Relationships of the Great

The Global Program for
Introducing the Prophet of Mercy

Relationships of the Great

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

PRESENTS HIS BROTHER JESUS TO MANKIND

﴿...his name is the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary ; he is honored in this world and the Here-after.﴾

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In The Name Of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

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Why Is He Loved?

Love is the most beautiful and the highest value in both religion and daily life.

In regards to the love of one human being for another, there are many causes for such a love. They include an open and cheerful personality; sincerity; truthfulness; faithfulness; modesty; rationality; fairness; honesty; noble speech; sweet smiles; tolerance; attentiveness; generosity; willingness to consult others and overlook their shortcomings; encouraging an offender to get back on his feet after having fallen by filling his heart with hope; refraining from causing embarrassment to others; richness of human feelings; willingness to give, do favors, and offer assistance; cherishing feelings of gratitude; appreciating beauty; exalting man's dignity and inviolability; entertaining an honest desire to teach others and shed the light of true knowledge on their lives; consistency between words and deeds; cleanliness; a never-failing willingness to pardon and forgive; opting for peace; adopting vigorous activity; endorsing perfectionism at work; offering a bright countenance; and demonstrating a refined sense of humor.

It is for all these qualities that the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, son of Abdullah, is loved. They were integrated in his personality, and could therefore be found on the surface and deep inside, in his public dealings and in his private life. They were the perennial qualities

that never abandoned him throughout his private, family, or social life ; be it with his wives, children, grandchildren, or Companions, or even his enemies. Yes, Muhammad, who is a source of pride for mankind by being one of its members, is loved for those qualities. Everyman of sound constitution, presence of mind, and active conscience loves these qualities, for a human being, by nature, loves beauty more than anything else.

Indeed, Muhammad is loved for those qualities.

He is, moreover, loved double fold, and in an exceptional way, for another, unique virtue, namely, his deep love and high appreciation of the leaders of the human race who preceded him, i.e. the previous prophets and messengers.

What makes this a virtue that merits a deep, double-fold, and unique kind of love?

Historical and current events are witnesses to a dark and evil phenomenon that has plagued humanity since it came into being and that still exists until today. It is the phenomenon of mutual enmity, hatred, envy, rejection, and ingratitude among peers.

Of this phenomenon of envy and ingratitude, the Prophet of Islam was completely free. He was completely pure of it.

How?

Previous prophets and messengers are the peers of Prophet Muhammad in almost everything: in being chosen by God, receiving divine revelations, delivering divine messages, and being blessed with an immaculate moral character.

Nevertheless, Prophet Muhammad gave a dazzling and highly impressive example of his astonishing

celebration and appreciation of the prophets and messengers before him.

He loved and cherished all those who came before him, rejoicing for the past existence on this planet of every messenger who chanted the notes of truth, goodness, and beauty. He believed in every book revealed to a messenger and spoke of the perfect qualities of every previous messenger.

It is true that the moral standards of prophets are of such sublimity and greatness that they cannot be equaled by any human being unless he himself is chosen and inspired by God.

That is true.

Still, to have the names of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus mentioned in the very book revealed to Muhammad many more times than his own name is something unprecedented , unusual, and highly impressive in the realm of divine codes, morality, and relationships.

In the Quran, (a) the name of Abraham is mentioned forty-eight times, (b) the name of Moses, 136 times, and (c) the name of Jesus, thirty-six times, while (d) the name of Muhammad, four times, and of Ahmad,* once only. This means Muhammad is mentioned, by these two names, a total of five times only.

The reader can himself do the arithmetical calculations to find out the ratios of these messengers' representations in the Quran. and can thus compare the number of times Muhammad is mentioned with the number of times Abraham, Moses, and Jesus are mentioned in the Book revealed to Muhammad. The reader will find they are astonishing and impressive differences.

This in itself is a scientific and moral proof that the prophethood of Muhammad is true and definite. No one would reach this high level of fairness, objectivity, and selflessness, giving his peers precedence over himself in profuse commendation, frequent mention, and glorification – no one other than a true prophet, bringing about the truth, complying with what is inspired to him, and hiding none of it.

This concept that motivates love for Muhammad is strengthened by other supporting concepts that also stimulate love for him.

I.The concept that the Quran, which was revealed by God to Prophet Muhammad, is the greatest record that keeps and documents the biographies of prophets and messengers, as well as the history of their books, sources, messages, and true missions.

First, it is a record of the biographies of prophets and of their messages in general terms:

- **"Say, 'Praise be to God, and peace be upon His servants whom He has chosen'"** (*Al-Naml* XXVII: 59).
- **"God chooses messengers from among angels and from among humans"** (*Al-Haj* XXII: 75).
- **"They will be with us among the chosen, righteous ones"** (*Saad* XXXVIII: 47).
- **"Some messengers we have already told you of and some we have not"** (*Al-Nisaa* IV: 164).

Second, it is a record of the lives of prophets and their messages in details. References to and accounts

• A variation of Muhammad.

of prophets and messengers occur in various Quran contexts. Such, for example, is what occurs in the *suras* of *Al-An'aam* (Cattle) and *Maryam* (Mary).

A. In the *sura* of *Al-An'aam*: **"That was Our argument which We provided Abraham against his people. We raise whom We please to higher levels; your Lord is all-wise and all-knowing.• We gave him Isaac and Jacob, and guided both—we had guided Noah before them. Among his progeny are David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron, that is how we reward the charitable; • and Zechariah, John, Jesus, and Elias—all were good men; • and Ishmael, Elijah, Jonah, and Lot—we favored each above all other creatures"** (*Al-An'aam* VI: 83-68).

B.In the *sura* of *Maryam*: •**"Mention in the Book Abraham; he was a truthful prophet"** (Maryam XIX: 41). •**"And mention in the book Moses, who was a faithful one, a messenger and a prophet. • We called out to him from the right side of Mount Sinai and drew him near in mystic communion. We gave him, out of Our grace, his brother Aaron as a prophet"** (*Maryam* XIX: 51-53). •**"And mention in the book Ishmael who was true to his promise, and was a messenger and a prophet. • He enjoined on his people prayer and alms-giving, and his Lord was well pleased with him"** (Maryam XIX: 54-55). • **"And mention in the book Idris, who was a man of truth, a prophet. • We raised him to a lofty station. • These were some of the prophets upon whom God bestowed His blessings – of the seed of**

Adam, and of those whom We carried in the ark with Noah, and of the progeny of Abraham and Israel, and of those whom We had guided and chosen. When the revelations of the Most Merciful were recited to them they would fall down prostrating themselves and weeping" (Maryam XIX: 56-58).

II. The concept that Muhammad's is a universal_religion for all humanity, rather than a local or a racial religion. Owing to its universality and appeal to all mankind:

A.Muhammad's heart, soul, and mind was capacious enough to accommodate all prophets and all revealed books.

B.He was eloquent in praising his prophet and messenger brothers.

III. The concept that the final message is a complete and perfect one, and yet, the Prophet was required to follow the example of previous prophets in regards to the basics of belief, the obligations of faith, and high moral standards.

A. **"You have a good example in Abraham and those who were with him"** (*Ibraheem* LX: 4).

B."**These are the ones God guided, so follow their example"** (*Al-An'aam* VI: 83-90). The reference here is to the succession of prophets and messengers whose names adorn the passage immediately before this particular verse.

Indeed, Muhammad is loved for all this:•for his personality traits and moral values in which all the

qualities of beauty and perfection are implanted, and • for his close, sublime relationship with his prophet and messenger brothers, who lived in various places and times and spread knowledge,] enlightenment, and morality, beginning with Noah and up to the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, may God bestow blessings and have mercy upon them all.

This introduction is just to make general references to the relationships of the great, which this book focuses on in detail in its following chapters and topics.

As we infer from this relationship the lofty position in which the chosen and righteous lived, it induces wise and magnanimous people in all ages to be high-minded in their relationships with one another, through truthfulness, loyalty, nobleness, and refinement.

By following such a course, one follows the example of prophets and messengers.

Among the purposes of sending prophets and messengers on missions to people is to provide practical or empirical evidence that attaining an exalted position is possible, and even practicable, in real human life, and it is not mere mental fantasy.

For this reason, prophets are human beings, rather than angels.

A. **"Their messengers told them, 'We are just human beings like you.'"** (*Ibraheem* XIV: 11).

B. **"Say, 'I am only a human being like you, and it has been revealed to me that your God is one deity, so let him who hopes to meet his Lord perform good deeds and not worship anybody else with God'"** (*Al-Kahf* XVIII: 110).

Similarity of species, constitution, personality traits, and characteristics includes the ability of people to follow the example of prophets and messengers in many respects. This includes emulating them, as much as one's resolution and energy allow, in establishing civilized human relationships, free from mutual hatred, envy, and ingratitude and overflowing with love, appreciation, mutual honest praise, and positive testimony.

CHAPTER ONE

Firm Unity of the Basic Principles of Prophethood

"We have inspired you the same as we inspired Noah and the prophets before him" (*Al-Nisaa* IV: 163).

Can one question that prophets have walked on this planet of ours, prophets to whom the angel Gabriel delivered books revealed by God, the Most Sublime, the content of which is

- The knowledge and love of God, the feelings of satisfaction and contentment to be living within His Realm, and gracious willingness to meet Him in the Hereafter;
- the refinement and happiness of the individual human being, and his attainment of feasible perfection; and
- enrichment of common human life with the values of learning, knowledge, brotherhood, mercy, justice, truthfulness, faithfulness, tolerance, rightfulness, and beauty?

Can one question that blessed messenger prophets, with such qualities and missions, have walked on this planet of ours?

The People of the Book, i.e. Jews and Christians, in answering this question emphatically confirm that messenger prophets, with such qualities and missions, have indeed walked on this planet of ours, at successive periods of time.

This confirmation by the People of the Book is a basic faith requirement, obligatory by virtue of their belief in God's prophets: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, Moses, Aaron, Zachariah, John, Jesus, and their brothers, blessings and peace be upon them all. This is an established fact of faith for the People of the Book. Islam regards it as one of the references that confirm the prophethood of Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, in as much as it relates to belief in the

principle of book revelation and sending messengers.

The evidence that this is a reference is the following.

I. **"We have only sent before you men whom We inspired, so ask the followers of revelations if you do not know"** (*Al-Anbyaa* XXI: 7). The People of the Book are followers of revelations, the earlier revelations inspired to their prophets.

II. **"Unbelievers say that you are not a messenger. Say, 'It is enough to have God as a witness between you and me, as well as those who have knowledge of the Book'"** (*Al-Ra'd* XIII: 43). Those who have knowledge of the Book, inspired earlier, are the People of the Book.

III. **". . . the unlettered prophet messenger whom they find mentioned in their Torah and Gospel. He commands them to do what is right, forbids them to do what is wrong, makes lawful to them the good things of life, and forbids them all that is foul. He lifts from them their burden and the shackles that weighed upon them"** (*Al-A'raaf* VII: 157).

IV. **"They have not appreciated God as it is His due, for they said, 'God has never revealed a thing to a human being.' Say, 'Who revealed the Book which Moses brought to be a light and guidance for people?'"** (*Al-An'aam* VI: 91). Those who failed to give God the appreciation due to Him – by

denying the source of revelation and claiming that God had not, in earlier days, inspired any herald of good omens – were the Arab polytheists. The irrefutable argument that disproved their claims was the evidence of the inspiration and book revealed to Moses.

V. **"God has ordained for you the religion which He recommended to Noah, and which We have inspired to you and recommended to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, that you should uphold religion and do not differ over it"** (*Al-Shoora* XLII: 13).

VI. **"It is a revelation from the Lord of Creation , •brought down by the faithful spirit • unto your heart, so that you may be given warning, • with an explicit Arabic tongue. • It is also in the books of early people. • Was it not a sign for them that it was recognized by scholars from the children of Israel?"** (*Al-Shu'araa* XXVI: 192-97).

VII. **"Say, 'How about if it is from God, you deny it, and a witness from the children of Israel testifies to a similar version?'"** (*Al-Ahqaaf* XLVI: 10).

All these are passages serve as evidence and combine to prove two facts.

A.the fact that the inspiration revealed to Muhammad was preceded by inspiration revealed to the prophets of the People of the

Book, foremost among them are Moses, son of 'Imraan; and Jesus, son of Mary, peace be upon them both; and

B.the fact that prophets attest to the truth of other prophets.

As the passages above are evidence of the first of these two facts, the evidence for the second is embedded in the passages below.

I.Moses attests to the truthfulness of earlier prophets. Therefore, the implications, in the Quran, of the significance of the scriptures revealed to him as reference are coupled with implications of the same significance of the scriptures revealed to Abraham.

A.**"Has he not been told what the scriptures of Moses contain? • And of Abraham who was true? • That no soul shall bear another's burden, • that man has nothing other than his labor, • that his labor shall be seen, • and then he will receive full reward for it, and that to your Lord is the destination"** (Al-Najm LIII: 36-42).

B.**"Successful will be he who purifies himself, • and invokes the name of his Lord and prays. • Yet you prefer this present life, • while the Hereafter is better and longer lasting. • All this has indeed been in earlier scriptures, • the scriptures of Abraham and Moses"** (*Al-A'la* LXXXVII: 14 – 19).

II.Then Jesus came to attest to the truthfulness of Moses.

C.**"... and to confirm what has preceded me of the Torah, and to make lawful to you some of the things which were forbidden you."** (*Aal 'Imraan* III: 50).

D.**"... confirming what had already preceded him of the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, containing guidance and light, confirming what had preceded it of the Torah and giving guidance and a lesson to the God-fearing"** (*Al-Maaidah* V: 46).

E.**"Then Jesus, son of Mary, said, 'Children of Israel, I am God's messenger to you, confirming what has preceded me of the Torah"** (*Al-Saff* LXI: 6).

III. Muhammad,inturn,attestedtothetruthfulness of Moses and Jesus.

A.**"He revealed the Book to you with the truth, confirming what has preceded it, and had revealed the Torah and the Gospel"** (*Aal 'Imraan* III: 3).

B.**"This is a book We have revealed: blessed and confirming what has preceded it"** (*Al-An'aam* VI: 92).

C.**"What We have revealed to you of the Book is the truth, confirming what has preceded it"** (*Faatir* XXXV: 31).

Thus, Prophet Muhammad depicts a beautiful picture of this coordinated and complementary succession of prophets, whose blessed lines succeeded each other chronologically.

Prophet Muhammad says:

> **An analogy for me and the prophets before me is that of a man who built a building, which was well-done and beautifully ornamented, except for the location of one brick at one of its corners. People would come, circle it, admire it, and say, "Why do you not put that brick in?" Well, I am the brick, and I am the last of the prophets.**

There is another tradition that serves as an explanation of this one by declaring the brotherhood of prophets and the sameness of their faith. Prophet Muhammad says:

> **I have the best claim to the son of Mary in this world and the Hereafter; there is no other prophet between him and me; prophets are half-brothers on their father's side, having various mothers; and our religion is the same.**

Thus, seekers of the truth are united by the truth in all of which they believe.

Therefore, those who are fair among the People of the Book attest to the truth of what was revealed to Muhammad.

A. **"Those who were given knowledge before it fall down on their faces in humble prostration when it is recited to them, • and say, 'Glorious is our Lord. Truly, the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled. • Upon their faces they fall down, weeping, and it increases their humility"** (*Al-Israa* XVII: 107-09).

B. **"When they listen to what has been revealed to**

God's Messenger, you see their eyes overflow with tears, because of the Truth they recognize. They say: 'Our Lord, we do believe; so write us down among the witnesses of the truth. •How could we not believe in God and the truth that has come to us when we dearly hope that our Lord will admit us among the righteous? •And for saying this, God will reward them with gardens under which rivers flow, where they will abide forever. Such is the reward of those who do good" (*Al-Maaidah* V: 85-83).

C. **"Those to whom We sent the Book before this believe in it, • and when it is recited to them, they say, 'We believe in it, for it is the truth from our Lord. Indeed before this we have been Muslims. • These shall be given their reward twice: for having been patient and repelling evil with good, and for having spent in charity out of what We have provided for them"** (*Al-Qassas* XXVIII: 52-54).

For the sake of belief in the whole truth – as revealed to Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and all other prophets – all the People of the Book and Muslims, are commanded thus: **"Say, 'We believe in God and what was sent down to us and sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and his sons, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we submit to Him'"** (*Al-Baqarah* II, 136).

The Negus of Abyssinia gave expression to this truth when he said, "There is not one iota of difference between what is revealed to Muhammad, son of Abdullah, and what was revealed to Jesus, son of Mary."

CHAPTER TWO

Relationships of the Great Prophet Muhammad Presents His Brother Jesus to Mankind

"... his name is the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary; he is honored in this world and the Hereafter."

(*Aal-'Imran* III: 45).

If the largest and most thriving American and European Public Relations companies get together, cooperating closely, dedicating themselves and utilizing all their human, technical, and material resources to delineate a free and voluntary profile of God's Prophet Jesus, blessings and peace be upon him, and offer a most attractive image of him to mankind, what would the world community say about such an action? How would it describe this endeavor? Undoubtedly, it will describe it as broad-minded, as a refined disinterested effort, and as being faithful to the venerated Messiah. Many other charming adjectives, well-deserved by such a great action, will be used.

If that is an imaginary PR plan, there is a reality that surpasses it by millions of degrees, in regards to the intensity of its presentation, profundity of its content, sincerity of its style, intimacy of its characterization, and length of its duration.

That religious, historical, humanitarian, and ethical reality is that Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, presented his brother, the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, to the world community in a most glorious image. That profile and presentation was not a PR campaign, subject to the drawbacks and inadequacies that characterize such efforts. In presenting his great brother, The Prophet of Islam followed an approach that is impervious to shortcomings and failings. That approach is achieved by verses of the Quran – which is never tampered with, openly or by stealth, or marred by falsehood – and traditions of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, who does not speak capriciously. The time span of this profile and presentation was

not limited to a one-weak, one-month, or one-year campaign; it rather stretches from the time inspiration was revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the sixth century until Doomsday. The approach used in presenting the Messiah is not through an obsolete text, or a defunct document kept in a library or a museum. It is rather the living Quran, recited in prayers, taught at schools and universities, and heard on radio and television all day long.

It is the right of every rational person, every reader, and every researcher to ask – objectively, intelligently, and seriously: "This sounds to be a mere claim, so what is the evidence and proof supporting it?"

The answer is: Here is the proof:

First: Proof of the profile and presentation of the Messiah:

I.Proof from the Quran:

A.Presentation of the birth miracle: **"She went to her people carrying the child. They said: 'Mary, you have indeed done an amazing thing!Sister of Aaron, your father was not a wicked man, nor was your mother a loose woman! But she pointed to the child. They said: 'How can we talk to a baby in the cradle? Whereupon he said: 'I am a servant of God. He has given me a book and made me a prophet, and He made me blessed wherever I may be. He has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live.He made me kind to my mother, not haughty or bereft of grace.Peace was upon me on the day when I**

was born, and will be upon me on the day of my death and on the day when I shall be raised to life again" (*Maryam* XIX: 27-33).

B.Presentation of his wonderful, honored personality: **"The Angels said, "Mary, God brings you the tidings of a Word of His; his name is the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary; he is honored in this world and the Hereafter, and he shall be one of the favored ones"** (*Aal 'Imran* III: 45).

C.Presentation of the miraculous nature of his prophethood and mission: **"God will say, 'Jesus, son of Mary! Remember the favor which I bestowed on you and your mother: how I supported you with the Holy Spirit, so that you could speak to people in your cradle, and as a middle-aged man; how I instructed you in the Book, in wisdom, in the Torah, and in the Gospel; how by My leave you fashioned from clay the semblance of a bird and breathed into it so that, by My leave, it became a living bird; how, by My leave, you healed the blind man and the leper, and, by My leave, restored the dead to life'"** (*Al-Maaidah* V: 110).

D.Presentation of the Gospel revealed to him: **"We caused Jesus, the son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps confirming what had already preceded him of the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, containing guidance and light, confirming what had preceded it of the Torah and giving guidance and a lesson to the God-fearing"** (*Al-Maaidah* V: 46).

E.Presentation of his approach and mission, it being an

approach that urges the worship of God, praised be He, alone: **"'I have only told them what You have commanded me to, that is: worship God, my Lord and yours'"** (*Al-Maaidah* V: 117). It is also an approach that teaches wisdom to people and points out to them standards for settling differences: **"When Jesus came with the evident signs, he said, 'I have brought you wisdom and I am to make clear to you some of the things about which you differ'"** (*Al-Zukhruf* XLIII: 63).

II.Proof from the Prophet's *sunna*. The Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, says:

A."While I am asleep, circumambulating the *Ka'bba*, there comes a brown man with straight hair, between two men against whom he leaned, with water dropping from his head. I said, 'Who is that?' I was told, 'He is the son of Mary.'"

B.Prophet Muhammad described his brother Jesus, son of Mary, blessings and peace be upon both of them, as, "of medium height, ruddy as if he has just come out of a bath," which is a simile implying purity, brightness, and radiance.

C.Prophet Muhammad also says, "I have the best claim to the son of Mary in this world and the Hereafter; there is no other prophet between him and me; prophets are half-brothers on their father's side, having various mothers; and our religion is the same."

D.He also says, "When any person who testifies that there is no deity other than God, alone with no partner;

that Muhammad is His servant and messenger; that Jesus is God's servant and messenger, His word which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit from Him; that Paradise is real and Hell is real – God shall admit him into Paradise in accordance with the work he has done." Al-Nawawi, a major scholar of Islam, comments on this tradition of the Prophet's, saying, "This is a tradition of great significance; it is one of the most inclusive traditions that cover beliefs."

Second: Proof of the presentation of the apostles of the Messiah and his followers in an image of utmost grace, perfection, and spiritual refinement, for the presentation of the Messiah includes the presentation of his honorable, righteous apostles:

I.**"When Jesus became conscious of their rejection of the faith** [i.e. that they disliked him], **he asked, 'Who will be my supporters in the cause of God?' The disciples said, 'We are your supporters in God's cause. We believe in God. Bear you witness that we have surrendered ourselves to Him. •Our Lord, we believe in what You have revealed, and we follow the messenger, so write us down among those who bear witness'"** (*Aal 'Imran* III: 52-53).

II.**"Believers, be supporters in God's cause, the same as Jesus, son of Mary, said to the disciples: 'Who will be my supporters in the cause of God?' The disciples said, 'We are your supporters in God's cause'"** (*Al-Saff* LXI: 14). In this verse, Muslims are

invited to follow the examples of the disciples, peace be upon them, in supporting prophets and upholding the true approach.

III.As such, this presentation of the apostles receives God's praise, in the Quran, for they followed Christ with all sincerity: **"In their footsteps We sent Our messengers, and We followed them with Jesus, son of Mary; We gave him the Gospel; and we installed kindness and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him"** (*Al-Hadeed* LVII: 27).

One thing that is closely connected to the above, and becomes part and parcel of it is the defense in the Quran of righteous Christians who clung to their faith and were exposed to great harm but remained steadfast to their religion.

I.Among these are the Young Men of the Cave, who have a *sura* of the Quran named after them. These were upright Christian young men pursuing a reasonable course. Therefore, the Quran glorifies and commemorates them: **"Or did you think that the Cave and Raqeem people were amazing signs of ours? When the young men took shelter in the cave and said, 'Lord, Bestow on us Your grace, and provide for us right guidance in our situation. • So We drew a veil over their ears in the cave, for a number of years, • and then We awakened them so that We might mark out which of the two parties could calculate the span of time they had remained there.• We shall relate to you their story in all truth. They were young men who**

believed in their Lord, so We gave them additional guidance" (*Al-Kahf* XVIII: 9-10).

II.Others are the people burnt in the pit. They are also a group of Christians, whom the Quran also commemorates, condemning and denouncing their persecutors and tormentors: **"... slain be the people of the pit • of the fire abounding in fuel, • when they sat around it, • watching what they did to the believers. • They took vengeance on them only because they believed in God, the Almighty, to whom all praise is due, • To whom the dominion of the Heavens and the Earth belongs. But God is witness of all things. • Those who persecuted the believers, men and women, and have not repented afterwards shall suffer the punishment of hell, and suffer the punishment of burning"** (*Al-Burooj* LXXXV: 4-10).

In summary, let us say that the evidence recurs and items support each other in confirming that Islam presents Christ, blessings and peace be upon him, his gospel, his approach and mission, and his disciples in a perfect and most exalted image. It also defends persecuted Christian believers, in a manner that shows love for them and abhorrence for their tyrannical oppressors. It gives me pleasure to offer these statements, supported by evidence, as a gift to the Christians of the world.

If there is a conclusion to be made or a statement to be added, it is this: How can Islam be blamed for offering such a glorious picture of Christ? How can light be blamed for being light? How can the approach

of presenting Christ as lofty and sublime be a pretext to discredit Muhammad and his religion?

We believe in Christ as a prophet and a messenger. We love and glorify him, and we follow the light he came down with. If others do not believe in *our* prophet – belief being a matter of free choice – let them at least respect him. Such a respect would not only be morally praiseworthy, but it would also demonstrate a sensible attitude, for sensible people appreciate and respect anyone who glorifies those they love and believe in.

Now as in the past, the fanaticism of Muslims and Christians and the bickering between them appear all the more absurd and insignificant emanating from and instigated by small people especially when viewed in the light of the enlightened, sincere and lofty relationship between two very great men: Muhammad and Christ.

Do the Christians of the world know that belief in the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, as a prophet and messenger is one of the basic elements of belief for every Muslim. It is even a condition of the soundness of every Muslim's belief in Prophet Muhammad, in the sense that a Muslim's belief in the Prophet Muhammad is unacceptable and considered null and void unless it is combined with belief in the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, as a prophet and messenger?

Do the Christians of the world know that fact?

Some of them do, particularly Christians of the Arab World who speak Arabic, for their knowledge of the language allows them, for example, to listen to verse 136 of the *sura* of *Al-Baqarah* (The Cow): **"Say, 'We believe in God and what was sent down to us and sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and**

his sons, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we submit to Him'" (*Al-Baqarah* II, 136).

Some Christians know this fact, but the majority do not.

It is most likely that, together with other factors, their lack of knowledge of this fact has caused a great deal of misunderstanding in the way they have responded to Islam.

However, he who does not know cannot be the authority for people who do know, but the opposite is true.

Moreover, it is an obligation that has to be fulfilled at all times to state openly the fact that a Muslim's belief is unacceptable and void unless he believes in the prophethood and mission of the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary. It is not permissible to withhold such an open admission because of the disaffection of some people vis-a-vis Prophet Muhammad. In this context a question should be raised: Why should Muslims refrain from resorting to the same tactics to punish people who disparage the status of Prophet Muhammad, and curse and slander him? The answer is that the same tactics here mean disparaging, cursing, and slandering the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, and this is regarded in Islamic Law as infidelity. Such infidelity casts a Muslim out of the religion of Islam. There is no difference between slandering or ridiculing Christ and slandering or ridiculing Muhammad. No one tries to discriminate between them unless he disbelieves in both of them, and in all other prophets and messengers. In fact he would be a disbeliever in

God, high praise be to Him: **"Those who disbelieve in God and His messengers, who want to sow division between God and His messengers, who say, 'We believe in some and disbelieve in some,' and who want to find a course in-between — • those are the real unbelievers. We have prepared for unbelievers humiliating suffering.• As for those who believe in God and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them—to them He will give their reward. God is indeed much Forgiving and Merciful"** (*Al-Nisaa* VI: 150-152).

The gist of the statements above is that the ideological adherence to that fact, i.e., belief in and acceptance of all prophets without discrimination, is the basis of moral tolerance.

The extent to which the mind, heart, and soul of an individual or a nation accommodate the whole truth, is an indication of the extent of his or its tolerance.

"I am tolerant, and you are bigoted."

"No, the bigoted one is you, and I am the tolerant one."

These are statements that individuals and nations continue to exchange, each praising himself by claiming to be tolerant and accusing others of being bigoted. In using such adjectives, both sides, in most cases and for most people, follow their own whims and inclinatons, and the reason for this is the lack of an accurate criterion that controls the use of adjectives and prevents unfairness.

What is then the accurate criterion?

The most esteemed and precise criterion that can be used to measure the honesty of people on the scale of justice, as well as the accuracy of their ideological

course, correctness of their thoughts, and superiority of their moral standards is the extent to which their minds, hearts, and souls accommodate the whole truth, and revere and love the holders of truth in all times and all places.

Only by this criterion can a person be described as tolerant and another as bigoted. A person who is broad-minded enough to accommodate the whole truth, unmotivated by any arbitrary tendency to be selective, and to accept the bearers of the truth, regardless of when or where they make their appearance, is a really and truly tolerant person, and vice versa.[1] That is why it is one of the purposes and certainties of Islam that Muslims are obliged to accommodate in their hearts, minds, and souls the whole truth through all times and in all places: **"God has ordained for you the religion which He recommended to Noah, and which We have inspired to you and recommended to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, that you should uphold religion and do not differ over it"** (*Al-Shoora* XLII: 13).

These five great men and real leaders of enlightened thought, the one who is addressed and the ones that are mentioned in this verse, are the messengers of resolute purpose. They belong – as to their birth, residence, circumstances, mission, and delivery of message – to various places and times, and they cover the long span of human history from the time of Noah, through the times of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus respectively, to the time of Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon them all.

In spite of the diversity of places and long spans of time, the truth they preached and advocated is the

[1] This means that a person whose mind and heart cannot accommodate the whole truth is bigoted and inclined to falsehood.

same truth, as radiantly expressed in the verse above. Thus, today what can be called the lineage of truth – penetrating, firm, and continuous in time and place – radiates and is firmly established.

Real affiliation is the affiliation to right and goodness and to their bearers. (This, however, does not imply any ignorant involvement in underestimating the importance of descent from fathers and forefathers, or of belonging to homelands, for in Islam there is no conflict between these affiliations.) We have not seen Idris, Noah, Moses, Jesus, the disciples of Jesus, or Elijah, but we love and cherish them with all our hearts . Why? Because they are good, righteous people, and they have lofty souls and high moral standards, and also because the truth and the principles they uphold are worthy of being affiliated to, and make it worthy to be affiliated to those great men.

The esteemed Jesus, son of Mary, blessings and peace be upon him, is a revered messenger and prophet. Islam, in its divine Book and in the *sunna*, glorifies, venerates, and exalts Jesus, son of Mary, and accords him a lofty position. The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, presents Jesus to the human community in a loving, dignified, glorious, magnanimous, and radiant way.

That is the great position of the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, and that is his image in the Book and the *sunna*: in Islam belief in him is one of the basic elements of belief.

We testify that we believe in the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, as a prophet and messenger.

We also testify that we love him, because he is loved and chosen by God, because he is all mercy, all

peace, all love; blessed wherever he is; dutiful to his mother; and a sign for people—blessings and peace be upon him in early and later times.

* * * *

The esteemed Christ, blessings and peace be upon him, preached a number of values, precepts, concepts, and moral principles. He persevered in his preaching to make sure these moral values would flow naturally in man's consciousness and become an inalienable part of his conscience and the life of his society. It is not possible now to explore all those values, but examples can be cited. These include:

I.Mercy, which is the first and noblest characteristic of Christ's personality and of his message, as stated in the Quran: **"We will make him a sign for humanity and an act of mercy. It is a concluded matter"** (*Maryam* XIX: 21). This characteristic was instinctively very clear in his mind, and therefore he repudiated the existence of any vestige of haughtiness or arrogance, the opposite of mercy, in his own nature: **"He made me ... not haughty or bereft of grace"** (*Maryam* XIX: 32). He used to say, "Blessed be the meek and merciful. Come to me all you who are tired and burdened, and you will find comfort, because my yoke is gentle and my burden is light."

II.Peace. The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, was, beyond a shadow of doubt, an advocate of peace. This is not to be wondered at, for he was all peace: from his birth to his resurrection, as stated in the Quran: **"'Peace was upon**

me on the day when I was born, and will be upon me on the day of my death and on the day when I shall be raised to life again'" (*Maryam* XIX: 33).

III.Sound belief: **"'Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and yours. Whoever associates partners with God, God shall forbid him entrance into Paradise and his abode will be in Hell'"** (*Al-Maaidah* V: 72).

CHAPTER THREE

And Presents the Mother of Jesus, Truthful Mary

"Mary,God has chosen and purified you, and raised you above all women of creation."

(*Aal-'Imran* III: 42).

Every Muslim loves the Messenger and prays God to bless him whenever that Muslim is conscious of the blessings of monotheism, relishes the meaning of worship, recites the Quran, holds his head high with a sense of freedom and pride, engages industriously in virtuous work, is charitable to others, and adheres to the course of moderation in thought, utterance, action, and conduct. In all these situations, a Muslim's prayer for the Prophet to be blessed fills his heart and is constantly uttered by him, for all that is good in him is achieved through the Prophet's guidance

Actually, all mankind is indebted to this kind, august Prophet. It is he who allowed humanity to make the great leap: by bestowing a high value on reason, releasing the potentials of thought and contemplation, freeing the will and conscience from the shackles of paganism and oppression, establishing the standards of equality, instituting reciprocal recognition between all communities and nations, introducing the principles of justice and applying them even to adversaries, celebrating and elevating the value of the common human heritage, and defending righteous characters, regardless of their customs or environments, rightfully, proudly, and generously.

This whole treatise is an elaboration of the last point.

One of the proofs of the truthfulness of our Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, is that he advocated a religion that promotes belief in the whole truth, a truth not subject to division, exclusion, or cancellation.

This is a rational and methodological issue; neither in its essence nor in its source, can truth be divided or

self-contradictory.

Mary as a Model

One person said once, "the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, blessings and peace be upon him, has a half-brother." Certain Islamic religious institutions were quick to repudiate and disprove that statement, because it undermines the sacredness and purity of the truthful Mary, may God be pleased with her, who never married.

Which source uniquely testifies to Virgin Mary's maidenhood, purity, and freedom from contact with men?

It is the Quran, which was inspired to Muhammad. That illuminating book establishes a firm belief relating to pure Mary, a belief that affirms the truth and repudiates all falsehood and slander.

One of the characteristics of the Quran is that it defends upright, faithful people, regardless of their race, nationality, time, place, or gender. Mary, belonging to this superior group, is presented in the Quran in the best way and the best context. The Quran also defends her with an incontrovertible argument that inspires love and glorification for her.

I.She is protected from Satan: **"'I have named her Mary and I seek Your protection for her and her offspring against the accursed Satan'"** (*Aal 'Imran* III: 42).

II.She is honored by God's Grace: **"Whenever Zachariah visited her in the sanctuary he found that she had a supply of food. He said, 'Mary, where did**

you get this?' She said, 'It is from God.' God gives sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning" (*Aal 'Imran* III: 42).

III.She is chosen over all women of creation: **"'Mary, God has chosen and purified you, and raised you above all women of creation.'"** (*Aal 'Imran* III: 42).

IV.She is truly devout, and she prostrates herself and bows down to God: **"'Mary, remain truly devout to your Lord, prostrate yourself and bow down with those who bow down'"** (*Aal 'Imran* III: 42).

V.She is the receiver of tidings of a great, honored child: **"The Angels said,** "Mary, **God brings you the tidings of a Word of His; his name is the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary; he is honored in this world and the Hereafter, and he shall be one of the favored ones"** (*Aal 'Imran* III: 45).

VI.She is acclaimed in the Quran: **"Mention in the book Mary when she withdrew from her family to a place in the east"** (*Maryam* XIX: 16).

VII.She is a sign for all mankind:

A.**"We ... caused her and her son to become a sign to all mankind"** (*Al-Anbiyaa* XXI: 91).

B.**"We caused the son of Mary and his mother to become a sign"** (*Al-Muminoon* XXIII: 50).

VIII.She is truthful: **"His mother was a truthful woman"** (Al-Maaidah V: 75).

IX.She is a chaste maiden who never married or had contact with any human being: **"Mention in the book Mary when she withdrew from her family to a place in the east, • where she kept herself in seclusion from them. We, then, sent to her Our Spirit, who appeared to her in the shape of a well-formed human being. • She said: 'May the Most Merciful protect me from you, if you fear God. •He said, 'I am but a messenger of your Lord, and have come to give you a son endowed with purity. • She said, 'How shall I have a child when no man has ever touched me and I have never been a loose woman? • He said, 'That is what your Lord says: "This is easy for Me. We will make him a sign for mankind and an act of mercy from Us. It is a settled matter.'" • So she conceived him, and retired to a far-off place. • And the throes of labor drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree. She cried, 'Would that I had died before this and passed into complete oblivion! • But he called out to her from below, 'Do not grieve. Your Lord has provided a brook running beneath you. • And if you shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards you, it will drop you fresh ripe dates. • So eat, drink, and be satisfied. Should you see any human being, just say, "I have vowed a fast to the Most Merciful and will not speak today to any human being.'" • She went to her people carrying the child. They said: 'Mary, you have indeed done an amazing thing! • Sister of Aaron, your father was not a wicked man, nor was your mother a loose woman! • But she pointed to the child. They said: 'How can we talk to a baby in the cradle? • Whereupon he said: 'I am a**

servant of God. He has given me a book and made me a prophet, • and He made me blessed wherever I may be. He has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. • He made me kind to my mother, not haughty or bereft of grace. • Peace was upon me on the day when I was born, and will be upon me on the day of my death and on the day when I shall be raised to life again" (*Maryam* XIX: 16-33).

This is the great Mary as presented in the Quran, pure and purified, innocent and irreproachable, chaste and immaculate, both when she conceived and when she gave birth, untouched by any human being. It was God that made her conception and delivery of a child a miracle of His, His commands being absolute.

It is noteworthy at this point that some People of the Book cite the Quran as evidence when they speak of Mary's purity. A number of high-ranking clergymen of the Coptic Church in Egypt cite – in discrediting the claim that Christ, peace be upon him, had a half-brother – the words of Mary quoted in the Quran: **"She said, 'How shall I have a child when no man has ever touched me and I have never been a loose woman?'"** (*Maryam* XIX: 20). This is unquestionably a point of shared belief.

It is true that some Jews slandered Mary and said terrible things about her, but the Quran has denounced these atrocious claims of theirs as an act of disbelief: **"... And for their disbelief and the monstrous slander they utter against Mary"** (*Al-Nisaa* IV: 156).

I conclude this chapter with points that I believe to be highly relevant in this context.

Our assertion that Messenger Muhammad has

claims on all mankind is supported by the following facts.

A. The Prophet's mission was a new qualitative reorganization of human existence. The components of this reorganization are respect for the human mind, the designation of personal responsibility, incitement to harness whatever is in the skies and earth in the service of man, a declaration of the oneness of the human race, and other varied advancements.

B. If some wise people become aware that there are some existing historical documents that do justice to and defend their religion and their eminently righteous famous figures, their wisdom should prompt them to cherish these documents. Consequently, wisdom should prompt wise Christians and Jews throughout the world to respect the Quran and the person to whom it was revealed, for the Quran is the greatest document that glorifies the religious figures in whom they believe.

C. To cite an example, Mary, may God be pleased with her, was not an Arab. However, the Quran – which condemns and even stamps out racism, both as an idea and in practice – glorifies and extols Mary, because it is the book that upholds the real criteria for differentiating between people, those criteria of true belief, good deeds, and high moral standards.

Is it not the right of Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, who came with a religion that offers a most magnificent picture of prophets and faithful people, to be appreciated, and have his status recognized, by all mankind?

CHAPTER FOUR

And Presents His Brother Moses

"And mention in the book Moses...."
(*Maryam* XIX: 51)

Muhammad fasted the *'Aashoora'* to express his rejoicing at the delivery of his brother Moses and Moses' people from persecution and oppression.

It is not right, therefore, for the People of the Book, i.e., for any Jew or Christian, to be offensive towards God's Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him. For any person who is capable of fairness, faithfulness, refinement, and nobility endeavors and is eager to show gratitude to a man who has been a friend of his father's and who has honored him and recognized his status. Would a person then not feel the same towards that individual who has presented to humanity, with warmth and admiration, the pioneers of that person's civilization and the architects of his moral existence?

What is the source of moral existence for Jews and Christians. It is the Old Testament, which was revealed to Moses, son of 'Imran, and the New Testament which was revealed to Jesus, son of Mary. The illumination emanating from these books was brought to people and to life in general by these two prophets.. How, then, is the relationship between Muhammad and these two great and kind prophets, Moses and Jesus, blessings and peace be upon them both?

I have already demonstrated the lofty, close, and exceptional relationship between Muhammad and Christ, our Prophet having presented the brightest image of Christ in a most beautiful, dutiful, and appealing style. Therefore, this chapter is wholly devoted to the relationship between God's Prophet Muhammad, son of Abdullah, and his brother, God's prophet Moses, son of 'Imran.

* The tenth day of the month of Muharram in the Hijri Calendar.

Following the example of their Prophet, many Muslims fast on the tenth day of the month of Muharram. The origin of this tradition is that Prophet Muhammad fasted on that day, following the example of Moses and expressing his rejoicing at the latter's escape, together with his people, from injustice, persecution and torture. Al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others cite a tradition that "God's Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him, arrived in Madinah and found Jews fasting on the day of *'Aashoora.* He said to them, 'What day is this on which you are fasting?' They said, 'This is a great day on which God saved Moses and his people and caused Pharaoh and *his* people to drown.' God's Messenger said, 'Well, we have a better and truer claim to Moses than you do.' He fasted that day and urged Muslims to do the same."

The story of how Moses and his people were freed from the persecution, injustice, and cruelty of Pharaoh is a happy and joyful story that was inspired to Muhammad. It is part of the Quran, read and recited by Muslims one generation after another. As they read it, they thank God for the great favor He bestowed on Moses and his people:

A. **"We thus inspired Moses: 'Go forth with My servants by night, and strike out for them a dry path through the sea. Have no fear of being overtaken, and dread nothing. • Pharaoh pursued them with his soldiers, but they were overwhelmed by the power of the sea. • Pharaoh led his people astray and had not guided them aright. • Children of Israel! We saved you from your enemy, and then We made a covenant with**

you on the right flank of Mount Sinai. We sent down manna and quails for you" (*Taahaa* XX: 77-80).

B.**"Moses said to his people, 'Remember the blessings God bestowed on you when He saved you from Pharaoh's people who afflicted you with grievous torment, slaughtered your sons, and only spared your women. That was indeed an awesome trial from your Lord'"** (*Ibraheem* XIV: 6).

This is a festival of the great victory at which the Prophet of Islam rejoiced, fasted on its anniversary, and urged Muslims to fast on it to express thanks to God, praised be He.

The story of the escape is told in elaborate Quran contexts that bring us a true report of the great Moses, blessings and peace be upon him. It is a report that is also told in detail in the Prophet's traditions.

First: The great Moses in the Quran, in general terms and in detail:

I.In general terms: **"And mention in the book Moses, who was a faithful one, a messenger and a prophet. • We called out to him from the right side of Mount Sinai and drew him near in mystic communion. • We gave him, out of Our grace, his brother Aaron as a prophet"** (*Maryam* XIX: 51-53).

II.In detail:

A.**"We revealed to the mother of Moses: 'Breast-feed him, and then when you have cause to fear**

for him, cast him in the river, and have no fear and do not grieve. We shall restore him to you, and shall make him one of the messengers.' • Pharaoh's people picked him up, so that he would become an enemy to them and a source of grief. Pharaoh, Haman, and their hosts were sinners indeed. • Pharaoh's wife said, 'A joy to the eye he will be for me and for you. Do not kill him. He may well be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son.' They had no inkling. • By the morning an aching void came over the heart of Moses' mother, and she would indeed have disclosed his identity had We not strengthened her heart so that she could have faith. • She said to his sister: 'Trace him.' So she watched him from a distance, while they had no inkling. • Right from the very beginning We caused him to refuse all nurses' breasts. So, she said, 'Shall I direct you to a family who might bring him up for you and take good care of him? • Thus We restored him to his mother, so that he might be a joy to her eye, that she would grieve no more, and that she might know that God's promise comes true; even though most people do not know. • When he attained his full manhood and became fully mature, We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge. Thus do We reward those who do good" (*Al-Qassas* XXVIII: 7-14).

B."'Go to Pharaoh; for he has transgressed all bounds. • He Said, 'My Lord, open up my heart; • make my mission easy for me; free

my tongue from its impediment, • so that they may understand what I say; • and appoint for me a helper from among my kinsmen, • Aaron, my brother. • Grant me strength through him, • and let him share my task, • so that together we may extol Your glory • and remember You always. • You Have been watching over us. • He said, 'You are granted what you have asked for, Moses'" (*Taahaa* XX: 24-36).

III.Detailed accounts also include the adulatory and scholarly presentation in the Quran of the Torah, i.e. the book revealed to Moses:

A.**"We revealed the Torah, containing guidance and light"** (*Al-Maaidah* V: 44).

B.**"But how is it that they ask you to judge when they have the Torah which contains God's judgment"** (*Al-Maaidah* V: 43).

C.**"We gave Moses the Scriptures and the Standard ..."** (*Al-Baqarah* II: 53).

D.**"Moreover, We gave Moses the Book in fulfillment upon him who would do right, spelling out everything in detail, and providing guidance and grace, so that they might believe in the meeting with their Lord"** (*Al-An'aam* VI: 154).

Second: The great Prophet Moses in the words of his brother, God's Prophet Muhammad:

I.A Jew approached the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, and said, "Muhammad, one of your Supporter (*Ansaar*) Companions hit me on the face." The man

was brought in, and the Prophet said, "Why did you hit his face?" He said, "God's messenger, I passed by the Jewish man and heard him say, 'By Him Who has selected Moses over all human beings.' I said, 'And over Muhammad?' I was angered and hit him.' The Prophet said, 'Do not prefer me over Moses. People lose consciousness on the Day of Resurrection, and I will be the first to recover. I will see Moses holding to one of the Throne's pillars. I will not be able to tell whether he has recovered before me or whether he is compensated for the loss of consciousness on Mount Sinai?"

II.The Prophet presents an image of his brother Moses as being blest with a great deal of modesty. He said, "Moses was a very modest and discreet man."

III.The Prophet was physically harmed by some people, so he invoked the character of his brother Moses. He said, "May God have mercy upon Moses; he was exposed to greater harm than this, but he tolerated it." So our Prophet followed the example of his brother Moses in enduring harm, thus guided by the injunction of God, the most Sublime: **"Follow, then, their guidance'"** (*Al-An'aam* VI: 90).

IV.One day the Prophet came out to meet his Companions and told them, "Nations were paraded before me, and I saw a horde so great that it hid the horizon. It was said, 'This is Moses with his people.'"

V.The Prophet made a point of mentioning Moses

whenever there was an occasion to do so. In the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet passed by Al-Azraq Valley, and asked, "What valley is this?" People said, "Al-Azraq Valley." "I can almost see Moses descending the mountain pass and raising his voice declaring to God that he is there at His service."

VI. Finally, the Prophet announced that the Islamic Nation owes a lot to Moses for suggesting to the Prophet to get the number of prayers reduced. All versions agree that when God, the Most Sublime, ordained that fifty prayers be performed by the Prophet and his nation every day and night, the Prophet met Moses in the Sixth Heaven and Moses said, "Go back to your Lord and ask Him to reduce the burden for your nation. I had a very hard time dealing with the children of Israel before you, and your nation is even weaker." The Prophet kept going back and forth between Moses and God, the Most Glorious and Sublime, and had the burden reduced every time, until it got down to five prayers every day and night. This is why many scholars, recalling this expert advice from Moses, pray to God saying, "May God reward Muhammad well for us, and may God reward Moses well for us."

This is the position of God's Prophet Moses, son of 'Imran, as presented in the Book and the *Sunna*, and it is a lofty position of reverence and dignity. Hence, guarding Moses against offenses is a basis for guarding our own Prophet and all other prophets against the same. Moreover, refraining from offending Moses and all other prophets is one of the elements, fruits, and proofs of belief in God: **"Believers, do not be like those who**

harmed Moses, but God exonerated him from what they had said. In God's eyes he is honored" (*Al-Ahzaab* XXXIII: 69).

In God's eyes he is honored. And the Arabic word for honored in this context, which is *wajeeh*, implies high rank, lofty position, and noble qualities.

How do we know all this? We know it from the Quran, which was revealed to Muhammad, and from the traditions of prophet Muhammad himself, who loved Moses, followed his example, and constantly referred to and commended him.

Therefore, and for other considerations as well, we know of no logical or moral reason that would make a normal person from among the People of the Book hate or dishonor God's prophet Muhammad. What reason could there possibly be? Could it be Muhammad's belief in, love for, and devotion to God? Could it be his bright burning movement to liberate man from any servitude other than his servitude to God? Could it be his proclamation of the fundamental oneness and authentic dignity of the human race? Could it be the wide range of his religion, which was capable of encompassing belief in all divine books and in the messengers preceding him? Could it be his desire for the welfare of every human being, or rather for every creature, a desire he expressed every morning by saying, "God, what blessing I or any other of your creatures have this morning comes from You alone, Who have no partner. So praise and gratitude are due to You"?

What could the reason possibly be? Could it be because God sent him as an act of mercy towards humanity? Could it be because he led the world's

greatest movement of enlightenment? Could it be because he elevated the importance of reason, learning, and knowledge? Could it be because he fought against superstition, humbug, and illusion? Could it be because he struggled against oppression, tyranny, and injustice? Could it be because he made a loose woman's kindness to a thirsty dog the means by which she obtained forgiveness and salvation? Could it be because he was gentle, kind, easy-going, and very modest and unassuming? Could it be because he was faithful to everyone that did him a good turn, and hoped to return him the favor even if that person remained a polytheist all his life? Could it be because he strictly kept promises and honored covenants and agreements? Could it be because he paid back with an act of kindness for an offense, forgave, and graciously pardoned (and that is how he is described in the Torah)? Could it be because he loved purity, cleanliness, and beauty, and preached that "God is beautiful and loves beauty"? Could it be because he sought comfort from God when he was despondent over property, kin, and offspring? Could it be because his personality combines all the high and needed moral standards, as indicated by God's description of him: **"You have sublime manners"** (*Al-Qalam* LXVIII: 4).

One really wonders whether there is a normal human being who is unable to stand the full bloom and scent of roses, the brightness and sublimity of perfection, the advent of light, the purity and profundity of knowledge, the rationality of thought, the dignity of conscience, or the close harmony between the kind utterance and the kind action!

CHAPTER FIVE

Aromatic Plants and Luscious Fruit from His Garden

A parable for the guidance and knowledge entrusted to me by God is that of rain falling on land. Parts of the land are a good set; they welcome the water and bring forth plenty of grass and pasture. That is the example of a person who grasps God's religion and benefits from what I have brought; he learns and teaches.

I.

I am sent as an act of mercy; I am not sent as an execrator.

There has arisen a big controversy as well as a loud uproar concerning what is claimed to be a practice of cursing all Christians indiscriminately.

The controversy arose or got heated particularly after the hateful September events. One of the consequences of those events was that Muslims began to feel that a ferocious Western campaign in the political arena and in the media was targeting them all.

Driven by that feeling, some prayer leaders at mosques and a few advocates and preachers began to curse all Christians indiscriminately making sweeping generalizations against them.

This is an issue that calls for a special intellectual effort, an effort that, in its scholarly aspect, should be systematic and objective, and, in its moral aspect, honest and fair. It has to be an effort consisting of three themes:

A.the theme of avoiding aggression in one's prayers,

B.the theme of correct interpretation of events and situations, and

C.the theme of political exploitation of religion.

Aggression in Prayer, and Whether There Is Aggression in Prayer

Yes, there is. In verse 55 of the *Sura* of *Al-A'raaf*

(VII). the Quran confirms that. It says, **"Pray to your Lord with humility and secretly; He does not like agressors."** Al-Qurtubi says, "He means aggressors in prayer. Aggression in prayer is of many types. One type is being very loud to the extent of shouting. Another is to pray to have the same status as a prophet, or pray for the impossible or the extreme. One type is to pray asking for something sinful, and so on." I would like to add that one more type of aggression in prayer occurs when a person curses an innocent, unsuspecting peaceful human being who has not oppressed him, has never thought of doing so, and has not rejoiced at seeing him oppressed. Undoubtedly, many Christians and Jews are not involved in any oppression of Muslims. To curse these is one type of aggression. In fact, cursing them is utterly unjust. Islam does not allow the mere difference in religion to be a justification for committing aggression against the other party; it rather forbids that absolutely in as much as it absolutely forbids injustice.

It is true that cursing is legitimate, but only when it is directed against the unjust. It is even legitimate for non-Muslims; the prayer of a person suffering from injustice, even a non-Muslim, is answered, and there is nothing that stands between it and God. Leaders of prayers at mosques, advocates, and preachers may limit their curses to the unjust, and that is (1) in order to avoid being unjust to innocent, peaceful people,

and (2) because prayer, including cursing, is an act of communion with God, and communion cannot be achieved through injustice.

This idea is reinforced by other, supporting notions. Some Muslim men are married to Christian women, so how can a Muslim's curses carry conviction when they include his own wife? There are educated and intellectual Christians whose attitude towards Islam is more honorable and nobler than that of many people who bear Islamic names. Hundreds of thousands of Christians in the West have staged demonstrations in support of Muslims. How then is it justified to curse such people? Such comprehensive and indiscriminate cursing is a religious sin and an example of political stupidity.

What is even more serious is that such all-inclusive indiscriminate cursing is in conflict with a statement found in the last *sura* of the Quran, inspired to the Prophet; namely, *Al-Maaidah*, which says, **"... and you will find that the nearest of them in affection to the believers are those who say, 'We are Christians'"** (V: 82). This statement forbids any generalization or inclusiveness in curse-prayers.

It might be said that that was an old position and is no longer valid. The answer to that is, first, that such an argument can only be made by a person who arrogates to himself a high position on earth and claims an authority he is not entitled to, which is the authority to annul the Glorious Quran with claims of his own.

Second, the facts of history and the current situation both confirm the statement in the Quran. The people who have the closest affinity with Islam and the ones who understand it the most and convert to it most frequently are the Christians.

This is not to reject or deny the religious factor in interpreting events, situations, and conflicts. However, exaggeration that blows up and magnifies any single factor is likely to thrust out common sense and sound reasoning.

For example, when it is claimed that the religious factor accounts for all world conflicts, how can we then account for the Ethiopian-Eritrean war since the two warring nations share the same religion, which is Christianity. How can the war in the Great Lakes area, a war between tribes that mostly share the Christian religion, be explained? How can the armed conflict between the Orthodox Serbs and the Catholic Croatians, both being Christian, be justified? How can the bloody violence that erupted and lasted for many decades between the Catholic and Protestant Irish be interpreted both being Christian? Earlier, Hitler and Mussolini, both Christian, fought other Christians all over Europe. The First World War was also a fierce war between nations that share the Christian religion. Still earlier, Americans fought a war of independence against the British, although both sides were Christian. In older times, Europe suffered from devastating, long-lasting wars that caused great destruction to many of its various countries, although they all shared the same religion: Christianity.

When we consider the situation with Arabs and Muslims in recent decades, we find a phenomenon that is mostly the same, with a little variation in form and course necessitated by local conditions. Recent decades have witnessed a wide, acute, long-lasting and bitter Arab conflict over almost everything. It is a conflict with various themes and instruments. Its themes include the economy and whether it should be socialist or free; nationalism, whether it is a genuine and natural Arab nationalism or a philosophical substitute to Islam; and the type of government, whether it is more genuine and useful to have conservative regimes that develop quietly and gradually or revolutionary ones that favor violent and radical change, brought about by leaps and bounds? As for the Instruments of the conflict, they include political sabotage, which accounts for 20% of the total of conflict factors and instruments. Another is negative propaganda, or cold war, which accounts for 49%.

All this has been taking place although the dominant religion on all sides is Islam.

Such evidence – and similar evidence is abundant in human history and in current situations – deserves sober, insightful, and shrewd contemplation, that reconsiders the philosophies and trends employed in interpreting human events, situations, and conflicts in order to arrive at a sound explanation on which sounder attitudes and more rational relationships can be based.

If it is comforting for a person to entertain a single

view of the world, a world painted in one color and where events originate from one cause, such a sweet comfort can only be obtained by suppressing the objective point of view. It is a comfort that comes only from a naïve desire to see the world not as it really is, but rather as the viewer wishes and desires it to be. Many are the individuals and the regimes that had a single image of the world and explained everything as the result of a single cause – following their dreams and illusions, but they were so shocked by reality that they either perished or retreated into a position far removed from what really goes on in the world. Moreover, this kind of comfort is illusory, rather than real. It is so illusory that it can imply or invoke its opposite. Viewing the world in a single way and in a single color causes misery and endless trouble and difficulties to the viewer in his actual dealing with the world. Such difficulties include shock, confusion, puzzlement, difficulty of communication, and the embarrassment resulting from speaking a language nobody else comprehends.

It is absolutely inappropriate to use one single cause or factor to interpret local and international events, situations, and conflicts. It is methodologically wrong, because it ignores other objective factors which sound inductive reasoning and practical application require that they be not ignored. Any action based on such a narrow interpretation has a flawed foundation or no foundation at all.

To go back to the central issue, aggression in prayer is a practice that should be subjected to explicit criticism.

There is enough evidence that indicates that it is a common, deep-rooted malady, and when an argument has such characteristics, a counter argument has to be elaborate, and the criticizing and refuting methodology has to be well-constructed.

What follows is a set of facts and notions that meet these two requirements:

I.It has already been stated that generalization in curse-prayers to include all Christians involves stark injustice. Evidence of how abhorrent this grave injustice is regarded in the Islamic methodology is offered by the fact that it involves

A.Violation of the Quran's injunction of being just in speech: **"When you speak, be just"** (*Al-An'aam* VI: 152). This is a strict command to observe justice in speech, and prayer *is* speech. When prayer departs from justice and involves injustice, the person uttering it disobeys God, opposes the teachings of the Quran, and, thus, strays from the right path.

B.Violation of the Quran's method that calls for differentiation in the way that various People of the Book are regarded and judged. The Quran says, referring to the People of the Book, **"They are not alike"** (*Aal 'Imraan* III: 113). By logic and analogy, it is concluded through denying their similarity, that those people have quantitative and qualitative differences: some are peaceful and unmindful,

some neutral, some unjust, and some, by nature or by virtue of their search for and investigation of the truth, are the closest people to Islam. As the Quran is a book of absolute justice that extends to all human beings, and of great precision in expression, it gives us the statement, **"They are not alike,"** to distinguish between the just and the unjust, and to educate Muslims to use the same method in regarding people in general and in dealing with the People of the Book in particular. This statement is intended to teach Muslims that the world of human beings cannot be viewed as an exclusively black and white picture but, rather, as a world of various colors and of moral distances that vary in how close and how far they are. It is also meant to make Muslims realize that indiscriminate generalizations are therefore a methodological error and a moral sin, and to help them guard themselves against contradicting reality. In reality, Muslims meet segments of the People of the Book who are characterized by fairness and equity in commercial transactions, in their general conduct, or in the way they teach or give instruction. For example, there are tens of thousands of Muslims today who have received their education in economics, engineering, medicine, administration, and various other disciplines at the hands of instructors who are People of the Book and who never cheated their students in their research, never treated them with condescension, and never were biased when grading their work. To deny such a reality leads to psychological and mental

distress. In order to protect Muslims against such distress, the Quran has made a true distinction between the just and unjust among the People of the Book. Moreover, this agreeable reality about teaching and learning in itself precludes any prayer that curses those segments that have been good and beneficial to Muslims. Al-Mut'em Ibn 'Adi did such a good turn to God's Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him, on the latter's way back from Taif. He offered the Messenger protecttion at a moment of difficulty. Later, when the battle of Badr took place and eminent polytheists were taken prisoners, the Messenger passed by these prisoners and said, "Had Al-Mut'em Ibn 'Adi been alive and interceded with me for these, I would have given them to him." The Messenger did not curse Al-Mut'em, even though he was still a polytheist at his death, but rather recalled Al-Mut'em's favor and act of kindness and wished to have had the chance to honor him by freeing those prisoners for his sake, that is without ransom.

II.

One of these facts and notions is the notion of mercy. The Quran makes the function of God's Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him, clear and defines his mission, his message, and the great objective of entrusting him with that message in this succinct verse: **"We have sent you only as an act of mercy for all creatures"** (*Al-Anbiyaa* XXI: 107).

This general and global mercy rules out aggression in prayers that curse others.

How?

Muslims are in the habit of cursing others in their prayers, but this is in a way that suggests habit and addiction. Such practice contradicts the universal mercy that filled the world with the arrival of Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him. A curse implies banning from God's mercy. It would be a very sharp contradiction to use the religion that is meant to make God's all-encompassing mercy available to people as a pretext to bar people from enjoying that mercy

This notion shines in a tradition of the Prophet's. He was told to "Pray God, cursing the polytheists." He said. "**I am sent as an act of mercy; I am not sent as an execrator**." This antithesis of mercy against execration, or cursing, in the words of one so eloquent and concise, illustrates the fact that when one's function is general mercy, one does not deprive people of that mercy – the mercy of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent – nor does he contradict the essence of his mission. God forbid that he does!

Thus, expression of the obligation to avoid cursing is not restricted to the tradition quoted above; it is rather a complete methodology established by the Prophet in an abundance of glorious traditions. These include:

A."A believer cannot be a slanderer, an execrator, or a vulgar or obscene person."

B."Execrators cannot serve as witnesses nor intercede on the Day of Resurrection."

C."A believer should not be an execrator."

D."No friend ought to be an execrator."

E."Do not invoke God's curse on each other."

F.In fact, the Prophet of mercy even discouraged any cursing of the wind. Abdullah Ibn 'Abbaas is quoted as saying that "A man struggled with a wind that was trying to strip him off his gown, and he cursed it. God's Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him, told him: 'Do not curse it; it is acting by order and is harnessed " [to serve man]. He also forbade cursing a beast or uttering a slur against a cock. There is more than one profound and edifying meaning in this. One meaning is that aggression in prayer is forbidden, even if it is directed at universal energy, beasts, or fowl. Another meaning is to guard one's tongue against getting used to such offensive, debased utterances, for getting used to something wrong leads to permanent defects.

G.The Prophet, the author of these traditions, meticulously observed them himself. Anas Ibn Maalek says, "God's Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him, did not swear, use bawdy language, or curse." Therefore, if you come across a person, whether an advocate of Islam or someone else, who swears, uses bawdy language,

and curses, you should know that he has departed from the *sunna*, even if he prays, fasts, delivers speeches and lectures on Islam, strives to promote Islam, and claims to be himself a Muslim. One of the Prophet's Companions, in whose hand the scale of equality tipped to one side for a moment, was told, "You retain something pre-Islamic in your character."

It is true that common people often curse in their daily life, not only when they get angry, but also when kidding or trying to be witty. A person, impressed with the work of another, would say to him, "You be damned!" Yes, such a thing does occur. Yet, what distinguishes an advocate, speaker, or preacher from a layman is his common sense, refined language, knowledge of Islam's purposes, adherence to *sunna*, extensive mercy for others, and recognition of the seriousness of uttering curses.

III

If humanity is destined to advance to a stage where it is healthier, has a stronger constitution, a better-satisfied spirit, and more honest relations, a more refined employment of the language is a *sine qua non* for the desired advance. What is a person's worth when he physically acquires the refinements of civilization, yet when he speaks a barrage of curses and execrations comes out of his mouth? Since language is the commodity in which religious speakers and advocates

deal, they are recommended to set an example by actively contributing to the desired human advance with refined, elegant, gentle, well-mannered, amiable speech. The Prophet offered a true example both in sound and meaning of this refined language.

II
Beauty and Love in the Prophet's Words and Actions

He is a human being. This is an undisputed fact: **"Say, 'I am only a human being like you'"** (*Al-Kahf* XVIII: 110). The likeness and correspondence between him and mankind in this, i.e. being human, emphasize two absolute facts, which are:

A.the genetic or biological nature of all human beings, with no exception, and

B.the fact of denying that human beings and all other creatures have any divine nature, for God is one and has no partner in divinity.

While being equally human emphasizes these two facts, it by no means diminishes the special, superior status of the last prophet and messenger, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

While the differences between the status of

divinity and that of prophet must be acknowledged and sustained, Prophet Muhammad must have all the veneration, reverence, and respect that are due to him: **"Do not raise your voices above that of the Prophet, and do not speak to him as loud as when you speak to each other, lest your actions would fail without your feeling it.Those who speak with soft voices in the presence of God's Messenger are the ones whose hearts have been tested by God for piety. They will have forgiveness and a great reward"** (*Al-Hujuraat* XLIX: 2-3).

A case of dry formality, or lifeless and exaggerated rigor of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is the claim that to pray for the Prophet to be blessed is a once-in-a-lifetime requirement, "an obligation to be performed once in a lifetime."

Despite the copious volumes written by various authors about the Prophet, the clear and pure stream of his qualities and sublime manners continues to flow, in an abundant flux, revealing further noble, lofty, and superior traits with which believers quench their thirst for spiritual amelioration and from which every person with determination to become a better human being drinks.

Let us then dip two scoops, which are beauty and love, out of his words and actions, blessings and peace be upon him.

First, Beauty

The Prophet was sent with abundant instructions and purposes. One of these is the purpose of beauty, in

the sense that he had the task of teaching people about "beauty" and revive their sense and awareness of it. For God, praised be He, is beautiful, the Quran is beautiful, and the universe is beautiful. Being sent to teach people about this universal beauty, he, undoubtedly had the best share of it. He was characterized by:

I.The beauty of smiling. Yes, smiling is a type of superior beauty. It is also a universal human language in the sense that if we see, on television for example, a Korean, German, Senegalese, or American, or a national of any other country, smiling, we understand that he is smiling, with all the elation, joy, and human affection suggested in the act of smiling. Such a picture is a beautiful one, the opposite of a picture of depression, gloom, and frowning.

This is why one of the most important things that public relations trainees are told is to smile. They are taught how to smile and how to keep smiling. Linguists say that smiling, a prelude to laughter, is a facial expression of cheerfulness, in which one's teeth are a sign of pleasure and joy.

Smiling, therefore, is one form of beauty. The Prophet was known to smile throughout the day and throughout his life. He smiled more than any other person. Jareer is quoted as saying, "God's Messenger never declined to see me since I embraced Islam. He never saw me without smiling at me." The Prophet was not only characterized by the beauty of his smiling, he also promoted smiling and encouraged others to smile. He says, "Your smiling at your brother is an act of charity." He also says, "Do not underrate any good action, even

if it is just meeting your brother with a buoyant face," i.e. a cheerful, smiling, reassuring face.

II.The beauty of handsome appearance. The Prophet used to wear the nicest clothes available to him. He groomed himself when preparing to meet delegations in a manner appropriate for him and for them; that is, he dressed what is compatible with the status and traditions of each delegation. He liked perfume. 'Aisha says, "I used to apply to the Prophet the best scent available." He prohibited any person who had eaten onions or garlic to get inside the mosque. He endorsed beauty in general as one of the things loved by God. He says, "God is beautiful and loves beauty."

III.The beauty of gentleness in behavior, action, and speech. He, blessings and peace be upon him, says, "When gentleness gets into something, it can only adorn it, and when removed from something, it can only disfigure it." Thus, gentleness is an adornment, i.e. beautiful, while violence is an ugly, repulsive thing. The Prophet carried all his affairs with gentleness, and, consequently, urged gentleness in all affairs, both public and private.

IV.The beauty of tenderness:

A. He used to shorten a prayer when he heard an infant crying, in consideration of a mother's anxiety for her child.
B. Once he stopped the advance of an army out of concern for a bird grieving for its babies, which were captured by some soldiers. The army resumed its advance only when the baby birds were returned to

their mother.

C. He avoided direct, face-to-face reproach. He would rather say something like, "What about those people who feel too proud to do something which I myself do?" In *Al-Fatth*, Ibn Hajar has a Chapter on Those Who Avoid Confronting Others with Rerproach.

D. He indulged children and joked with them. Anas says, "The Prophet was so friendly with us that he used to say to my little brother, "Hey, Abu 'Umair, what has the birdie done?" (A playful, rhyming question in Arabic.)

E. He approved and encouraged recreation in his house. 'Aisha says, "I used to play with dolls at the Prophet's, and I had playmates who played with me. When God's Messenger came in, they felt shy, so he would let them pass on to me and play with me."

F. He said, "Let not any of you say, 'I have a devilish impulse,' but rather, 'I have a strong inclination' ...." Ibn Hajar, in *Al-Fatth*, quotes Al-Khattaabi as saying that "'strong inclination' and 'devilish impulse' are similar in meaning, but the Prophet disliked the 'devilish' adjective and opted for the safer expression. It was his habit to substitute an unpleasant name with a refined one. This tradition implies that unpleasant vocabulary should be avoided." The point here is that avoiding an expression like 'I have a devilish impulse' is an act of tenderness towards oneself.

G. The beauty of tenderness includes devising various ways to honor one's wife. The Prophet used to offer his knee for his wife Safia to step on it when she wanted to mount a camel.

H. He preached God's "tenderness" with his people. He

says, "When God created His creatures, He wrote down in His book, which He has on the Throne, 'My mercy outweighs my anger.'"

Second: Love

Many genuine and venerable words are used to a point where they are almost shunned or debased. Such a word, which one fears may be abandoned or misused, is "love." Love, however, is actually a basic religious principle. It is the basis of great relationships that are most sublime and closest to perfection.

Love is the origin of one's relationship with God, for God loves people who repent and who purify themselves: **"God loves those who turn to Him in repentance, and He loves those who keep themselves pure"** (*Al-Baqarah* II: 222). He loves people who are patient, people who are charitable, people who put their trust in Him and turn to Him, and people who are fair-minded.

Belief is a plant, adorned with love, sown by God in the believer's heart: **"But God has made belief appeal to you and adorned it in your hearts"** (*Al-Hujuraat* XLIX: 7).

Hence, the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, was an advocate of love in both his words and through his actions. He says:

I."No one may taste the sweetness of belief until he, when he loves another person, loves him only for the sake of God; until being cast into the fire is more agreeable to him than relapsing into disbelief after God has rescued him from it; and until God and His Messenger are loved

by him more than anybody else."

II."Mu'aath, by God I love you."

III."By Him Who has my soul at His disposal, you will not be admitted into paradise before you believe, and you will not truly believe before you love each other."

IV.Some one asked, "God's Messenger, who is the person you love the most." He said, "'Aisha." He was then asked, "And of men?" He said, "her father."

V.One of his prayers that expressed love and penitence is: "God, give me the gift of loving You and loving any creature whose love serves me well with You. God provide me with things I love to turn them into a force I use for what You love, and as for the things I love that You keep from me, let them be a free time for me spent in what You love."

In this one tradition the word "love," and one of its derivatives, are repeated seven times. This has a very clear significance: that love is the most important and greatest of all values and relationships.

VI. On the relationship with locations that expresses gratefulness, the Prophet says, "Uhud is a mountain we love, and it loves us."

Let all the followers of Muhammad, as well as all other people, renew their sense and their strong awareness of the beauty in religion and in the universe, and of love, which is the basic principle of all intimate, bright, sensible relationships. After all, without beauty

and love, there is no true religious devotion and no sound life on Earth. Could either be realized through ugliness and hatred?

III.

Wishing for the Good and Happiness for All Humanity

The gist and all-inclusive element of Islam is constant refined manners, constant so that they do not alter, and refined so that they do not deteriorate. Faith, action, worship, judiciary activity, and many other things are only multiple, diverse ways, tools, and approaches to constant refined manners. For example, what is the underlying principle of fasting? It is refined manners. Here is the evidence in the form of statements of the Prophet:

A. "When someone does not refrain from false statements and from actions based on them, God has no need for him to give up his food and drink."

B. "Fasting is not [refraining] from eating and drinking. Fasting is rather guarding oneself from falling into error and obscenity. If someone swears at you or abuses you, say, 'I am fasting! I am fasting!'"

Therefore, manners should be an element taken into consideration____ in every matter that concerns human beings, because when such matters are discussed without reference to manners, they seem to leave their objectives and purpose behind and divest the subject

under discussion of its meaning and usefulness, turning it into a form without content or a layer of painting with no surface behind it.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit a number of states in the U.S.A. People have come up with many religious and secular explanations that try to find reasons for these events. It is the right of people to ask "Why?" when a universal or a human event occurs. Man is curious, investigative, and eager by nature, and nobody has the right to suppress such human characteristics. As it is the right of people to ask, it is a scientific and ethical duty to try to offer a correct answer.

Gloating over the misfortune of others has never been a correct response, a sound acknowledgment, or a satisfactory ethical conduct in reaction to such disasters.

I.The decent or normal thing to do is to wish for the good and happiness of people, all people. Otherwise, why are missions assigned and messengers sent? God has no need for people. Therefore, be sure that religion is for the good and happiness of people, to extend mercy to them and relieve them of any grief. Undoubtedly, to gloat at the misfortune of some people, when some misfortune has happened to them, is a type of behavior that is incompatible with how people should normally react or with that great religious purpose.

II.The Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, used to start his day with this delightful, human-divine prayer that expressed penitence: "God, whatever gift is enjoyed by me or any other of Your other creatures this morning

is from You alone, Who has no partner. Thus, praise and thankfulness are due to You." This merciful, tender, and gentle prophet, whose heart is big enough to admit all humanity, thanks his Lord on behalf of all people and all other creatures for all the gifts God has bestowed on them. For the phrase "or any of Your other creatures" encompasses all people, which is the first purpose of the prayer—yes, all people, Muslim or non-Muslim. For God is the Lord of all human beings, not of Muslims alone. Every human being has his own share from the Godhood in that he is created, has supplies, and gifts bestowed on him. The Prophet is certainly the most eloquent of all speakers, so when he says, "or any of Your other creatures," it is exactly and specifically the denotation of humanity in general that he means by the phrase. The expression of thankfulness to God for the gifts He bestows on all human beings is but an honest expression of wishing for the well-being, and happiness of all mankind. Could then this prophet, who thanks God for all gifts granted to all people, gloat at a misfortune or a hardship suffered by anyone? The answer is a most definite no. A heart that is so pure and so merciful has no room for gloating or rejoicing at others' misfortunes. Combined with this is a profound philosophical implication, namely, that rejoicing at every gift bestowed by God on any human being is concomitantly associated with its antithesis in feeling, conception, and purpose, and that is hating to see people suffer any distress, misfortune, or misery. Moreover, overflowing mercy and gloating cruelty cannot exist side by side in the same heart.

III. Speaking of mercy brings to mind the Prophet's

tradition in which he says, "God has no mercy for any one who shows no mercy to others." In explaining this tradition, Ibn Battaal, as quoted in *Fatth Al-Baari*, says, "It signifies encouragement to extend mercy to all creatures, and that includes Muslims and non-Muslims; and beasts both owned and free." It is universally acknowledged that mercy towards people and gloating at their misfortune, which means feeling happy to see them grieve, are irreconcilable, mutually exclusive opposites.

IV.Rescuing and saving people is one of the moral precepts in the Islamic system. No person who gloats over the misfortunes of others can be characterized by such sublime, radiant, and useful moral values, because his logic and his attitude consist in refraining from relieving a non-Muslim in distress and waiting until he perishes or comes to harm to gloat at his misfortune. If a non-Muslim catches a disease, such a person would offer him no treatment, but would rather wait till the disease gets more critical so that he may have the joy of gloating at such suffering. If a person of that type is an experienced swimmer or diver, he would not try to save a drowning non-Muslim, but would rather let him drown to gloat at his death. If you are of this type, do not offer assistance to an orphan who is in a dire need for help, but enjoy watching him in his condition, because that is how you gloat at his adversity. All this would be contrary to the instructions of Quran verses on rescue and assistance. These include, for example, the following verses: **"Yet he would not scale the Ascent. • Would that you knew what the Ascent is. • It is**

the emancipation of a slave, • or the feeding, on a day of famine, • of an orphaned near of kin, • or a needy man in distress" (*Al-Balad* XC: 11-16).

V.The Quran tells us that gloating and rejoicing at the misfortunes of others is a characteristic of abnormal non-Muslims, persons who are mentally sick and whose standards are so muddled that they make a habit of rejoicing at the misfortunes of others: **"When good fortune comes your way, it grieves them; and if evil befalls you, they rejoice"** (*Aal 'Imran* III: 120).

How can Muslims be superior in their ethics and manners if they imitate such aberrant people in this shameful, strange feeling, the feeling of exaltation at the calamities of other people and of dejection when God bestows one of his gifts on other people.

VI.Gloating at others' misfortunes incurs the malicious implication of envy. Abu Haamed Al-Ghazaali says, "This is the worst type of envy. When you are hurt by some one for one reason or another and he opposes you over something in one way or another, your heart may fill with anger at and hatred for him, and you may develop a strong grudge against him. A grudge calls for wishing to see him suffer and avenging yourself, and if you are unable to make him suffer yourself, then you would wish that fate would make him suffer." If this happens, you may believe that God, the Most Sublime, has honored and vindicated you. Whatever disaster befell your enemy would please you, and you would believe it to be a reward from God to you for hating

that person, and that it happened only for your sake. While whatever blessing befell him would displease you because it would be against your desire.

It is well-known that Islam rigorously forbids envy, its motives, forms, and purposes. Therefore, even if gloating at others' misfortune had no implication other than envy, a Muslim should free and purify himself from it, both in the way he feels and in expression.

VII.Inviting non-Muslims to Islam has special psychological and moral keys and approaches. Foremost among these is flexibility, kindness, and refined and noble human compassion; promising words that carry good tidings; smiling and cheerfulness; warm affection; and great concern for, and honest interaction with, people's problems and worries. A person who gloats at misfortune is definitely devoid of these refined qualities and gifts. Thus, he is incapable of inviting others to God's religion, because he actually drives them away from it by blocking the entrances and portals through his harshness and insensitivity.

VIII.The Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, once told Mother of Believers 'Aisha, may God be pleased with her, some of his memories of painful times in Makkah. He said, "I suffered a lot at the hands of your people. The worst suffering I experienced was on the Day of 'Aqaba. I approached Ibn Abd Kilaab with my message, and he declined to accept it. I went my way, with concern showing on my face. I regained my composure only when I was in Qarn Al-Th'aaleb. I

looked up and I found a cloud giving me shade. As I looked at it, I saw in it Gabriel, peace be upon him. He called me and said, 'God, the Most Sublime, heard what your people said to you and how they answered you. He has sent you the King of Mountains and you can command him to do to them whatever you wish.' The King of Mountains called me and said, 'Muhammad, God heard what your people said to you, and I am the King of Mountains. God sent me to you to do what you bid me. If you wish, I can clamp down the Akhshabain, [two great mountains in Makkah,] and squeeze your people in between.' I said, "I rather wish that God will bring out of their loins people who worship Him alone, and nothing else with Him.'"

The Prophet received the support of the elements of nature at a time of hardship. He had the opportunity to take revenge against his oppressors and those who were unjust to him. It would have been expected of him, under such circumstances, to have wished for the destruction of these people. But being a man with lofty ideals, who came to bring life and happiness to people, he was unwilling to have his antagonists perish. He could rise above the desire to see them dead and the inclination to gloat at their misfortunes while they perished, because he, being mercy itself to mankind, knows only mercy, whatever the case may be.

IX.Muslims are commanded to speak to others in an amiable, kind manner:

A.**"Tell My servants to say that which is best"** (*Al-Israa* XVII: 53).

B.**"Contend with what is best, and then the one you**

have been at enmity with behaves as a close supporter" (*Fussilat* XLI: 34).

C.**"Speak kindly to people"** (*Al-Baqarah* II: 83).

It is certain that gloating over other people's misfortune is not conducive to speaking in an amiable, kind manner, which Islam makes obligatory for Muslims in dealing with others.

X.Islam forbids any feeling of joy when others suffer harm, even if those others are non-humans, i.e. animals. It is thus not permissible in Islam to rejoice at the distress of oxen, dogs, or cocks when they fight and suffer pain. Could Islam then forbid rejoicing at the harm suffered by animals and yet sanction feelings of joy at the harm, distress, calamities, hurricanes, and other causes of human suffering?

XI.The highest aspects of monotheism are two in number:
the worship of God alone with no partner, and charity towards His creatures, human beings and others, and wishing good and happiness to mankind at large. There is no charity to people whatsoever in gloating at their misfortune; it is rather an offense to them. Therefore, it is a terrible decline from a high aspect of monotheism and faith. The integrating link of the two aspects is realized through the coupling of fear of God ("Fear God wherever you be...") with charity to people (... and deal with people in a nice manner"). The two aspects are combined in one of the traditions of the loving Prophet.

IV.

There Are a Thousand Approaches to God and His Paradise

Here is a letter from a wise and upright Christian reader commenting on an article I have written on the "Obligation of Honest Thankfulness" to non-Muslims when they do something, take an attitude, or make a statement that calls for gratitude. He first expresses his pleasure at discovering that Islam has such a high degree of justice, tolerance, and nobleness. Then he raises a question, which is the point here; he says, "There is an ambiguous point for me which I find hard to resolve, and that is the question of admission into Paradise. In the Christian education I received, I was taught that we had to pray, fast, and do good deeds; not to commit theft, murder, and adultery; and to love our enemies – and that is the road to Paradise. So how can the slaughter of innocent people be the shortest cut to Paradise?" Obviously, he was referring to the acts of violence perpetrated by Muslims who claim that these acts are *jihad* for the sake of God, and that this *jihad* provides the shortest road and quickest access to paradise.

I offer here some brief lines on the concept of *jihad*, and then I will move to the main subject, devoting most of this chapter to it, hoping to cover it in full detail. It is the subject that there are one thousand and more roads to Paradise.

***Jihad* in Islam is a right, and I will make no**

apology for it, because no apology is due for a right. It is a right because it is legitimate defense of one's self, religion, homeland, and all the elements and components of one's people, nation, and country. In this sense, it is a right equally shared by Muslims and all other nations. On the basis of this general legal and political right, the constitutions of all countries stipulate that one of the most important duties and responsibilities of a head of state is to defend the country against all aggression by others. Others call it the right of self-defense. They can call it that, for they are free to choose the name they want. Islam, however, calls it *jihad*, and by the same right of choosing a name, Islam may certainly call it that. And just as a nation has its own laws and systems, it also has its own vocabulary and idioms. **That is one point. Another is that it is impossible for mere violence to be *jihad*, even if it claims to be so.** In Islam, *jihad* has certain conditions, without which it cannot be *jihad*, just as purity, prayers, sale transactions, and marriage have conditions which have to be fulfilled otherwise they are invalid. The conditions of *jihad* include that it has to be declared by a competent legitimate ruler; that killing innocent people should be avoided; that it should not be for the sake of a high worldly status and should not cause earthly corruption; that it should not be an abjuration of a covenant or a treaty; and that it should not be a desire or a whim and sudden impulse to confront the enemy, since the normal state of things is peace among nations.

To get to the heart of the matter, it should be clear in the mind, conscience, and heart, first of all, that *jihad*, in its true sense, is not the only way to Paradise. Islamic

System and Methodology confirm, through hundreds of clues and items of evidence, that Paradise has a thousand roads leading to it, and even more.

This is a generalization that calls for elaboration supported with evidence from the Divine Book and the *sunna*.

First: the approaches to win admission to Paradise, according to the Quran, include:

I.The approach of hastening to receive God's pardon through engaging in activities that qualify one for it: **"Hasten all of you to a pardon from your Lord, and a Paradise as wide as heavens and earth, prepared for the pious, • Those who give freely in prosperity and adversity, who control their anger, who forgive people – God likes the charitable – •and who, having committed a grave indecency or compromised themselves, mention God and ask to be forgiven their sins – Who forgives sins other than God? – and do not knowingly persist in doing what they have done. • The reward for these is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens with rivers flowing underneath, where they live eternally.** Excellent is the reward for those who labor" (*Aal 'Imran* III: 133-35).

II.The approach of performing prayers, paying *zakah*, belief in the messengers, and spending out of one's wealth for the sake of God: **"If you attend to your prayers, give out *zakah*, believe in My messengers and support them, and offer up to God a generous**

loan, I shall forgive your sins and admit you into gardens under which running waters flow" (*Al-Maaedah* V: 12).

III.The approach of recognizing the awe of standing before God; exalting, glorifying, and sanctifying Him; and freeing one's self from the chains of passion and desire: **"As for the one who fears standing before his Lord and denies his soul its caprices, Paradise shall be his abode"** (LXXIX: 40-41).

IV.The approach of being tolerant, forgiving, and dealing with others in a refined manner: **"A good deed is not equal to a bad one. Contend with what is best, and then the one you have been at enmity with behaves as a close supporter. • But none will meet this description other than the patient. None will meet it other than a person with great fortune"** (*Fussilat* XLI: 34-35). The great fortune *is* Paradise.
Second: the approaches to Paradise, according to *sunna*, include:

I.The approach of offering water to a thirsty dog:
The Prophet, blessing and peace be upon him recounted: "While a man was walking down a road, he felt very thirsty. He came by a well, went down into it, and drank. He came out, and there was a dog gasping and sucking at some of the soft soil out of thirst. The man said to himself, 'This dog is as thirsty as I have been.' He went down the well, filled one of his shoes with water, held it with his mouth till he climbed all the way up, and let the dog drink. God appreciated what

the man did, and He forgave the man [his sins] and admitted him into Paradise." In another version of this tradition, it is a prostitute that does this, and, for her action, she is forgiven by God.

II.The approach of general planting for the general benefit of all creatures: the Prophet says, "Whenever a Muslim sows or plants a seed or plant, and a human being, beast, or bird later eats some of it, it is counted for the man who planted it as an act of ongoing charity till the Day of Resurrection."

III.The approach of ample and varied refined qualities: The Prophet says, "Whenever a person observes any of forty qualities – the top of which is goat-offering – in the hope of getting its reward and having its promise fulfilled, God will admit him into Paradise for it." Goat offering means that a person lends a goat to another, so that the latter may benefit from its milk, and then return it to its owner.

IV.The approach of cleaning the environment of anything that spoils or pollutes it:

God's Messenger, blessing and peace be upon him, says:

A."I saw a man strolling along in Paradise in reward for a tree that he cut off and removed from the middle of a road where it had caused harm to Muslims."

B."The deeds of my nation, both good and bad, were displayed to me, and I found included in its good deeds removing harmful objects off a road, and in its bad deeds any spittle or mucus that is found in a mosque and is not buried in the ground."

V.The approach of invoking God, exalted be His name: The Prophet says,

A."Whoever says, 'Glory and praise be to God,' will have a palm tree planted for him in Paradise."

B."'Shall I tell you of one of the treasures of Paradise.' 'Yes,' I said. He said, 'No force and no power are possible without God's help.'"

C."'Shall I tell you what your King considers your best and most virtuous deeds, the deeds that win you the highest ranks, that count better for you than giving away gold and silver, that count better for you than meeting your enemy and striking off their heads and having your heads stricken off by them?' They said, 'Yes.' He said, 'It is invoking God's name.'"

VI.The approach of learning:

God's Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him, says, "Whoever follows a path to seek learning through it, God paves for him, through it, a path to Paradise."

VII.The approach of toiling with one's hands, assisting a person in distress, enjoining what is right, and keeping oneself from causing harm to others. Abu Moosa quotes the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, as saying, "A charitable offering is due from every Muslim." "How about if he cannot afford it?" he was asked. He said, "He toils with his hands to benefit himself and to make a charitable offering.'" "How about if he is unable to do so?" he was asked. He said, "He enjoins what is right or good." "How about if he fails to do it?" he was asked. He said, "He refrains from evil, for that is an act of charity."

VIII.The approach of moral refinement: the Prophet said:

A."There is nothing that weighs heavier in a believer's scale on the Day of Resurrection than good manners."

B."The ones I love most among you and the ones who sit closest to me on the Day of Resurrection are those with the best manners."

C.Shall I tell you who has immunity from fire? Immunity from fire is given to every easily reached, easy-going, flexible, simple person."

With such and similar evidence from the Glorious Book and from verified *sunnah*, we are certain that there are a thousand roads to Paradise, and even more.

This is a fact supported with implications, concepts, and purposes that are open-ended and brightly shining.

First, one of the purposes of Islam is to expand the ways of good and vary its tools in every field and on every level.

Second, *jihad* – in its combative, defensive sense – is an exceptional action. It is not something that goes on twenty four hours a day throughout our lives. Fighting, after all, is forbidden in the cases of peace, of being bound by a treaty or truce, of helplessness, etc. Does this mean that under such circumstances, varied and long-lasting as they may be, the roads to Paradise are blocked? Nobody would answer this question in the affirmative unless he is lacking in his knowledge about Islam. And nobody can give out what he lacks or can describe well what he has not seen. With no affirmative answer possible to the question posed above, it is evident that the roads to Paradise are almost countless.

Third, every useful deed is a point of ascent to Paradise, if three conditions are met:

1. true belief,
2. honest intention, and
3. appropriate means.

This shows how wide the range of actions is that qualify a Muslim for admission into Paradise, and how varied are their forms and types.

Fourth, the *sura* of *Al-'Ankaboot*, one of the *suras* revealed in Makkah, concludes with this verse: **"Those who strive for Our sake We will guide to Our right paths. God is for the righteous"** (XXIX: 69).

In this verse, we find two great concepts, the concept that striving (*jihad*) is not meant in this context to signify fighting, because, while in Makkah, fighting

was not yet prescribed for Muslims, and the concept that there are paths, not just one path, to which God guides people. These many paths all lead to Paradise.

V.

The Pioneer of the Greatest ProgressiveEnlightenment in Human History

More than 1,400 years ago the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him – the man who taught humanity truth, beauty, mercy, and perfection – stood on the Mountain of 'Arafa endorsing what is known today as human rights. He promoted human dignity and the inviolability of life, honor, and property. He called for equality before religious and secular law. He advocated general peace, order, respect for and appreciation of women, as well as other concepts and values along the same line, which he proclaimed, loud and clear, while bidding farewell to people in that great Hajj scene, where most of the Muslims at the time gathered (100,000 Muslims accompanied the Prophet on that pilgrimage).

This is an awesome, splendid conclusion to the Prophet's work over less than a quarter of a century (twenty three years, to be precise). What he accomplished during that period – which is extremely short in the cycle of revivals and civilizations – is the establishment of the greatest and most profound movement of enlightenment in all human history. This is a statement that calls for elaboration. Therefore, let us quote an elite group of non-Muslim wise men as they speak of this happy,

promising, enlightening renaissance.

I. In his book *History of Mankind*, Arnold Toynbee says that the genius of Muhammad was instrumental in enabling him to deliver his Lord's message to his people, and the history of Arabia is connected to that. Toynbee adds that in 622, the situation radically changed to the advantage of Muhammad and his mission, when a group of people from the agricultural oasis Yathrib, or Madinah, came to him and asked him to move to their town and be in charge of their affairs. Following that, Toynbee writes, Islam spread throughout the world and had a profound impact on it.

II. Brilliant Irish physicist John Desmond Bernal says in his encyclopedic *Science in History* that a positive element was soon added to the negative elements then prevailing, including the void in which the world lived. That element, he says, was the emergence and fast spreading of a new international religion. Bernal adds that the linguistic, religious, and governmental barriers which existed up to the seventh century, limiting each culture within its own region, suddenly disappeared almost everywhere between the two oceans: the Indian and the Atlantic. Islam, Bernal says, spread brotherly love among all races, prescribed specific rites for its followers, and based its philosophy on monotheism; it was a religion firmly rooted in the hearts of people.

III. Well-known Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru says in his book *Glimpses of World History* that what is really surprising is that the Arab nation, that had been

forgotten for many generations and that had kept itself isolated from what went on around it, suddenly came to life brimming with activity and energy and amazing the world and turning it upside down. Nehru describes the surging out of Arabs through Asia, Europe, and Africa, and the refined culture and brilliant civilization they introduced in the world as one of the wonders of history, and he says that Islam was the real driving force of that renaissance through the culture it introduced and the confidence, and vitality it inspired.

This is some elaboration that itself needs further elaboration. Some of the models of the great, enlightening renaissance led by the Prophet of Islam are the following.

The first model is the rational enlightening revival, which is the true beginning. For there can be no real awakening in any field in the absence of reason or in a state of narrow-mindedness. Therefore, we can calmly and confidently assert that the great enlightening renaissance led by the Prophet of Islam had reason as its key, outlook, mechanism, and approach.

The rational and systematic explanation of that fact is that Arabia, as well as the whole world, was in a state of mental blackout, and intellectual stagnation was the pervasive and dominant condition. It goes without saying that it is impossible for progress, awakening, liberation, and enlightenment to take place while reason is dormant and mental stagnation is prevalent. Therefore, the systematic and practical priority was for a recall of absent reason, stimulation of the stagnant mind, and making it operate at maximum capacity.

This systematic priority is evident in varied Quran contexts, such as:

A. The context of restricted command at the beginning, a command that requires one thing only, which is thinking: **"Say, 'I am only teaching you this one thing: to stand up for God in pairs and individually, and then think.'"** (*Sabaa* XXXIV: 46). It is one thing only, and it is to make free and active thinking the substitute for the condition of mental stagnation, for under that condition, the message would never have been understood, and it was sent down to be understood. Wise people would not dispute the fact that the first requisite for thinking is to have its tool alive rather than dead, glowing rather than extinguished, open rather than closed, active rather than motionless or frozen.

B. The context of stimulating thinking by casting an intelligent, scrutinizing look at one's self and the universe around: **"Have they not contemplated within themselves; God has only created Heavens, the Earth, and what is between them rightfully and for a prescribed term"** (*AL-Room* XXX: 08).

C. The context of shocking through comparisons: **"Are they equal, those who know and those who do not? It is only those with understanding that remember"** (*Al-Zumar* XXXIX, 9).

D. The context of a flaming, long-term, intensive campaign against foolish and blind imitation of practices that are not supported by reason, logic, evidence, or proof: **"When it is said to them, 'Follow what God has revealed,' they say, 'We**

will rather follow what we found our forefathers believing in.' Why, even if their forefathers did not comprehend nothing and followed no guidance?" (*Al-Baqarah* II: 170).

The second model of the great enlightening renaissance led by the Prophet of Islam is one that resulted from the powerful rational and intellectual renaissance. Detonation of the energy inherent in reason and logic produced an objective, scientific approach, based on knowledge in dealing with the universe. Hence, the proper progress of humanity started with knowledge of cosmology and the insightful dealing with cosmic matters.

It is once again proper to quote an elite group of wise non-Muslims, who speak, with knowledge and honesty about this point about the bases of scientific revival.

I.John Desmond Bernal says that Islam made a sudden upward surge, and the reason for that was that culture and science became greatly energized. Islam, he says, became the meeting point for Asian and European knowledge, and then into that combined current flowed a series of inventions that were not known or available to Greek and Roman technology.

II.A second scientist who documents this fact is Herbert G. Wells, who gives in his book *A Short History of the World* a testimony to the effect that many forms of progress in the fields of mathematical, medical, and natural sciences were realized by Muslims. Undoubtedly, he adds, they achieved great discoveries in minerals and succeeded in their technical application. He adds

that those applications were of utmost importance and had deep influence on the revival of physical sciences in Europe.

III.A third scientist is Paul Kennedy, who states this scientific fact in his book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. He says that a great part of the European cultural and scientific heritage has actually been borrowed from Islam and Muslims.

The third model of the great enlightening renaissance led by the Prophet of Islam is the model of human and religious tolerance. Two examples will suffice in this area.

I.In his book, *A Controversy about Zion*, Douglas Reed quotes a clear and honest statement by St. Augustine. The statement is that Islam gave economic freedom to non-believers and allowed them to run their own affairs. It was tolerant in dealing with the followers of other religions. The statement goes on to say that the free flourishing realized by Judaism was impossible to be realized in the early days of Christianity.

II.The second example is what the renowned Jewish thinker Israel Shahak says in his book *Judaism.* He says that an important fact is that the expulsion of Jews was practically unknown in Muslim lands, because it contradicts Islamic Law.

The fourth model of the great, international enlightening renaissance led by the Prophet of Islam is the proclamation of the unity of the human community in

that distant time, when racial, national, tribal, and ethnic prejudices, and even prejudices among members of the same tribe, were dominant.

Some of the principles of the proclamation of the unity of the human community are expressed in God's words in His glorious Book:

A. **"People, fear your Lord, Who created you from one soul"** (*Al-Nisaa* IV: 1).

B. **"People, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes in order to know each other. The noblest among you in God's consideration are those who fear Him the most"** (*Al-Hujuraat* XLIX: 13).

This is the Prophet of Islam, who, more than 1,400 years ago, stood on the Mountain of 'Arafa to proclaim to the world the rights of man and to lead the greatest enlightenment renaissance in the whole history of mankind.

Such a prophet, with such exalted contribution to the struggle for the progress and happiness of mankind, must have his great right acknowledged and must be given his due by mankind. The loyalty of Muslims to him is in following him and adhering to his approach. As for the gratitude of non-Muslims, it should be in appreciating and respecting him as a great pioneer who offered a lot to mankind: a lot of branches of science and scholarship, and a lot of knowledge, values, and ethics. He has also taught mankind how its relationship with its Lord should be, how the relationship between one human being and another should be, and how man's relationship with the universe should be.

Hence, an offense aimed at the Prophet of Islam is not only an ugly type of racism and religious prejudice,

but it is also an act of moral ingratitude, whether it comes from an individual or an entire culture.

CHAPTER SIX

Muhammad: His Position with God and His Status Among Muslims

" And We exalted your fame"
(*Al-Sharh* XCIV: 4).

The attributes of God include that He is Truly Wise and All-Knowing. He chooses what He wants knowingly and wisely.

A. **"It is He who is in Heaven God and on earth God, and He is Truly Wise, All-Knowing"** (*Al-Zukhruf* XLIII: 84).

B. **"'My Lord is gracious in whatever way He wishes. He is All-Knowing, truly Wise.'"** (*Yusuf* XII: 100).

With this encompassing knowledge and infinite wisdom, He selects out of all human beings prophets and messengers: **"God chooses messengers from among angels and messengers from among humans"** (*Al-Haj* XXII: 75).

The selection is, therefore, neither accidental nor arbitrary. Moreover, prophets are not men who plan to become prophets; they rather receive their prophethood unexpectedly, God having chosen them through His own knowledge, wisdom, compassion, and benevolence. Prophethood was, for example, far from the thoughts, imagination, and wishes of Moses, but he was chosen by God to be a prophet and a messenger: **"Have you been told the story of Moses, • when he saw a fire. He said to his family, 'Stay put! I have espied a fire. Perhaps, I will get you a lighted torch from it or find some clue by the fire. • When he approached it he was called, 'Moses! • I am your Lord, so take off your shoes; you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa. • I have chosen you, so listen to what is being revealed"** (*Taha* XL: 9-13).

Also through His own knowledge and wisdom, God, the Most Glorious and Sublime, chose Muhammad

to be a messenger prophet out of the millions of people who lived in the early seventh century A.D.:

A. **"Recite in the name of your Lord, Who created. He created man from a clinging mass. Recite, and your Lord is Most Generous, Who has taught by means of the pen. He taught Man what he had not known"** (*Al-'Alaq* XCVI: 1 – 5).

B. **"Thus We inspired you with a spirit of Our will. You had not known what the Book and what faith are, but We made it a light with which We guide whomever We will of our servants, and you certainly offer guidance to a straight path. It is the path of God, to Whom belongs everything in the Heavens and on Earth; it is to God that all matters return"** (*Al-Shoora* XLII: 52-53).

C. **"You receive the Quran out of the grace of One who is Wise, All-Knowing."** (*Al-Naml* XXVII: 6).

D. **"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but rather God's messenger and the last of the prophets. God has knowledge of everything"** (*Al-Ahzaab* XXXIII: 40).

The Exalted Position Given to Muhammad by Him Who Chose Him as Prophet:

A person chosen by God, the Truly Wise, All-Knowing, Who chooses knowingly and wisely, must be an exceptional human being: worthy, honorable and truly eminent. We know this from the words of God revealed to His prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him. In the Quran, God elevates His chosen prophet Muhammad and exalts his status; He says:

A. **"Prophet, we have sent you as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and of warnings"** (*Al-Ahzaab* XXXIII: 45).

B. **"And We exalted your fame"** (*Al-Sharh* XCIV: 4).

C. **"You have sublime manners"** (*Al-Qalam* LXVIII: 4).

D. **"Wait patiently for your Lord's decision; We are watching over you"** (*Al-Toor* LII: 48).

E. **"God and His angels send their blessing upon the Prophet. Believers, send your blessings upon him and wish him peace"** (XXXIII: 56).

F. **"Whoever obeys the Messenger would be obeying God"** (*Al-Nisaa* IV: 80).

G. **"Fear God, you men with understanding who have believed; God has sent you down a reminder, • a messenger who recites to you God's verses, articulated, to lead those who believe and do righteous deeds out of darkness into light."** (*Al-Talaaq* LXV: 10-11).

H. **"Do not raise your voices above that of the Prophet, and do not speak to him as loud as when you speak to each other, lest your actions would fail without your feeling it. • Those who speak with soft voices in the presence of God's Messenger are the ones whose hearts have been tested by God for piety. They will have forgiveness and a great reward"** (*Al-Hujuraat* XLIX: 2-3).

I. **"We have sent you only as an act of mercy for all creatures"** (*Al-Anbiyaa* XXI: 107).

He is – to God and as described by God, the Most Sublime – a witness for and against mankind, giving a testimony that is fair and just according to the standards of right and justice that he has introduced. He is also the

herald of good tidings, who advances everything that is good, right, beautiful, and ideal. He is the bright lantern, the one whose fame is exalted forever and ever. He is the man with lofty manners; the one who – as he moves or stands still; as he speaks, acts, delivers his message, guides, teaches, and recommends – is lovingly watched over, guarded, and protected by God; he is the one who receives blessings from God, angels, and believers; the one whom to obey is a condition for obeying God; the one who should have no voice raised above his; the one who embodies God's mercy to all humanity; the one who invokes God and always reminds believers of God, through his words, deeds, manners, and conduct.

With prophet Muhammad enjoying this venerable position in the eyes of his Lord, God himself, sublime as He is, has undertaken to defend His dear and beloved prophet, messenger, and chosen one:

A. **"Let him who thinks that God will not support him in this world and in the Hereafter stretch out a rope to the sky and then cut himself off, and then let him see whether his scheme will remove that which has enraged him"** (*Al-Haj* XXII: 15). Among the implications of this verse is that a person who thinks that God will not support His prophet is full of illusion to the extent that he gets confused and encounters so many problems that he will eventually perish, because it is certain and beyond any doubt whatsoever that God will support His prophet.

B. **"If you do not support him, God has already supported him at the time when the unbelievers drove him away. He was only one of two, and**

they were in the cave; he said to his companion: 'Do not grieve; God is with us.'" (*Al-Tawbah* IX: 40).

C. **"We have spared you the mockers"** (*Al-Hijr* XV: 95).

D. When one of the polytheists described the Prophet as being "cut off," that is having no offspring, God responded through his words to the prophet: **"We have certainly given you abundance, •so pray to your God, and slaughter. • Surely, he who hates you is the one cut off"** (*Al-Kawthar* CVIII: 1-3).

E. When Abu Lahab swore at the Prophet and said, "May you be doomed," God responded by saying: **"Doomed are the hands of Abu Lahab, • and doomed is he. • His wealth and his gains shall avail him nothing. He shall have to endure a flaming fire"** (*Al-Masad* CXI: 1-3).

Muhammad's Status Among Muslims

The number of Muslims, followers of Muhammad, is estimated as one billion and four hundred thousand people. They represent all races, colors, languages, and backgrounds. When to this number is added the number of Muslims who have lived on earth for the past 1,437 lunar years, that is from the time Muhammad was sent as a messenger prophet to the present, it becomes many folds higher.

Those billions of Muslims feel true, deep, and sincere love towards Prophet Muhammad, a love that is stronger than they feel towards their family members and even themselves.

I.They love him because they believe in the existence of God, as the one-and-only deity; in His ability to reveal books and send messengers; in His infinite, sublime wisdom in doing so. He, the most Glorious, did not create human beings for no reason and without a guiding system: **"Did you think that We created you in mere idle play, and that to Us you would not return? •Sublimely exalted is God, the Ultimate Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth. There is no deity other than Him, the Lord of the Glorious Throne"** (*Al-Muminoon* XXIII: 115).

From the very beginning, when He ordered Adam to go down to earth and serve as His deputy on it, He decided to send down a system to guide mankind to what is best, a system to be delivered by prophets and messengers of His choice: **"We said, 'Descend from it, all of you! When guidance shall reach you from Me, those who follow My guidance shall have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve"** (*Al-Baqarah* II: 38).

God has fulfilled His promise. The practical logic of human history testifies that the progress of humanity is marked with successive processions of prophets and messengers, starting with Noah and ending with Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon them all. This is a history documented in God's words in His Book: **"We have sent revelations to you just as We sent revelations to Noah and the prophets after him, and as We sent revelations to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and their descendents; and to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron and Solomon; as We gave David**

a Book of Divine wisdom. • Some messengers we have already told you of and some we have not. And God has spoken directly to Moses. • These were messengers sent to bring good news and warnings, so that, after the messengers, people may have no argument against God. God is Almighty and Wise" (*Al-Nisaa* IV: 163-64).

II.They love him because God Who exists and Who is the One-and-Only, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, and the Truly Wise One, Who out of mercy for mankind sent messengers to people – chose Muhammad for a mission and introduced him to mankind to believe in him and his mission: **"People, the Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord. Believe, then; it is better for you"** (*Al-Nisaa* IV: 170).

Undoubtedly, when you have faith in the words and wisdom of the One who introduces someone, this implies that you will trust the person who has been introduced and believe in his greatness, and that you will feel affection for him. The one introduced in this case is Prophet Muhammad: **"Whose word could be truer than God's?"** (*Al-Nisaa* IV: 122).

Of all people, Muslims were the first to believe in Prophet Muhammad and benefit from the light he brought. Consequently, they loved him, for it is normal that when you get the taste of something, you get to know and love it, and this leads to success: **"Those, therefore, who believe in him, honour and support him, and follow the light that has been sent down through him shall indeed be successful"** (*Al-A'raaf* VII: 157).

III.They love him because he is the means by which they were guided to the right path and is the light of their lives, having brought them the book of guidance and light, the Glorious Quran.

First, he is the means by which they were guided:

A.**"We have sent down the book to you to make everything clear, and to give guidance, grace, and good news to Muslims"** (*Al-Nahl* XVI: 89).

B.**"You certainly offer guidance to a straight path."** (*Al-Shoora* XLII: 52).

Second, he is the light of their lives, the light of their conscience, minds, and hearts:

A.**"He whose heart God has opened for Islam has a light from his Lord"** (*Al-Zumar* XXXIX, 22).

B.**"God has sent you down a reminder, a messenger who recites to you God's verses, articulated, to lead those who believe and do righteous deeds out of darkness into light."** (*Al-Talaaq* LXV: 10-11).

The beginning of guidance and the center of light and enlightenment was when Prophet Muhammad introduced to Muslims their Lord: their Creator and God. He taught Muslims how their relationship with God should be through their belief, worship, and conduct.

Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, is the one who taught us and implanted in our hearts and minds the belief that no one created the universe but God, no one made it work according to a magnificent precise system but God, no one created man in the best

possible form and honored him but God, no one has knowledge of the unknown but God, no one can do as he wishes but God, no guide is there to the truth but God, and, therefore, no one deserves to be worshipped but God. Thus to Him alone, with no partner, is pure worship due; He alone is with every human being wherever he may be; He alone knows what is hidden within the soul; He is the Ever-Living, the Eternal Master of all, Whom no slumber or sleep overtakes; and He is the One who holds the keys of the unknown and knows what the land and the sea contain: **"All that is in the Heavens and on Earth give glory to God; He is the Mighty one and Wise. • To Him belongs the Kingdom of the Heavens and Earth, He ordains life and death, and He has power for everything. • He is the first and last, the evident and invisible, and He has knowledge of everything.•It is he Who created the Heavens and Earth in six days, and then he settled on the Throne. He knows what goes into Earth and what comes out of it, and what comes down from Heaven and what ascends to it. He is with you wherever you are. God is aware of what you do. • To Him belongs the Kingdom of the Heavens and Earth, and all things return to him. • He makes the night goes into day, and the day goes into night, and He has knowledge of the secrets of the hearts"** (*Al-Hadeed* LVII: 1-6).

"God: there is no deity but Him, the Ever-Living, the Eternal Master of all. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. His is all that is in the Heavens and all that is on Earth. Who can intercede with Him, except by His permission? He knows all that lies open before them and all that lies behind them; and they

acquire no part of His knowledge unless He wills it. His throne extends over the Heavens and the Earth, and the preservation of both does not weary Him. He is the Highest, the Greatest" (II: 255).

"With Him are the keys to what lies beyond the reach of human perception: none knows them but He. He knows all that the land and sea contain; not a leaf falls but He knows it; and neither is there a grain in the earth's deep darkness, nor anything wet or dry but is recorded in a clear book" (*Al-An'aam* VI: 59).

This knowledge of God is a source of unequalled happiness for people endowed with great minds, free consciences, and upright souls.

Every person with a sound psychological and mental make-up must have a mind and heart that yearn and aspire to know and love his Lord, Who created him, and to get close to this Lord through the worship and action He loves and according to a system He approves.

Before Muhammad emerged as a prophet and messenger, Zaid Ibn 'Amr Ibn Nufail was one of those eminent Arabs looking for a way to know and worship their Lord. But Zaid was at a loss and did not know how to worship his Lord. He used to say, "God, if I knew the method you like best I would worship you according to it, but I do not know it."

The method or system unknown to this man, who had a great yearning to establish a sound relationship with his Lord, was introduced by Prophet Muhammad, and through it we know, believe in, love, and worship our Lord; we sing His glory at dawn and at sunset; and He is always in our minds and His name is on our lips.

Noble and refined principles of ethics require that Muslims should love the man who brought this true happiness to them, the happiness of a sound relationship with God Who is Merciful, Great, Exalted, Most Kind, and Most Loving.

IV.Muslims also love Prophet Muhammad because he brings mercy to them in particular, owing to their belief in him, and to all humanity as well.

A.**"To you has come a messenger who is one of you. He grieves that you should perish, and he is solicitous over you. He is compassionate and merciful towards believers"** (*Al-Tawbah* IX: 128).

B.**"He has his trust in believers, and he is a mercy for those who have believed"** (*Al-Tawbah* XI: 61).

C.**"The Prophet has a better claim on believers than they on themselves, and his wives are their mothers"** (XXXIII: 6).

V.They also love him because to follow him is a condition they have to fulfill if they want to love God: **"Say, 'If you love God, follow me and God will love you and forgive your sins.' God is Most Forgiving and Merciful"** (III: 31).

VI.They love him because he fought, struggled, was patient, held his ground, and put up with his tormentors until the religion and the blessing he brought were completed and until Islam came to them, i.e. to Muslims, pure, well-preserved, and perfect. Therefore, when he

asked 100,000 Muslims at the Farewell Pilgrimage, "When you are asked about me, what will you say?" they said, "We will testify that you delivered and gave good advice." He said, "God, be my witness! God, be my witness! God, be my witness!" He asked God to be his witness that he, Muhammad, delivered the full message of Islam to the people, the way God wanted him to.

Evidence and Manifestations of the Love Muslims Have for Their Prophet

First: In His Lifetime and among His Supporters

His Companions respected and venerated him, and they hastened to do his bidding, listen to and memorize his words, obey his orders, and inquire about and follow his example (*sunna*). They were always ready to protect him even with their own lives.

What is the first great motive for all this? It is love, the love these Companions had for their Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him.

Here are some examples that serve as evidence and show some manifestations of the love held by these early Muslims for the Prophet:

I.Abu Bakr wished to accompany the Prophet on the trip of immigration (*Hijra*) to Madinah, and the Prophet granted him that wish. While on the road, Abu Bakr would walk before the Prophet for an hour and then behind him for an hour. When the Prophet asked him

why he did that, Abu Bakr said, "God's Messenger, I think of those chasing us and walk behind you. Then I think of those on the lookout for us and walk in front of you." The Prophet said, "Abu Bakr, if something happens would you rather it would happen to you and not to me?" He meant, "Do you mean to protect me with your own life?" Abu Bakr said, "Yes! By Him Who sent you with the Truth, any disaster that takes place should affect me and not you."

Abu Bakr used to say frequently, "We are ready to sacrifice our parents to protect you!"

II.Omar used to tell the Prophet, "You are dearer to me than my own self."

III.On the night of immigration, Ali Ibn Abu Taleb spent the night in the Prophet's bed in order to protect the Prophet with his life, out of love for him. Ali was asked, "How did you love God's Messenger?" He said, "By God he was dearer to us than our property, children, and parents, and than cold water to a thirsty person."

IV.When the inhabitants of Makkah drove Zaid Ibn Al-Dathnah out of the Holy Mosque to get him killed, Abu Sufian Ibn Harb asked him, "Do you wish that Muhammad was with us now instead of you to strike his head off?" Zaid said, "I would not like Muhammad where he is now even to be pricked by a thorn while I sit [safe] among members of my family." Abu Sufian then said, "I have never met among all people a person who loved another more than the Companions of Muhammad love him."

V.The battle of Uhud took place when Muslims went out of Madinah in order to defend it, having received intelligence that the enemy were planning to attack. As the battle was going on, Abu Talha, one of the Supporters (*Ansaar*) turned himself into a human shield to protect the Prophet from enemy arrows. He backed this act of love with words of love by saying, "Prophet of God, dearer than my father, do not take a vantage point [meaning do not look lest you be seen], lest an arrow hits you; I'll protect your chest with mine."

VI.When the Prophet arrived in Madinah at the end of his immigration journey, Muslims felt light spreading everywhere; whereas when the Prophet died, they felt that the whole city was covered with darkness. One of the Companions, Anas Ibn Maalek says, "On the day when the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, arrived in Madinah, everything in it was covered with light. Then on the day he died, everything in it was dark. We hardly finished with the funeral rites for the Prophet, when we disowned our own hearts."

It is a lover's feeling to see the light in the presence of the beloved and darkness in his absence.

Second: The Love of Muslims for Their Prophet Throughout the Ages

the Prophet says, "Some of those who love me most will come after me. Each of them would be ready to give up his family and wealth just to see me."

History of the times that followed the Prophet, confirmed that prophesy of love with ample evidence and many diverse forms, which include the following.

I.Every Muslim has a great yearning to dream of the Prophet, i.e. *see* the Prophet while dreaming. When someone is fortunate enough to do so, he feels an overwhelming happiness filling his soul, heart, and consciousness. His loving heart, however, keeps looking forward for the experience to be repeated.

II.Inquiring about and following the example (*sunna*) of the Prophet in words and action is something motivated by love, and it is, at the same time, a point of ascent to acquire God's love: **"Say, 'If you love God, follow me and God will love you'"** (III: 31).

III.Muslims travel just to visit the Prophet's Mosque and pay homage to him.

IV.To pray for God's blessing and peace to be upon him is customary after a prayer call; it is part of every prayer, supplication, and Friday sermon; it is included at the opening and conclusion of writings; and it is repeated by Muslims throughout the day and night.

V.Thousands of books are written about his life, *sunna*, and personal traits.

VI.Scores of thousands of magnificent, relevant, appropriate poems are written to praise him.

VII.His honorable status is always defended.

Among the proofs and manifestations of the love Muslims have for their prophet is their constant

willingness to sacrifice themselves and their own parents for his sake. Because of this willingness they instinctively rise to defend his noble status whenever any offense to it occurs. It is a kind of defense dictated by belief in him and love for him: **"Those, therefore, who believe in him, honour and support him, and follow the light that has been sent down through him shall indeed be successful"** (*Al-A'raaf* VII: 157). After all, belief in him and love for him entail supporting him, and this undoubtedly means defending his great, sacred, and inviolable status.

It is not right to say that since God has undertaken the protection and defense of His Prophet against people, and since He said, **"And God protects you from people"** (V: 67), and **"We have spared you the mockers"** (*Al-Hijr* XV: 95), therefore, there is no need for Muslims to defend him. There is no doubt that God did guard His Prophet against all harm intended against him, enabling him to carry out his mission and deliver his message in the best possible manner, and then – content and approved of, amiable, blessed, and triumphant – he joined his Lord. There is, however, no systematic or practical conflict between God's defense of His Prophet and his defense by Muslims. The evidence of the perfect harmony and integration between God's and Muslims' actions is:

I. God *has* undertaken to defend believers: **"God defends those who believe. God does not love anyone who keeps betraying his trust and being ungrateful"** (*Al-Haj* XXII: 38). However, he made it obligatory for them to defend themselves: **"Fight for the cause of God those**

who fight you, and do not commit aggression. God does not love aggressors" (*Al-Baqarah* II: 190).

II.God Himself, Holy in His sublimity, the Powerful One Whose will is dominant, tests the faith of believers through their willingness and readiness to defend and support Him:

A.**"Believers, if you support God, He will support you, and give you the strength to hold fast"** (*Muhammad* XLVII: 7).

B.**"God will find out who supports Him and His messengers in unseen matters. God is mighty and powerful"** (*Al-Hadeed* LVII: 25).

C.**"Believers, be supporters of God"** (*Al-Saff* LXI: 14).

The gist of this point is that God's power is linked, in all fields, to the utilization of the means prescribed by God and made the basis for free, voluntary actions and for the differences in status among believers.

The position of Prophet Muhammad in the hearts of Muslims is great and self-renewing. His love fills their hearts and souls all the time. And they express this love openly rather than whisper it to each other.

> When the drives of a lover get strong,
> He will not be content with hints of his love made to his beloved.

Thus, they express their love in various forms and ways, one of which is defending, with resolve and persistence, his exalted position against any impudent attack on it.

While they love, respect, and glorify the Prophet, Muslims do not allow the standards of what is right to

get confused in their minds, hearts, or judgments.

In Muslims' belief, there are very clear differences and no overlapping whatsoever between the status of a prophet and the status of God.

God alone is the Creator, Provider, the Everlasting, the Ever-vigilant, the Giver of Life, the Bringer of death, the One with Knowledge of what is unknown and what is seen, the Omniscient, and the Omnipotent. He alone is duly and rightly worshipped. He is the Lofty, Sublime, Singular, Everlasting, Unique One, Who never mixes with His creatures, and does not allow His creatures to mix with Him.

Great in status, high in position, and close to his Lord as he is, the Prophet is one of God's creatures and of His repentant, faithful, outstanding servants:

A. **"Glorious is He who transported His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Aqsa Mosque, the environs of which We have blessed, so that We might show him some of Our signs. He alone is the One Who hears all and sees all"** (*Al-Israa* XVII: 1).

B. **"Then, he drew near and came down, till he got within two bows' length or closer, and he revealed to His servant that which he revealed"** (*Al-Najm* LIII: 10).

C. **"It is He who sends down to His servant articulated verses to lead you out of darkness into light. God is Most Merciful and Benificent to you"** (*Al-Hadeed* LVII: 9).

For this reason the human nature of prophets has been emphasized:

A. **"It is not for any human being to whom God had given the Book, wisdom, and prophethood to subsequently say to people, 'Worship me instead of God.' But rather 'Be Men of God, as you have been engaged in teaching the Book and studying it.Nor would he bid you to take angels and Prophets as gods. Would he bid you to be unbelievers after you have become Muslims?"** (*Aal 'Imran* III: 79-80).

B. **"Their messengers told them, 'We are just human beings like you, but God bestows His grace on whomever He wills of His servants'"** (*Ibraheem* XIV: 11).

C. **"Say, 'I am only a human being like you, and it has been revealed to me that your God is one deity, so let him who hopes to meet his Lord perform good deeds and not worship anybody else with God'"** (*Al-Kahf* XVIII: 110).

In emphasizing the human nature of the Prophet, there are objective and practical considerations:

- The first consideration is keeping faith and belief pure and avoiding the pitfall of confusing the status of God with that of prophets, and
- The second consideration is that the human nature of the Prophet proves that other human beings can follow his example, for he is human like them, rather than an angel who belongs to a different species and whom they are unable to emulate: **"Say, 'Had there been angels walking about on Earth with reassurance, We would have sent them an angel messenger from heaven"** (*Al-Israa* XVII: 95).

It is true that the Prophet shares this human nature with all other human beings, but he surpasses them by millions of degrees and steps, by the fact of his being chosen by God, by the revelation he received, by the honor of his ascent to his lord and reaching the sidra-tree beyond which no one may pass, and by the special divine love, protection, and care he received: **"Wait patiently for your Lord's decision; We are watching over you"** (*Al-Toor* LII: 48).