

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

**THE
HOLY QURAN**

**ENGLISH TAFSEER
CHAPTER 57
SURAH AL-HADID**

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

057

SURAH AL-HADID

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Introduction and Summary

We have now studied the contents of nearly nine-tenth of the Quran. We have found that the arrangement of Surahs in the present Text is not haphazard, but that they follow a distinct logical order more helpful for study than the chronological order, The comprehensive scheme of building up the new Ummah or Brotherhood and its spiritual implications is now complete. The remaining tenth of the Quran may be roughly considered in two parts.

- The first contains ten Surahs (Surah 57 to Surah 66), all revealed in Madinah, and each dealing with some special point which needs emphasis in the social life of Ummah.

- The second (Surah 67 to 94) contains short Makkan lyrics, each dealing with some aspect of spiritual life, expressed in language of great mystic beauty.

The present Madinah Surah is chiefly concerned with spiritual humility and the avoidance, and a warning that retirement from the world may not be the best way of seeking the good pleasure of Allah. Its probable date is after the Conquest of Makkah, A.H. 8.

Summary- Allah's Power and Knowledge extend to all things; follow His light direct, without doubt or fear or half-heartedness, but with humility, generous charity, and faith, and not in a life of isolation from the world. (57:1-29, and C. 236).

C.236 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*Allah is All-in-All: follow His Law
 And His Light, and obey His Prophet, who invites
 You to deeds of goodness and charity.
 Strive and spend your resources and yourselves
 In the Cause of Allah; He will grant you a Light
 To go before you and guide you to your Eternal
 Goal, where no Evil can enter. When success
 Crowns your efforts, even then is the time
 To humble yourselves before Allah, in sincere
 Witness to His love. The pleasure here below
 Are deceptive: be foremost in seeking Allah
 And His Good Pleasure: trust Him: be not
 Like those who mistook mere renunciation
 Of the world for Allah's service. Allah's Grace
 Is for all: be your love and your service for all.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

1. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah:

C5275. A connecting thought between this and the last Surah, of which see verse 96.

See also paragraph 3 of the Introduction to Surah 53.

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١)

for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ...

2. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; it is He Who gives life and Death;

وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢)

and He has Power over all things.

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ...

3. He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Hidden:

C5276. Allah is Evident in so far as there is ample evidence of His existence and providence all around us. On the other hand, Allah is Hidden in so far as intellect cannot grasp His essence nor can He be seen in the present world.

The following tradition in Sahih Muslim is also significant for an understanding of this verse.

The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

"Thou art the First, so that there was nothing before Thee;

and Thou art the Last, so that there is nothing after Thee;

and Thou art Evident, (or Ascendant) so that there is nothing above Thee,

and Thou art the the Hidden, the Knower of hidden things, so that there is nothing hidden from Thee." [Eds.]

وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٣)

and He has full knowledge of all things.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ...

4. He is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days,

C5277. "In six Days": see 41:9-12, and notes;

also more briefly, n. 1031 to 7:54.

... ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ...

and is moreover firmly established on the Throne (of authority).

C5278. Cf. 10:3, and n. 1386.

It is not that Allah completed His Creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, or rests now.

Certain external forms of the universe were by Allah's Command completed in six periods of evolution. But His creative process still goes on, and He is still, and will always be, in full control, knowing all and guiding all affairs. (R).

... يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ

وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ...

He knows what enters within the earth and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from heaven and what mounts up to it.

... وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ...

And He is with you wheresoever ye may be.

C5279. Allah watches over man and observes his deeds. His knowledge comprehends all, the earth, heavens, what is in them or above them or whatever is in between

them, comes out of them or goes into them, for "not a leaf doth fall but with His knowledge", and "there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is inscribed in a Record". (6:59). [Eds.].

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٤)

And Allah sees well all that ye do.

لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

5. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth:

C5280. See 57:2 above, where this phrase referred to Allah's complete authority over the whole of the external universe:

the same phrase now refers to His complete authority over the abstract world-of thoughts and affairs. Every affair must finally go back to Him, whether it comes out here from Darkness into Light, or hides itself from Light into Darkness. Allah's knowledge penetrates into the inmost recesses of all Hearts.

... وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ (٥)

and all affairs are referred back to Allah.

يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُؤَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ ...

6. He merges Night into Day, and He merges Day into Night;

... وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٦)

and He has full knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts.

آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَخْلِفِينَ فِيهِ ...

7. Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend (in charity) out of the (substance) whereof He has made you heirs.

C5281. Whenever power or wealth or influence or any good thing is transferred from one person or group of persons to another, it involves added responsibilities to the persons receiving these advantages. They must be

the more zealous in real charity and all good works, for that is a part of the evidence which they give of their faith and gratitude. And, besides, their good deeds carry their own reward.

... فَأَلْذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَأَنْفَقُوا لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (٧)

For, those of you who believe and spend (in charity) -- for them is a great Reward.

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَأْتُمُنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ...

8. What cause have ye why ye should not believe in Allah? --

C5282. "What cause have ye why should not..." A figure of speech implying a far wider meaning than the words express. It is equivalent to saying: "There is every reason why ye should believe in Allah", etc. The same construction applies to verse 10 below.

... وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ أَخَذَ مِيثَاقَكُمْ ...

And the Messenger invites you to believe in your Lord, and has indeed taken your Covenant,

C5283. There are two shades of meaning.

- There is the implied Covenant in a man who accepts the Gospel of Unity that he will bring forth all the fruits of that Gospel, i.e., believe in Allah, and serve Allah and humanity. See n. 682 to 5:1.
- There were at various times express Covenants entered into by the Muslims to serve Allah and be true to the Prophet, comparable to the Covenants of the Jewish nation about the Message of Moses; e.g., the two Covenants of 'Aqaba (5:8, and n. 705) and the Pledge of Hudaibiyah (48:10, n. 4877).

For the Covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, see. 2:63, n. 78.

... إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٨)

if ye are men of faith.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ...

9. He is the One Who Sends **to His Servants** manifest Signs, that He may lead you from the depths of Darkness into the Light.

C5284. The Holy Prophet Muhammad.

The Signs sent to him were:

- the Ayats of the Quran, and
- his life and work, in which Allah's Plan and Purpose were unfolded.

... وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُمْ لَرَوْؤُفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٩)

And verily, Allah is to you Most Kind and Merciful.

وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تُنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

10. And what cause have ye why ye should not spend in the Cause of Allah? -- For to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth.

C5285. "To Allah belongs the heritage of... ":

see n. 485 to 3:180; also n. 988 to 6:165; and n. 1964 to 15:23.

... لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ أَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلٌ ...

Not equal among you are those who spent (freely) and fought, before the Victory, (with those who did so later).

C5286. This is usually understood to refer to the Conquest of Makkah, after which the Muslims succeeded to the power and position which the Pagan Quraish had so misused at Makkah. Thereafter the Muslims had the hegemony of Arabia, and in a few centuries, for a time, the hegemony of the world.

But the words are perfectly general, and we must understand the general meaning also: that the people who fight and struggle in Allah's Cause and give of their best to it at any time are worthy of praise: but those are worthy of special distinction who do it when the Cause is being persecuted and in most need of assistance, before victory comes.

...أُولَئِكَ أَكْبَرُ مَنْ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أَنْفَقُوا مِن بَعْدِ وَقَاتَلُوا وَكُلًّا وَعَدَّ
اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَى...

Those are higher in rank than those who spent (freely) and fought afterwards. But to all has Allah promised a goodly (reward),

...وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (١٠)

and Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

Section 2

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا ...

11. Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful Loan?

C528. Cf. 2:245, n. 276.

... فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ (١١)

For (Allah) will increase it manifold to his credit, and he will have (besides) a liberal reward.

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُم بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ
وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ...

12. One Day shalt thou see the believing men and the believing women how their Light runs forward before them and by their right hands:

C5288. In the Darkness of the Day of Judgment there will be a Light to guide the righteous to their Destination. This will be the Light of their Faith and their Good

Works: for the Blessed will receive their Record in their right hand (69:19-24).

...بُشْرَاكُمْ الْيَوْمَ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

(their greeting will be): "Good News for you this Day!

Gardens beneath which flow rivers! To dwell therein for aye!

... ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١٢)

this is indeed the highest Achievement!"

C5289. The highest Achievement, the highest felicity, the attainment of Salvation, the fulfilment of all desires.

See n. 4733 to 44:57.

...يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ...

13. One day will the Hypocrites -- men and women -- say to the Believers:

"Wait for us! let us borrow (a light) from your Light!"

C5290. Watchful preparation in Life, and the light of Faith, which reflects the divine Light, are matters of personal Life, and cannot be borrowed from another.

So, in Christ's parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), when the foolish ones had let their lamps go out for want of oil, they asked to borrow oil from the wise ones, but the wise ones answered and said, "Not so; ... but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves".

...قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا...

It will be said:

"turn ye back to your rear! then seek a light (where ye can)!"

... فَضْرَبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ ...

So a wall will be put up betwixt them, with a gate therein.

C5291. The wall will divide the Good from the Evil. But the Gateway in it will show that communication will not be cut off. Evil must realise that Good- i.e., Mercy and Felicity-had been within its reach, and that the Wrath which envelops it is due to its own rejection of Mercy.

... بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ (١٣)

Within it will be Mercy throughout, and without it, all alongside, will be (wrath and) Punishment!

يُنَادُونَهُمْ أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ...

14. (Those without) will call out, "were we not with you?"

C5292. The evil will now claim some right of kinship or association or proximity with the good in earthly life; but in fact they had been arrogant and had selfishly despised them before. The reply will be:

- you yourselves chose temptation and evil;
- when you had power in your earthly life, you hoped for ruin to the good, and perhaps plotted for it;
- you were warned by prophets of Allah, but you doubted Allah's very existence and certainly His Mercy and Justice, and the Hereafter;
- you followed your own lusts and neglected Reason and Truth;
- you were given plenty of rope, but you followed your mad career, until Judgment came upon you, and now it is too late for repentance.

...قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْأَمَانِيُّ...

(The others) will reply,

"True! but ye led yourselves into temptation; ye looked forward (to our ruin); ye doubted (Allah's promise); and (your false) desires deceived you;

...حَتَّىٰ جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَغَرََّتْكُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ (١٤)

until there issued the Command of Allah. And the Deceiver deceived you in respect of Allah.

C5293. The Arch-Deceiver (Satan) deceived you in respect of Allah in many ways: for example,

- he made you oblivious of Allah's Mercy and loving-kindness;

- he made you reject His Grace;
- he made you think that Allah's Justice may not overtake you; etc.

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَلَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

15. "This Day shall no ransom be accepted of you, nor of those who rejected Allah.

C5294. In personal responsibility there is no room for vicarious ransom or for ransom by payments of gold or silver or by sacrifice of possessions. Nor can the crime be expiated for after Judgment. 'You' and 'those who rejected Allah' are two ways of looking at the same persons. 'You are rejected because you rejected Allah.'

مَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ هِيَ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَبئسَ الْمَصِيرُ (١٥)

Your abode is the fire: That is the proper place to claim you: and an evil refuge it is!"

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

16. Has not the time arrived for the Believers ...

C5295. Humility and the remembrance of Allah and His Message are never more necessary than in the hour of victory and prosperity.

... أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ...

... that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the truth which has been revealed (to them),

...وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ...

and that they should not become like those to whom was given Revelation aforetime,

C5296. The men immediately referred to are the contemporary Jews and Christians. To each of these Ummahs was given Allah's Revelation, but as time passed, they corrupted it, became arrogant and hard-

hearted, and subverted justice, truth, and the purity of Life.

But the general lesson is far wider. No one is favoured of Allah except on the score of righteousness. Except on that score, there is no chosen individual or race. There is no blind good fortune or ill fortune. All happens according to the just laws and Will of Allah. But at no time is humility or righteousness more necessary than in the hour of victory or triumph.

... فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ ...

but long ages passed over them and their hearts grew hard?

وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (١٦)

For many among them are rebellious transgressors.

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

17. Know ye (all) that Allah giveth life to the earth after its death!

C5297. As the dead earth is revived after the refreshing showers of rain, so is it with the spirit of man, whether as an individual or a race or Ummah. There is no cause for despair. Allah's Truth will revive the spiritual faculties if it is accepted with humility and zeal.

...قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (١٧)

already have We shown the Signs plainly to you, that ye may learn wisdom.

...إِنَّ الْمُسَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا...

18. For those who give in Charity, men and women, and loan to Allah a Beautiful Loan,

C5298. Cf. [57:11](#);

also see 2:245, n. 276.

...يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ (١٨)

it shall be increased manifold (to their credit), and they shall have (besides) a liberal reward.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّٰدِقُونَ...

19. And those who believe in Allah and His messengers -- they are the Sincere (Lovers of truth),

C5299. Cf. 4:69, and n. 586.

The four categories there mentioned as constituting the beautiful Company of Faith are:

- the Prophets who teach, the Sincere Lovers of Truth,
- the Martyrs, and
- the Righteous who do good.

Of these, the prophets or messengers have already been mentioned in this verse. The Righteous who do good are mentioned as the men and women given over to deeds of charity in verse 18.

...وَالشَّهَدَاءَ ...

and the witnesses (who testify),

C5300.

- The Witnesses are not only Martyrs, but all those who carry the Banner of Truth against all odds and in all positions of danger, whether by pen or speech, or deed or counsel.

...عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ وَنُورُهُمْ...

in the eyes of their Lord: they shall have their Reward and their Light,

C5301. Note that these two are specially high degrees in the Hereafter, just short of Prophethood. For they have not only their reward in the Hereafter, like those who practice charity (verse 18 above), but they themselves become sources of light and leading.

...وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ (١٩)

but those who reject Allah and deny Our Signs -- they are the Companions of Hell-Fire.

Section 3

اعلموا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوَ وِزِينَةٌ ...

20. Know ye (all), that the life of this world is but play and amusement,

C5302. Cf. 6:32, and n. 855.

In the present passage the idea is further amplified. In this life people not only play and amuse themselves and each other, but they show off, and boast, and pile up riches and man-power and influence, in rivalry with each other.

...وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ...

pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children:

...كَمَثَلِ ...

Here is a similitude:

C5303. Cf. 39:21, and n. 4273.

Here the Parable is meant to teach a slightly different lesson. Allah's mercies are free and open to all, like His rain. But how do men make use of them? The good men take the real spiritual harvest and store the Spiritual grain. The men who are in love with the ephemeral are delighted with the green of the tares and the grass; but such things give no real nourishment; they soon wither, become dry, and crumble to pieces, like the worldly pleasures and pomps, boasting and tumults, possessions and friends.

...غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ...

How rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (the hearts of) the tillers;

C5304. **Kuffar** is here used in the unusual sense of 'tillers or husbandmen', because they sow the seed and cover it up with soil.

But the ordinary meaning, 'Rejecters of Truth', is not absent. The allegory refers to such men.

...فَنَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا...

soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry and crumbles away.

...وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ...

But in the Hereafter is a Penalty severe (for the devotees of wrong), and Forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the devotees of Allah).

...وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْعُرُورِ (٢٠)

And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception?

C5305. Cf. 3:185, and n. 492.

Many of the attractive vanities of this world are but nets set by Satan to deceive man. The only thing real and lasting is the Good Life lived in the Light of Allah.

سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ...

21. Be ye foremost (in seeking) forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden (of Bliss), the width whereof is as the width of heaven and earth,

C5306. Cf. 3:133, and n. 452.

...أَعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ...

prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers:

...ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ...

that is the Grace of Allah, which He bestows on whom He pleases:

C5307. "Bestows on whom He pleases." That is, such grace and favour is beyond any one's own merits. It is bestowed by Allah according to His holy Will and Plan, which is just, merciful, and righteous.

... وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢١)

and Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ ...

22. No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls,

C5308. External disasters or misfortunes may strike people's eye or imagination, but there are worse crisis and misfortunes in the spiritual world, which are of equal or greater importance to man's future. All this happens according to the Will and Plan of Allah. Even where we are allowed the exercise of our own wills, the consequences that follow are in accordance with the laws and Plan decreed by Allah beforehand.

... إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ نُنزِّلَهَا ...

but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence:

C5309. For **bara'a**, 'to bring into existence', and other words denoting Allah's creative energy, see n. 120 to 2:117; n. 916 to 6:94; and n. 923 to 6:98.

إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (٢٢)

that is truly easy for Allah:

لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ ...

23. In order that ye may not despair over matters that pass you by, nor exult over favors bestowed upon you.

... وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ (٢٣)

For Allah loveth not any vainglorious boaster --

C5310. In the external world, what people may consider misfortune or good fortune may both turn out to be illusory,-in Kipling's words, "both imposters just the same". The righteous man does not grumble if some one else has possessions, nor exult if he has them. He does not covet and he does not boast. If he has any advantages, he shares them with other people, as he considers them not due to his own merits, but as gifts of Allah. (R).

الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ ...

24. Such persons as are covetous and commend covetousness to men.

C5311. Neither the Covetous nor the Boasters have any place in the Good Pleasure of Allah. The Covetous are particularly insidious, as their avarice and niggardliness not only keep back the gifts of Allah from men, but their pernicious example dries up the streams of Charity in others.

... وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٢٤)

And if any turn back (from Allah's Way), verily Allah is free of all needs, worthy of all praise.

C5312. It is Charity in Allah's Way that is specially in view here. If people are selfish and withhold their hand, they only injure themselves, They do not hurt Allah's Cause, for He is independent of all needs, and He will find other means of assisting His more meagerly-endowed servants; He is worthy of all praise in His care for His creatures.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ
النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ...

25. We sent aforetime our messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice;

C5313. Three things are mentioned as gifts of Allah. In concrete terms they are;

- the Book,
- the Balance, and
- Iron,

which stand as emblems of three things which hold society together, viz.

- Revelation, which commands Good and forbids Evil;
- Justice, which gives to each person his due;
- and the strong arm of the Law, which maintains sanctions for evil-doers.

For Balance, see also 42:17, and n. 4550.

...وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ ...

and We sent down Iron,

C5314. "Sent down": **anzala**:

in the sense of revealed to man the use of certain things, created in him the capacity of understanding and using them: cf. 39:6: "sent down for you eight head of cattle in pairs".

... فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ ...

in which is (material for) mighty war, as well as many benefits for mankind,

C5315. Iron: the most useful metal known to man. Out of it is made steel, and from steel and iron are made implements of war, such as swords, spears, guns, etc., as well as instruments of peace, such as ploughshares, bricklayers' trowels, architects' and engineers' instruments, etc.

Iron stands as the emblem of Strength, Power, Discipline, Law's sanctions, etc. Iron and steel industries have also been the foundation of the prosperity and power of modern manufacturing nations'. (R).

...وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ ...

that Allah may test who it is that will help, unseen Him and His messengers;

C5316. In 21:49, I have translated "in their most secret thoughts" for the more literal "unseen" (*bilgaibi*). Perhaps the more literal "unseen" may do if understood in the adverbial sense; as explained in 35:18, n. 3902.

The sincere man will help the Cause, whether he is seen or brought under notice or not.

C5317. To help Allah and His messengers is to help their Cause. It is to give men an opportunity of striving and fighting for His Cause and proving their true mettle, for thus is their spirit tested.

As explained in the next line, Allah in Himself is Full of Strength, Exalted in Power, and Able to enforce His Will, and He has no need of others' assistance.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٢٥)

for Allah is Full of Strength, exalted in Might (and able to enforce His will).

C5318. Cf. 22:40 and n. 2818.

"Strength" is specific: Power or Might is more abstract, the ability to enforce what is willed.

Section 4

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ...

26. And We sent Noah and Abraham, and established in their line Prophethood and Revelation:

...فَمِنْهُمْ مُهْتَدٍ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٢٦)

and some of them were on right guidance, but many of them became rebellious transgressors.

C5319. Some of them: i.e., of their line, or posterity, or Ummah. When the Book that was given to them became corrupted, many of them followed their own fancies and became transgressors.

ثُمَّ فَفَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بَرُسُلْنَا وَفَعَلْنَا بَعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَآلِئِنَّاهُ

الْإِنْجِيلَ...

27. Then, in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our messengers: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel;

...وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً...

and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him
Compassion and Mercy.

C5320. The chief characteristic of the teaching in the Gospels is humility and other- worldliness.

The first blessings in the Sermon on the Mount are on "the poor in spirit", "they that mourn", and they that are "meek" (Matt. 5:3-5).

Christ's disciples were enjoined to "take no thought for the morrow", and told "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34).

They were also commanded "that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39).

These are fragmentary presentments of an imperfect philosophy as seen through monastic eyes. In so far as they represent pity, sympathy with suffering, and deeds of mercy, they represent the spirit of Christ.

...وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ ...

But the monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them:

C5321. But Allah's Kingdom requires also courage, resistance to evil, the firmness, law, and discipline which will enforce justice among men. It requires men to mingle with men, so that they can uphold the. standard of Truth, against odds if necessary. These were lost sight of in Monasticism, which was not prescribed by Allah.

... إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ...

(We commanded) only the seeking for the Good pleasure of Allah;

...فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَائِهَا...

but that they did not foster as they should have done.

C5322. Allah certainly requires that men shall renounce the idle pleasures of this world, and turn to the Path

which leads to Allah's Good Pleasure. But that does not mean gloomy fives, ("they that mourn"), nor perpetual and formal prayers in isolation. Allah's service is done through pure lives in the turmoil of this world. This spirit was lost, or at least not fostered by monastic institutions. On the contrary a great part of the "struggle and striving" for noble lives was suppressed.

...فَأَتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ ...

Yet We bestowed, on those among them who believed, their (due) reward,

C5323. Many of them lost true Faith, or had their Faith corrupted by superstitions. But those who continued firm in Faith saw the natural development of Religion in Islam. Their previous belief was not a disadvantage to them, but helped them, because they kept it free from false and selfish prejudices. These are the ones who are further addressed at the beginning of verse 28 below.

... وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٢٧)

but many of them are rebellious transgressors.

C5324. The corruptions in the Christian Church, the hair-splitting disputes, and mutual strife and hatred of sects had become a scandal by the time that the light of Islam came into the world. The pages of Gibbon's great History bear witness. Not only had the religion become void of grace, but the lives of the people, priests and laity, had fallen into great depths of degradation.

See remarks in my [Appendix V](#), and the general picture in Kingsley's Hypatia.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

28. O ye that believe!

C5325. From the context before (see [n. 5323](#) above) and after (see next note), this is held to refer to the Christians and People of the Book who kept their Faith true and undefiled.

... اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ ...

fear Allah, and believe in His messenger,

... يُؤْتِيكُمْ كَفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ ...

and He will bestow on you a **double portion** of His Mercy:

C5326. The **double portion** refers to the past and the future.

As noted in the last note, this passage is addressed to the Christians and the People of the Book, who, when honestly facing the question of the new Revelation in Islam, find in it the fulfilment of previous revelations, and therefore believe in Allah's Messenger Muhammad, and walk by the new light. Their previous merits will be duly recognised, and they will be treated on fully equal terms in the new Ummah. This is their double share, not necessarily more in quantity than that of their brethren in Islam who passed through no other gate, but having a twofold aspect.

... وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ ...

He will provide for you a light by which ye shall walk (straight in your path),

C5327. As this refers to the Christians and the People of the Book, the following saying of Christ in his last days may interest them:

"Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you... While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them". (John, 12:35-36).

The light of Christ's Gospel soon departed; his Church was enveloped in darkness; then came the light again, in the fuller light of Islam. And they are asked to believe in the light, and to walk in it. Cf. also 57:12. and n. 5288 above.

... وَيَعْفِرُ لَكُمْ...

and He will forgive you (your past):

C5328. Any wrong they may have committed through ignorance or misconceptions in their previous religion will be forgiven them, as they have seen the new light and walk by it.

...وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٢٨)

For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful:

لِنَّا يَعْلَمَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَلَّا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ...

29. That the People of the Book may know that they have no power whatever over the Grace of Allah,

C5329. Let not any race, or people, or community, or group, believe that they have exclusive possession of Allah's Grace, or that they can influence its grant or its withholding.

Allah's Grace is free, and entirely controlled by Him, independently of any priests and privileged people. He dispenses it according to His own wise and holy Will and Plan; and to His Grace there is no limit.

...وَأَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ...

that (His) Grace is (entirely) in His hand, to bestow it on whomsoever He wills.

...وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢٩)

For Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.