INTRODUCTION TO SÛRAT Luqman, 31.

The argument of the Final End of Things is here continued from another point of view. What is Wisdom? Where shall she be found? Will she solve the mysteries of Time and Nature, and that world higher than physical Nature, which brings us nearer to Allah? "Yes," is the answer; "if, as in the advice of Luqman the Wise, human wisdom looks to Allah in true worship, ennobles every act of life with true kindness, but avoids the false indulgence that infringes the divine law,—and in short follows the golden mean of virtue." And this is indicated by every Sign in nature.

The chronology of this Sûra has no significance. In the main, it belongs to the late Makkân period.

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

True Wisdom is firm and enduring, and discerns Allah's Law in the working of His Creation: it looks to the Final End of Things, whose mystery is only known to Allah (xxxii. 20-34).
In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. A. L. M. 3579

2. These are Verses Of the Wise Book. 3580

3. A Guide and a Mercy To the Doers of Good. 3581

4. Those who establish regular Prayer, And give zakat And have sure faith in The Hereafter. 3582

5. These are on (true) guidance From their Lord; and these Are the ones who will prosper.

3579. See n. 25 to ii. 1 and Introduction to S. xxx.

3580. This Sūra relates to Wisdom, and the Qur-ān is appropriately called the Wise Book, or the Book of Wisdom. In verse 12 below there is a reference to Luqmiṣ the Wise. "Wise" in this sense (Ḥakīm) means not only a man versed in knowledge human and divine, but one carrying out in practical conduct (‘amal) the right course in life to the utmost of his power. His knowledge is correct and practical, but not necessarily complete: for no man is perfect. Such an ideal involves the conception of a man of heroic action as well as of deep and workman-like knowledge of nature and human nature,—not merely dreams or speculation. That ideal was fulfilled in a most remarkable degree in the holy Prophet, and in the sacred Book which was revealed through him. "The Wise Book" (Kitāb-ul-Ḥakīm) is one of the titles of the Qur-ān.

3581. A guide to all, and, to those who accept its guidance, a source of mercy as leading them to Salvation.

3582. The righteous are distinguished here by three marks, which are summed up in the phrase "doers of good", viz.: (1) they yearn towards Allah in duty, love, and prayer, (2) they love and serve their fellow-men in charity, (3) they win peace and rest for themselves in the assured hope of the Future.

3583. They get these blessings because they submit their will to Allah's Will and receive His guidance. They will do well in this life (from the highest standpoint) and they will reach their true Goal in the Future.
6. But there are, among men,
Those who purchase idle tales,\(^{3584}\)
Without knowledge (or meaning),
To mislead (men) from the Path
Of Allah and throw ridicule
(On the Path): for such
There will be a humiliating
Chastisement.

7. When Our Signs are rehearsed
To such a one, he turns\(^{3585}\)
Away in arrogance, as if
He heard them not, as if
There were deafness in both
His ears: announce to him
A grievous Chastisement.

8. For those who believe
And work righteous deeds,
There will be Gardens
Of Bliss,—

9. To dwell therein. The promise
Of Allah is true: and He
Is Exalted in power,\(^{3586}\) Wise.

10. He created the heavens
Without any pillars that ye\(^{3587}\)

3584. Life is taken seriously by men who realise the issues that hang upon it. But there are men of a frivolous turn of mind who prefer idle tales to true Realities and they are justly rebuked here. In the time of the holy Prophet there was a pagan Naḍhr ibn al-Ḥārith who preferred Persian romances to the Message of Allah, and turned away ignorant men from the preaching of Allah's Word.

3585. Such men behave as if they had heard nothing of serious import, or laugh at serious teaching. The loss will be their own. They will miss the higher things of life and be left out of Allah's blessings. Ignorance and arrogance are in most cases the causes of their fall.

3586. He is Exalted in power, and can carry out His Will, and nothing can stop the carrying out of His promise. He is also infinitely Wise: His promise is therefore full of meaning: it is not merely without purpose: it has a place in the Universal Plan.

3587. Cf. xiii. 2 and n. 1800.
Can see; He set
On the earth mountains\textsuperscript{3588}
Standing firm, lest it
Should shake with you;
And He scattered through it
Beasts of all kinds.\textsuperscript{3589}
We send down rain\textsuperscript{3590}
From the sky, and produce
On the earth every kind
Of noble creature, in pairs.\textsuperscript{3591}

11. Such is the Creation of Allah:
Now show Me\textsuperscript{3592} what is there
That others besides Him
Have created: nay, but
The Transgressors are
In manifest error.

\textsuperscript{3588} Cf. xvi. 15 and n. 2038.
\textsuperscript{3589} Cf. ii. 164 and n. 166.

\textsuperscript{3590} Note the change of the pronoun at this stage in the verse. Before this, Allah was spoken of in the third person, “He”, and the acts of Creation referred to were acts that in the main were completed when the universe as we see it came into being, though its slow age-long evolution continues. After this, Allah speaks in the first person “We” - the plural of honour, as explained before (see n. 56 to ii. 38); and the processes spoken of are those that go on continually before us, as in the case of rain and the growth of the vegetable kingdom. In some way the creation of the heavens and the earth and animal life on it may be considered impersonal to man, while the processes of rain and vegetation may be considered in special personal relationship to him.

\textsuperscript{3591} I think that sex life in plants is referred to, as in xiii. 3, where see n. 1804, though the pairs here may refer to animals also. “Noble” (\textit{karim}) may refer to the more beneficent plants and trees (and animals), which Allah has created for man’s use.

\textsuperscript{3592} The transition from “We” in the last verse to “Me” in this verse means a still more personal relation to Allah: (see n. 56 to ii. 38): as we are now asked about the true worship of Allah, as against the false worship of others besides Allah.
We bestowed (in the past) Wisdom on Luqman: 3593
"Show (thy) gratitude to Allah."
Any who is (so) grateful Does so to the profit Of his own soul: but if Any is ungrateful, verily 3594 Allah is free of all wants, Worthy of all praise.

Behold, Luqman said 3595 To his son admonishing him “O my son! Join not in worship (Others) with Allah: for False worship is indeed The highest wrong-doing.”

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

3593. The sage Luqmān, after whom this Sūra is called, belongs to Arab tradition. Very little is known of his life. He is usually associated with a long life, and his title is Mu‘ammār (the long-lived). He is referred by some to the age of the ‘Ād people, for whom see n. 1040 to vii. 65. He is the type of perfect wisdom. It is said that he belonged to a humble station in life, being a slave or a carpenter, and that he refused worldly power and a kingdom. Many instructive apologetics are credited to him, similar to Aesop's Fables in Greek tradition. The identification of Luqmān and Aesop has no historical foundation, though it is true that the traditions about them have influenced each other.

3594. Cf. xiv. 8. The basis of the moral Law is man's own good, and not any benefit to Allah, for Allah is above all needs, and “worthy of all praise”; i.e., even in praising Him, we do not advance His glory. When we obey His Will, we bring our position into conformity with our own nature as made by Him.

3595. Luqmān is held up as a pattern of wisdom, because he realised the best in a wise life in this world, as based upon the highest Hope in the inner life. To him, as in Islam, true human wisdom is also divine wisdom: the two cannot be separated. The beginning of all wisdom, therefore, is conformity with the Will of Allah (xxx1. 12). That means that we must understand our relations to Him and worship Him aright (xxx1. 13). Then we must be good to mankind, beginning with our own parents (xxx1. 14). For the two duties are not diverse, but one. Where they appear to conflict, there is something wrong with the human will (see n. 3597).
3596. The set of milk teeth in a human child is completed at the age of two years, which is therefore the natural extreme limit for breast-feeding. In our artificial life the duration is much less.

3597. Where the duty to man conflicts with the duty to Allah, it means that there is something wrong with the human will, and we should obey Allah rather than man. But even here, it does not mean that we should be arrogant or insolent. To parents and those in authority, we must be kind, considerate, and courteous, even where they command things which we should not do and therefore disobedience becomes our highest duty.

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

3598. In any apparent conflict of duties our standard should be Allah’s Will, as declared to us by His command. That is the way of those who love Allah: and their motive in disobedience to parents or human authority where disobedience is necessary by Allah’s Law is not self-willed rebellion or defiance, but love of Allah, which means the true love of man in the highest sense of the word. And the reason we should give is: “Both you and I have to return to Allah; therefore not only must I follow Allah’s Will, but you must command nothing against Allah’s Will.”
And I will tell you
All that ye did.\textsuperscript{3599}

16. “O my son!” (said Luq\={m}\={a}n),\textsuperscript{3600}
“If there be (but) the weight
Of a mustard-seed and
It were (hidden) in a rock,\textsuperscript{3601}
Or (anywhere) in the heavens or
On earth, Allah will bring it
Forth: for Allah is subtle and
Aware.\textsuperscript{3602}

17. “O my son! establish
Regular prayer, enjoin what is
Just, and forbid what is wrong:
And bear with patient constancy
Whate’er betide thee; for this
Is firmness (of purpose)
In (the conduct of) affairs.

18. “And swell not thy cheek\textsuperscript{3603}
(For pride) at men.

\textsuperscript{3599}. These conflicts may appear to us strange and puzzling in this life. But in Allah’s Presence we shall see their real meaning and significance. It may be that that was one way in which our true mettle could be tested: for it is not easy to disobey and love man at the same time.

\textsuperscript{3600}. Verses 14-15 are not the direct speech of Luq\={m}\={a}n but flow by way of commentary on his teaching. He was speaking as a father to his son, and he could not very well urge respect for himself and draw the son’s attention to the limitations of filial obedience. These verses may be supposed to be general directions flowing from Luq\={m}\={a}n’s teaching to men, and not directed to his son; though in either case, as Luq\={m}\={a}n got wisdom from Allah, it is divine principles that are enunciated.

\textsuperscript{3601}. The mustard-seed is proverbially a small, minute thing, that people may ordinarily pass by. Not so Allah. Further emphasis is laid by supposing the mustard-seed to be hidden beneath a rock or in the cleft of a rock, or to be lost in the spacious expanse of the earth or of the heavens. To Allah everything is known, and He will bring it forth, \emph{i.e.}, take account of it.

\textsuperscript{3602}. For \textit{Latif} as a title applied to Allah, see n. 2844 to xxii. 63.

\textsuperscript{3603}. The word “cheek” in English, too, means arrogance or effrontery, with a slightly different shade added, \textit{viz.}: effrontery from one in an inferior position to one in a superior position. The Arabic usage is wider, and includes smug self-satisfaction and a sense of lofty superiority.
Nor walk in insolence
Through the earth:
For Allah loveth not
Any arrogant boaster.

19. "And be moderate
In thy pace, and lower
Thy voice; for the harshest
Of sounds without doubt
Is the braying of the ass."

SECTION 3.

20. Do ye not see
That Allah has subjected
To your (use) all things
In the heavens and on earth,
And has made His bounties
Flow to you in exceeding
Measure, (both) seen and
unseen?

3604. The "Golden Mean" is the pivot of the philosophy of Luqman as it is of the philosophy of Aristotle and indeed of Islam. And it flows naturally from a true understanding of our relation to Allah and His universe and to our fellow-creatures, especially man. In all things be moderate. Do not go the pace, and do not be stationary or slow. Do not be talkative and do not be silent. Do not be loud and do not be timid or half-hearted. Do not be too confident, and do not be cowed down. If you have patience, it is to give you constancy and determination, that you may bravely carry on the struggle of life. If you have humility, it is to save you from unseemly swagger, not to curb your right spirit and your reasoned determination.

3605. Allah's Creation is independent of man. But Allah, in His infinite mercy, has given man the faculty to subdue the forces of nature and to penetrate through high mysteries with his powers of reason and insight. But this is not merely a question of power. For in His Universal Plan, all are safeguarded. But man's destiny, as far as we can see, is noble to the highest degree.

3606. Allah's grace and bounties work for us at all times. Sometimes we see them, and sometimes we do not. In things which we can apprehend with our senses, we can see Allah's grace, but even in them, sometimes it works beyond the sphere of our knowledge. In the inner or spiritual world, sometimes, when our vision is clear, we can see it working, and often we are not conscious of it. But it works all the same.
Yet there are among men
Those who dispute about Allah,
Without knowledge and without
Guidance, and without a Book\(^{3607}\)
To enlighten them!

21. When they are told to follow
The (Revelation) that Allah
Has sent down, they say:
"Nay, we shall follow
The ways that we found
Our fathers (following)."\(^{3608}\)
What! even if it is
Satan beckoning them
To the Chastisement
Of the (Blazing) Fire?

22. Whoever submits
His whole self to Allah,
And is a doer of good,
Has grasped indeed
The firmest hand-hold:\(^{3609}\)
And to Allah shall
All things return.\(^{3610}\)

23. But if any reject Faith,
Let not his rejection
Grieve thee: to Us\(^{3611}\)

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3607. Such men lack knowledge, as they make no use of their intellects but are swayed by their passions; they lack guidance, as they are impatient of control; and the fruits of revelation, or spiritual insight, do not reach them, as they reject Faith and Revelation.

3608. They do not realise that in the spiritual world, as in the physical world, there is constant progress for the live ones: they are spiritually dead, as they are content to stand on ancestral ways, many of them evil, and leading to perdition.

3609. Cf. ii. 256 and n. 301.

3610. Cf. xxii. 41. Everything goes back to Allah. He is our final Goal, as He is the final Goal of all things.

3611. The man of God should not grieve because people reject Faith. He should do his duty and leave the rest to Allah. Every soul must return to Allah for his reckoning. Allah knows everything, and His Universal Plan is full of wisdom.
Is their Return, and We
Shall tell them the truth
Of their deeds: for Allah
Knows well all that is
In (men's) hearts.

24. We grant them their pleasure
For a little while:3612
In the end shall We
Drive them to
A chastisement unrelenting.

25. If thou ask them,
Who it is that created
The heavens and the earth.3613
They will certainly say,
"Allah", Say: "Praise be to
Allah!"3614

But most of them
Know not.

26. To Allah belong all things
In heaven and earth: verily
Allah is He (that is)
Free of all wants,
Worthy of all praise.3615

3612. Cf. ii. 126. The respite in this life is of short duration. The ultimate Penalty of Evil is such as cannot be quenched. Cf. xiv. 17. It will be too late then to repent.

3613. Cf. xxiii. 84-89, and xxix. 61 and n. 3493. Men will acknowledge that Allah created the heavens and the earth, and yet fail to understand the love and goodness of Allah in continuing to cherish and maintain them with His gifts. Even if they allow this, they sometimes yet fall short of the corollary, that He is the only One to be worshipped, and run after their own false gods in the shapes of their fancies and lusts. They do not do the duties which, if they rightly understood their own nature and position, they should take a delight in doing.

3614. This ejaculation expresses our satisfaction that at least this is recognised,—that the Creator of the whole world is Allah. It is a pity that they do not go further and recognise other facts and duties (see the last note).

3615. Cf. above, xxxi. 12. There was begun the argument about showing gratitude to Allah, introducing Luqmān's teaching and philosophy. Such gratitude is shown by our understanding His love and doing our duty to Him by serving our fellow-men. For Allah =
27. And if all the trees
On earth were pens
And the Ocean (were ink),
With seven Oceans behind it
To add to its (supply),
Yet would not the Words\textsuperscript{3616}
of Allah be exhausted
(In the writing): for Allah
Is Exalted in power,
Full of Wisdom.

28. And your creation
Or your resurrection
Is in no wise but
As an individual soul\textsuperscript{3617}
For Allah is He Who
Hears and sees (all things).

29. Seest thou not that
Allah merges Night into Day\textsuperscript{3618}
And He merges Day into Night;

\textsuperscript{3616} Words of Allah": his wonderful Signs and Commandments are infinite and cannot be expressed if all the trees were made into pens, and all the wide Ocean, multiplied seven times, were made into ink. Any Book of His Revelation would deal with matters which man can understand and use in his life: there are things that man can never fathom. Nor would any praise that we could write with infinite resources be adequate to describe His power, glory, and wisdom.

\textsuperscript{3617} Allah's greatness and infinitude are such that He can create and cherish not only a whole mass, but each individual soul, and He can follow its history and doings until the final Judgment. This shows not only Allah's glory and Omniscience and Omnipotence: it also shows the value of each individual soul in His eyes, and lifts individual responsibility right up into relations with Him.

\textsuperscript{3618} Cf. xxii. 61 and n. 2841. Even when we can form a conception of Allah's infinitude by His dealings with each individual in His Creation as in verse 28 above, it is still inadequate. What is an individual himself? What is his relation to the universal Laws of Allah? In outer nature we can see that there is no clear-cut line between night and day: each merges into the other. Yet the sun and moon obey definite laws. Though =
that He has subjected the sun
And the moon (to His Law),
Each running its course
For a term appointed; and
That Allah is well acquainted
With all that ye do?

30. That is because Allah is
The Truth and because
Whatever else they invoke\(^{3619}\)
Besides Him is Falsehood;
And because Allah,-He is
The Most High, Most Great.

SECTION 4.

31. Seest thou not that
The ships sail through
The Ocean by the grace
Of Allah?-that He may
Show you of His Signs?
Verily in this are Signs
For all who constantly persevere\(^{3620}\)
And give thanks.

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\(^{3619}\) Cf. xxii. 62 and note 2842 and 2843. All the wonderful complexities,
gradations, and nuances, that we find in Creation, are yet blended in one harmonious
whole, that obeys Law and exemplifies Order. They therefore point to the One True God.
He is the only Eternal Reality. Anything put up in competition or equality with Him is
only Falsehood. For He is higher and greater than anything we can imagine.

\(^{3620}\) Even the things that man makes are, as using the forces of Nature, evidence
of the grace of Allah, Who has subdued these wonderful forces to the use of man. But
this gift of mastery can only be understood and appreciated by constant perseverance,
combined with a recognition of the divine gifts (“giving thanks”). \(\textit{Sabār}\) is an intensive
form from \(\textit{sabr}\) and I have indicated it by the adverb “constantly”.

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= they seem to go on for ever, yet their existence and duration themselves are but an atom
in Allah’s great universe. How much more “merging” and imperceptible gradation there
is in the inner and spiritual world? Our actions themselves cannot be classified and
ticketed and labelled when examined in relation to motives and circumstances. Yet they
are like an open book before Allah.
32. When a wave covers them
Like the canopy (of clouds),
They call upon Allah,
Offering Him sincere devotion.\textsuperscript{3621}
But when He has delivered them
Safely to land, there are
Among them those that falter\textsuperscript{3622}
Between (right and wrong).
But none reject Our Signs
Except only a perfidious
Ungrateful (wretch)!

33. O mankind! do your duty
To your Lord and fear
(The coming of) a Day
When no father can avail
Aught for his son, nor
A son avail aught
For his father.\textsuperscript{3623}
Verily, the promise of Allah
Is true: let not then
This present life deceive you,
Nor let the Chief Deceiver\textsuperscript{3624}
Deceive you about Allah.

\textsuperscript{3621} Cf. vii. 29. Unlike the people mentioned in the last verse, who constantly seek Allah's help and give thanks for His mercies by using them aright and doing their duty, there is a class of men whose worship is merely inspired by terror. When they are in physical danger—the only kind of danger they appreciate,—e.g., in a storm at sea, they genuinely think of Allah. But once the danger is past, they become indifferent or wish to appear good while dallying with evil. See next verse.

\textsuperscript{3622} They halt between two opinions. They are not against good, but they will not eschew evil. They are a contrast to those who "constantly persevere and give thanks". But such an attitude amounts really to "perfidious ingratitude".

\textsuperscript{3623} On the Day of Reckoning no one can help another. The most loving father cannot help his son or be a substitute for him, and \textit{vice versa}. Each will have his own personal responsibilities.

\textsuperscript{3624} The Chief Deceiver is Satan. It may make us forget that Time is fleeting and delude us by suggesting that the Reckoning may not come, whereas it is certain to come, because Allah's promise is true. We must not play with Time nor be deceived by appearances. The Day may come to-day or to-morrow or when we least expect it.
3625. The question of Knowledge or Mystery governs both clauses here, *viz.*: Rain and Wombs. In fact it governs all the five things mentioned in this verse: *viz.* (1) the Hour; (2) Rain; (3) the Birth of a new Life (Wombs); (4) our Physical Life from day to day; (5) our Death. See n. 3627 below. As regards Rain we are asked to contemplate how and when it is sent down. The moisture may be sucked up by the sun's heat in the Arabian Sea or the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean near East Africa, or in the Lake Region in Central Africa. The winds drive it hither and thither across thousands of miles, or it may be, only short distances. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." No doubt it obeys certain physical Laws established by Allah, but how these Laws are interlocked, one with another! Meteorology, gravity, hydrostatics and dynamics, climatology, hygrometry, and a dozen other sciences are involved, and no man can completely master all of them, and yet this relates to only one of the millions of facts in physical nature, which are governed by Allah's Knowledge and Law. The whole vegetable kingdom is primarily affected by Rain. The mention of Wombs brings in the mystery of animal Life, Embryology, Sex, and a thousand other things. Who can tell—-to take man alone—how long it will remain in the womb, whether it will be born alive, what sort of a new individual it will be,—a blessing or a curse to its parents, or to Society?

3626. "Earn" here, as elsewhere, means not only "earn one's livelihood" in a physical sense, but also to reap the consequences (good or ill) of one's conduct generally. The whole sentence practically means; "no man knows what the morrow may bring forth."
Nor does any one know
In what land he is
To die. Verily with Allah
Is full knowledge and He
Is acquainted (with all things). 3627

3627. See the five Mysteries summed up in n. 3625 above. The argument is about the mystery of Time and Knowledge. We are supposed to know things in ordinary life. But what does that knowledge amount to in reality? Only a superficial acquaintance with things. And Time is even more uncertain. In the case of rain, which causes vegetable life to spring up, or in the case of new animal life, can we answer with precision questions as to When or How or Wherefore? So about questions of our life from day to day or of our death. These are great mysteries, and full knowledge is with Allah only. How much more so in the case of the Ma‘ād, the Final House, when all true values will be restored and the balance redressed? It is certain, but the When and the How are known to Allah alone.