

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE  
HOLY QURAN

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ENGLISH TAFSEER  
CHAPTER 31  
SURAH LUQMAN

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

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By  
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**HOLY QURAN**

**CHAPTER**

**031**

**SURAH LUQMAN**

*ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI*

### **Introduction and Summary**

The argument of the Final End of Things is here continued from another point of view.

What is Wisdom?

Where shall it be found?

Will it solve the mysteries of Time, and Nature, and that world higher than physical Nature, which brings us nearer to Allah?

"Yes," is the answer; "If, as in the advice of Luqman the Wise, human wisdom looks to Allah in true worship, ennobles every

act of life with true kindness, but avoids the false indulgence that infringes the divine law-and in short follows the golden mean of virtue."

And this is indicated by every Sign in nature.

The chronology of the Surah has no significance. In the main, it belongs to the late Makkan period.

**Summary-** The earnest seekers after righteousness receiver guidance, unlike the seekers after vanity, who perish; all Creation bears witness to this; Wisdom, as expounded by Luqman the Wise, is true service to Allah, and consists in moderation (31:1-19, and C. 183).

The Wisdom is firm and enduring, and discerns Allah's Law in the working of His Creation; it looks to the Final End of Things, whose mystery is only known to Allah (31:20-34, and C. 184).

### **C.183 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

**(31:1-19)**

*What is the Book of Wisdom? It is  
A Guide and Mercy to men, and teaches  
Them how to attain Bliss, Allah's Mercies  
Are infinite: how can man deny them?  
Luqman the Wise taught grateful worship  
Of the One True God, and the service of men.  
Beginning with Parents; every good deed  
Is known to Allah and is brought to account.  
So walk in the Golden Mean, and serve  
Him with constancy and firmness of purpose.*



الم (١)

1. Alif Lam Mim.

**C3579.** See n. 25 to 2:1 and Introduction to Surah 30.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢)

2. These are Verses of the Wise Book, --

**C3580.** This Surah relates to Wisdom, and the Quran is appropriately called the Wise Book, or the Book of Wisdom.

In verse 12 below there is a reference to Luqman the Wise. "Wise" in this sense (Hakim) means not only a man versed in knowledge human and divine, but one carrying out in practical conduct ('amal) the right course in life to the utmost of his power.

His knowledge is correct and practical, but not necessarily complete: for no man is perfect.

Such an ideal involves the conception of a man of heroic action as well as of deep and workman-like knowledge of nature and human nature,-not merely dreams or speculation. That ideal was fulfilled in a most remarkable degree in the holy Prophet, and in the sacred Book which was revealed through him. **"The Wise Book" (Kilab-ul-hakim)** is one of the titles of the Quran.

هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّلْمُحْسِنِينَ (٣)

3. A Guide and a Mercy to the Doers of Good, --

**C3581.** A guide to all, and, to those who accept its guidance, a source of mercy as leading them to Salvation.

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ (٤)

4. Those who

- establish regular Prayer,

- and give regular Charity,
- and have (in their hearts) the assurance of the Hereafter.

**C3582.** The righteous are distinguished here by three marks, which are summed up in the phrase "doers of good", viz.:

1. they yearn towards Allah in duty, love, and prayer,
2. they love and serve their fellow-men in charity,
3. they win peace and rest for themselves in the assured hope of the Future.

أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ...

5. These are on (true) guidance from their Lord;

**C3583.** They get these blessings because they submit their will to Allah's Will and receive His guidance. They will do well in this life (from the highest standpoint) and they will reach their true Goal in the Future.

...وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٥)

and these are the ones who will prosper.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْتَرِي لَهْوَ الْحَدِيثِ ...

6. But there are, among men, those who purchase idle tales,

**C3584.** Life is taken seriously by men who realize the issues that hang upon it. But there are men of a frivolous turn of mind who prefer idle tales to true Realities and they are justly rebuked here.

In the time of the holy Prophet there was a pagan Nadr ibn al Harith who preferred Persian romances to the Message of Allah, and turned away ignorant men from the preaching of Allah's Word.

...لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا ...

without knowledge (or meaning), to mislead (men) from the Path of Allah and throw ridicule (on the Path):

...أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ (٦)

for such there will be a humiliating Penalty.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا وَكَّىٰ مُسْتَكْبِرًا...

7. When Our Signs are rehearsed to such a one, he turns away in arrogance,

**C3585.** Such men behave as if they had heard nothing of serious import, or laugh at serious teaching. The loss will be their own. They will miss the higher things of life and be left out of Allah's blessings.

Ignorance and arrogance are in most cases the causes of their fall.

...كَأَن لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا...

as if he heard them not,

...كَأَن فِي أُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرًا...

as if there were deafness in both his ears:

...فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٧)

announce to him a grievous Penalty.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ النَّعِيمِ (٨)

8. For those who believe and work righteous deeds, there will be Gardens of Bliss. --

...خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

9. To dwell therein.

...وَعَدَ اللَّهُ حَقًّا...

The promise of Allah is true:

...وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٩)

and He is Exalted in power, Wise.

**C3586. He is Exalted in power,** and can carry out His Will, and nothing can stop the carrying out of His promise.

He is also infinitely **Wise**: His promise is therefore full of meaning: it is not merely without purpose: it has a place in the Universal Plan.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا...

10. He created the heavens without any pillars that ye can see;

**C3587.** Cf. 13:2 and n. 1800.

...وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ...

He set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you;

**C3588.** Cf. 16:15 and n. 2038.

...وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ...

and He scattered through it beasts of all kinds.

**C3589.** Cf. 2:164 and n. 166.

...وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً ...

We send down rain from the sky,

**C3590.** Note the change of the pronoun at this stage in the verse.

Before this, Allah was spoken of in the third person, "He", and the acts of Creation referred to were acts that in the main were completed when the universe as we see it came into being, though its slow age-long evolution continues.

After this, Allah speaks in the first person "We" the plural of honor, as explained before (see n. 56 to 2:38); and the processes spoken of are those that go on continually before us, as in the case of rain and the growth of the vegetable kingdom.

In some way the creation of the heavens and the earth and animal life on it may be considered impersonal to man, while the processes of rain and vegetation may be considered in special personal relationship to him.



... فَأَنْبِئْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ (١٠)

and produce on the earth every kind of noble creature, in pairs.

**C3591.** I think that sex life in plants is referred to, as in 13:3, where see n. 1804, though the pairs here may refer to animals also.

**"Noble" (karim)** may refer to the more beneficent plants and trees (and animals), which Allah has created for man's use.

هَذَا خَلْقُ اللَّهِ...

11. Such is the Creation of Allah:

... فَأَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ...

now show Me what is there that others besides Him have created:

**C3592.** The transition from "We" in the last verse to **"Me"** in this verse means a still more personal relation to Allah: (see n. 56 to 2:38): as we are now asked about the true worship of Allah, as against the false worship of others besides Allah.

... بَلِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ (١١)

nay,

but the Transgressors are in manifest error.

## Section 2

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ...

12. We bestowed (in the past) wisdom on Luqman: "Show (thy) gratitude to Allah."

**C3593.** The sage Luqman, after whom this Surah is called, belongs to Arab tradition. Very little is known of his life. He is usually associated with a long life, and his title is **Mu'ammār** (the long-lived). He is referred by some to the age of the 'Ad people, for whom see n. 1040 to 7:65. He is the type of perfect wisdom.



It is said that he belonged to a humble station in life, being a slave or a carpenter, and that he refused worldly power and a kingdom.

Many instructive apologies are credited to him, similar to 'Esop'e Fables in Greek tradition. The identification of Luqman and Aesop has no historical foundation, though it is true that the traditions about them have influenced each other.

...وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ...

Any who is (so) grateful does so to the profit of his own soul:

...وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ (١٢)

but if any is ungrateful, verily Allah is free of all wants, worthy of all praise.

**C3594.** Cf. 14:8.

The basis of the moral Law is man's own good, and not any benefit to Allah, for Allah is above all needs, and "**worthy of all praise**"; i.e.,

even in praising Him, we do not advance His glory. When we obey His Will, we bring our position into conformity with our own nature as made by Him.

وَاذْ قَال لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ...

13. Behold, Luqman said to his son by way of instruction:

**C3595.** Luqman is held up as a pattern of wisdom, because he realized the best in a wise life in this world, as based upon the highest Hope in the inner life.

To him, as in Islam, true human wisdom is also divine wisdom: the two cannot be separated. The beginning of all wisdom, therefore,

- is conformity with the Will of Allah (31:12). That means that we must understand our relations to Him and worship Him aright (31:13).
- Then we must be good to mankind, beginning with our own parents (31:14).

- For the two duties are not diverse, but one. Where they appear to conflict, there is something wrong with the human will (see [n. 3597](#)).

...يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ...

"O my son!

Join not in worship (others) with Allah:

...إِنَّ الشِّرْكََ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٣)

for false worship is indeed the highest wrongdoing."

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ...

14. And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents:

...حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ...

in travail upon travail did his mother bear him,

...وَفَصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ...

and in years twain was his weaning:

**C3596.** The set of milk teeth in a human child is completed at the age of two years, which is therefore the natural extreme limit for breast-feeding.

In our artificial life the duration is much less.

...أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ...

(hear the command),

"Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents:

...إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ (١٤)

to Me is (thy final) Goal.

وَأِنْ جَاهِدَاكَ عَلَى أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ...

15. "But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge,

**C3597.** Where the duty to man conflicts with the duty to Allah, it means that there is something wrong with the human will, and we should obey Allah rather than man.

But even here, it does not mean that we should be arrogant or insolent. To parents and those in authority, we must be kind, considerate, and courteous, even where they command things which we should not do and therefore disobedience becomes our highest duty.

The worship of things other than Allah is the worship of false things, things which are alien to our true knowledge, things that go against our own pure nature as created by Allah.

... فَلَا تُطِعُهُمَا ...

obey them not;

... وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا ...

yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration),

... وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنَابَ إِلَيَّ ...

and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love):

**C3598.** In any apparent conflict of duties our standard should be Allah's Will, as declared to us by His command.

That is the way of those who love Allah: and their motive in disobedience to parents or human authority where disobedience is necessary by Allah's Law is not self willed rebellion or defiance, but love of Allah, which means the true love of man in the highest sense of the word.

And the reason we should give is:

"Both you and I have to return to Allah; therefore not only must I follow Allah's Will, but you must command nothing against Allah's Will."

... ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ...

in the End the return of you all is to Me,

... فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (١٥)

and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that ye did."

**C3599.** These conflicts may appear to us strange and puzzling in this life. But in Allah's Presence we shall see their real meaning and significance.

- It may be that that was one way in which our true mettle could be tested: for it is not easy to disobey and love man at the same time.

يَا بُنَيَّ ...

16. "O my son!" (said Luqman),

**C3600.** Verses 14-15 are not the direct speech of Luqman but flow by way of commentary on his teaching.

He was speaking as a father to his son, and he could not very well urge respect for himself and draw the son's attention to the limitations of filial obedience.

These verses may be supposed to be general directions flowing from Luqman's teaching to men, and not directed to his son; though in either case, as Luqman got wisdom from Allah, it is divine principles that are enunciated.

... إِنَّهَا إِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِي صَخْرَةٍ...

"If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock,

**C3601.** The **mustard-seed** is proverbially a small, minute thing, that people may ordinarily pass by. Not so Allah.

...أَوْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ أَوْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ...

or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth:

Further emphasis is laid by supposing the mustard-seed to be hidden beneath a rock or in the cleft of a rock, or to be lost in the spacious expanse of the earth or of the heavens. To Allah everything is known, and He will bring it forth, i.e., take account of it.



...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ (١٦)

for Allah understands the finest mysteries, (and) is well-acquainted (with them).

**C3602.** For Latif as a title applied to Allah, see n. 2844 to 22:63.

يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ...

17. "O my son!

- establish regular prayer,

...وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ...

- enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong:

...وَأصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ...

- and bear with patient constancy whatever betide thee;

...إِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ (١٧)

for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs.

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا...

18. - "And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth;

**C3603.** The word "**cheek**" in English, too, means arrogance or effrontery, with a slightly different shade added, viz.: effrontery from one in an inferior position to one in a superior position.

The Arabic usage is wider, and includes smug self-satisfaction and a sense of lofty Superiority.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ (١٨)

for Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster.

وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ...

19. - "And be moderate in thy pace, and lower thy voice;

**C3604.** The "Golden Mean" is the pivot of the philosophy of Luqman as it is of the philosophy of Aristotle and indeed of Islam. And it flows naturally from a true

understanding of our relation to Allah and His universe and to our fellow-creatures, especially man.

In all things **be moderate**.

- Do not go the pace, and do not be stationary or slow.
- Do not be talkative and do not be silent.
- Do not be loud and do not be timid or half-hearted.
- Do not be too confident, and do not be cowed down.

If you have patience,

- it is to give you constancy and determination, that you may bravely carry on the struggle of life.

If you have humility,

- it is to save you from unseemly swagger, not to curb your right spirit and your reasoned determination.

...إِنَّ أُنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ (١٩)

for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass."

### **C.184 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

**(31:20-34)**

*True Wisdom sees Allah's boundless Bounties  
To man, and how all nature is made  
To serve man's ends. It is due from us  
To know our place, discern the limits  
Of our knowledge, and see how far above us  
Is Allah's Wisdom, and His Law. Let us not  
Describe ourselves. The end of all things  
Will come, but the When and the How are known  
To Allah alone, to Whom be all Praise!*

### Section 3

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

20. Do ye not see that Allah has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth,

**C3605.** Allah's Creation is independent of man. But Allah, in His infinite mercy, has given man the faculty to subdue the forces of nature and to penetrate through high mysteries with his powers of reason and insight.

But this is not merely a question of power. For in His Universal Plan, all are safeguarded. But man's destiny, as far as we can see, is noble to the highest degree.

...وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَهُ ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَةً...

and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen?

**C3606.** Allah's grace and bounties work for us at all times. Sometimes we see them, and sometimes we do not.

In things which we can apprehend with our senses, we can see Allah's grace, but even in them, sometimes it works beyond the sphere of our knowledge. In the inner or spiritual world, sometimes, when our vision is clear, we can see it working, and often we are not conscious of it. But it works all the same.

...وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ

مُنِيرٍ (٢٠)

Yet there are among men those who dispute about Allah, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a Book to enlighten them!

**C3607.** Such men lack knowledge, as they make no use of their intellects but are swayed by their passions; they lack guidance, as they are impatient of control; and the fruits of revelation, or spiritual insight, do not reach them, as they reject Faith and Revelation.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا...

21. When they are told to follow the (revelation) that Allah has sent down, they say:

...بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا...

"Nay, we shall follow the ways that we found our fathers (following)."

**C3608.** They do not realize that in the spiritual world, as in the physical world, there is constant progress for the live ones: they are spiritually dead, as they are content to stand on ancestral ways, many of them evil, and leading to perdition.

...أُولُو كَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ يَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ (٢١)

What! even if it is Satan beckoning them to the Penalty of the (Blazing) Fire!

وَمَنْ يُسْلِمْ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى...

22. Whoever submits his whole self to Allah, and is a doer of good, has grasped indeed the most trustworthy hand-hold:

**C3609.** Cf. 2:256 and n. 301.

...وَالِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ (٢٢)

and with Allah rests the End and Decision of (all) affairs.

**C3610.** Cf. 22:41.

Everything goes back to Allah. He is our final Goal, as He is the final Goal of all things.

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَلَا يَحْزِنُكَ كُفْرُهُ...

23. But if any reject Faith, let not his rejection grieve thee:

...إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا...

to Us is their return, and We shall tell them the truth of their deeds:

**C3611.** The man of God should not grieve because people reject Faith. He should do his duty and leave the rest to Allah. Every soul must return to Allah for his



reckoning. Allah knows everything, and His Universal Plan is full of wisdom.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٢٣)

for Allah knows well all that is in (men's) hearts.

...نُمَتِّعُهُمْ قَلِيلًا ...

24. We grant them their pleasure for a little while:

**C3612.** Cf. 2:126.

The respite in this life is of short duration. The ultimate Penalty of Evil is such as cannot be quenched.

Cf. 14:17. It will be too late then to repent.

... ثُمَّ نَضْطَرُّهُمْ إِلَىٰ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ (٢٤)

in the end shall We drive them to a chastisement unrelenting.

وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ...

25. If thou ask them, who it is that created the heavens and the earth,

**C3613.** Cf 23:84-89, and 29:61 and n. 3493.

Men will acknowledge that Allah created the heavens and the earth, and yet fail to understand the love and goodness of Allah in continuing to cherish and maintain them with His gifts.

Even if they allow this, they sometimes yet fall short of the corollary, that He is the only One to be worshipped, and run after their own false gods in the shapes of their fancies and lusts. They do not do the duties which, if they rightly understood their own nature and position, they should take a delight in doing.

...لَيَقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ...

they will certainly say, "Allah."

**C3614.** This ejaculation expresses our satisfaction that at least this is recognized, that the Creator of the whole world is Allah.

It is a pity that they do not go further and recognize other facts and duties (see the last note).

...قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ...

Say: "Praise be to Allah!"

...بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٥)

But most of them understand not.

...لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

26. To Allah, belong all things in heaven and earth:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٢٦)

verily Allah is He (that is) free of all wants, worthy of all praise.

**C3615.** Cf. above, 31:12. There was begun the argument about showing gratitude to Allah, introducing Luqman's teaching and philosophy.

Such gratitude is shown by our understanding His love and doing our duty to Him by serving our fellow-men. For Allah Himself is Free from all wants and is in no way dependent on our service.

That argument has been illustrated in various ways. But now we are told that it can never be completed, for no human tongue or human resources can be adequate either to praise him or to expound His Word.

وَلَوْ أَنَّمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةُ  
أُبْحُرٍ مَّا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ...

27. And if all the trees on earth were pens and the Ocean (were ink), with seven Oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet would not the Words of Allah be exhausted (in the writing):

**C3616. "Words of Allah":** his wonderful Signs and Commandments are infinite and cannot be expressed if all the trees were made into pens, and all the wide Ocean, multiplied seven times, were made into ink.

Any Book of His Revelation would deal with matters which man can understand and use in his life: there are things that man can never fathom. Nor would any praise that we could write with infinite resources be adequate to describe His power, glory, and wisdom.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٧)

for Allah is Exalted in power, Full of Wisdom.

مَا خَلَقَكُمْ وَلَا بَعَثَكُمْ إِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ...

28. And your creation or your resurrection is in no wise but as an individual soul:

**C3617.** Allah's greatness and infinitude are such that He can create and cherish not only a whole mass, but each individual soul, and He can follow its history and doings until the final Judgment.

This shows not only Allah's glory and Omniscience and Omnipotence: it also shows the value of each individual soul in His eyes, and lifts individual responsibility right up into relations with Him.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ (٢٨)

for Allah is He Who hears and sees (all things).

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ...

29. Seest thou not that Allah merges Night into Day and He merges Day into Night;

**C3618.** Cf. 22:61 and n. 2841.

Even when we can form a conception of Allah's infinitude by His dealings with each individual in His Creation as in verse 28 above, it is still inadequate.

What is an individual himself?

What is his relation to the universal Laws of Allah?

In outer nature we can see that there is no clear-cut line between night and day: each merges into the other. Yet the sun and moon obey definite laws. Though they seem

to go on for ever, yet their existence and duration themselves are but an atom in Allah's great universe.

How much more **"merging"** and imperceptible gradation there is in the inner and spiritual world?

Our actions themselves cannot be classified and ticketed and labeled when examined in relation to motives and circumstances. Yet they are like an open book before Allah.

...وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلًّا يَجْرِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

that He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His Law), each running its course for a term appointed:

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (٢٩)

and that Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do?

...ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ الْبَاطِلُ...

30. That is because Allah is the (only) Reality, and because whatever else they invoke besides Him is Falsehood;

**C3619.** Cf. 22:62 and note 2842 and 2843.

All the wonderful complexities, gradations, and nuances, that we find in Creation, are yet blended in one harmonious whole, that obeys Law and exemplifies Order.

They therefore point to the One True God. He is the only Eternal Reality.

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ (٣٠)

and because Allah, -- He is the Most High, Most Great.

Anything put up in competition or equality with Him is only Falsehood. For He is higher and greater than anything we can imagine. (R).



## Section 4

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ الْفُلْكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ لِيُرِيَكُمْ مِنْ آيَاتِهِ...

31. Seest thou not that the ships sail through the Ocean by the grace of Allah? -- that He may show you of His Signs?

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (٣١)

Verily in this are Signs for all who constantly persevere and give thanks.

**C3620.** Even the things that man makes are, as using the forces of Nature, evidence of the grace of Allah, Who has subdued these wonderful forces to the use of man.

But this gift of mastery can only be understood and appreciated by constant perseverance, combined with a recognition of the divine gifts ("**giving thanks**").

**Sabbar** is an intensive form from **sabr** and I have indicated it by the adverb "constantly".

وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَوْجٌ كَالظُّلِّ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ...

32. When a wave covers them like the canopy (of clouds), they call to Allah, offering Him sincere devotion.

**C3621.** Cf. 7:29. Unlike the people mentioned in the last verse, who constantly seek Allah's help and give thanks for His mercies by using them aright and doing their duty, there is a class of men whose worship is merely inspired by terror.

When they are in physical danger-the only kind of danger they appreciate,-e.g. in a storm at sea, they genuinely think of Allah. But once the danger is past, they become indifferent or wish to appear good while dallying with evil. See next verse.

...فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ...

But when He has delivered them safely to land, there are among them those that halt between (right and wrong).

**C3622.** They halt between two opinions.

- They are not against good, but they will not eschew evil.
- They are a contrast to those who "constantly persevere and give thanks".

But such an attitude amounts really to "perfidious ingratitude".

...وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُورٍ (٣٢)

But none reject Our Signs except only a perfidious ungrateful (wretch)!

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ...

33. O mankind! do your duty to your Lord,

...وَاحْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَّا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ عَن وَلَدِهِ وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ جَازٍ عَن وَالِدِهِ شَيْئًا...

and fear (the coming of) a Day when no father can avail aught for his son, nor a son avail aught for his father.

**C3623.** On the Day of Reckoning no one can help another. The most loving father cannot help his son or be a substitute for him, and vice versa. Each will have his own personal responsibilities.

...إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ...

Verily, the promise of Allah is true:

...فَلَّا تَعُرَّتْكُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا ...

let not then this present life deceive you

... وَلَا يُعْرَتُّكُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْعُرُورُ (٣٣)

nor let the Chief Deceiver deceive you about Allah.

**C3624.** The **Chief Deceiver** is Satan.

It may make us forget that Time is fleeting and delude us by suggesting that the Reckoning may not come, whereas it is certain to come, because Allah's promise is true.

We must not play with Time nor be deceived by appearances. The Day may come to-day or to-morrow or when we least expect it.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ...

34. Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah (alone).

...وَيُنزِلُ الْعَيْثَ...

It is He Who sends down rain,

...وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ...

and He Who knows what is in the wombs.

**C3625.** The question of Knowledge or Mystery governs both clauses here, viz.:

- Rain and
- Wombs.

In fact it governs all the five things mentioned in this verse: viz.

- the Hour;
- Rain;
- the Birth of a new Life (Wombs);
- our Physical Life from day to day;
- our Death.

See [n. 3627](#) below.

As regards **Rain** we are asked to contemplate how and when it is sent down.

The moisture may be sucked up by the sun's heat in the Arabian Sea or the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean near East Africa, or in the Lake Region in Central Africa. The winds drive it hither and thither across thousands of miles, or it may be, only short distances. "The wind bloweth where it listeth."

No doubt it obeys certain physical Laws established by Allah, but how these Laws are interlocked, one with another! Meteorology, gravity, hydrostatics and dynamics, climatology, hygrometry, and a dozen other sciences are involved, and no man can completely master all of them, and yet this relates to only one of the millions of facts in physical nature, which are governed by Allah's Knowledge and Law.

The whole vegetable kingdom is primarily affected by Rain.

The mention of **Wombs** brings in the mystery of animal Life, Embryology, Sex, and a thousand other things. Who can tell-to take man alone-how long it will remain in the womb, whether it will be born alive, what sort of a new individual it will be,-a blessing or a curse to its parents, or to Society?

...وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا...

Nor does anyone know what it is that he will earn on the morrow:

**C3626.** "Earn" here, as elsewhere, means not only "earn one's livelihood" in a physical sense, but also to reap the consequences (good or ill) of one's conduct generally.

The whole sentence practically means;

"no man knows what the morrow may bring forth."

...وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ...

nor does anyone know in what land he is to die.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (٣٤)

Verily with Allah is full knowledge and He is acquainted (with all things).

**C3627.** See the five Mysteries summed up in [n. 3625](#) above.

The argument is about the mystery of Time and Knowledge. We are supposed to know things in ordinary life.



But what does that knowledge amount to in reality?

Only a superficial acquaintance with things. And Time is even more uncertain.

In the case of rain, which causes vegetable life to spring up, or in the case of new animal life, can we answer with precision questions as to When or How or Wherefore?

So about questions of our life from day to day or of our death. These are great mysteries, and full knowledge is with Allah only.

How much more so in the case of the *Maad*, the Final House, when all true values will be restored and the balance redressed?

It is certain, but the When and the How are known to Allah alone.