



الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ



Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

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Al Fatihah

الْفَاتِحَةُ

Introduction and Summary

C.42 - The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose

First comes that beautiful Surah,

15. Each chapter or portion of the Quran is called a Surah, which means a Degree Or Step, by which we mount up.

Sometimes whole Surahs were revealed, and sometimes portions, which were arranged under the Prophet's directions.

Some Surahs are long, and some are short, but a logical thread runs through them all. Each verse of the Surah is called an Ayah (plural, Ayat), which means also a sign.

A verse of revelation is a Sign of Allah's beautiful handiwork in the material creation or His dealings in history are signs to us, if we would understand. Some Ayat are long, and some are short.

The Ayah is the true unit of the Quran.

The Opening Chapter of Seven Verses,

16. Fatihah: Opening Chapter.

17. These seven verses form a complete unit by themselves, and are recited in every prayer and on many other occasions.

Cf. [15:87](#).

Rightly called the Essence of the Book.

It teaches us the perfect Prayer.

For if we can pray aright, it means

That we have some knowledge of Allah

And His attributes, of His relations

To us and His creation, which includes

Ourselves; that we glimpse the source

From which we come, and that final goal

Which is our spiritual destiny

Under Allah's' true Judgement: then

We offer ourselves to Allah and seek His light.

C.43

Prayer is the heart of Religion and Faith

But how shall we pray? What words shall convey

The yearnings of our miserable ignorant hearts

*To the Knower of all? It is worthy of Him
Or of our spiritual nature to ask
For vanities, or even for such physical needs
As our daily bread? The Inspired One
Taught us a Prayer that sums up our faith,
Our hope, and our aspiration in things that matter.
We think in devotion of Allah's name and His Nature;
We praise Him for His creation and His Cherishing care;
We call to mind the Realities, seen and unseen;
We offer Him worship and ask His guidance;
And we know the straight from the crooked path
By the light of His grace that illumines the righteous.*

18. By universal consent it is rightly placed at the beginning of the Quran, as summing up, in marvelously terse and comprehensive words, man's relation to Allah in contemplation and prayer.

In our spiritual contemplation the first words should be those of praise. If the praise is from our inmost being, it brings us into union with Allah's Will. Then our eyes see all good, peace, and harmony. Evil, rebellion, and conflict are purged out. They do not exist for us, for our eyes are lifted up above them in praise. Then we see Allah's attributes better ([verse 2-4](#)).

This leads us to the attitude of worship and acknowledgement ([verse 5](#)).

And finally comes prayer for guidance, and contemplation of what guidance means ([verse 6-7](#)).

Allah needs no praise, for He is above all praise; He needs no petition, for He knows our needs better than we do ourselves; and His bounties are open without asking, to the righteous and the sinner alike. The prayer

is for our own spiritual education, consolation, and confirmation.

That is why the words in this Surah are given to us in the form in which we should utter them. When we reach enlightenment, they flow spontaneously from us.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ (۱)

1. In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

C19. The Arabic words "**Rahman** and **Rahim**" translated "Most Gracious" and "Most Merciful" are both intensive forms referring to different aspects of Allah's attributes of Mercy.

The Arabic intensive is more suited to express Allah's attributes than the superlative degrees in English. The latter implies a comparison with other beings or with other times or places, while there is no being like unto Allah, and He is independent of Time and Place.

Mercy may imply pity, long-suffering, patience, and forgiveness, all of which the sinners need and Allah Most Merciful bestows in abundant measure. But there is a Mercy that goes before even the need arises, the Grace which is ever watchful, and flows from Allah Most Gracious to all His creatures, protecting them, preserving them, guiding them, and leading them to clearer light and higher life. For this reason the attribute **Rahman** (Most Gracious) is not applied to any but Allah, but the attribute **Rahim** (Merciful), is a general term, and may also be applied to Men.

To make us contemplate these boundless gifts of Allah, the formula:

"In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful";

is placed before every Surah of Quran (except the ninth), and repeated at the beginning of every act by the Muslim

who dedicates his life to Allah, and whose hope is in His Mercy.

Opinion is divided whether the Bismillah should be numbered as a separate verse or not. It is unanimously agreed that it is a part of the Quran. Therefore it is better to give it an independent number in the first Surah. For subsequent Surahs it is treated as an introduction or headline, and therefore not numbered.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢)

2. Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

C20. The Arabic word **Rabb**, usually translated Lord, has also the meaning of cherishing, sustaining, bringing to maturity. Allah cares for all the worlds He has created.

There are many worlds;

- astronomical and physical worlds,
- worlds of thought,
- spiritual world, and so on.

In every one of them, Allah is all-in-all. We express only one aspect of it when we say:

"In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

The mystical division between:

1. **Nasut:** the human world knowable by the senses.
2. **Malakut:** the invisible world of angels, and
3. **Lahut:** the divine world of Reality, requires a whole volume to explain it.

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (٣)

3. Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٤)

4. Master of the Day of Judgment.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (٥)

5. Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek.

C21. On realizing in our souls God's love and care, His grace and mercy, and His power and justice (as Ruler of the Day of Judgment), the immediate result is that we bend in the act of worship, and see both our shortcomings and His all-sufficient power.

The emphatic form means that not only do we reach the position of worshipping Allah and asking for His help, but we worship Him alone and ask for His aid only. For there is none other than He worthy of our devotion and able to help us.

The plural "we" indicates that we associate ourselves with all who seek Allah, thus strengthening ourselves and strengthening them in a fellowship of faith.

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (٦)

6. Show us the straight way.

C22. If we translate by the English word "guide," we shall have to say:

"Guide us to and in the straight Way."

For we many be wandering aimlessly, and the first step is to find the Way; and the second need is to keep in the Way: our own wisdom may fail in either case.

The straight Way is often the narrow Way, or the steep Way, which many people shun (90:11).

By the world's perversity the straight Way is sometimes stigmatized and the crooked Way praised.

How are we to judge?

We must ask for God's guidance. With a little spiritual insight we shall see which are the people who walk in the light of Allah's grace, and which are those that walk in the darkness of Wrath. This also would help our judgment.

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ...

7. The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace,

... غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

Those whose (portion) is not wrath,

C23. Note that the words relating to Grace are connected actively with Allah; those relating to Wrath are impersonal.

In the one case Allah's Mercy encompasses us beyond our deserts.

In the other case our own actions are responsible for the Wrath, the negative of Grace, Peace, or Harmony.

... وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ (٧)

and who go not astray.

C24. Are there two categories?

- those who are in the darkness of Wrath and
- those who stray?

The first are those who deliberately break Allah's law; the second those who stray out of carelessness or negligence.

Both are responsible for their own acts or omissions.

In opposition to both are the people who are in the light of Allah's Grace: for His Grace not only protects them from active wrong (if they will only submit their will to Him) but also from straying into paths of temptation or carelessness.

The negative **gair** should be construed as applying not to the way, but as describing men protected from two dangers by Allah's Grace.



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