation, and the doctrine of the Hereafter.

وَإِنَّهُ لَهْدَىٰ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٧٧)

77. And it certainly is a Guide and Mercy to those who believe.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ بِحُكْمِهِ...

78. Verily thy Lord will decide between them by His Decree:

**C3310. Decree: hukm:** the disputes between rival sects can only be settled by the Decree of Allah,

- in the form of a Revelation, as was done by the Quran, or
- by the logic of events, for hundreds of sects have been extinguished and forgotten in the course of time, and
- in the Decree of Judgment in the Hereafter, when all jarring sects will at length see their errors.

...وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ (٧٨)

and He is Exalted in Might, All-Knowing.

فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ...

79. So put thy trust in Allah:

...إِنَّكَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ الْمُبِينِ (٧٩)

for thou art on (the Path of) manifest Truth.

إِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَىٰ وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ (٨٠)

80. Truly thou canst not cause the Dead to listen, nor canst thou cause the Deaf to hear the call, (especially) when they turn back in retreat.

**C3311.** The Prophet's responsibility was to preach and show the way. Men and women of goodwill had faith and accepted the Message. But he was not responsible for the obstinacy and perversity of men who turned away from Allah's Signs and rejected the Truth.

وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَادِي الْعُمَىٰ عَن ضَلَالَتِهِمْ...

81. Nor canst thou be a guide to the Blind, (to prevent them) from straying;

...إِن تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ (٨١)

only those wilt thou get to listen who believe in Our Signs, and they will bow in Islam.

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ...

82. And when the Word is fulfilled against them (the unjust),

**C3312. The Word.** the Decree or Sentence, the Decision to end the respite and restore the true values of right and wrong in a new world: their cup of iniquity will then have been full.

...أُخْرِجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ...

We shall produce from the earth a beast to (face) them:

**C3313.** The **Beast** will be one of the Signs of the Last Days to come, before the present World passes away and the new World is brought into being.

In symbolic language it would represent gross Materialism. It will be the embodiment of fat worldly triumph, which will appeal to a misguided and degenerate world, because such a corrupt world will have no assured belief in the Signs of Allah or in spiritual Light. It will itself be a Sign or Portent, closing the door or repentance. I do not know whether this Beast has any reference to the symbolism in chapter xii of the Book of Revelation, which closes the New Testament.

...تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ (٨٢)

he will speak to them, for that mankind did not believe with assurance in our Signs.

If **taklimuhum** is read instead of **tukallimuhum**, it would mean that the Beast would wound them, symbolically, that Materialism would produce its own Nemesis.

## Section 7

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مَمَّنْ يُكَذِّبُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ (٨٣)

83. One Day We shall gather together from every people a troop of those who reject Our Signs, and they shall be kept in ranks --

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوا قَالَ أَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِآيَاتِي...

84. Until, when they come (before the Judgment-Seat), Allah will say: "Did ye reject My Signs,

...وَلَمْ تُحِيطُوا بِهَا عِلْمًا...

though ye comprehended them not in knowledge,

**C3314.** The charge against them will be:

'You had no knowledge, and yet you arrogantly rejected My Signs: is that true, or have you any plea in your defence?'

... أَمَّاذَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٨٤)

or what was it ye did?"

وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا فَهُمْ لَا يَنْطِقُونَ (٨٥)

85. And the Word will be fulfilled against them, because of their wrongdoing, and they will be unable to speak (in plea).

**C3315.** There will be no plea, because the charge will be only too true.

The Decree will be passed and executed.

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لَيْسَكُنْتُمْ فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا...

86. See they not that We have made the Night for them to rest in and the Day to give them light?

**C3316.** Night, Day, Rest, and Light. both in the literal and the symbolic sense.

- Any one with a scrap of faith or spiritual insight could see that the Night is blessing when used for rest and a curse when used to cover ignorance or sin;
- and that the Day is for work and enlightenment, and its misuse is gross ingratitude to Allah.

Or, understand Truth and practise Righteousness while it is yet Light and the Message of Allah is here to guide you:

for there comes the Night when Endeavour will cease and there will be no room for Repentance.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٨٦)

Verily in this are Signs for any people that believe!

...وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَقَرَعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي

الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ...

87. And the Day that the Trumpet will be sounded -

then will be smitten with terror those who are in the heavens, and those who are on earth, except such as Allah will please (to exempt):



...وَكُلُّ أُنُوفِهِ دَاخِرِينَ (٨٧)

and all shall come to His (Presence) as beings conscious of their lowliness.

**C3317.** Arrogance will flee with Ignorance, and Self will see itself in its true place-that of humility and lowliness-when the scales of ignorance fall from its eyes.

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ...

88. Thou seest the mountains and thinkest them firmly fixed: but they shall pass away as the clouds pass away:

**C3318.** This is so in the present phase of phenomenal things, both literally and figuratively.

There seems nothing more firm or fixed or permanent than the "eternal hills": yet when the new order of things comes and the new World is brought into being, they will be as flimsy and unsubstantial as clouds.

So, in the revaluation of things in the Hereafter persons or things or ideas that seem so great and so firmly established now will pass away like mere fancies and give way to the Reality of Allah.

...صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ...

(such is) the artistry of Allah, Who disposes of all things in perfect order:

**C3319. Atqana:** to arrange or dispose of things with art, or so as to obtain the most perfect results.

The present phenomenal world and the Future that is to be, all have a definite object and purpose in the Plan of Allah, Who knows perfectly what we are, what we do, what we think, and what we need. Who can praise His artistry enough?

...إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٨٨)

for He is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا...

89. If any do good, good will (accrue) to them therefrom;

...وَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرَعٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ آمِنُونَ (٨٩)

and they will be secure from terror that Day.

وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكَبَّتْ وَجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ...

90. And if any do evil, their faces will be thrown headlong into the Fire:

**C3320. Headlong:** it may be that the very things of which we were proudest, which we considered foremost in our present order of the world, will be the first to go into the Fire, as they are but the window-dressing (faces) of Evil.

...هَلْ نُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٠)

"Do ye receive a reward other than that which ye have earned by your deeds?"

**C3321.** There will be no punishment except such as has been deserved by actual conduct in the present life of probation.

إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْبَلَدَةِ الَّذِي حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ...

91. For me, I have been commanded to serve the Lord of this City, Him Who has sanctified it and to Whom (belong) all things:

**C3322. The Lord of this City.** This was spoken in Makkah say about the 5th year before the Hijrah, when the holy Prophet and his adherents were being persecuted as enemies to the cult of Makkah.

So far from being against the true spirit of the holy City of Makkah, it was actually in furtherance of that spirit, which had been overlaid by the idolatries and abominations of the Pagan Quraish.

They are told that the new Teaching is from the Lord of Makkah itself, the One True God, Who had sanctified it in the time of Abraham. Lest they should think that it was a local or tribal or narrow cult, it is added that He is not only Lord of this City, but Lord of the Worlds, "to Whom belong all things".

It is a universal message; but how sad it would be if the Makkans, among whom it came first, were to reject it?

...وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (٩١)

and I am commanded to be of those who bow in Islam to Allah's Will --

وَأَنْ أتلُوَ الْقُرْآنَ...

92. And to rehearse the Qur'an:

**C3323.** The duty of the Prophet and his adherents was,

- first, to accept Islam and become themselves shining examples of Allah's grace and mercy, as they in fact were, and
- secondly to preach that message and spread that Light to all around.

It was not for them to force it on unwilling people: for any who rejected it would find their own spiritual loss in such rejection. But they must clearly warn them of the consequences.

...فَمَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ...

and if any accept guidance, they do it for the good of their own souls,

...وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَلْهُ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ (٩٢)

and if any stray, say: "I am only a Warner."

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا...

93. And say: "Praise be to Allah, Who will soon show you His Signs, so that you shall know them;"

**C3324.** In a few years after that, many wonderful things happened that removed the doubts of the doubters and confirmed the faith of the Believers. They showed how the logic of events proved the true mission of the holy Prophet. Other things some minds may not be able to grasp. But the logic of events is for all to see.

...وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٣)

and thy Lord is not unmindful of all that ye do.

**C3325.** Trials and tribulations, persecution and exile, and the patient endurance and constancy with which they were met by the Believers-all are known to Allah and will be credited to their account.