And We shall try you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience;

We have examined and followed the current arrangement of the Surahs according to subject matter and independently of chronology, and we have found that a logical thread runs through them. We have now finished more than five-sixth of the Quran. The remaining sixth consists of short Surahs, but these are again grouped according to subject matter.

We begin the first of such groups with a group of three Surahs (47 to 49), which deal with the organisation of the Muslim Ummah or community both for external defence and in internal
relations. The present Surah deals with the necessity of defence against external foes by courage and strenuous fighting, and dates from about the first year of the Hijrah, when the Muslims were under threat of extinction by invasion from Makkah.

**Summary**—Aggressive hostility to Faith and Truth should be fought firmly, and Allah will guide (47:1-19, C. 220). Faint-heartedness condemned; those who strive and those who turn away will be sorted out (47:20-38 and C. 221).

**C.220 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

(47:1-19)

No plots against Truth or Faith will succeed:
But those who follow both will be strengthened.
Be firm in the fight, and Allah will guide.
Rebellion against Allah is destruction; fidelity
Will cool the mind and feed the heart;
It will warm the affections and sweeten life.
Hypocrisy carries its own doom.

**C4817.** Whatever they do will miss its mark, because Allah is the source of all energy and life. If the wicked try to persecute men or seduce them from the Truth, the result will be the opposite of what they intend.

1. Those who reject Allah and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, their deeds will Allah render astray (From their mark).
2. But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and believe in the (Revelation) sent down to Muhammad - for it is the Truth from their Lord,

...كفر عنهم سبئاتهم وأصلح بالهم (2)

He will remove from them their ills and improve their condition.

C4818. Bal means state or condition, whether external, or of the heart and mind. Both meanings apply here.

The more the wicked rage, the better will be the position of the righteous, and Allah will make it easier and easier for the righteous to love and follow the Truth.

ذلك بأن الذين كفروا اتبعوا الباطل وأن الذين آمنوا اتبعوا الحق من ربهم...

3. This because those who reject Allah follow vanities, while those who believe follow the Truth from their Lord:

كذلك يضرب الله للناس آمنتهم (3)

Thus does Allah set forth for men their lessons by similitudes.

C4819. We learn the greatest moral lessons by parables and similitudes from things that happen in the outer world.

If a man goes after a mirage or a thing that has no real existence, he can never reach his goal, while the man that follows the kindly Light from Allah that leads him on must be happier in mind, sounder in heart, and firmer in life, generally for every moment that he lives.

فإذا لقيتم الذين كفروا قضروا الرقارب...

4. Therefore, when ye meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; at length,
C4820. When once the fight (Jihad) is entered upon, carry it out with the utmost vigour, and strike home your blows at the most vital points (smite at their necks), both literally and figuratively. You cannot wage war with kid gloves.

... حَتَّى إِذَا أُثَنِينَوْهُمْ فَشْدُوا الْوَتَانِ...

... when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them):

C4821. In the first onset there must necessarily be great loss of life; "after the enemy's numbers are fairly thinned down,, prisoners may be taken". With this passage may be compared 8:67, and n. 1234.

... فَإِلَمَا مَنَا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فَذَاء حَتَّى تَضْعِفَ الْحَرَبُ أُوْزَارُهَا...

thereafter (is the time for) either generosity or ransom: Until the war lays down its burdens.

C4822. When once the enemy is brought under control, generosity (i.e., the release of prisoners without ransom) or ransom is recommended.

... ذَلِكَ...

Thus (are ye commanded):

... وَلَوْ يَشَاء اللَّهُ لَانْتَصَرَّ مِنْهُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَيْبَلُّو بَعْضَكُمْ بَعْضَ...

but if it had been Allah's Will, He could certainly have exacted retribution from them (Himself); but (He lets you fight) in order to test you, some with others.

C4823. The Believers are tested in Faith by the extent to which they are willing to make sacrifices, even to the laying down of their lives; and the enemies are tested as to whether they would repent and let the righteous five in freedom and security.

... وَالَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَن يُضِلَّنَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٤)

But those who are slain in the way of Allah, He will never let their deeds be lost.

C4824. There are two alternative readings,
5. Soon will He guide them and improve their condition.

C4825. If we read "who are slain" in the last clause but one of verse 4, (see last note), "guide" would mean "guide them in their journey after death".

Improve their conditions: see n. 4818 above.

If after death, their minds and hearts will be more and more settled and rest, and their spiritual satisfaction greater.

6. And admit them to the Garden which He has announced for them.

C4826. "The Garden which He has made known to them": the state of bliss which is declared in Revelation to be destined for those who serve Allah.

7. O ye who believe!

if ye will aid (the cause of) Allah, He will aid you, and plant your feet firmly.

C4827. See above, 4711 and n. 4817.
9. That is because they hate the Revelation of Allah; so He has made their deeds fruitless.

C4828. Their deeds are "fruitless" in the sense that they are vain; they do not produce the results intended by their doers.

But they will not be exempt from producing the natural consequences of evil, viz., further degradation and misery for the soul.

أَفْلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْذِّينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

10. Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the End of those before them (who did evil)?

C4829. The end of evil is evil. All past history and tradition shows that. Will not men of every generation learn that lesson?

Allah helps His servants, but those who rebel against Allah have no one to help them.

... دَمَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ أَمْتَالَهُمْ (۱۰)

Allah brought utter destruction on them, and similar (fates await) those who reject Allah.

ذَلِكَ بَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوَلَّى الْذِّينَ آمَنُوا وَأَنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ لَا مَوْلِي لَهُمْ (۱۱)

11. That is because Allah is the Protector of those who believe, but those who reject Allah have no protector.

Section 2

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَدْخُلُ الْذِّينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ...

12. Verily Allah will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow;
while those who reject Allah will enjoy (this world) and eat as cattle eat; and the Fire will be their abode.

**C4830.** An apt simile.

Beasts of the field eat their fill, but have no higher interests. Men who worship the world exclusively are no better: their pleasures and enjoyments rise no higher then those of the beasts of the field. They have no inkling of spiritual happiness.

On the contrary, as they were endowed with spiritual faculties which they misused, they will not escape the Fire of Punishment, the Penalty of Sin.

And there was none to aid them.

**C4831.** A reference to Pagan Makkah, which drove out the holy Prophet because of his righteousness and because he preached Repentance.

The date of this Surah must therefore be after the Hijrah.

And there was none to aid them.

13. And how many cities, with more power than thy city which has driven thee out, have We destroyed (for their sins)?

**C4832.** Clear, or enlightened; a Path on which shines the Light of Allah.

and such as follow their own lusts?
C4834. See n. 4671 to 43:73. [Eds.]
and Grace from their Lord.

**C4835. Grace from their Lord:** that is the covering up or blotting out of sin and all that was sad or unsatisfactory in the lower life;

the pure Light from the Countenance of Allah Most High: 92:20.

(Can those in such Bliss) be compared to such as shall dwell for ever in the Fire, and be given, to drink, boiling water, so that it cuts up their bowels (to pieces)?

**C4836. Cf. 37:66-67, and n. 4074.**

Just as the Bliss of the Blessed will penetrate their being through and through, so the agony of the condemned ones will penetrate their being through and through.

“Bowels” besides meaning their inmost being, also suggests the seat of their feelings and affection.

16. And among them are men who listen to thee,

...حَتَّى إِذَا خَرَجُوا مِنْ عَنْدِكَ قَالُوا لِلْذِينَ أُوْلِئِكَ أَوْلَٰئِكَ أُولُو الْعَلْمِ مَأَضَىٰ قَالُوا أَيَّا... but in the end, when they go out from thee, they say to those who have received Knowledge:

"What is it he said just then?"

**C4837. Cf. 10:42, and n. 1434; also 6:25, 36, and n. 857.**

The case here referred to is that of the Hypocrites who came to the assemblies of Islam in Madinah and pretended to listen to the Prophet's teaching and preaching. But their heart and mind were not in learning righteousness, but in carping at things they saw and heard.
When they got out, they knew nothing of the teaching, but on the contrary asked foolish and ignorant questions, such as might raise doubts.

Such are men whose hearts Allah has sealed, and who follow their own lusts.

17. But to those who receive Guidance, He increases (the light of) Guidance, and bestows on them their Piety and Restraint (from evil).

C4838. Spiritual advancement is progressive: each step makes the next ones easier and more complete.

18. Do they then only wait for the Hour, that it should come on them of a sudden?

C4839. Cf. 43:66, and n. 4665.

But already have come some tokens thereof,

C4840. The sands of time are always running, and when a wrong is done, the time for its punishment is approaching every moment. No one should therefore wait.

The time for repentance is Now at any given time. When the punishment comes, it is too late for repentance, and all admonition would be useless.

Looking to the particular time when this Surah was revealed, viz., about a year after the Hijrah, already there were Signs that the plans of the Pagans to crush Islam were crumbling to pieces. The Hijrah showed how much good-will there was in Madinah for the holy Prophet of Allah, and how many people from Makkah adhered to him, The battle of Badr showed that they could hold their own against odds of three to one.
...فَأَلَّا لَهُمْ إِذَا جَاءَهُمْ ذُكْرَاهُمْ (۱٨)

and when it (actually) is on them, how can they benefit then by their admonition?

فَأَعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَسْتَغْفِرْ لَدَنِي وَلِلَّمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُوْمِنَاتِ...

19. Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah, and ask forgiveness for the fault, and for the men and women who believe:


وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَتَّلُبَكُمْ وَمَتَّعَكُمْ (۱۹)

for Allah knows how ye move about and how ye dwell in your homes.

C4842. The time and manner of our conducting ourselves at home and when we move about on our business are all material to the judgment of our conduct, and for every nuance in our moral and spiritual progress, we must seek Allah's help and guidance.

C.221 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(47:20-38)

Those eager for service want the call for service;
But the hypocrites blanch at such call.
If it were not obeyed, and evil should get
The upper hand, will it not stalk arrogant
Over the land, and trample under foot
All claims of right and kinship? Fight it,
And fail not in the test of your mettle. Be hold
And establish the Flag of Righteousness
In the highest places. Thus comes Peace,
For which due sacrifice must be made.
20. Those who believe say, "Why is not a Surah sent down (for us)?"

C4843. The men of faith and loyalty are eager and anxious to get a command to serve the Cause even if it be at the sacrifice of their lives. Not so the Hypocrites, "those in whose hearts is a disease". They are mortally afraid as mentioned below.

But when a Surah of basic or categorical meaning is revealed, and fighting is mentioned therein,

C4844. Cf. 37:7, and n. 347.

The defence of truth and righteousness at all sacrifice, when a definite and categorical command issues from the ruler of an Islamic state is a fundamental condition of enlistment in the cause of Allah.

It is true that Punishment and Judgment belong to Allah alone; but our mettle and fidelity have to be tested, (see verse 4 above), and Allah uses human agency in human affairs. (R).

thou wilt see those in whose hearts is a disease looking at thee with a look of one in swoon at the approach of death:

C4845. Cf. 2:10.

The disease is hypocrisy, disloyalty to the Cause, want of courage and of the spirit of self-sacrifice, want of true understanding.

but more fitting for them --
21. Were it to obey and say what is just, and when a matter is resolved on, it were best for them if they were true to Allah.

**C4846.** The resolution is not taken except under guidance from Allah. Those, therefore, who fail to implement it by their own effort and sacrifice, are not true to Allah. And such disloyalty or cowardice is not even good for them from a worldly point of view. With what face can they meet their friends after their disgraceful conduct?

**قُلْ أَلَّا تَطَلُّبْنَّكَ أَنْ تَحْكُوْمَنَّكُمْ أَنْ تَفْسَدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتَقْطَعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ (٢٢)**

22. Then, is it to be expected of you, if ye will do no mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin?

**C4847.** It is no use to say, as the Quraish said, that it is not seemly to fight against kith and kin. From one point of view the stand against sin brings "not peace, but a sword". It is a case of either subduing evil or being subdued by evil. If evil gets the upper hand, it is not likely to respect ties of kith and kin. It did not in the case of the holy Prophet and his adherents, and had to be suppressed, to bring about the conditions necessary for peace.

**أَوْلَيْكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَّهُمُ اللَّهُ قَأْصَمَهُمْ وَأَعْمَى أَبْصَارَهُمْ (٢٣)**

23. Such are the men whom Allah has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.

**C4848. Cursed:** i.e., deprived of His Grace: left them straying, because they deliberately rejected His guidance. The result is that what they hear is as if they had not heard, and what they see is as if they had not seen.

They have no desire to understand Allah's Will or Allah's Revelation;
or is it that they have themselves locked and bolted their hearts and minds, so that nothing can penetrate them?

أَفَأَيْتَدْبَرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالَهَا (٢٤)

24. Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked up by them?

إِنَّ الْذِّينَ ارْتَدُّوا عَلَى أَدْبَارِهِمْ مَنْ بَعْدٌ مَا قَبَّلَتْهُمْ الْهَدَايَةُ...

25. Those who turn back as apostates after Guidance was clearly shown to them,

C4849. Such men are entirely in the hands of Satan. They follow his suggestions, and their hopes are built on his deceptions.

...الشَّيْطَانُ سُوْلَ لَهُمْ وَأَمَلَى لَهُمْ (٢٥)

the Evil One has instigated them and buoyed them up with false hopes.

ذَلِكَ بَيْنَهُمْ قَالَوْا لِلْذِّينَ كَرَهُوا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ...

26. This, because they said to those who hate what Allah has revealed,

C4850. They have become so impervious to facts and truths, because, without the courage to oppose Allah's Cause openly, they secretly intrigue with Allah's enemies, and say that they will follow them part of the way, and by remaining partly in the other camp, they will be far more useful as spies and half-hearted doubters than by going over altogether. If they think that this game will be successful, they are mistaken.

...سَنُطَيعُكُمْ فِي بَعْضِ الْأَمْرِ...

"We will obey you in part of (this) matter;"

وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِسْرَارَهُمْ (٢٦)

...but Allah knows their (inner) secrets.

All the inner secrets and motives of their hearts are known to Allah. Cf. 59:11.
27. But **how (will it be)** when the angels take their souls at death,

**C4851.** It is all very well for them to practice hypocrisy in this life. How will they feel at death, when they find that the angels know all, and touch the very spots they had taken such care to conceal?

...  یُضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهُهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ (٢٧)

and smite their faces and their backs?

**C4852. Their faces and their backs:**
there is a subtle metaphor.

- The face is what looks to the front, the side you present to the outer world; the back is what is not shown, what is hidden from the world. The hypocrites will be hit at both points.

- Or, the face is what they boast of, what they are proud of; the back is the skeleton in the cupboard, the things they dare not utter, but which yet haunt them. The hypocrites are hit on every side. Cf. 8:50.

ذاَلِكَ بَاتِكُمْ اتَّبَعُوا مَا أَسْخَطَ اللَّهُ وَكَرَهُوُا رَسُوْلَهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٢٨)

28. This because they followed that which called forth the Wrath of Allah, and they hated Allah's good pleasure; so He made their deeds of no effect.

**Section 4**

أمَّ حَسَبَ الْذِّينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْرِجَ الْلَّهُ أَضْغَانَهُمْ (٢٩)

29. Or do those in **whose** hearts is a disease, think that Allah will not bring to light all their rancor?

**C4853.** Cf. verse 20 above, and n. 4845.
Being diseased at the very core of their being, they do not understand the simplest facts of spiritual life.
30. Had We so willed, We could have shown them up to thee, and thou shouldst have known **them by their marks**:

*C4854.* Evil is not always necessarily branded in this life with a distinguishing mark or brand. But the discerning ones know. Evil is betrayed by its speech and behaviour.

...وَلَتُعَرَّفُنَّهُمْ فِي لِحْنِ الْقُوَّل... but surely thou wilt know them by the tone of their speech!

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ أَعْمَالَكُمْ (٣٠)

And Allah knows All that ye do.

وَلَنُنَبِّئُنَّكُمْ حَتَّى نُعَلِّمَ الْمُجاهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ...

31. And We shall **try** you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience;

*C4855.* Cf. 34:21, and n. 3821.

The test and trial is for our own psychological development, to help in the exercise of such choice as has been given to us in our free- will.

Cf. also 3:154, and n. 467.

...وَلَنَنْبِئُ أَحْبَارَكُمْ (٣١)

and We shall try your reported (mettle).

*C4856.* **Akhbar:** the things reported of you; reputation for courage and constancy, which has to be brought to the test of facts and experience.

In an epigram of Tacitus we are told of a Roman Emperor that he would have been considered in every way to have been worthy of being a ruler if only he had never ruled! So in life people may think us courageous, true, noble, and self-sacrificing; and we may consider ourselves as possessing all such virtues; but it is actual experience that will bring them to the test.
32. Those who reject Allah, hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, and resist the Messenger,

after Guidance has been clearly shown to them, will not injure Allah in the least,

C4857. Cf. verse 25 above, and verse 34 below:

- in verse 25 was shown the source of the evil, viz., yielding to the deceptions of Satan;
- in this verse are shown the proximate consequences of such yielding to evil, viz., failure of all we do;
- and in verse 34 below are shown the eternal consequences, viz., our deprivation of Allah's Grace and Mercy.

but He will make their deeds of no effect.

33. O ye who believe!

obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and make not vain your deeds!

34. Those who reject Allah,

C4858. See last note.

and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, then die rejecting Allah, Allah will not forgive them.
35. Be not weary and faint-hearted crying for peace.

وَانْتَمُوْنَ الأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَن يَبْرَكَمُ أَعْمَالَكُمْ (۳۵)

When ye should be Uppermost: for Allah is with you, and will never put you in loss for your (good) deeds.

C4859. To those who are trying to root out evil, and have authority to do so, the question is not of peace or conflict, but of whether Good or Evil is to prevail. They must remember that Good must ultimately prevail, and Allah's help is with those who, as far as men can, are trying to further the universal Plan.

Cf. n. 4847 to verse 22 above.

36. The life of this world is but play and amusement:

C4860. Cf. 6:32, and n. 855; and 29:64, and n. 3497 .

Amusement and play are not bad things in themselves. As preparations for the more serious life, they have their value. But if we concentrate on them, and neglect the business of life, we cannot prosper. So we must use our life in this world as a preparation for the next life.

وَإِنْ تَوَارَيْنَ وَتَتَّقَا يَوْتِكُمْ أُجُورَكُمْ وَلَا يَسَأَلَكُمْ أَمْوَالَكُمْ (۳۶)
and if ye believe land guard against evil, He will grant you your recompense, and will not ask you (to give up) your possessions.

C4861. Complete self-sacrifice, if voluntarily offered, has a meaning:

it means that the persons devotion is exclusively and completely for the Cause. But no law or rule can demand it. And a mere offer to kill yourself has no meaning. You should be ready to take risks to your life in fighting for the Cause, but you should aim at life, not death.

If you live, you should be ready to place your substance and your acquisitions at the disposal of the Cause. But it is not reasonable to pauperise yourself and become a hanger-on for the Cause.
Moreover, the inborn tendency to self-preservation in an average man would lead to concealment and niggardliness if all were asked for the Cause, by Law, and there would further be a feeling of bitterness and rebellion.

 إن يَسَّأَلُكُمُوهَا فَيَبْخَلُوا تَبْخَلُوا...

37. If He were to ask you for all of them, and press you, ye would covetously withhold,


...وَيُخْرِجُ أَصْعَانَكُمْ (37)

and He would bring out all your ill-feeling.

C4863. Cf. above, verse 29.

Rancour or ill-feeling, or any desire but that of devotion, should never be given a handle in a wise Law.

هُنَّ الَّذِينَ هُوَؤُلاءِ تَذْعَوْنَ لِتَنفَعَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

38. Behold, ye are those invited to spend (of your substance) in the way of Allah:

C4864. Here the case of the special devotee and of the average man with his human foibles are distinguished.

Stinginess is not a virtue: it hurts more the finer-nature of the individual practicing it that it hurts the Cause.

Allah is free of all wants and independent of any need that we can meet. His Cause is similarly independent of human aid. But it uses human agency for our own human advancement. The need to be able to serve Allah's cause is ours. We are the needy beggars who should claim the privilege before the Lord of Bounties unbounded. (R).

فَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُبْخَلُ وَمَنْ يَبْخَلُ فَإِنَّمَا يَبْخَلُ عَنْ نَفْسِه...  

but among you are some that are niggardly.

But any who are niggardly are so at the expense of their own souls.
...وَاللَّهُ الْغَنِّيُّ وَآنِثَمُ الْفَقِيرَاءَ...

But Allah is free of all wants, and it is ye that are needy.

If ye turn back (from the Path), He will substitute in your stead another people;
then they would not be like you!

C4865. If we desert the Cause, the Cause will not fail. Better men than we will uphold the flag. But we should fall, and others will take our place, who are not so timid, half- hearted, or stingy. In Wordsworth's words, "High Heaven rejects the lore of nicely calculated less or more."