

Surah 42. Ash-Shura

42.1 Ha Mim; ⁴⁵²⁶

42.2 `Ain Sin Qaf. ⁴⁵²⁷

42.3 Thus doth (He) send Inspiration to thee as (He did) to those before thee Allah Exalted in Power full of Wisdom. ⁴⁵²⁸

42.4 To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: and He is Most High Most Great. ⁴⁵²⁹

42.5 The heavens are almost rent asunder from above them (by His Glory): and the angels celebrate the Praises of their Lord and pray for forgiveness for (all) beings on earth: Behold! Verily Allah is He the Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful. ^{4530 4531}

42.6 And those who take as protectors others besides Him Allah doth watch over them; and thou art not the disposer of their affairs. ⁴⁵³²

42.7 Thus have We sent by inspiration to thee an Arabic Qur'an: that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities and all around her and warn (them) of the Day of Assembly of which there is no doubt: (when) some will be in the Garden and some in the Blazing Fire. ^{4533 4534 4535}

42.8 If Allah had so willed He could have made them a single people; but He admits whom He will to His Mercy; and the wrongdoers will have no protector nor helper. ⁴⁵³⁶

42.9 What! Have they taken (for worship) protectors besides Him? But it is Allah He is the Protector and it is He Who gives life to the dead: it is He Who has power over all things. ⁴⁵³⁷

42.10 Whatever it be wherein ye differ the decision thereof is with Allah: Such is Allah my Lord: in Him I trust and to Him I turn. ⁴⁵³⁸

42.11 (He is) the Creator of the heavens and the earth: He has made for you pairs from among yourselves and pairs among cattle: by this means does He multiply you: there is nothing whatever like unto Him and He is the One that hears and sees (all things). ⁴⁵³⁹

42.12 To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth: He enlarges and restricts the Sustenance to whom He will: for He knows full well all things. ⁴⁵⁴⁰

42.13 The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah--the which We have sent by inspiration to thee--and that which We enjoined on Abraham Moses and Jesus: Namely that ye should remain steadfast in Religion and make no divisions therein: to those who worship other things than Allah hard is the (way) to which thou callest them. Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him). ^{4541 4542 4543}

42.14 And they became divided only after knowledge reached them through selfish envy as between themselves. Had it not been for a Word that went forth before from thy Lord (tending) to a Term appointed the matter would have been settled between them: but truly those who have inherited the Book after them are in suspicious (disquieting) doubt concerning it. ^{4544 4545 4546}

42.15 Now then for that (reason) call (them to the Faith) and stand steadfast as thou art commanded nor follow thou their vain desires; but say: "I believe in the Book which Allah has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you. Allah is Our Lord and your Lord. For us (is the responsibility for) Our deeds and for you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. Allah will bring us together and to Him is (Our) final goal. ^{4547 4548}

42.16 But those who dispute concerning Allah after He has been accepted futile is their dispute in the sight of their Lord: on them is Wrath and for them will be a Penalty Terrible. ⁴⁵⁴⁹

42.17 It is Allah Who has sent down the Book in truth and the Balance (by which to weigh conduct). And what will make thee realize that perhaps the Hour is close at hand? ⁴⁵⁵⁰

42.18 Only those wish to hasten it who believe not in it: those who believe hold it in awe and know that it is the Truth. Behold verily those that dispute concerning the Hour are far astray. ⁴⁵⁵¹

42.19 Gracious is Allah to His servants: He gives Sustenance to whom He pleases: and He has Power and can carry out His Will. ^{4552 4553 4554}

42.20 To any that desires the tilth of the Hereafter We give increase in his tilth; and to any that desires the tilth of this world We grant somewhat thereof but he has no share or lot in the Hereafter. ⁴⁵⁵⁵

42.21 What! have they partners (in godhead) who have established for them some religion without the permission of Allah? Had it not been for the Decree of Judgement the matter would have been decided between them (at once): but verily the wrongdoers will have a grievous Penalty. ⁴⁵⁵⁶

42.22 Thou wilt see the wrongdoers in fear on account of what they have earned and (the burden of) that must (necessarily) fall on them. But those who believe and work righteous deeds will be in the luxuriant meads of the Gardens: they shall have before their Lord all that they wish for: that will indeed be the magnificent Bounty (of Allah). ^{4557 4558}

42.23 That is (the Bounty) whereof Allah gives Glad Tidings to His Servants who believe and do righteous deeds. Say: "No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kin." And if anyone earns any good We shall give Him an increase of good in respect thereof: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Ready to appreciate (service). ^{4559 4560 4561}

42.24 What! do they say "He has forged a falsehood against Allah"? But if Allah willed He could seal up thy heart. And Allah blots out Vanity and proves the Truth by His Words. For He knows well the secrets of all hearts. ⁴⁵⁶²

42.25 He is the One that accepts repentance from His Servants and forgives sins: and He knows all that ye do. ⁴⁵⁶³

42.26 And He listens to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness and gives them increase of His Bounty: but for the Unbelievers there is a terrible Penalty. ⁴⁵⁶⁴

42.27 If Allah were to enlarge the provision for His Servants they would indeed transgress beyond all bounds through the earth; but He sends (it) down in due measure as He pleases: for He is with His Servants well-acquainted Watchful. ^{4565 4566}

42.28 He is the One that sends down rain (even) after (men) have given up all hope and scatters His Mercy (far and wide). And He is the Protector Worthy Of all Praise. ⁴⁵⁶⁷

42.29 And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the living creatures that He has scattered through them: and He has power to gather them together when He wills. ^{4568 4569}

42.30 Whatever misfortune happens to you is because of the things your hands have wrought and for many (of them) He grants forgiveness. ⁴⁵⁷⁰

42.31 Nor can ye frustrate (ought) (fleeing) through the earth; nor have ye besides Allah anyone to protect or to help. ⁴⁵⁷¹

42.32 And among His Signs are the ships smooth-running through the ocean (tall) as mountains. ⁴⁵⁷²

42.33 If it be His Will He can still the Wind: then would they become motionless on the back of the (ocean). Verily in this are Signs for everyone who patiently perseveres and is grateful. ⁴⁵⁷³

42.34 Or He can cause them to perish because of the (evil) which (the men) have earned: but much doth He forgive.

42.35 But let those know who dispute about Our Signs that there is for them no way of escape. ⁴⁵⁷⁴

42.36 Whatever ye are given (here) is (but) a convenience of this Life: but that which is with Allah is better and more lasting: (it is) for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord; ^{4575 4576}

42.37 Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds and when they are angry even then forgive; ⁴⁵⁷⁷

42.38 Those who hearken to their Lord and establish regular prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance; ^{4578 4579}

42.39 And those who when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves. ⁴⁵⁸⁰

42.40 The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation His reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong. ^{4581 4582 4583}

42.41 But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong (done) to them against such there is no cause of blame. ⁴⁵⁸⁴

42.42 The blame is only against those who oppress men with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land defying right and justice: for such there will be a Penalty grievous. ⁴⁵⁸⁵

42.43 But indeed if any show patience and forgive that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. ⁴⁵⁸⁶

42.44 For any whom Allah leaves astray there is no protector thereafter and thou wilt see the wrongdoers when in sight of the Penalty Say: "Is there any way (to effect) a return?" ⁴⁵⁸⁷

42.45 And thou wilt see them brought forward to the (Penalty) in a humble frame of mind because of (their) disgrace (and) looking with a stealthy glance. And the Believers will say: "Those are indeed in loss who have given the perdition their own selves and those belonging to them on the Day of Judgement. Behold! truly the wrongdoers are in a lasting Penalty!" ^{4588 4589}

42.46 And no protectors have they to help them other than Allah: and for any whom Allah leaves to stray there is no way (to the Goal). ⁴⁵⁹⁰

42.47 Hearken ye to your Lord before there come a Day which there will be no putting back because of (the ordainment of) Allah! That Day there will be for you no place of refuge nor will there be for you any room for denial (of your sins)! ^{4591 4592}

42.48 If then they turn away We have not sent thee as a guard over them. Thy duty is but to convey (the Message). And truly when We give man a taste of Mercy from Ourselves He doth exult thereat but when some ill happens to him on account of the deeds which His hands have sent forth truly then is man ungrateful! ^{4593 4594}

42.49 To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills (and plans). He bestows (children) male or female according to His Will (and Plan). ⁴⁵⁹⁵

42.50 Or He bestows both males and females and He leaves barren whom He will: for He is Full of knowledge and power. ⁴⁵⁹⁶

42.51 It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration of from behind a veil or by the sending of a Messenger to reveal with Allah's permission what Allah wills: for He is Most High Most Wise. ^{4597 4598 4599 4600}

42.52 And thus have We by Our command sent inspiration to thee: thou knowest not (before) what was Revelation and what was Faith; but We have made the (Qur'an) a Light wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will; and verily thou dost guide (men) to the Straight Way ^{4601 4602}

42.53 The Way of Allah to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth: Behold (how) all affairs tend towards Allah! ⁴⁶⁰³

Author Comments

4526 - See Introduction to S. xi.

4527 - This Sura has a double set of Abbreviated Letters, one in the first verse, and one in this second verse. No authoritative explanation of this second set is available, and I refrain from speculation. See Appendix I.

4528 - Inspiration is full of Power and Wisdom, and both these qualities are derived from the Power and Wisdom of Allah. Unlike human power, this Power is necessarily good and merciful; unlike human wisdom, this Wisdom is necessarily complete and indisputable.

4529 - We cannot conceive the distance which separates the Most High from the highest of His creatures, Allah Most Great from the greatest of the beings that we can imagine. The highest heavens are mentioned in the next verse, as well as the noblest creatures that we can imagine, the angels.

4530 - How can we conceive of sublimity and greatness in a higher degree than this, that the highest heavens are almost ready to burst asunder by His Glory, which is higher than all?

4531 - The angels are the noblest and purest beings of whom we can conceive. They reflect on the one side Allah's Glory and Praise, and on the other, two other attributes of Allah, that look towards His erring creatures, viz., Forgiveness and Mercy. The two sets of attributes are complementary. They thus proclaim in their own being and in their prayers the Greatness and unbounded Goodness of Allah.

4532 - We now come to the contrast, the folly and ingratitude of man. But that cannot escape its final doom in the Universal Plan of Allah. Only Judgment rests with Allah. A Prophet is not responsible for the conduct of men, in a system which permits some limited free-will and personal responsibility.

4533 - The point of the Qur-an being in Arabic is that it is plain and intelligible to the people through whom and among whom it was promulgated; see next clause.

4534 - The City of Makkah. See n. 913 to vi. 92. This is undoubtedly a Makkan verse. Even apart from the Qibla, Makkah is the centre of Islam, and "all around her" is the whole world.

4535 - The contrast is again emphasised, as explained in the Summary.

4536 - Cf. v. 51, and n. 761. It is one of the Signs of Allah that He has made us different, that we may be tried in the exercise of our will, and that we may reach, through righteousness and Faith, our highest development, and enjoy His gifts of Mercy and Grace. But we must not become contentious, and fall into evil: we must understand our own limitations. Otherwise we shall lose His grace and protection.

4537 - There can be no greater ingratitude or blasphemy than to worship false gods, or to seek protection from things that have no power, when Allah-Who has power over all things-is always seeking to protect and cherish His creatures, and placing in their way all the means for attaining the best in them.

4538 - In the highest issues of life men may see things differently. If their differences arise merely from selfish motives, or narrowness of vision, they are sinning against their own souls. If their differences arise from sincere but mistaken notions, their proper course is not to form divisions and sects, or to increase contention and hatred among men, but to leave all things to Allah, trusting in Him and turning to Him in all difficulties. The final decision in all things is with Him.

4539 - The mystery of sex has not only its physical aspects, but its moral and spiritual aspects, and therefore mankind is in this respect differentiated from the lower animals, and among mankind the grades and qualities are suggested by the phrase "from among yourselves". As regards cattle, they are specially mentioned among the animals, as having special relations with man and specially subserving his needs, not only in the physical sphere, but also in the matter of transport, which is the key to all civilization and culture: Cf. xxxvi. 71-73; also xxiii. 21-22, where they are compared to ships, the symbol of international intercourse.

4540 - "Sustenance", here as elsewhere, stands for all things that support every phase of life, physical, social, intellectual, or spiritual. Cf. x. 59, n. 1447. The source of all gifts is Allah; His bounty is inexhaustible, and He gives to all; but He does not give to all in the same measure, because, out of the fullness of His knowledge and wisdom, He can judge best what is best for any of His creatures.

4541 - Allah's Religion is the same in essence, whether given, for example, to Noah, Abraham, Moses, or

Jesus, or to our holy Prophet. The source of unity is the revelation from Allah. In Islam it is "established" as an institution, and does not remain merely a vague suggestion.

4542 - Faith, Duty or Religion, is not a matter to dispute about. The formation of sects is against the very principle of Religion and Unity. What we should strive for is steadfastness in duty and faith, and unity among mankind.

4543 - Unity, unselfishness, love for Allah and man,-these things are inconsistent with selfish aggrandizement, unjust suppression of our fellow-creatures, false worship, and false conduct to our brethren. Hence the Gospel of Unity, though it is in complete accord with the pure pattern after which Allah made us, is yet hard to those who love self and falsehood. But Grace is free to all, and in His wise Plan, He will specially select Teachers to show the Way to humanity, and no one who turns to Him will lack guidance.

4544 - Cf. ii. 213. If you reject Truth after it has reached you, it can only be through selfish contumacy or envy.

4545 - Cf. x. 19, and n. 1407. Allah's decree has allowed a certain Term during which a sinner has the chance of repentance and forgiveness. Were it not so, sin would be punished at once, and the matter would be decided straightway. So also, when people reject Truth from selfish or contumacious motives, they get rope: perchance they may repent.

4546 - Cf. xiv. 9 and n. 1884. "Those who have inherited the Book" are the People of the Book, of the ages since the Book or Revelation came to them. Referring to the Jews and Christians, contemporary with our Prophet, how true it is that they were broken up into hostile sects which hated and persecuted each other! Islam came to unite them, and it did. For the present phases of Christianity and Judaism are of later growth.

4547 - How beautifully the mission of Islam is commended in this verse! (1) The more sectarianism and division there is in the world, the more need is there for the Gospel of Unity. (2) It must steadfastly pursue its way. (3) It must not be deflected by worldly or political motives. (4) Its faith must be directly in Allah and

in Allah's Revelation. "The Book" mentioned here covers all the revelations sent by Allah to His prophets. (5) it must judge justly between warring factions, as the Religion of Peace and Unity.

4548 - The Mission of Islam is further described. (6) The God whom it preaches is not an exclusive God: He is the Lord of the Worlds: to any given person, of whatever faith, 'He is your Allah, as well as mine.' (7) Our Faith is not a question of words; it is deeds which decide; each one of us has personal responsibility for his own conduct. (8) There is no cause of contention whatever, when we preach Unity, Truth, and the Hereafter. (9) If you have doubts, the final arbiter is Allah, and His pleasure is our Goal.

4549 - After He has been accepted. The disputants are the Unbelievers who pugnaciously assault the minds of Believers after the Believers have by conviction accepted Faith in Allah as leading to spiritual Light. Such disputation is futile. An inner spiritual experience can never be shaken by dialectical assaults. On the contrary such disputations recoil on the heads of those who indulge in them. Allah's Wrath is on them in this life, and the terrible Penalty of the Hereafter must inevitably follow their evil plots against Truth.

4550 - Revelation is like a balance, an instrument placed by Allah in our hands, by which we can weigh all moral issues, all questions of right and wrong in conduct. We must do so constantly. For the Judgment in any given case may come at any time: it may be quite near, and we must always be prepared. The Balance may also refer to the God given faculty by which man can judge between right and wrong.

4551 - The Unbelievers do not believe in Judgment and laugh at it. They say defiantly, "If there is to be a punishment, let it come at once!" The threefold answer to this will be found in n. 1810 to xiii. 6. With those who believe, the case is different. They know that the Hereafter is an awful Reality, and prepare for it. They see clearly on what a wrong track the scoffers are!

4552 - Latif: so kind, gracious, and understanding, as to bestow gifts finely suited to the needs of the recipients. For the various meanings of Latif, see n. 2844 to xxii. 63. Cf. also xii. 100.

4553 - "Servants" here seems to include all men, just and unjust, for Allah provides for them all.

4554 - Sustenance, i.e., provision for all needs. "To whom He pleases" is not restrictive, but modal. 'Allah provides for all, but His provision is according to His wise Will and Plan, and not according to people's extravagant demands.' He can provide for all, because He has complete power and can carry out His Will. A further comment will be found in the next verse.

4555 - The parable is from the efforts of the husbandman, who ploughs and prepares the soil, sows the seed, weeds in due season, and reaps the harvest, You reap as you sow. But Allah will add manifold advantages for spiritual tilth. To those who are only engrossed in the vanities of this world, something may accrue in this world, but the next world is closed to them.

4556 - Nothing can exist without the permission of Allah. Can people, who indulge in false worship say: "Why does Allah permit it?" The answer is: "a certain latitude is allowed with the grant of a limited form of free will. When the time for Judgment comes, the Punishment is sure." See n. 1810 to xiii. 6. Decree (or Word) of Judgment: See n. 1407 to x. 19.

4557 - The chief feature of the punishment of wrong-doing is that the minds of the wrong-doers are haunted with terror on account of their own guilty conscience. They cannot possibly escape the weight of that terror.

4558 - In contrast with the withering terror of the wrong-doers is the ease and rational happiness of those who do good. "On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (ii. 38). Their wills will have been purified, and they shall have all that they shall desire, "before their Lord". That is, their highest Bliss will be the sight of their Lord. No higher Bounty can they wish for.

4559 - Heaven may be pictured to our minds in various forms. This is one of the highest, and Allah announces it freely to the righteous.

4560 - No sort of tangible reward does the prophet of Allah ask for proclaiming the Glad Tidings of Allah. But at least he has the right to ask that his kith and kin should not persecute him and put all sorts of obstacles in his way, as did the Quraish against the holy Prophet.

4561 - Cf. xxxv. 29-30, and notes 3915 (for increase) and 3917 (for Allah's appreciation of service).

4562 - If any one has a doubt about a prophet's mission, let him look at the prophet's life, at his work, at his character. Allah loves Truth, not Falsehood. Allah's aid goes with Truth, not with Falsehood. The beauty and power of Allah's Word cannot be found in Falsehood. The false man's heart would be sealed, not expanded to new heights, as is that of the Message-bearer of Allah.

4563 - Whatever the sin, Allah's Mercy is open to sincere Repentance, at all times, until the decree of condemnation issues.

4564 - To the prayers of the righteous He listens, and He gives them of His Bounty beyond their deserts. Every time they do a little good, they are increased in their goodness. Every right impulse or aspiration is strengthened and leads to progressive spiritual advancement.

4565 - It may be objected that all prayers, even of good people, are not answered. The reply is: (1) that even everyone who is good does not necessarily know what is best for him, for the values in this life are curiously distorted; and (2) on account of their want of knowledge, if everyone got all he asked for, there would be chaos and confusion, and "transgression beyond bounds through the earth", for the different interests are so intermingled and balanced that some measure must be observed in granting people's wishes. This measure is best supplied by the watchful care of Allah and His perfect knowledge of all our real needs.

4566 - "As He pleases" is here almost equivalent to "as He thinks best".

4567 - That men should get such a blessing as rain when they expect it according to ordinary calculations or probabilities does not impress them, as it is a daily occurrence. But Allah's mercy is more than this. It comes to our aid even when all hope is lost, and gives us new chances and new openings where we least expect them. His quality of cherishing and protecting His creatures is always active, and what higher praise can we give?

4568 - Dabbatun: beasts, living, crawling creatures of all kinds: see n. 166 to ii. 164. Similarly in xxiv. 45, and other passages, the word is used for living creatures of all kinds, life generally, whose material basis is the mysterious thing which science calls protoplasm. The more our biological knowledge increases, the more do we marvel at the unity of Life on the one hand, and its diversity on the other.

4569 - Life is not confined to our one little Planet. It is a very old speculation to imagine some life like human life on the planet Mars. Though no scientific demonstration is possible, it is reasonable to suppose that Life in some form or other is scattered through some of the millions of heavenly bodies scattered through space. What a wonderful Sign of Allah! The Almighty Who created such countless beings has surely the power to bring them together.

4570 - All evil, all sorrow, all pain and affliction, are things not normal, things twisted from the pure and holy nature as created by Allah's hands. As far as man is concerned, his misfortunes are but the consequences of the things he has done. He must bear personal responsibility for them and not throw the blame on others.

4571 - Every evil deed or word or thought must have its evil consequences: but if Allah forgives anything,-and He forgives much, yet no one imagine that he has defeated-or can defeat-Allah's. Will or Plan. The only help or protection that is possible is from Allah. Cf. xxix. 22.

4572 - The great and stately ships are appealed to again and again as being among the Signs of Allah, from many aspects. The aspect referred to here is how the great sailing ship runs prosperously as long as "the breath of heaven fills the sail", and what a miserable helpless creature she becomes when she once becomes becalmed. Students of English literature will remember the striking picture which Coleridge draws in his "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The becalmed ship is as it were in the grip of Death because of the crime which the sailor had committed, and his mind feels psychologically the full force of the Sign. By analogy we can apply this to other craft: the steamer is not free from other dangers of the sea, nor air-craft from numerous dangers of the air.

4573 - If we study such Signs in the right spirit, we learn the highest lessons for our spiritual life: on the one hand, patient perseverance with reliance on Allah, and on the other a feeling or attitude of grateful thanks to Allah, that He enables us to achieve so much in spite of our shortcomings, and forgives in us so much that deserves punishment and disaster.

4574 - If we treat Allah's Signs in the wrong spirit, i.e., contumaciously reject them or constantly dispute about them instead of trying to understand them, we are told that such tactics will avail us nothing. we cannot escape the consequences of our sins. The only way to escape is by repentance on our part and the grant of mercy by Allah.

4575 - Any good (or ill) which is our lot is only a temporary phase to serve the convenience of this life. But there is a higher good, which comes from Allah's own Presence. Such good is both superior in quality, and more permanent. In the same way, any ills that we may suffer in this life, have reference only to the conditions of this our life of probation. The ills that we "earn" in our spiritual Life-such as deprivation of Allah's Grace-are far more momentous and permanent.

4576 - The higher and more permanent gifts which come from Allah's Presence are for those who truly worship and serve Allah. These are described by nine of their characteristics: viz. (1) they have Faith: and it follows that (2) they trust in Allah, instead of running after false standards or values: (3) they eschew the more serious offences against Allah's Law, and of course keep clear of any offences against sex (indecencies); (4) while knowing that they are not themselves perfect, they are ready to forgive others, even though they are sorely tried with anger and provocation; for the rest see n. 4578.

4577 - Here we are speaking of the ordinary man or woman who tries to follow Allah's Law: he or she is not perfect, but at least eschews the major breaches of conduct. For those higher in spiritual degree there is of course a stricter standard. But all are entitled to the blessing of Islam, whatever their degree.

4578 - Continuing the enumeration of the characteristics described in n. 4576 above, we have the following further qualities in those who wish to serve Allah. (5) They are ready at all times to hearken to Allah's Signs, or to listen to the admonitions of prophets of Allah, and to follow the true Path, as they understand it; (6) they keep personal contact with Allah, by habits of Prayer and Praise; (7) their conduct in

life is open and determined by mutual Consultation between those who are entitled to voice, e.g., in private domestic affairs, as between husband and wife, or other responsible members of the household; in affairs of business, as between partners or parties interested; and in State affairs, as between rulers and ruled, or as between different departments of administration, to preserve the unity of administration; (8) they do not forget Charity, or the help due to their weaker brethren, out of the wealth or gifts or talents or opportunities, which Allah has provided for themselves; and (9) when other people use them spitefully, they are not cowed down or terrorised into submission and acceptance of evil, but stand up for their rights within the limits mentioned in verse 40.

4579 - "Consultation." This is the key-word of the Sura, and suggests the ideal way in which a good man should conduct his affairs, so that, on the one hand, he may not become too egotistical, and, on the other, he may not lightly abandon the responsibilities which devolve on him as a Personality whose development counts in the sight of Allah. See the points in head (7) under n. 4578 above. This principle was applied to its fullest extent by the holy Prophet in his private and public life, and was fully acted upon by the early rulers of Islam. Modern representative government is an attempt-by no means perfect-to apply this principle in State affairs. See my Religious Polity of Islam.

4580 - This follows from the high value attached to an individual soul's Personality in Islam. Cf. last note. There are four possible situations that may arise: an individual may have to stand up against an oppressor (1) for his own trampled rights, or (2) for the rights of others within his ken; or (3) a community may have similarly to stand up for its own rights collectively: or (4) for the rights of others. Nos. 2, 3, and 4 are considered highly meritorious for all, though few have the courage or the spirit to rise to so high a standard. No. 1 is specially liable to abuse on account of man's selfishness; Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are also abused by men pretending to motives of public good when they are serving their own personal interests or idiosyncracies; hence the qualifications mentioned in the next four verses and the notes thereto.

4581 - See last note. When you stand up for rights, either on private or public grounds, it may be through processes of law, or by way of private defence in so far as the law permits private action. But in all cases you must not seek a compensation greater than the injury suffered. The most you can do is to demand equal redress, i.e., a harm equivalent to the harm done to you. Even this may serve to curb your unregenerate soul, or a community bent on revenge. But the ideal mode is not to slake your thirst for vengeance, but to follow better ways leading to the reform of the offender or his reconciliation. See xli. 34, and xxiii. 96. You can take steps to prevent repetition, by physical or moral means; the best moral means would be to turn hatred into friendship by forgiveness and love. In that case the compensation or reward (if we must use such terms) is infinitely greater, for it wins the good pleasure of Allah. But this active righting of wrongs, whether by physical or by moral or spiritual means, which are commended as better, is an antithesis to the monkish doctrine, when you are smitten on one cheek, to turn the other also. This would not suppress, but encourage wrong-doing. It is practised by none but poltroons, and is preached only by hypocrites, or men who want to make slaves of others by depriving them of the power of self-defence. It occurs in two of the four canonical Gospels (Matt. v. 39, and Luke vi. 29), but we need not therefore assume that it was preached by Jesus.

4582 - To love Allah is the highest motive of our conduct, for it leads to the love of Allah's creatures; to win the approbation and love of Allah, is the highest reward, far transcending any compensation or satisfaction we can obtain in this life.

4583 - Allah does not love those who do wrong. If, therefore we tolerate wrong, or encourage wrong by allowing it to run rampant when we can prevent it, we fail in our duty to Allah.

4584 - Such people are not to be blamed, though they are following the lower law. The blame is on those who arrogantly ride rough-shod over the land, oppressing people with grievous wrong. See next verse.

4585 - The fact that men seek the lower rather than the higher Law is itself a result of arrogant wrongdoing of which the type was the Pharaoh who claimed to be "your Lord Most High" and oppressed the Israelites, and kept his own people under slavery and subjection, and the false glamour of magic and deception.

4586 - It is harder to be patient and forgive, and yet to get wrongs righted, as was done by the holy Prophet, than to bluster about and "punish the guilty" or "teach them lessons". It may look like futility or lack of purpose, but in reality it is the highest and noblest form of courage and resolution. And it may carry out the purpose of reform and the suppression of evil even better than stem punishment. The gentleness of innocence often "persuades where stronger measures fail." But of course circumstances alter cases, and there is some allowance also to be made for the personal equation of the men you have to deal with: in some cases severity may be called for, but it should be from a strict judicial motive, and not merely from personal anger or spite or any lower motive in disguise.

4587 - When the actual consequences of evil are in sight, the foolish sinner wishes that it were possible to get back to the life of probation. But he neglected or abused it and rejected Allah's Grace all the time. How can he then be restored to a closed chapter of his life?

4588 - They were very arrogant in their probationary life. Now they will be humbled to the dust. And they

will be in utter despair and misery. They will not be able to see the favours and good things of the other life (Cf. xx. 124-126). Even their misery, which will face them as a terrible Reality, they will only be able to look at askance, so thoroughly cowed will be their spirit.

4589 - This will be their thought, and their realised experience: 'after all, any troubles and sorrows, any persecutions and taunts which they suffered in the life of probation from the enemies of truth, were of no consequence; the real loss was that revealed at the Judgment at the restoration of true values; the wicked and the arrogant have lost their own souls, and have brought to perdition all who attached themselves to them and followed their evil ways; and this Penalty is one that will endure! How much more real it is!'

4590 - The argument begun in verse 44 above is here rounded off. 'If once men finally cut themselves off from Allah's guidance and care, they will have no protection whatever. All their false objects of worship will only mislead them further and further. How they will wish the fact blotted out when they are in sight of Judgment, and vainly wish for time to be reversed! They will be in the Fire, while the men whom they despised and rejected will have reached the final Goal! For them there will be no such way!'

4591 - The Day of Judgment is inevitable. Allah has ordained it, and it cannot in any way be put back.

4592 - At Judgment no one can escape the consequences of his crimes or deeds. And no one can disavow them or deny them, or by any chance pretend that they do not apply to him.

4593 - The warning is now given, that men may repent and do good, and pray for Allah's Mercy and Grace. If the warning is not heeded or is rejected, the prophet of Allah is not responsible for bringing about the Penalty or for forcing people to come to the right Path. He is not a guard set over them to free them from the need of exercising their limited free-will.

4594 - Cf. xxx. 36. It is a sad reflection that men, when they receive some gift out of Allah's Mercy, exult in their good fortune and attribute it to some merit in themselves, instead of to the Grace and Mercy of Allah, thus missing the real lesson of Life. On the other hand, when they are in trouble, due to their own errors and shortcomings, they fall into despair and blame Allah, instead of blaming themselves. This is rank ingratitude. So they miss the true lesson of Life in that case also.

4595 - Verses 49-50 deal, in their ordinary meaning, with Allah's creative power replete with knowledge and continued purpose, contrasted with man's instincts and gropings after knowledge. The mystery of sex and parenthood is referred to in a new light. With reference to children, a parent is often spoken of as the "author" of their being. The growth of population and the proportion of males and females in it have various sociological and psychological implications; yet how little do parents really know about them? If advancing knowledge threw light on what may be called the mechanical aspects of the question, the profounder problems touched by it are beyond the reach of man. Yet they are not governed by chance. Allah has a meaning and purpose in all things, and His power is complete to carry out His purpose.

4596 - To parents themselves it is a mystery why a male or female child is given at any birth, or how the balance of the two sexes is made up in a family or in large groups of mankind, or why in some cases the womb is barren and the would be parents are denied the joys and responsibilities of parenthood. But each individual human soul is precious in the Plan of Allah, and all these variations, besides their reactions on parents and on society, have a purpose to fulfil in the large Plan of Allah.

4597 - This leads us on to the higher spiritual meaning of verses 49-50, as leading up to verses 51-53. Man is but a speck in Allah's creation. His growth and family relationships are not by any means comparable to Allah's creative acts, whose various stages are referred to in n. 120 to ii. 117, n. 916 to vi. 94, and n. 923 to vi. 98. That being so in the mysteries of man's daily life, how much more profound is the contrast between man and Allah in the apprehension of the higher spiritual problems concerned with Revelation? How can man be fit to speak to Allah? He is not fit. But there are three ways in which Allah, in His infinite Mercy, communicates with man, as described in verses 51-53.

4598 - Allah is Most High, Most Wise: man is, in spite of his high destiny, often the lowest of the low (xcv. 5). Yet Allah, out of His infinite Mercy and Grace, has bestowed His revelation on man. How does it come about? Three ways are mentioned: (1) Wahyun, Inspiration; (2) from behind a veil; and (3) by the sending of a Messenger: see the notes following. Wahyun, Inspiration, is interpreted to be of two kinds: (1) a suggestion thrown by Allah into the heart or mind of man, by which man understands the substance of the Message, whether it is a command or prohibition, or an explanation of a great truth; and (2) verbal or literal inspiration, by which the actual words of Allah are conveyed in human language.

4599 - Behind a veil: not of course a material veil, but the veil of Light. Muslim relates a tradition that the Prophet said: "His veil is Light: were He to withdraw it, then would the august splendours of His countenance surely consume everything that comes within His Sight."

4600 - Messenger: Rasul: the angel Gabriel, through whom the revelations were given to the holy Prophet.

4601 - Before the receipt of his mission in his fortieth year, the holy Prophet, though a man of steadfast virtue and purity and unflinching in his search for Truth, was yet unacquainted with Revelation in the highest sense of the term and with the certainty that comes from perfected Faith, or realised nearness to Allah. Ruh, which I have here translated Inspiration has also been understood by some Commentators to refer to the angel Gabriel, the vehicle of Revelation. The Light of the Qur-an made all things clear to man, and to the world.

4602 - The Qur-an and the inspired Prophet who proclaimed it, are here identified. They were a Guide to men, showing the Straight Way. This Way is described in various ways: for example, see i. 6, and n. 22; xviii. 1-2, and notes 2326-27; and xc. 11-18.

4603 - The most comprehensive description of the Straight Way is that it is the Way of Allah, the Way of the Universal Law.

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