

Surah 37. As-Saffat

Asad: CONSIDER these [messages] ranged in serried ranks,¹

Malik: I swear by those who range themselves in ranks

Mustafa Khattab:

By those ?angels? lined up in ranks,

Pickthall: By those who set the ranks in battle order

Yusuf Ali: By those who range themselves in ranks. ^{4030 4031}

Author Comments

1 - Regarding the adjectival particle wa and my rendering it as "Consider", see first half of note [23] on [74:32](#). - Most of the classical commentators assume that verses {1-3} refer to angels - an assumption which Abu Muslim al-Isfahani (as quoted by Razi) rejects, stating that the passage refers to the true believers among human beings. However, Razi advances yet another (and, to my mind, most convincing) interpretation, suggesting that what is meant here are the messages (ayat) of the Qur'an, which - in the commentator's words - "deal with various subjects, some speaking of the evidence of God's oneness or of the evidence of His omniscience, omnipotence and wisdom, and some setting forth the evidence of [the truth of] prophetic revelation or of resurrection, while some deal with man's duties and the laws [relating thereto], and yet others are devoted to the teaching of high moral principles; and these messages are arranged in accordance with a coherent system above all [need of] change or alteration, so that they resemble beings or things standing 'in serried ranks'."

4030 - At a later stage, we shall study the general meaning of the adjurations in the Qur'an indicated by the particle wa. See app. xi. Here we may note that the last Sura (Ya-Sin) practically began with the adjuration "by the Qur'an, full of wisdom", emphasising the fact that Revelation was the evidence by which we could learn the highest wisdom of the spiritual world. Here our attention is called in three verses or clauses, to three definite attitudes which illustrate the triumph of Good and the frustration of Evil. See the notes following.

4031 - Two questions arise: (1) are the doers of the three things noted in verses 1-3 the same persons, whose actions or qualities are differently described, or are they three distinct sets of persons? (2) in either case, who are they? As to (1) the most authoritative view is that the three clauses describe the same set of persons in different aspects. As to (2) some take them to refer to angels, and others understand by them the good men, the men of God, who strive and range themselves in Allah's service. The words are perfectly general, and I interpret them to refer to both classes. The feminine form is grammatically used in Arabic idiom for the indefinite plural. In xxxvii. 165 below, the word saffan is used in the definite plural, and seems to be spoken by these beings, angels or men of God or both, according to how we interpret this verse.

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