

Surah 39. Az-Zumar

39.1 The revelation of this Book is from Allah the Exalted in Power Full of Wisdom. ⁴²⁴²

39.2 Verily it is We Who have revealed the Book to thee in Truth: so serve Allah offering Him sincere devotion.

39.3 Is it not to Allah that sincere devotion is due? But those who take for protectors other than Allah (say): "We only serve them in order that they may bring us nearer to Allah." Truly Allah will judge between them in that wherein they differ. But Allah guides not such as are false and ungrateful. ^{4243 4244 4245}

39.4 Had Allah wished to take to Himself a son He could have chosen whom He pleased out of those whom He doth create: but Glory be to Him! (He is above such things.) He is Allah the One the Irresistible. ⁴²⁴⁶

39.5 He created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions): He makes the Night overlap the Day and the Day overlap the Night: He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His law) each one follows a course for a time appointed. Is not He the Exalted in Power He Who forgives again and again? ^{4247 4248}

39.6 He created you (all) from a single person: then created of like nature his mate; and He sent down for you eight head of cattle in pairs: He makes you in the wombs of your mothers in stages one after another in three veils of darkness. Such is Allah your Lord and Cherisher: to Him belongs (all) dominion. There is no god but He: then how are ye turned away (from your true Center)? ^{4249 4250 4251 4252 4253}

39.7 It ye reject (Allah) truly Allah has no need of you; but He liketh not ingratitude from His servants: if ye are grateful He is pleased with you. No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. In the end to your Lord is your return when He will tell you the truth of all that ye did (in this life). For He knoweth well all that is in (men's) hearts. ^{4254 4255}

39.8 When some trouble toucheth man he crieth unto his Lord turning to Him in repentance: but when He bestoweth a favor upon him as from Himself (man) doth forget what he cried and prayed for before and he doth set up rivals unto Allah thus misleading others from Allah's Path. Say "Enjoy thy blasphemy for a little while: verily thou art (one) of the Companions of the Fire!" ^{4256 4257}

39.9 Is one who worships devoutly during the hours of the night prostrating himself or standing (in adoration) who takes heed of the Hereafter and who places his hope in the Mercy of his Lord (like one who does not)? Say: "Are those equal those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition." ^{4258 4259}

39.10 Say: "O ye my servants who believe! Fear your Lord: good is (the reward) for those who do good in this world. Spacious is Allah's earth! Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure!" ^{4260 4261}

39.11 Say: "Verily I am commanded to serve Allah with sincere devotion;

39.12 "And I am commanded to be the first of those who bow to Allah in Islam." ⁴²⁶²

39.13 Say: "I would if I disobeyed my Lord indeed have fear of the Penalty of a Mighty Day." ⁴²⁶³

39.14 Say: "It is Allah I serve with my sincere (and exclusive) devotion:

39.15 "Serve ye what ye will besides Him." Say: "Truly those in loss are those who lose their own souls and their People on the Day of Judgement: Ah! that is indeed the (real and) evident Loss!" ^{4264 4265}

39.16 They shall have layers of fire above them and layers (of fire) below them: with this doth Allah warn off His servants: "O my servants! Then fear ye Me!" ^{4266 4267}

39.17 Those who eschew evil and fall not into its worship and turn to Allah (in repentance) for them is Good News: so announce the Good News to My Servants ⁴²⁶⁸

39.18 Those who listen to the Word and follow the best (meaning) in it: those are the ones whom Allah has guided and those are the ones endowed with understanding. ⁴²⁶⁹

39.19 Is then one against whom the decree of Punishment is justly due (equal to one who eschews evil)? Wouldst thou then deliver one (who is) in the fire? ⁴²⁷⁰

39.20 But it is for those who fear their Lord that lofty mansions one above another have been built: beneath them flow rivers (of delight): (such is) the promise of Allah: never doth Allah fail in (His) promise. ^{4271 4272}

39.21 Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky and leads it through springs in the earth? Then He causes to grow therewith produce of various colors: then it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then He makes it dry up and crumble away. Truly in this is a Message of remembrance to men of understanding. ⁴²⁷³

39.22 Is one whose heart Allah has opened to Islam so that he has received enlightenment from Allah (no better than one hard-hearted)? Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against celebrating the praises of Allah! They are manifestly wandering (in error)! ^{4274 4275}

39.23 Allah has revealed (from time to time) the most beautiful message in the form of a Book consistent with itself (Yet) repeating (its teaching in various aspects): the skins of those who fear their Lord tremble thereat; then their skins and their hearts do soften to the celebration of Allah's praises. Such is the guidance of Allah: He guides therewith whom He pleases but such as Allah leaves to stray can have none to guide. ^{4276 4277 4278 4279}

39.24 Is then one who has to fear the brunt of the Penalty on the Day of Judgement (and receive it) on his face (like one guarded therefrom)? It will be said to the wrongdoers: "Taste ye (the fruits of) what ye earned!" ^{4280 4281}

39.25 Those before them (also) rejected (revelation) and so the Punishment came to them from directions they did not perceive. ⁴²⁸²

39.26 So Allah gave them a taste of humiliation in the present life but greater is the Punishment of the Hereafter if they only knew! ⁴²⁸³

39.27 We have put forth for men in this Qur'an every kind of Parable in order that they may receive admonition. ⁴²⁸⁴

39.28 (It is) a Qur'an in Arabic without any crookedness (therein): in order that they may guard against Evil. ^{4285 4286}

39.29 Allah puts forth a Parable a man belonging to many partners at variance with each other and a man belonging entirely to one master: are those two equal in comparison? Praise be to Allah! But most of them have no knowledge. ^{4287 4288}

39.30 Truly thou wilt die (one day) and truly they (too) will die (one day). ⁴²⁸⁹

⁴²⁹⁰ 39.31 In the end will ye (all) on the Day of Judgement settle your disputes in the presence of your Lord.

39.32 Who then doth more wrong than one who utters a lie concerning Allah and rejects the truth when it comes to him? Is there not in Hell an abode for blasphemers? ^{4291 4292}

⁴²⁹³ 39.33 And he who brings the Truth and he who confirms (and supports) it such are the men who do right.

39.34 They shall have all that they wish for in the presence of their Lord: such is the reward of those who do good: ⁴²⁹⁴

39.35 So that Allah will turn off from them (even) the worst in their deeds and give them their reward according to the best of what they have done. ⁴²⁹⁵

39.36 Is not Allah enough for His servant? But they try to frighten thee with other (gods) besides him! For such as Allah leaves to stray there can be no guide. ⁴²⁹⁶

39.37 And such as Allah doth guide there can be none to lead astray is not Allah Exalted in Power (able to enforce His Will) Lord of Retribution? ^{4297 4298}

39.38 If indeed thou ask them who it is that created the heavens and the earth they would be sure to say "Allah." Say: "See ye then? The things that ye invoke besides Allah can they if Allah wills some Penalty for me remove His Penalty? Or if He wills some Grace for me can they keep back His Grace?" Say: "Sufficient is Allah for me! In Him trust those who put their trust." ^{4299 4300 4301}

39.39 Say: "O my people! Do whatever ye can: I will do (my part): but soon will ye know ⁴³⁰²

39.40 "Who it is to whom come a Penalty of ignominy and on whom descends a Penalty that abides." ⁴³⁰³

39.41 Verily We have revealed the Book to thee in Truth for (instructing) mankind. He then that receives guidance benefits his own soul: but he that strays injures his own soul. Nor art thou set over them to dispose of their affairs. ^{4304 4305}

39.42 It is Allah that takes the souls (of men) at death: and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep: those on whom He has passed the decree of death He keeps back (from returning to life) but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed. Verily in this are Signs for those who reflect. ^{4306 4307 4308 4309}

39.43 What! Do they take for intercessors others besides Allah? Say: "Even if they have no power whatever and no intelligence?" ⁴³¹⁰

39.44 Say: "To Allah belongs exclusively (the right to grant) Intercession: to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: in the End it is to Him that ye shall be brought back." ^{4311 4312}

39.45 When Allah the One and Only is mentioned the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter are filled with disgust and horror; but when (gods) other than He are mentioned behold they are filled with joy! ⁴³¹³

39.46 Say: "O Allah! Creator of the heavens and the earth! Knower of all that is hidden and open! It is Thou that wilt judge between Thy Servants in those matters about which they have differed." ⁴³¹⁴

39.47 Even if the wrongdoers had all that there is on earth and as much more (in vain) would they offer it for ransom from the pain of the Penalty on the Day of Judgement: but something will confront them from Allah which they could never have counted upon! ^{4315 4316}

39.48 For the evils of their Deeds will confront them and they will be (completely) encircled by that which they used to mock at! ⁴³¹⁷

39.49 Now when trouble touches man he cries to Us; but when We bestow a favor upon him as from Ourselves he says "This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge (I have)!" Nay but this is but a trial but most of them understand not! ^{4318 4319 4320}

39.50 Thus did the (generations) before them say! But all that they did was of no profit to them.

39.51 Nay the evil results of their deeds overtook them. And the wrongdoers of this (generation) the evil results of their deeds will soon overtake them (too) and they will never be able to frustrate (Our Plan)! ⁴³²¹

39.52 Know they not that Allah enlarges the provision or restricts it for any He pleases? Verily in this are signs for those who believe! ⁴³²³

39.53 Say: "O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful." ⁴³²⁴

39.54 "Turn ye to your Lord (in repentance) and bow to His (Will) before the Penalty comes on you: after that ye shall not be helped." ⁴³²⁵

39.55 "And follow the Best of (the courses) revealed to you from your Lord before the Penalty comes on you of a sudden while ye perceive not!--" ⁴³²⁶

39.56 "Lest the soul should (then) say: Ah! woe is me! In that I neglected (my duty) towards Allah and was but among those who mocked!" ⁴³²⁷

39.57 "Or (lest) it should say: `If only Allah had guided me I should certainly have been among the righteous!" ⁴³²⁸

39.58 "Or (lest) it should say when it (actually) sees the Penalty: `If only I had another chance I should certainly be among those who do good!" ⁴³²⁹

39.59 "(The reply will be) `Nay but there came to thee My signs and thou didst reject them: thou wast haughty and became one of those who reject Faith!" " ^{4330 4331}

39.60 On the Day of Judgement wilt thou see those who told lies against Allah; their faces will be turned black; is there not in Hell an abode for the Haughty? ^{4332 4333}

39.61 But Allah will deliver the righteous to their place of salvation: no evil shall touch them nor shall they grieve. ⁴³³⁴

39.62 Allah is the Creator of all things and He is the Guardian and Disposer of all affairs. ⁴³³⁵

39.63 To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth: and those who reject the Signs of Allah it is they who will be in loss. ⁴³³⁶

39.64 Say: "Is it someone other than Allah that ye order me to worship O ye ignorant ones?" ⁴³³⁷

39.65 But it has already been revealed to thee as it was to those before thee "If thou wert to join (gods with Allah) truly fruitless will be thy work (in life) and thou wilt surely be in the ranks of those who lose (all spiritual good)." ^{4338 4339}

39.66 Nay but worship Allah and be of those who give thanks. ⁴³⁴⁰

39.67 No just estimate have they made of Allah such as is due to Him: on the Day of Judgement the whole of the earth will be but His handful and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand: Glory to Him! High is He above the Partners they attribute to Him! ^{4341 4342}

39.68 The Trumpet will (just) be sounded when all that are in the heavens and on earth will swoon except such as it will please Allah (to exempt). Then will a second one be sounded when behold they will be standing and looking on! ⁴³⁴³

39.69 And the Earth will shine with the glory of its Lord: the Record (of Deeds) will be placed (open); the prophets and the witnesses will be brought forward: and a just decision pronounced between them; and they will not be wronged (in the least). ^{4344 4345}

39.70 And to every soul will be paid in full (the fruit) of its deeds; and (Allah) knoweth best all that they do. ⁴³⁴⁶

39.71 The Unbelievers will be led to Hell in crowds; until when they arrive there its gates will be opened and its Keepers will say "Did not apostles come to you from among yourselves rehearsing to you the Signs of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?" The answer will be: "True: but the Decree of Punishment has been proved true against the Unbelievers!" ^{4347 4348 4349}

39.72 (To them) will be said: "Enter ye the gates of Hell to dwell therein: and evil is (this) abode of the arrogant!" ⁴³⁵⁰

39.73 And those who feared their Lord will be led to the Garden in crowds: until behold they arrive there; its gates will be opened: and its Keepers will say: "Peace be upon you! Well have ye done! Enter ye here to dwell therein." ^{4351 4352}

39.74 They will say: "Praise be to Allah Who has truly fulfilled His promise to us and has given us (this) land in heritage: we can dwell in the Garden as we will: how excellent a reward for those who work (righteousness)!" ^{4353 4354}

39.75 And thou wilt see the angels surrounding the Throne (Divine) on all sides singing Glory and Praise to their Lord. The Decision between them (at Judgment) will be in (perfect) justice. And the cry (on all sides) will be "Praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds!" ⁴³⁵⁵

Author Comments

4242 - In connection with Revelation two qualities of Allah are mentioned: (1) that He is All-Powerful and can carry out His Will in spite of all opposition; and (2) that He is full of knowledge and wisdom. The first answers those who question how Allah can send Revelation to man; the second explains that true wisdom consists in carrying out Allah's Will as revealed to us.

4243 - In the many Signs in Creation as described below, there yet is a clear indication of the unity of Plan, pointing to the Unity of the Creator. Worship or service is due to none but Him. And He wants exclusive

and sincere devotion.

4244 - Worshippers of Idols or of deities other than Allah, e.g., saints or perhaps Wealth and Power, Science or Selfish Desire, may pretend that these are symbols that may get them nearer to their self-development, nearer to the goal of their life, nearer to Allah, but they are altogether on the wrong track.

4245 - This departure of theirs from true worship, this divergence from the right way, produces endless disputations and sects. Allah will judge between them. But if they are determined to go after falsehoods and forget the gratitude and service which they owe to Allah, and Allah alone, they are putting themselves on a Path where they will get no guidance. They are cutting themselves off from revealed Truth.

4246 - It is blasphemy to say that Allah begot a son. If that were true, He should have had a wife (vi. 101), and His son would have been of the same kind as Himself; whereas Allah is one, with no one else like unto Him (cxii. 4). Begetting is an animal act which goes with sex. How can it be consistent with our conception of One Who is above all Creatures? If such a blasphemous thought were possible, as that Allah wanted some one else to help Him, He could have chosen the best of His creatures instead of lowering Himself to an animal act. But glory to Allah! He is above such things! His Unity is the first thing that we have to learn about Him. As He is Omnipotent, He requires no creatures to help Him or bring other creatures to Him.

4247 - Cf. vi. 73, and n. 896.

4248 - His Power is equalled by His Mercy. Who can there be like unto Him?

4249 - Cf. iv. 1, and n. 504.

4250 - See vi. 143-4, where four kinds of cattle are mentioned in pairs in connection with certain Arab

superstitions which are there condemned. Here the, same four kinds are mentioned as representative of domesticated cattle given by Allah as useful to man. These are sheep, goats, camels, and oxen. In Arab idiom the horse is not included among "cattle". For the wisdom and goodness of Allah in granting man dominion over cattle, see xxxvi. 71-73.

4251 - See xxii. 5, where the gradual physical growth of man in several successive stages is mentioned as one of the Signs of Allah's creative Power and cherishing care.

4252 - The three veils of darkness which cover the unborn child are: the caul or membrane, the womb, and the hollow in which the womb is enclosed.

4253 - It is clear that you owe your very existence and your maintenance, growth, and preservation, to Allah; How is it that you are turned away by chance things from Him?

4254 - Allah is independent of all wants, and therefore man's ingratitude does not affect Allah. But Allah cares for man, and therefore man's gratitude and service earn Allah's Good Pleasure, and man's ingratitude and rebellion are displeasing to Allah.

4255 - Cf. vi. 164. The account is between you and Allah. No one else can take your burdens or carry your sins. Vicarious atonement would be unjust. You have to return to Allah in the Hereafter. You will find that He knows all that you did in this life, and its full significance. He will explain to you even better than you can understand yourself; because all your secret hidden motives, which you sometimes tried to ignore yourself, are fully known to Him.

4256 - Cf. x. 12. Trouble and adversity often bring a man to his bearings. But if he is not firm and constant, he forgets the lessons which life is meant to teach him. As soon as he gets a little prosperity, he forgets that it is from Allah, and attributes it to something which may only be a secondary cause, e.g., his own efforts or the Powers of Nature, or something which he has invented and made into a god, e.g., idols or fate. Allah is the Ultimate Cause of all things. To set up rivals to him in this way is not only wrong and degrading to the false worshipper himself, but misleads countless ignorant people, who may not be able to make allowances for the figures of speech or the symbolism by which subtler minds can explain away

falsehoods.

4257 - Those who practise and those who teach evil and blasphemy may seem to flourish in this world. But their satisfaction will be of very short duration. They are treading all the while the Path that leads to the Fire of Perdition.

4258 - Cf. iii. 113-117. It is a great thing when a man gets into the attitude of humble devotion to Allah. To him the hereafter is a real thing, and he prepares for it with good works. He does not build his hopes on the vanities of this world, but on Allah's Grace and Mercy. Such a man is "endued with understanding" and receives Allah's Message with fervour and alacrity. He is not to be compared with the cynic or the unbeliever, who knows nothing of the real value of the inner life.

4259 - Cf. iii. 19.

4260 - The "fear of Allah" (Taqwa) is explained in n. 26 to ii. 2. See also n. 2912 to xxiii. 60. The fear of Allah is akin to love, for it means that we are afraid to displease Him.

4261 - Cf. xxix. 56 and n. 3489. We must always do right. We cannot plead that the circumstances in which we find ourselves force our hands. If our home conditions do not allow us to act according to the Faith that is in us, we must be prepared to suffer ostracism or even exile.

4262 - Cf. vi. 14. "The first" need not necessarily be chronological: it may also refer to the first rank in zeal, and in readiness to suffer for the Cause.

4263 - Cf. vi. 15. The worst penalty in a spiritual sense is the Displeasure of Allah, just as the highest achievement, the fulfilment of all desire, is the attainment of Allah's Good Pleasure: vi. 16.

4264 - This is not a command or permission but a reproach and warning. The address of the Prophet of Allah may be paraphrased thus: 'Whatever happens I will follow the command of Allah. He has revealed Himself, and I know that He is One, supreme over all creatures. Him alone will I serve. Is there any so ignorant as to seek anyone else? Let him do so and see the result. The loss will be his own. For he falls from Grace into Evil.'

4265 - The cult of Evil results in the destruction of all that is best and most valuable in us, as well as poisons all the affections which link us to our families, friends, and people, in the Final Adjustment, which we call the Day of Judgment.

4266 - The consequences of Sin when Judgment comes are aptly figured by Layers upon Layers of Fire, which hem in the sinners above and below. It is also suggested that the Layers, though of Fire, have something dark in them-the scorching quality of Sin.

4267 - But Allah does not leave mankind without warning. Man has been granted a limited amount of free-will, and in order to help him in its right use, all the consequences of his action are clearly explained to him. To those who will listen to Reason are given arguments which can be apprehended by their own intelligence; to those who are swayed by affections and emotion, an appeal is made in the name of the love of Allah; to those who understand nothing but fear, the warning is conveyed by a portrayal of the dreadful consequences of wrong-doing.

4268 - There is always the danger that Evil may seize us even if we approach it out of mere curiosity. If we take an interest in it we may become its worshippers or slaves. The wise man eschews it altogether, and so he enrolls among the Servants of Allah, and gets the good news of His Mercy and Good Pleasure.

4269 - The Commentators construe this clause in two alternative ways. (1) If "word" be taken as any word, the clause would mean that good men listen to all that is said and choose the best of it. (2) If "word" be taken to mean Allah's Word, it would mean that they should listen reverently to it, and where permissive and alternative courses are allowed for those who are not strong enough to follow the higher course, those "endued with understanding" should prefer to attempt the higher course of conduct. For example, it is permitted (within limits) to punish those who wrong us, but the nobler course is to repel evil with good

(xxiii. 96): we should try to follow the nobler course. I prefer the latter construction: it accords better with my interpretation of the last verse: see n. 4268.

4270 - If a man is already steeped in sin and has rejected Allah's Grace, how can we expect Revelation to work in his soul?

4271 - Cf. xxix. 58, and xxxiv, 37. The idea of heaven here is that of a Home of sublimity and beauty, with a picturesque outlook, such as we would describe in this life by the type of a palace by gently-flowing streams. The mansions will also suggest generous space and architectural beauty, tiers upon tiers piled one upon another.

4272 - Mi'ad: the time, place, and manner of the fulfilment of a Promise. Allah's promise will be fulfilled in all particulars better than we can possibly imagine.

4273 - The circuit of water, by which the rain falls from the clouds, is absorbed through the earth, and flows through rivers or underground streams to the sea, where it again rises as vapour and forms clouds, was explained in notes 3111-12 to xxv 53. Here our attention is drawn to one portion of the process. The rain fructifies the soil and the seeds. Produce of various kinds is raised. The harvest ripens and is gathered in. The plants wither, dry up, and crumble away. Men and animals are fed. And the circuit starts again in another season. Here is a Sign of the Grace and Goodness of Allah, clear to those who understand.

4274 - Those who listen to Allah's Message find at each stage Allah's Grace helping them more and more to expand their spiritual understanding and to receive Allah's light, so that they travel farther and farther to their Goal in the Path of Truth and Righteousness. They are not to be compared to those who shut out Allah's Light from their hearts. See next note.

4275 - Just as there is spiritual progress for those who seek Allah, so there is more and more spiritual retrogression for those who close their hearts to Allah. Their hearts get hardened, and they allow less and less Allah's Grace to penetrate within. But it is obvious that they flounder on the Way, and cannot walk with the firm steps of those of assured Faith.

4276 - Is Mutashabih here to be understood in the same sense as in iii. 7? See n. 347. The better opinion is that there is a slightly different shade of meaning here, as suggested by the context. In the earlier passage, it was opposed to Muhkam: here it is contrasted or compared to Mathani. The root meaning is: 'having something similar; working by analogy or allegory, or parable; having its parts consistent with each other'. The last meaning I adopt here. The Qur-an was revealed in parts at different times. And yet its parts all conform to each other. There is no contradiction or inconsistency anywhere.

4277 - Mathani: Cf. xv. 87, where we have translated "oft-repeated": "the seven oft- repeated (verses)". See n. 2008 to that passage. Here the meaning is similar, but the context gives a different colour to it, as is seen in the translation.

4278 - The skin is the outer integument of the body. It receives the first shock from the impact of anything unusual, and it trembles and its hair stands on end under excitement. So in spiritual matters the first stimulation from Allah's Message is external. Those who receive Faith do it as it were with tremor and not with apathy. But the next stage is that it penetrates their outer nature and goes right into their hearts. Their whole nature is "softened" to receive the beneficent Message, and it transforms them through and through.

4279 - "Whom He pleases" and "leaves to stray" are explained fully in n. 2133 to xvi. 93. See also xiv. 4 and n. 1875.

4280 - The unrepentant Sinners will receive the full Penalty on the Day of Judgment. They will receive it full in the face, i.e., their whole being will be affected by it. Their hands will be tied, and they cannot therefore use their hands to ward off the Penalty of the Fire: in any case their hands will not have the power to ward it off. Are such helpless people to be compared for a moment with people who have received Grace and are therefore guarded from all harm and danger? Certainly not. To the evil the fruit of their deed, and to the good the grace of their Lord!

4281 - That is, of all their misdeeds, all the evil which they did in the world.

4282 - Cf. xvi. 26. They will be punished from quarters or in ways they do not perceive. From their Unbelief and Rebellion they think they derive great advantages, but they suddenly find out, when too late, that that which they exulted in was the cause of their own undoing.

4283 - Cf. ii. 114. Sin often brings disgrace and humiliation in this life, but the greater and truer punishment is in the Hereafter. But men often do not know the inwardness of this matter. If they flourish here for a time, they think they will escape the real consequences in the Hereafter. Or if they suffer little harm here, they think that will make up the Penalty, and they will escape the Hereafter. Both ideas are wrong.

4284 - Men can only understand high spiritual truths by parables and similitudes and these are given abundantly in the Qur-an. The object is, not merely to tell stories, but to teach lessons of spiritual wisdom.

4285 - Previous revelations had been in other languages. Now the revelation was given in Arabia in Arabic itself, the language of the country which all could understand. And it is a beautiful language, straight and flexible, and fit to be the vehicle of sublime truths.

4286 - See xviii. I and n. 2326. Cf. also vii. 45, n. 1024; and xix. 36, n. 2488.

4287 - The difference between the creed of Polytheism and the Gospel of Unity is explained by the analogy of two men. One belongs to many masters; the masters disagree among themselves, and the poor man of many masters has to suffer from the quarrel of his many masters; it is an impossible and unnatural position. The other serves only one master, his master is good, and does all he can for his servant; the servant can concentrate his attention on his service; he is happy himself and his service is efficiently performed. Can there be any doubt as to (1) which of them is the happier, and (2) which of them is in a more natural position? No man can serve two, still less numerous, masters.

4288 - Allah is praised that He has put us, not under gods many and lords many, but has, out of His infinite Mercy, allowed us direct approach to Him, the One, the True, the Eternal.

4289 - Even the prophets are not exempt from bodily death, much less the righteous, but they live in their beneficent work and the memories they leave behind them. All men have to die, good and bad alike. But there is a life after death, and in that life all the unexplained things about which people dispute in this world will be made clear in the presence of Allah.

4290 - See last note.

4291 - When the creature deliberately adopts and utters falsehoods against his own Creator, in spite of the Truth being brought, as it were, to his very door by Allah's Signs, what offence can we imagine more heinous than this? In Christian theology this is the blasphemy "against the Holy Ghost" spoken of in Matt. xii. 31-32: "whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man", (Christ), "it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come".

4292 - Cf. iii. 151; xvi. 29.

4293 - This is true of the Prophet, and all Prophets of God and all righteous persons. Any one who preaches the Truth and brings home Allah's Signs to men is performing the duty of a right and noble life. In this he confirms the teaching of all previous Prophets of Allah. Any one who supports and confirms such a teacher is also doing his duty and on the right way.

4294 - At that stage their wills will have been purified. If an earthly king gives a decoration, how much greater is the honour when the investiture takes place by the king himself personally?

4295 - The conjunction (lam in Arabic, translated "so that") indicates here the results, not the purpose. Allah's Reward is so bounteous, that if we truly and sincerely put our will into His keeping, He will remove the consequences not only of our minor faults but of the worst of our sins, and judge us according to the

very best of our deeds.

4296 - The righteous man will find Allah enough for all the protection he needs, all the rest and peace he craves for, and all the happiness he can imagine. If Satans wish to frighten him with false gods, he knows that that is mere superstition. In the case of idols to whom worship is paid, this is easily intelligible. But there are other false gods which men worship, -wealth, position, power, science, selfish desire, and so on. The idea may occur to them: "this is the right course, but what will men say?" or "shall I lose my case if I tell the truth?" or "will it ruin my chances if I denounce sin in high places?" All such false gods will only mislead and leave their victims in the lurch. The worship of them will lose them the Mercy of Allah, which wants to guide and comfort all who seek Allah.

4297 - On the other hand if any one holds fast to Allah's Truth, nothing can mislead or betray him.

4298 - Allah's Power can protect, and will defeat all plots against His Will, as well as punish Evil when it gets beyond bounds.

4299 - Cf. xxix. 61; also n. 2927 to xxiii. 85. Most worshippers of false gods are not either atheists or sceptics. They admit the existence of Allah but it has not come into their hearts and souls: it has not been translated into their lives. They run after false worship on account of ancestral custom or on account of their thoughtlessness or false environment, or on account of their own selfish desires or limited outlook. To them is addressed the argument: 'Ultimately your false gods can do nothing for you: why not turn to the One True God, on Whom you depend, and Who can give you Grace and Mercy, Justice and Punishment?'

4300 - Cf. xxxiii. 17,

4301 - Cf. xii. 67 and xiv. 12. Allah alone is He Who will and can discharge any trust put in Him. All other things will fail. Therefore those who put their trust in anything should put their trust in Allah.

4302 - Cf. xi. 121 and n. 1624-A.

4303 - Cf. xi, 93. The two clauses, about those who suffer a Penalty of ignominy and those on whom descends a lasting Penalty, apparently refer to the same persons in two different aspects: (1) they suffer shame, and (2) their punishment endures.

4304 - Revelation is sent by Allah through His messenger, but it is for all. It is given in order that men and women may be taught Righteousness. It is given in Truth: there is no pretence about it. It is for their own good. If they reject it and follow Evil, the loss is their own.

4305 - Allah's messengers do all they can to teach mankind. But they cannot force men's wills. If men reject their teaching, the account of the rejecters is with Allah Cf. vi. 107 and n. 935.

4306 - The mystery of life and death, sleep and dreams, is a fascinating enigma, of which the solution is perhaps beyond the ken of man. A vast mass of superstition as well as imaginative and psychological literature has grown up about it. But the simplest and truest religious doctrine is laid down here in a few words. In death we surrender our physical life, but our soul does not die; it goes back to a plane of existence in which it is more conscious of the realities of the spiritual world: "Allah takes the soul".

4307 - Cf. vi. 60. What is sleep? As far as animal life is concerned, it is the cessation of the working of the nervous system, though other animal functions, such as digestion, growth, and the circulation of the blood, continue, possibly at a different pace. It is the repose of the nervous system, and in this respect it is common to man and animals, and perhaps even to plants, if, as is probable, plants have a nervous system. The mental processes (and certainly volition) are also suspended in sleep, except that in ordinary dreams there is a medley of recollections, which often present vividly to our consciousness things that do not or cannot happen in nature as we know it in our coordinated minds. But there is another kind of dream which is rarer-one in which the dreamer sees things as they actually happen, backwards or forwards in time, or in which gifted individuals see spiritual truths otherwise imperceptible to them. How can we explain this? It is suggested that our soul or personality,-that something which is above our animal life-is then in a plane of spiritual existence akin to physical death (see last note), when we are nearer to Allah. In poetic imagery, Sleep is "twin-brother to Death".

4308 - Sleep being twin-brother to Death, our souls are for the time being released from the bondage of the flesh. Allah takes them for the time being. If, as some do, we are to die peacefully in sleep, our soul does not come back to the physical body, and the latter decays and die. If we have still some period of life to fulfil according to Allah's decree, our soul comes back to the body, and we resume our functions in this life.

4309 - If we contemplate these things, we can see more clearly many spiritual truths: e.g. (1) that our bodily life and death are not the whole story of our existence; (2) that in our bodily life we may be dead to the spiritual world, and in our bodily death, may be our awakening to the spiritual world; (3) that our nightly Sleep, besides performing the function of rest to our physical life, gives us a foretaste of what we call death, which does not end our personality; and (4) that the Resurrection is not more wonderful than our daily rising from Sleep, "twin-brother to Death".

4310 - Let alone worship, men should not rely upon any power or person other than Allah to help them out or intercede for them. When it is idols, they are poor lifeless things which have obviously neither power nor intelligence. But even prophets or saints or heroes have no power to intercede except as Allah wills and permits. See next note.

4311 - For Shafa'at (Intercession, Advocacy) see ii. 255; x. 3; xx. 109, n. 2634; and xxi. 28, n. 2688. It follows that no one can intercede with Allah, except (1) by Allah's permission, and (2) for those who have prepared themselves by penitence for Allah's acceptance. Even in earthly Courts, Advocacy is not permitted to any one; the Advocate must be granted the position of Advocate before he can plead before the judge. Nor can it be supposed that a plea for forgiveness or mercy can be put forward except on grounds recognised by equity and justice.

4312 - At all times, including our present life, all dominion belongs to Allah. At the End of the present plane of existence, we shall be placed before Allah for Judgment. Cf. x. 4.

4313 - To evil ones, the mention of the exclusive service of Good is hateful: they only rejoice when other motives are added, e.g., personal indulgence, ancestral custom, and numerous things in life which compete with Allah's Law in this world.

4314 - The mysteries of life and death, of worship and spiritual growth, are matters of high moment, which it may be difficult for us to apprehend in this present life. It is no use arguing about them and plunging in endless controversies. The proper attitude is to appeal to Allah humbly to accept our purified hearts and Faith, in the firm hope that everything which is now vague to us will be cleared up in the Hereafter, and to pray to Him for His guidance and mercy.

4315 - Cf. xiii. 18. Those who reject Allah's Message must realise that the time will come when they will wish they had sacrificed everything in the cause of Truth and Righteousness. It will be too late then. Why not examine the matter seriously now and accept Allah's Grace and Light?

4316 - This something will be beyond anything they can conceive of in this life. Just as the righteous will then attain a bliss which no human imagination can conceive of now, so the unrighteous will be in a misery of which they can form no conception now. See next note.

4317 - How humiliating it will be for them to realise that the things they used to mock at are realities all around them, and the things they were so eager to pursue are mere falsehoods or vanities!

4318 - Cf. xxx. 33 and n. 3545.

4319 - Cf. xxxix. 8 above.

4320 - Cf. xxxviii. 78, and n. 3408. Prosperity may be a trial as much as adversity.

4321 - Cf. xvi. 34.

4322 - It is the same story through the ages. People laugh at Truth, persecute Truth, and try to destroy Truth. But Allah's Plan is never to be frustrated. It will be carried out, and only the enemies of Truth will accomplish their own undoing. So it happened in Arabia: so will it happen always and everywhere.

4323 - Cf. xxviii. 82. Allah's gifts are given to all men-to some in a greater degree than to others. But it is all done according to His wise Plan, for His Will is just and looks to the good of all creatures. No one should therefore be puffed up in prosperity or cast down in adversity. Prosperity does not necessarily mean merit on man's part, nor adversity the reverse. Thinking men bear in mind the large Plan-which is visible in all Allah's Signs.

4324 - Forgives all sins: i.e., on sincere repentance and amendment of conduct.

4325 - The exhortation in brief is: 'Repent and work righteousness, before it becomes too late'. No help will come to you when the Judgment is actually established and you stand before Allah.

4326 - Cf. xxxix. 18, and n. 4269. Allah's Command meets the weakness of His weakest servants, and only asks that His servants should surrender their selfish will to Allah's Will. In divine compassion, therefore, we are allowed to do just what we can, even though our standard should fall short of the highest standard. But our aim should be to follow the highest standard, and Allah's Grace will come to our assistance. But we must do so in this life-and at once, as soon as the Word penetrates our mind or understanding. We must not delay a moment, for the Judgment may come at any time, suddenly, before we even perceive where we are.

4327 - Many kinds of sighs and regrets will then assail us. In the first place, we shall see our shortcomings: we were negligent when we should have been serious: we mocked when we should have tried to learn and understand. But it will be too late then to retrieve our position.

4328 - In the second place, we might be inclined to say, 'I wish I had received warning or guidance'. But this would not be true, because the warning and guidance are being conveyed in the clearest manner in Allah's Revelation. "that is the force of 'lest it should say'. It could have said so, had it not seen that the objection is clearly anticipated in the call to repent and in the warning about the Hereafter.

4329 - In the third place, when we stand face to face with the Penalty of our own deeds, we might say, 'I wish I had another chance'. But not one, but many, chances are being given, especially when we are told (verse 53 above): 'Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful'. The force of 'lest it should say' here is the same as explained in the last note.

4330 - The reply explains how all such pleas have been anticipated and met. It was deliberate rejection that will deserve and meet its consequences. It is further explained that the motive of sin, as with Satan, was haughtiness and Self.

4331 - Cf. ii. 34. The example of the arch-sinner illustrates what happens in a minor degree in every kind of sinner.

4332 - As spotless white is the symbol of purity, honour and truth, so black is the symbol of evil, disgrace, and falsehood. Perhaps "black" in connection with Hell also refers to the scorching punishment of the Fire.

4333 - Cf. above, xxxix. 32, and n. 4292, where the subtle implication of the interrogative form is explained.

4334 - Mafazat: place or state of safety or salvation, place or state of victory or achievement; accomplishment of wish or desire. This contrasted against the frustration, failure, and perdition of the children of evil,-what may be called damnation in theological phrase.

4335 - Allah has not only created all the Worlds, but He maintains them and cares for them. He does not sit apart from His world. Everything depends upon Him.

4336 - Allah has nothing to lose by the rebellion or disobedience of His creatures. It is they who lose, because they go counter to their own nature, the beautiful mould in which Allah created them.

4337 - "Order me": there is great irony here. The Prophet of Allah turns to his critics and says: "You arrogate to yourselves the right to order me how to worship! But who are you? You are only ignorant men! My commission is from Allah. It is the same as came to Prophets of Allah before me in all ages, viz., (1) that the only Truth is in the Gospel of Unity; and (2) that if you worship other things and turn away from Allah, your life will be wasted and all your probation will have been of no account."

4338 - The Message of Unity, renewed in Islam, has been the Message of Allah since the world began.

4339 - Cf. v. 6. False worship means that we run after fruitless things, and the main purpose of our spiritual lives is lost.

4340 - To "give thanks" is to show by our conduct that we esteem the gifts of Allah and will use them in His service.

4341 - Cf. vi. 91, and n. 909; and xxii. 74. In running after false gods or the powers of nature they have forgotten that all creatures are as nothing before Allah.

4342 - See last note. The whole earth will be no more to Allah than a thing that a man might enclose in the hollow of his hand, nor will the heavens with their vast expanse be more than a scroll, which a man might roll up with his right hand, the hand of power and action. Cf. xxi. 104, and lxxxi. 1.

4343 - Saiqa implies the idea of a swoon, or loss of all consciousness of being: it implies a cessation of the normal functioning of the usual powers of life or feeling. With the first Trumpet of the Resurrection the whole world will cease to be in the form and the relations which we see now: there will be a new heaven and a new earth, see xiv. 48, n. 1925; human souls will for the time being be dazed and lose all memory or consciousness of time or place or personality. With the second one, they will stand in a new world; they will see with clearer vision than ever before; and judgment will proceed.

4344 - It will be a new Earth. All traces of injustice or inequality, darkness or evil, will have gone. There will be the one universal Light, the Glory of Allah, which will now illuminate all. Falsehood, pretence, and illusion will have disappeared. Everything will be seen in its true light.

4345 - It is in such a scene of Reality that Judgment will be held. Before the Throne of Allah, the book of each man's deeds and motives will be placed wide open, which all may see; the Prophets and Preachers of Truth and the martyrs who gave their lives or made their real sacrifices in the cause of Truth, will be in the Court, to give evidence; and the decision pronounced will be absolutely just, for the Judge will not only be just, but He will know every fact and circumstance, and His wisdom will give due weight to everything, great or small.

4346 - In an earthly court, a decision may possibly go wrong because the judge is deceived; here no deceit or mistake will be possible, for Allah knows all, and knows it better than any one else can.

4347 - Groups: this is the word which gives the key-note to the Sura. If the soul does not stand to its own convictions or search out the Truth by itself, it will be classed with the crowds that go to Perdition!

4348 - The Keepers may be supposed to be angels, who know nothing of the conditions of evil on this earth, and are surprised at such crowds coming to the "Evil Abode".

4349 - Cf. x. 33. The answer is perhaps given by other angels: 'yes; messengers were sent to them from among themselves, to warn them and proclaim to them Mercy through repentance; but the decree of Allah, which warned them of punishment, has now come true against them, for they rebelled and were haughty; they rejected Truth, Faith, and Mercy!'

4350 - As elsewhere, the root of Evil is pointed out to be in self-love and arrogance. Cf. ii. 34, etc.

4351 - The righteous ones will also go in crowds, and not be alone. There is now a true sorting out. Verses 73-75 are parallel in contrast to verses 71-72 above.

4352 - The angels in heaven are not surprised at the advent of the good and righteous souls. They are glad; they greet them with the salutation of Peace; they congratulate them; and they welcome them in.

4353 - This is said by the new arrivals in heaven. As is right, they begin with the Praises of Allah, which shows at once their satisfaction and their gratitude.

4354 - In heritage: i.e. as our Portion. Cf. iii. 180, and n. 485; vi. 165, and n. 988. There is no question here of their passing on any property to heirs. They are the final possessors of Heaven for eternity, by the grace of Allah.

4355 - These are the opening words of the first Sura, and they describe the atmosphere of the final Bliss in Heaven, in the light of the Countenance of their Lord, the Lord of all!

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