

Sūra XCVI.

Iqraa, or Read ! or Proclaim !Or '*Alaq*, or The Clot of Congealed
Blood.*In the name of God, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

1. **P**roclaim ! (or Read !)⁶²⁰³
In the name⁶²⁰⁴
Of thy Lord and Cherisher,
Who created—

2. Created man, out of
A (mere) clot
Of congealed blood :⁶²⁰⁵

3. Proclaim ! And thy Lord
Is Most Bountiful,—

4. He Who taught
(The use of) the Pen,—⁶²⁰⁶



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

١- اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ
الَّذِي خَلَقَ ۙ

٢- خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۙ

٣- اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْاَكْرَمُ ۙ

٤- الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۙ

6203. *Iqraa* may mean "read", or "recite or rehearse", or "proclaim aloud", the object understood being God's Message. For an account of the circumstances in which this first revelation—the divine commission to preach and proclaim God's Message came to the holy Prophet, in the cave of Hira, see C. 27-31. In worldly letters he was unversed, but with spiritual knowledge his mind and soul were filled, and now had come the time when he must stand forth to the world and declare his mission.

6204. The declaration or proclamation was to be in the name of God the Creator. It was not for any personal benefit to the Prophet : to him there was to come bitter persecution, sorrow, and suffering. It was the call of God for the benefit of erring humanity. God is mentioned by his title of "thy Lord and Cherisher", to establish a direct nexus between the source of the Message and the one addressed. The Message was not merely an abstract proposition of philosophy, but the direct concrete message of a personal God to the creatures whom He loves and cherishes. "Thy" addressed to the Prophet is appropriate in two ways : (1) he was in direct contact with the divine Messenger (Gabriel) and Him Who sent the Messenger ; (2) he represented the whole of humanity, in a fuller sense than that in which Christ Jesus is the "Son of Man".

6205. Cf. xxiii. 14. The lowly origin of the animal in man is contrasted with the high destiny offered to him in his intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature by his "most bountiful" Creator. No knowledge is withheld from man. On the contrary, through the faculties freely given to him, he acquires it in such measure as outstrips his immediate understanding, and leads him ever to strive for newer and newer meaning.

6206. The symbol of a permanent revelation is the mystic Pen and the mystic Record. See n. 5593 to lxviii. 1.

The Arabic words for "teach" and "knowledge" are from the same root. It is impossible to produce in a Translation the complete orchestral harmony of the words for "read", "teach", "pen" (which implies reading, writing, books, study, research), "knowledge" (including science, self knowledge, spiritual understanding), and "proclaim", an alternative meaning of the word for "to read". This proclaiming or reading implies not only the duty of blazoning forth God's message, as going with the prophetic office, but also the duty of promulgation and wide dissemination of the Truth by all who read and understand it. The comprehensive meaning of *qaraa* refers not only to a particular person and occasion but also gives a universal direction. And this kind of comprehensive meaning, as we have seen, runs throughout the Qur-ān—for those who will understand.

5. Taught man that
Which he knew not.⁶²⁰⁷
6. Nay, but man doth
Transgress all bounds,⁶²⁰⁸
7. In that he looketh
Upon himself as self-sufficient.
8. Verily, to thy Lord
Is the return (of all).⁶²⁰⁹
9. Seest thou one
Who forbids—⁶²¹⁰
10. A votary when he
(Turns) to pray ?
11. Seest thou if ⁶²¹¹
He is on (the road
Of) Guidance ?—
12. Or enjoins Righteousness ?

ه-عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمُ ۝

٤-كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِكَيِّطٍ ۝

ع-أَنْ رَأَاهُ اسْتَعْتَى ۝

ه-إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَى ۝

٩-أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَى ۝

١٠-عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّى ۝

١١-أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ الْهُدَىٰ ۝

١٢-أَوْ أَمَرَ بِالتَّقْوَىٰ ۝

6207. God teaches us new knowledge at every given moment. Individuals learn more and more day by day; nations and humanity at large learn fresh knowledge at every stage. This is even more noticeable and important in the spiritual world.

6208. All our knowledge and capacities come as gifts from God. But man, in his inordinate vanity and insolence, mistakes God's gifts for his own achievements. The gifts may be strength or beauty, wealth, position, or power, or the more subtle gifts of knowledge or talents in individuals,—or Science, or Art, or Government, or Organisation for mankind in general.

6209. Man is not self-sufficient, either as an individual, or in his collective capacity. If he arrogates God's gifts to himself, he is reminded—backwards, of his lowly physical origin (from a drop of animal matter), and forwards, of his responsibility and final return to God.

6210. The words may be applied generally to perverse humanity, which seeks not only to rebel against God's Law, but also to prevent others from following it. There may however be a reference here to Abū Jahl, an inveterate enemy of Islam, who used in its early days to insult and persecute the holy Prophet and those who followed his teaching. He used, in particular, to use shameful methods to prevent the Prophet from going to the Ka'ba for devotions, and forbid any who came under his influence, from offering prayers or performing devotions. He was arrogant and purse-proud and met his end in the battle of Badr.

6211. Man's insolence leads to two results: (1) self-destruction through self-misleading; (2) a false example or false guidance to others. The righteous man must therefore test human example or human guidance by the question, "Is there God's guidance behind it?" And visible light would be thrown on it by the question, "Does it lead to righteousness?" A flouting of God and God's Truth answers the first question in the negative, and conduct which turns back from the eternal principles of Right answers the second.

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٥- عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا

٤- كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ

٤- أَنْ رَأَاهُ اسْتَعْنَى

٨- إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرَّجْمُ

٩- أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَدْعُو

١٠- عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّىٰ

١١- أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ

١٢- أَوْ أَمَرَ بِالتَّقْوَىٰ

13. Seest thou if he ⁶²¹²
Denies (Truth) and turns away ?

14. Knoweth he not
That God doth see ?

15. Let him beware ! If he
Desist not, We will
Drag him by the forelock,—⁶²¹³

16. A lying, sinful forelock !

17. Then, let him call
(For help) to his council ⁶²¹⁴
(Of comrades) :

18. We will call
On the angels of punishment
(To deal with him) ! ⁶²¹⁵

19. Nay, heed him not :
But bow down in adoration,
And bring thyself
The closer (to God) ! ⁶²¹⁶

١٣- أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ۖ

١٤- أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَىٰ ۖ

١٥- كَلَّا لَئِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهِ ۖ

لَنَسْفَعًا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ ۖ

١٦- نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ ۖ

١٧- فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهُ ۖ

١٨- سَنَدْعُ الزَّبَانِيَةَ ۖ

١٩- كَلَّا لَا تَطِعَهُ

وَأَسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ ۖ



6212. The usual trick of the ungodly is to refuse to face Truth. If they are placed in a corner, they deny what is obvious to reasonable men, and turn their backs.

6213. Cf. xi. 56, and n. 1551. The forelock is on the forehead, and is thus symbolical of the summit and crown of the man's power or dignity. To be dragged by it is to suffer the lowest dregs of humiliation. *Nasfa'an* is a syncopated form of the emphatic first person plural.

6214. The Pagan Quraish, who formed an oppressive junta or council to manage the Ka'ba were in sympathy with Abū Jahl, though they did not go to the unbridled lengths to which Abū Jahl went. But they could not, all combined, resist the onward march of the divine mission, though they did all they could to check it.

6215. All the combined forces of evil, though they may have worldly appearances in their favour, and though they may seem to be successful for a time, cannot stand against God. He has but to command His forces of punishment to exert themselves, and they will subdue evil, protect God's votaries and justify the faith for which the votaries suffer.

6216. The righteous man has no fear. He can disregard all the forces of evil that are brought against him. But he must learn humility : that is his defence. He will bow down in adoration to God. He must have the will to bring *himself* closer to God. For God is always close to him,—closer to him than his life blood in the jugular vein (l. 16). Man's humility and adoration remove him from being an insolent rebel on the one hand and, on the other, prepare his will to realise his nearness to God.

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THE HOLY QUR-AN

*Text, Translation
and Commentary*

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