

Sura 57, al-Hadid (Iron), Medina 94

The Quran's Text & Yusuf Ali's Translation:

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ... ^{up}

57:27. Then, in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our messengers: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel;

...وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً...

and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy.

...وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ...

But the monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them:

... إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ...

(We commanded) only the seeking for the Good pleasure of God;

...فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَائِهَا...

but that they did not foster as they should have done.

...فَأَتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ ...

Yet We bestowed, on those among them who believed, their (due) reward,

... وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

but many of them are rebellious transgressors.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

57: 28. O ye that believe! .

... اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ ...

fear God, and believe in His messenger,

... يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِن رَّحْمَتِهِ ...

and He will bestow on you a **double portion** of His Mercy:

... وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ ...

He will provide for you a light by which ye shall walk (straight in your path),

... وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ...

and He will forgive you (your past):

...وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful:

لِنَلَّا يَعْلَمَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَلَّا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ... ^{up}

29. That the People of the Book may know that they have no power whatever over the Grace of God,

...وَأَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ...

that (His) Grace is (entirely) in His hand, to bestow it on whomsoever He wills.

...وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٩﴾

For God is the Lord of Grace abounding.

Other Translations:

Muhammad Asad

57:27 And thereupon We caused [other of] Our apostles to follow in their footsteps; and [in the

course of time] We caused them to be followed by Jesus, the son of Mary, upon whom We bestowed the Gospel;" and in the hearts of those who [truly] followed him **We engendered compassion and mercy.** But as for monastic asceticism" - We did not enjoin it upon them: they invented it themselves out of a desire for God's goodly acceptance. **48** But then, they did not [always] observe it as it ought to have been observed: **49** and so We granted their recompense unto such of them as had [truly] attained to faith, whereas many of them became iniquitous. **50**

57: 28

O YOU who have attained to faith! 51 Remain conscious of God, and believe in His Apostle, [and] He will grant you doubly of His grace, and will light for you a light wherein you shall walk, and will forgive you [your past sins]: for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

57:29 And the followers of earlier revelation should know **52** that they have no power whatever over any of God's bounty, **53** seeing that all bounty is in God's

hand [alone]: He grants it unto whomever He wills - for God is limitless in His great bounty.

Asad's comments:

48 Or: "they invented it themselves, [for] We did not enjoin it upon them: [We enjoined upon them] only the seeking of God's goodly acceptance". Both these interpretations are equally legitimate, and are accepted as such by most of the classical commentators. The rendering adopted by me corresponds to the interpretation given by Sa'id ibn Jubayr and Qatadah (both of them cited by Tabari and Ibn Kathir).

49 I.e., not all of them observed it in the right spirit (Tabari, Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir), inasmuch as in the course of time many of them - or, rather, many of those who came after the early ascetics (Tabari) - corrupted their devotions by accepting the ideas of Trinity and of God's incarnation in Jesus, and by lapsing into empty formalism (Razi).

50 Sc., "and were deprived of Our grace".

51 As is evident from the preceding passage as well as from verse 29, the people thus addressed are the followers of earlier revelation (ahl al-kitab), and in particular the true - i.e., unitarian - followers of Jesus.

52 Lit., "so that the followers of earlier revelation [i.e., the Bible] may know" .

53 I.e., that they have no exclusive claim to any of God's bounty - which latter term relates, in the present context, to a bestowal of divine revelation. This is addressed in the first instance to the Jews, who reject the revelation granted to Muhammad in the belief that the office of prophethood is an exclusive "preserve" of the children of Israel, as well as to the Christians who, as followers of the Bible, implicitly accept this unwarranted claim.

Ali's comments :

5320. The chief characteristic of the teaching in the Gospels is humility and other- worldliness.

The first blessings in the Sermon on the Mount are on "the poor in spirit", "they that mourn", and they that are "meek" (Matt. 5:3-5).

Christ's disciples were enjoined to "take no thought for the morrow", and told "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34).

They were also commanded "that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39).

These are fragmentary presentments of an imperfect philosophy as seen through monastic eyes. In so far as they represent pity, sympathy with suffering, and deeds of mercy, they represent the spirit of Christ.

5321. But God's Kingdom requires also courage, resistance to evil, the firmness, law, and discipline which will enforce justice among men. It requires men to mingle with men, so that they can uphold the standard of Truth, against odds if necessary. These were lost sight of in Monasticism, which was not prescribed by God.

5322. God certainly requires that men shall renounce the idle pleasures of this world, and turn to the Path which leads to God's Good Pleasure. But that does not mean gloomy fives, ("they that mourn"), nor perpetual and formal prayers in isolation. God's

service is done through pure lives in the turmoil of this world. This spirit was lost, or at least not fostered by monastic institutions. On the contrary a great part of the "struggle and striving" for noble lives was suppressed.

5323. Many of them lost true Faith, or had their Faith corrupted by superstitions. But those who continued firm in Faith saw the natural development of Religion in Islam. Their previous belief was not a disadvantage to them, but helped them, because they kept it free from false and selfish prejudices. These are the ones who are further addressed at the beginning of verse 28 below.

5324. The corruptions in the Christian Church, the hair-splitting disputes, and mutual strife and hatred of sects had become a scandal by the time that the light of Islam came into the world. The pages of Gibbon's great History bear witness. Not only had the religion become void of grace, but the lives of the people, priests and laity, had fallen into great depths of degradation.

See remarks in my Appendix V, and the general picture in Kingsley's Hypatia.

5325. From the context before (see n. 5323 above) and after (see next note), this is held to refer to the Christians and People of the Book who kept their Faith true and undefiled

5326. The double portion refers to the past and the future.

As noted in the last note, this passage is addressed to the Christians and the People of the Book, who, when honestly facing the question of the new Revelation in Islam, find in it the fulfilment of previous revelations, and therefore believe in God's Messenger Muhammad, and walk by the new light. Their previous merits will be duly recognised, and they will be treated on fully equal terms in the new Ummah. This is their double share, not necessarily more in quantity than that of their brethren in Islam who passed through no other gate, but having a twofold aspect.

5327. As this refers to the Christians and the People of the Book, the following saying of Christ in his last days may interest them:

"Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you... While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and

departed, and did hide himself from them". (John, 12:35-36).

The light of Christ's Gospel soon departed; his Church was enveloped in darkness; then came the light again, in the fuller light of Islam. And they are asked to believe in the light, and to walk in it. Cf. also 57:12. and n. 5288 above.

5328. Any wrong they may have committed through ignorance or misconceptions in their previous religion will be forgiven them, as they have seen the new light and walk by it.

5329. Let not any race, or people, or community, or group, believe that they have exclusive possession of God's Grace, or that they can influence its grant or its withholding.

God's Grace is free, and entirely controlled by Him, independently of any priests and privileged people. He dispenses it according to His own wise and holy Will and Plan; and to His Grace there is no limit.