

The Revision Series

Islam and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century

Insights into Faith and What It Really Means To Be Exalted By It

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful

1. All praise be to God, whose succour and forgiveness we seek, and in whom we take refuge against the evils of our souls and those ensuing from our ill-guided actions. Indeed, whoever God has guided to the truth, no one will be able to cause him to err, and whoever God has led astray, no one save Him will be able to bring back to the straight path. I hereby proclaim: There is no God save God, the Unique who has no associates, and Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.
2. *“O you who have believed, fear God as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him]” (3: 102)*
3. *“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear God, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed God is ever, over you, an Observer” (4:1)*
4. *“O you who have believed, fear God and speak words of appropriate justice. He will [then] amend for you your deeds and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys God and His Messenger has certainly attained a great attainment” (33:71-2)*
5. Certainly, the most truthful speech is the speech of God, and the most excellent guidance is the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him (pbuh): the most evil matters tend to be those associated with the newfangled issues, for every new matter is an innovation and every innovation is a misguidance and every misguidance leads to hellfire.
6. Exaltation and noble superiority has always been and always will be one of the most important characteristics of the believers in whose hearts God has so perfected the faith that it has become firmly established in their intellect by way of apprehension and in their souls by way of meaningfulness and in their limbs through sheer striving and endeavour. Only those endowed with

such a faith act insightfully vis-à-vis their religion and vis-à-vis the world in which they live: they do not devote themselves to one issue at the expense of another, and if they give their attention to understanding or gaining knowledge, they do not forget to ask the critical questions, how and why, and nor are they tempted to exploit the confusion that might arise in those ambiguous aspects of the divine path in order to secure some small worldly gain or advantage. Exalted by their faith, they have rid themselves of their egoistic temptations, and having relied on God, they do their utmost to procure the causes that would firmly establish that reliance and perfect it. Through such a faith, they understand that it is not by pronouncing emotional speeches and following wishful thinking that one makes Truth triumph, but by fostering the most favourable conditions and procuring for it the best possible material means.

7. Our aim in this book is to clarify some of the concepts whose meanings have become confused, ill-conceived or simply mixed-up with those of others recently, to the extent that they ceased to fulfil the positive function they were intended for, nay, more often than not, they have led to the opposite of their objective, causing thus great harm.
8. In the first chapter of the book, we endeavour to look closely at what it means to be exalted by faith, and how this condition may be confused with self-exaltation or superbia. Though exaltation by faith and self-exaltation stand apart from each other in reality, they nonetheless can be confused by people in many instances; such that our striving to make God's Word triumphant can turn, on many occasions, to striving for the triumph of our own principles and for the sake of boasting our self-image. This confusion, besides being a major source of harm for the hearts of the believers, is also a major source of enmity and discordance among the people. We shall, as part of this first chapter, explore then the Sunnah of the Prophet peace be upon him (pbuh), and the exemplary lives of his Companions- may God be pleased with them- to salvage the true meaning of exaltation by faith and earnest dedication to the triumph of religion and the path set by the divine. By focussing on various edifying examples from the practices of these

luminaries of Islam, we aim to strengthen the meaning of such a lofty concept and cleanse it from the notions of hardheartedness, exclusion, and discourtesy which are often wrongly associated with it and are the attitudes that are often taken towards the sinful and the disobedient from among the Muslims and the non-Muslims alike.

9. Thus, in this chapter we will argue the following:
 - a. Faith and exaltation are mutually related: each time faith increases one is morally elevated, and each time faith decreases, one's moral standing diminishes.
 - b. Not all of the emotional outbursts that may be expressed in the name of the noble superiority which emanates from faith are actually in keeping with the teachings of Islam
 - c. To be exalted by faith is not the same as being elevated by one's good opinion of one's self
 - d. The person who is truly exalted by faith is the one who devotes all of his efforts towards ensuring that the word of God enjoys the highest standing, even if that is at his own expense, and that of his parents and close relatives
 - e. There is no conflict between showing kindness towards non-Muslims and being elevated in character: being exalted by faith and experiencing noble superiority does not entail hardheartedness and discourtesy towards the sinful and the disobedient from among the Muslims and the non-Muslims.
 - f. The divine Sharia revolves around justice and the ethics of Islam revolves around kindness to humanity.
 - g. It is unconceivable that Islam calls us to treat everyone justly and deal with everyone kindly and demands at the same time that we abuse the rights of our fellow human beings and trample on their humanity on the pretext of the superiority of faith.

h. From the account of Abdullah Bin Hadhafa we learn that whoever strives to make Islam ascendant, God will elevate his status and honour him, such that he will be successful in this world and the next, and that whoever spends all his energies in order to gain status, acting contrary to the ethical principles of religion, God will humiliate him, such that he will be a loser in both this world and the next.

10. In the second chapter of the book, we shall endeavour to arrive at a correct understanding of what it means to rely on God, and cleanse this principle from the notion of nonchalance which is often mistakenly associated with it, turning it into a positive source of action for both the individual and the group. We want to be able through this discussion to highlight that just as Islam devotes much attention to the spiritual dimension of mankind, it puts equal emphasis on their corporeal dimension in that the body is after all the receptacle of the spirit, and this it does in a way that is conducive to equilibrium in understanding and to mutual complementarity between the various concepts of the Islamic faith: neither the actions of the heart nor the actions of the limbs gain primacy over the others; it is the right alchemy of both and their complementary amalgam which is sought, and that is the sure way of avoiding that the end product is not a disfigured or immature fruit.

11. Indeed, in this chapter too we will nourish our souls by feeding from the table of the Prophets, beginning with the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be upon him, and then from the Prophets Yusuf, Ya'qub (Jacob), Dawud (David) – peace be upon them all- and Maryam (Merry) the Chaste and others. From all these towering spiritual figures, we shall learn how the feeling of exaltation which emanates from the faith, and which requires perfect reliance on God, does not exclude consideration of the causes and acting in accordance with their exigencies. We shall then deal briefly with some of the misconceptions surrounding this issue by taking a leaf from the account of Prophet Moses peace be upon him (pbuh), particularly those events which relate his deliverance and his people from

the tyranny of the pharaoh, and the account of Ibrahim (pbuh) and Hagar as well as their son Ismail (pbuh). We will close this second chapter by shedding light on the negative consequences that these misconceptions, which had infiltrated the mind of many young Muslims, had on the Afghani Jihad as a result of a defective analysis of the data on the ground and an incorrect appraisal of the events which were then taking place.

12. Thus, in this chapter we shall argue the following points:

- a. Just as reliance on God is a function of the heart, consideration of the causes is the function of the body
- b. Once a Muslim person has taken causes in full consideration, he must not turn to them for succour nor is he to rely on them; for reliance is only on God alone
- c. The feeling of elation which is experienced after one has determined the causes and means to achieve the desired effect is not only detrimental to one's faith, it is also the source of one's downfall
- d. The laws of the universe are inflexible and make no exceptions for anyone, except in the instance of a miracle or a supernatural event willed by God to support one of His Prophets or one of His saints, of which neither can be used as a basis for deriving rulings.
- e. A nation which cast aside the causes and fails to take them into account is a nation constituted of idle and lazy people and is therefore not fit to build a civilisation
- f. Taking full consideration of the causes is but a feature of the primordial nature with which God has conceived us
- g. Whoever has been unable to arrive at a holistic understanding of religion in which the constituent parts are correlated has only himself to blame for that inadequate understanding and not Islam.

13. In the third chapter we aim to extend a genuine invitation to all those who are concerned about the future of Islam to objectively situate ourselves in this world and conduct an intransigent self-assessment of ourselves:

whoever knows truly his self and endeavour in all sincerity to have a good sense of his ability, will certainly walk in the path of God in a fashion that is commensurable with his capabilities and the possibilities which are within his means. We also wanted this chapter to serve as an appeal for reasonableness: it is high time we curb our impulsiveness and our precipitancy with the Truth. To stand for the Truth requires that we harness the most suitable mechanisms, and strategies and the best possible material means in order to protect that Truth and maintain its standing. Indeed, the Prophet (pbuh) has on many occasions come to realise that the material means and capabilities at his disposal were not 'physically' sufficient to warrant a confrontation with the enemies of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, and that drove him to look for other solutions. Either he had to find ways to avoid these confrontations because they were adventurous or he had to find ways of preparing for them if they proved to be inevitable in the long run. But whatever he may have decided in the end, he (pbuh) certainly did not take in consideration only the factor of faith and he did not only rely on its force, although faith has been perfected in his heart and that of his Companions to an unparalleled degree of perfection. This can be seen most clearly if we consider, for instance, the Battle of the Confederates, when the Prophet (pbuh) had decided to dig the trenches, with the clear intention of calling off the fighting, or if we consider the swiftness with which he concluded the peace treaty with Ghatafan on the basis of the third of the fruits of Medina in order to restrain the power of the Confederates. Also, he (the Prophet peace be upon him) had entered into many pledges with the Jews to ensure that internal security is maintained, and because he knew that without that internal security, he had no chance of winning the war against his enemy from outside. These are but a few examples of this strategic thinking which highlight the relation between faith and causes, a relation we desperately need to understand.

14. God has indeed blessed the person who has successfully appraised himself, and hence is beset with neither self-distrust nor haughtiness. Al-Shafi'i-

may God bless him- has said: “whoever tries to overprice his goods, God will bring him back to the real value.”

15. The following is the points that will be argued in this chapter:
16. Faith alone is not sufficient for warding off the enemy; it needs to be accompanied by the power of the causes
17. Whenever the emotions of faith take over, to the extent that we become unable to perform precise calculations or unable to act within our means, the result of our action will be always disappointing and exceeding our worst fears
18. Religious zeal and total reliance on God are no protection to those who act against the laws of the universe
19. In relation to fighting, should we just take in consideration the number of soldiers involved or should we rather focus on the inequality in military capability, which is extremely significant between us and our enemy
20. To insist that only the whole Truth will do, will lead to the loss of the possible as a result of demands that were impossible.
21. The wise leader is the one who combines his knowledge of the Sharia with knowledge of the context in which we live, and it is he who does not cast aside the real world around us, under the pretext of implementing the foundational texts of the Sharia.

Chapter One

Being Self-Exalted and Being Exalted by Faith

There are certainly many concepts that have imposed themselves in the field of Islamic activism, to the extent that they figure prominently in its fundamental practices. Such is their centrality, we think they deserve to be further elaborated upon in order that we may clearly define their semantic field, explain their signification, and draw attention to the ambiguities that may arise from it. It is hoped that this endeavour will only add further insight to the vision of the Islamic movement, contributing to its perfection and thus ensuring that its fruits will be good and mature, God willing.

To this end, and inspired by His exalted words: “Say, *“This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight, I and those who follow me”* (12: 108), we have, with God’s permission, chosen to shed light on one of these central concepts, and its concomitant issues, namely, the issue of the exaltedness by faith, which when confused with self-exaltation, leads to haughtiness, transgression and the like.

There is no doubt that faith elevates the status of the believer and may raise him to the highest of ranks, all depending of course on the degree to which this faith has penetrated his heart and how firmly it is established therein. It is owing to this reality, in fact, that the people of paradise are not met with the same divine favours, as attested by the Prophet (pbuh) who has said: “*The people of the Paradise will look at the people in the rooms above them as you look at a bright star far on the horizon of the east or the west because of the great distance between them.*”¹ Hence, exaltedness is a condition which is correlated to faith, and it is, therefore, a characteristic which is an attribute of the People of belief so long as they are believers. even while in the eyes of the People who believe in this worldly life, they may appear lowly and inferior due to their weak influence, or their small number and limited capabilities, or due to the fact that they have been defeated by their enemy, they still remain most worthy of that elevated rank and status which faith bestows on them: when the believers had known defeat during the Battle of Uhud, God- may He be exalted- addressed them saying: “*Do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers*” (3:139).

Indeed, faith and exaltedness are correlates and they retain their intimate relationship in both the negative and the positive direction: whenever there is faith, there is exaltation; each time

¹ Related by Bukhari, No 3256 and Muslim, Book 11, No 2831

the former increases the latter does, and each it decreases, so does the other. The absence of faith strips from the believer the quality of exaltation and puts him in par with the People of disbelief, and each time that disbelief increases, each time the degradation of that person worsens, reaching rock bottom in the lowest level of hell, as is the case of the hypocrites, concerning whom God Almighty has said: *“Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire”* (4:145) , and also: *“Then We return him to the lowest of the low, Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they will have a reward uninterrupted”* (95:5-6).

Elsewhere, God- may He be glorified- has also said: *“And God made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of God - that is the highest”* (9:40), which is also worth commenting on. If the people of belief are worthy of exaltedness, and the people of disbelief are worthy of inferiority, there are also people in which both the quality of exaltedness and inferiority are combined, and these are the sinful among the believers. But since, in their case, the virtue of belief in the oneness of God is preponderant such that it prevails over the attribute of sin, their status leans rather towards exaltedness and so they would count among its people. They are, however, and to the degree that their faith is found wanting in a position inferior to those among the People of belief whose faith has been perfected.

We deduce from the above the quality of being exalted by faith is one of the qualities of the believers and it is certainly one by virtue of which they are entitled to be praised, and rewarded, and one which they should strive to attain, particularly when such striving becomes a motivating force for the implementation of the obligatory duties of religion and a disincentive against the committing of sins.

Unfortunately, some people have misunderstood faith and what it really to be exalted by it. As a result, they began to look upon others condescendingly, treating them as lowborn and they have acted with them most disrespectfully on the pretext that they are sinners and belong to the People of disbelief. Others have confused this moral superiority which emanates from faith with self-exaltation, and began to behave haughtily towards others. This is indeed a case of falsehood masquerading as truth, because all they are doing in fact is embellishing sin to make it look as obedience to God. The group who is in the habit of making the first confusion appears, at first blush, to be no different from the second, but on a closer look we realise that the difference between them is rather significant; only it is too

embedded and too concealed to be seen by the naked eye because that difference resides in the confines of their hearts: the first group may be in error, the second, on the other hand, presents a more serious danger. We think that this confusion is worth our consideration, so let us discuss together in more details.

1. What does it really mean to be exalted by faith?
2. Does exaltedness by faith entail hardheartedness, brusqueness and discourtesy towards anyone who disobeys Islam, be they non-Muslims who reject it entirely following their disbelief or Muslims who, in spite of committing certain transgression, remain faithful to it and affirm it?
3. Does exaltedness by faith entail abusing the rights of our fellow human beings and trampling on their humanity on the pretext that they are at variance with Islam, by adopting disbelief and the path of sin?

Before we answer these questions, we submit from the outset that exaltedness by faith does actually stem from true worship and from servanthood; it is not something that attained haphazardly and whimsically. So long as this exaltedness emanates from true worship, it follows that it is bound by the course set to it the divine, and the Sunnah of the Messenger of God, not to mention the fact that true worship necessitates that God's face and his pleasure be the sole object sought. So let it be made clear, not all emotional outbursts that masquerade as exaltedness by faith and as noble superiority is ultimately in keeping with the teachings of Islam, nor is every anger expressed for the sake of a religious activist, is in fact an expression of anger for the sake of religion, except when these emotions arise and are channelled according to the teachings brought by the Prophet (pbuh). How many a person looks at others with disdain, thinking he is among those God has bestowed the quality of exaltedness, and pretending to be manifesting the superiority of Islam, when in reality he is only seeking to elevate himself and his self-exaltedness. Sometimes, people may be lured by such a person, thinking to be courageous and heroic. Only, upon further scrutiny, it finally transpires that their show of courage is no more than cowardice, and that their heroics are no more than a disgraceful retreat. That is because God grants honour only to those have sincerely striven to elevate the rank of His religion, and have wholeheartedly

endeavoured to make His word triumphant. We ask God to protect us, out of His grace, from such trespassing and we take refuge in Him from the evils of our souls and the evils of our actions!

Now that we have included those introductory remarks let us proceed with the questions we raised earlier.

Being Exalted by Faith: What does it Mean Exactly?

Exaltedness by faith consists in seeking to raise the self to elevated ranks by means of a progressive journey through the various stations of the faith. From this, it becomes clear that exaltedness is an action and an endeavour which are in keeping with the requirements of faith and is a consequence of it. There are among us, however, those who understand this exaltedness to consist in seeking an elevated rank for one's self on the basis of one's faith. Thus, people holding such a view understand that they alone, as believers, deserve to be exalted and not those who do share their faith, be they among the disbelievers or the disobedient Muslims. Those who espouse such a notion of exaltedness are in fact saying, through their tongues of their disposition: "*I am better than him*" (7:12), a well-known satanic expression, which represents all of arrogance and vanity that are at the antipodes of faith and its requirements. It is obvious that this notion of exaltedness is wrong, and those who hold it had better refer to the definition of exaltedness by faith we have provided above.

Our critique of this notion of exaltedness should not lead anyone to think that we see no difference between a believer and an unbeliever; that is clearly not what is intended here: without doubt a believer is better than a disbeliever. Indeed, we can go further than this, and say that a believer is all good and that no good whatsoever may come from a disbeliever, so long as the believer remains in a state of faith and the disbeliever maintains his state of disbelief. There is, however, an important difference between this determination, which pertains essentially to a comparison between disbelief and belief, and the determination which makes abstraction of disbelief and belief, and looks instead at individuals qua individuals. In the latter instance, it is not right for a human being to consider himself better than another, even if that 'other' is a disbeliever, and that is because he has no way of foreknowing how his life might end, nor can he predict what spiritual direction the life of

that disbeliever might take and how it might end. So let us not forget the golden rule: it is the last stages of one's life which are taken in consideration in the hereafter.

The same argument applies to the comparison between a believer and a transgressor (*fasiq*) who is not outside the fold of Islam. Surely, the latter cannot be said to be a disbeliever: the transgressor is, by definition, he whose actions consist of a mix of good and bad actions, so in him one may find good and evil. As to the disbeliever, no quality of goodness may be attributed to him. Besides, should the transgressor be destined to die on that condition; it belongs ultimately to God to pardon him or punish him, whereas the disbeliever would be bound for hellfire, if he dies a disbeliever.

Also, it is possible to understand exaltedness by faith as having to do with striving to elevate the word of God and His religion. This is indeed in keeping with the definition we have put forward above, in that striving to elevate the word of God is part and parcel of faith and its exigencies. Our focussing on the striving to elevate the word of God is, therefore, only a focus on one of the correlatives of exaltedness, rather than a digression from it. Indeed, we aim by this to make its meaning clearer such that it is possible to establish its true meaning and to make the difference between those conceptions of it which are correct and those which are wrong. We said earlier that one of the most serious confusion resides in confusing exaltedness by faith with self-exaltedness or exaltedness through one's good opinion of one's self: the former is correct and represents the conception of exaltedness sought after, and the latter is wrong and represents the conception of exaltedness that we aim to repel. Having established that difference and following that semantic pattern, we may safely say that whoever has devoted all of his efforts in order to elevate the word of God, and for the furtherance of Islam, would be counted among those who have been exalted by faith, and that whoever has been motivated by anger and his own temperament, mustering all of his energies to elevate his own rank, would be counted among those who have indulged in self-exaltation.

Let us now together contemplate the words of God- may He be exalted- when contrary to expectation, He says: "*And God made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of God - that is the highest*" (9:40), instead of: "And the word of those who have believed is the highest", as required by the context. But the reason, the verse in question was so revealed was because exaltedness belongs to God's word and to His path and not to the

persons of the believers: God rewards, however, a reward which is commensurate with their actions, and so just as they strive to elevate His words to the highest planes, He elevates their ranks and their standing among the nations. What is crucial here is that this exaltedness is bestowed to them by Him, it is not something that they seek to realise for themselves; for God has warned the believers against seeking lordliness on earth, as indeed, He says: *“That abode of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous”* (28:83). Believers have no other way to aspire to exaltedness and noble superiority except through belief in God the Exalted, the Most High, in conformity with His words: *“And you will be superior if you are [true] believers”* (3:139). As for exaltation in the most absolute sense of the word, it does not appertain to anyone except God-Great, glorified, exalted and most High is He. Hence, whoever devotes himself to the elevation of the word of God, at the expense of his own self-interests, and at the expense of his own family and closest relatives will be among those who have been exalted by their faith, as for those who aimed their efforts at promoting their own word, and prestige, or have acted contrary to God’s desires to achieve their ends and have committed sins to satisfy their whimsical schemes, they will be among those whose evil-commanding soul has swayed and whose whims have overcome, dragging them down to the lowest of the low. We ask God to grant us success and steadfastness, and we take refuge in Him, through His benevolence, against failure and any disgraceful outcome

Does Exaltedness by Faith Entail Hardheartedness and Discourtesy?

We need to ask whether exaltedness by faith does inevitably imply acting hardheartedly, brusquely and discourteously towards any person who is at variance with the divine path, irrespective of whether that person is a disbeliever who totally rejects Islam or whether he is a Muslim who, in spite of not conforming with some of its teachings, maintains the faith and proclaims it. To be sure, this issue may be easily resolved just by taking a cursory look at the exemplary life of the Prophet (pbuh), and by contemplating carefully into the spirit of Islam. Since that is the case, dear brother, let us together deliberate on some stations of the life of the Prophet (pbuh), so that we may relive together some of his illustrious deeds.

- Once, the Prophet (pbuh) was approached by ‘Utba Bin Rabi‘a who was all intent to persuade him to abandon his Message, offering him the leadership of the tribes and total reign in return. The Prophet (pbuh) listened to him attentively until he had finished speaking, and then asked him: “Is that all you have to say, O Abu al-Waleed?”² Abu al-Waleed replied: yes, I did. The Prophet then said: “Now, it is your turn to listen to me”, and he (pbuh) recited to him Qur’anic verses from the chapter (*sura*) of Fussilat (Sura 41). Upon finishing the recitation, the Prophet then addressed ‘Utba, saying to him: “O Abu al-Waleed! You have listened to what I recited and you may react now as you see fit.” I now invite you, may God show you mercy, to reflect with me on this very noble character of the Prophet, whose superiority no other nobility can reach and no other morality can match. Consider, for instance, how he (pbuh) listened carefully to ‘Utba, one of the leaders of the polytheists, even when he was fully aware of the fact that ‘Utba had approached him only with the aim of swaying him away from his Message and to persuade him to renegade Islam. Also, consider with me how he (pbuh) has addressed him in this dialogue with his surname ‘Abu al-Waleed’, showing thus leniency towards his interlocutor, for indeed addressing a person with his surname among the Arabs, is not only thought to be decorous but also a sign of respect to the addressee. Do you, for a minute, think that this gentleness and leniency that the Prophet (pbuh) had exhibited conflict with exaltedness by faith?
- In the account of the conversion of ‘Adiyy Bin Hatim, as it was related by Ibn Kathir in his *Al-Bidaaya wa Al-Nihaaya*, we read:

“Addiy Bin Hatim said: ‘Thereupon I set out for Medina and came to see the Messenger of God (pbuh). I found him in his mosque. Upon greeting him, he said: Who is the man? I said: ‘Adi Bin Hatim. Thereupon, The Messenger of God (pbuh) rose to his feet, and took me to his home. Though all he wanted was to be with me in his place, he came across a weak and elderly woman who stopped him and talked to him at length about her needs, and he stood by her during all that time’, He (‘Adiyy) said: ‘I said to myself then: By God! This is not about worldly dominion’. He then said: ‘Following that [encounter] the Messenger (pbuh) and I resumed the walk to his place, and once there, he picked a cushion stuffed with palm fibres, and threw it

² Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jaami‘ Li Ahkaam Al-Qur’an*. Vol, 15, p, 338)

towards me, saying: Have a sit on this one'. He (Adiyy) said: 'I said: No, you sit on it', but, he (pbuh) insisted: 'No, be my guest'. So, I sat down [on the cushion], and the Messenger of God (pbuh) sat on the ground'. He ('Adiyy) again said: 'I said to myself then: By God! This is not about worldly dominion''.

The account of the conversion of 'Adiyy Bin Hatim goes on, but we shall stop here to reflect together on this event which is a wonder in history and one that dwarfs the achievements of other civilisations. Just consider this Messenger, upon whom God has bestowed the highest honour in the worlds, and has granted him victory in the greatest conquests ever fought - to the extent that all of the Arabs came under his reign, and all of the Romans were in awe of him after the Battle of Mu'tah- has no qualms nor expressed any hesitation in raising to his feet to take 'Adiyy Bin Hatim to his house, despite that immaculate record, firmly established power and unparalleled glory, and also in spite of the fact that 'Adiyy Bin Hatim was neither of his people nor of his religion; nay he was not long before that meeting a deserter who had switched his loyalties to the enemies of the Messenger (pbuh). Yes, Notice how despite all of this, he (pbuh) still received him in his private home, treating him as one of his guests and not as one of his avowed enemies, to the degree that he extended to him all the niceties of hospitality, while all along, his guest was still wearing his cross, according to some narrations. Yes, notice how the Messenger (pbuh) offered him the cushion for him to sit on, and how he insisted that it is he who should sit on the ground. Is there a modesty that surpasses this one, and is there a kindness and hospitality, anywhere, that exceed these? Even though 'Adiyy was still a disbeliever at that time, and even though he was wearing his cross, and even though the Messenger (pbuh) had the upper hand on him and on his people, and was after all honoured with the loftiest of stations by the divine, the Prophet still reserved to his guest the most impeccable treatment. Do you think, for a minute, that this behaviour of the Prophet (pbuh) conflict in any way with the exaltedness of faith? Indeed, we are in this example witnessing an uncontested and an undeniable truth, namely that kindness to the unbelievers and exaltedness by faith are not antithetical, and that hardheartedness and discourtesy are not mutually related to that exaltation. Another truth is this: since it has been established positively that kindness and cordiality are the qualities which we ought to show towards the disbelievers and the

polytheists, it goes without saying that these ought to be extended to the transgressors and the sinners from among the Muslims.

- During the Battle of Khaybar, the Prophet (pbuh) had used Bilal to look after the female captives and bring them to camp. On the way, Bilal passed by the dead of their people, and the women began to cry, scream and tear up their clothes from distress. When the Prophet saw that, he said: “Has mercy been removed from your heart, O Bilal?”³. What great ethics, and what a great religion! Yes, these women were among the polytheists who were taken captives during fighting, but Islam did not come to inflict traumas on people and shatter their feelings; it has come as a mercy, and the Prophet was sent but as a mercy for the worlds. Do you think, for a minute, that mercy, such as that the Prophet (pbuh) has shown towards those polytheists, is in any way in conflict with being exalted by faith? Is it not, rather, at the core of faith, and an essential quality of Islam?

When Bilal- may God be pleased with him- failed, wittingly or unwittingly, to be attentive to the feelings of those female captives, his action was met with the strongest rebuke: the words of the Prophet had basically depicted him as one who had no mercy in his heart – though what was meant was that action of his was not in keeping with mercifulness. And this highlights in our eyes the ethics of Islam, which were the secret behind its propagation among the people and its expansion to the four corners of the globe, and was the reason behind the ascendancy of the Muslims and their noble superiority. How little is this truth known among our preachers and those who are active in the propagation of Islam and how dire is their need to learn how to treat people, be they Muslims or non-Muslims! Indeed, without learning these truths, they run the risk of becoming the very source for the destruction of their cause and its demise, even though they may think they are on the right course.

We conclude in light of all the evidences above that exaltedness by faith does not necessarily mean that we should show hardheartedness, brusqueness and discourtesy towards the transgressors, whether they are unbelievers or Muslims, and that showing mercy and kindness towards all of these people is not in conflict with it either.

³ See Ibn Kathir, *Al-Seera Al-Nabawiyya*. Vol, 2, p, 557)

Now some might admittedly object to this argument, quoting the Qur’anic verse: “*O Prophet, fight against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh upon them*” (9:73), and they may refer to other events in the biography of the Prophet such as evidence for the need to be tough with the disbelievers. Indeed, some might quote the words of Abu Bakr ‘Suck al-Lat’s nipples! Would we flee from him and desert him!’, which he addressed to ‘Urwa Ibn Mas‘ud, when the latter said to the Prophet (pbuh): “O Muhammad, do you intend to obliterate your people? Have you heard of anyone of the Arabs who obliterated his people before you? If the other happens, By God, I do not see notables here, but rather I see a motley lot of people who will actually flee and desert you”⁴. Our answer to this objection is as follows. To begin with, the context in which the aforementioned verse was revealed, and the context in which Abu Bakr said those words are specific. The verse in question was revealed in the context of jihad and fighting, a task, which no doubt requires harshness and hardheartedness. One can find even harsher language in the Qur’an: it makes mention of cutting heads with the swords and of killing mercilessly in the context of fighting. As for the stance of Abu Bakr, it needs to be understood in the context of counter-psychological warfare: when ‘Urwa Bin Mas‘ud said what he said – and he was then still a disbeliever- he had certainly intended to strike a blow at the confidence of Muslims by putting pressure on their leader to take decision in favour of the disbelievers, who had in fact sent ‘Urwa to the Prophet (pbuh) for that purpose. We need to understand that all of the stances of the Companions- may God be pleased with them- which are characterised by hardheartedness, harshness, or discourtesy occur in contexts that require such a response. These may indeed be regarded as exceptions to the rule and to the norms which demand that people be treated with kindness, leniency and gentleness, in compliance with the hadith: “Be of an irreproachable morality in your dealings with people”.⁵

⁴ This is part of a long hadith related by Bukhari, on the authority of Marwan Ibn al-Hakam; No 2734

⁵ Related by Tarmidhi, No 1987. The hadith is deemed fair by al-Albani and Ahmed in his *Musnad*, and it is narrated on the authority of Abu Dharr- may God be pleased with him. Al-Arna’ut has deemed the hadith fair by virtue of other transmissions

Does Exaltedness by Faith Entail Usurping the Rights of any one who is at Variance with Islam, and Trampling on their Humanity?

It is imperative to remind all those who active in the field of the propagation of Islam that the Sharia revolves strictly around justice, and that the ethics of Islam revolves strictly on kindness, which needs to be shown to everyone, regardless of their faith or lack thereof, be they Muslims or disbeliever. God- may He be exalted- says in the Qur'an: "Indeed, God orders [you to implement] justice and [show] kindness" (16:90). Islam has certainly never stood for the transgression of others on the basis of their disbelief, and has never stood against showing benevolence and kindness to them. How is it conceivable that the religion which commands its followers to implement justice among the people and show them kindness, demands of them, at the same time, to trample on their rights and their humanity, on the basis of the exaltedness of the faithful? If it were not for the widespread of irresponsible practices, which clearly show that either we have lost the proper sense of these truths or that there is a deliberate attempt to erase them from the consciousness of Muslims, we would not have felt the need to bringing forward all of these compelling evidences, but the situation is such that it has, unfortunately, become necessary to do so. Among the evidences that do not require any further demonstration, are the words of the Almighty:

1. *"God does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, God loves those who act justly"* (60:8)
2. *"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for God, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear God; indeed, God is Acquainted with what you do"* (5:8)
3. The Prophet (pbuh) has said: *"Beware of Injustice; for every injustice will turn to a source of darkness on the Day of Judgement"*. The stern tone of this hadith makes it very clear that the Prophet wanted to leave no doubt as to the impermissibility of injustice. Moreover, this warning against injustice was not specific in its import but

is unconditional: just as it forbids injustices to be committed against Muslims, it also forbids injustices to be committed against non-Muslims

4. The Prophet (pbuh) has said: *Whoever kills someone with a treaty will not smell the fragrance of the Paradise although its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years*” (Related by Bukhari, No 3166; 6914, on the authority of Abdullah Ibn Umar- may God be pleased with him)

This is a clear indication that Islam has taken all the necessary measures to protect the lives of those who had a treaty or have entered into a pledge with Muslims, in spite of their being disbelievers. Indeed, this hadith should by itself be sufficient to bring back to the right path those who seem to shed the blood of non-Muslims with such callousness and in defiance of the truth, who think that by so doing, they are contributing to the ascendancy of Islam and elevating the status of faith. When are they going to realise that they are in reality destroying whatever they hope to erect and that they are corrupting whatever they hope to reform!

5. In the book *Al-Kharaaj*, of Abu Yusuf, we read:

“When Umar Ibn al-Khattab saw an old Jewish man begging, he approached to find out from him what had led him into this situation. Having established that it was old age as well as poverty that had pushed that Jew to resort to begging, he took him with him to the public treasury and asked those charged with its operations to disburse a sum of money for him and others in his situation, which would be enough to cover their needs and improve their conditions. He said, ‘Seeing that we have collected religious tax from him as a youth, it would not be fair now to let him down as an elderly’” (*This account was mentioned by al-Sarakhsi in his al-Mabsut, under ‘The Book of Zakat*). I beg you to reflect with me- May God bless you with the mercy of Islam embodied in ‘Umar the Just’- on how he has shown mercy to the humanity of this old Jewish man, sparing him the humility of begging and instituting for him and those in his case a right which although they themselves did not think were worthy of it, the mercy of Islam saw fit to extend to them and to the rest of humanity, irrespective of whether they are believers or not. Indeed, God- may He be exalted-says: “[O Muhammad! We have sent you but as a mercy for the worlds”.

Could you, for a minute, imagine that this religion, which has instituted to people who do not abide by it, rights such as these in order to protect their human dignity, can turn around and demand that their rights and their humanity be trampled on?

6. Following the conquest of the conquest of Egypt at the hands of Umar Ibn al-'As, the caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab- may God be pleased with him- appointed him as governor of the newly conquered land. While in office, his son had entered into a race with a son of a one of the Copts of Egypt who was still a Christian, and lost the contest. Seeing that he was defeated, the son of the then governor whipped the son of this Copt, saying to him: 'take this from the son of a noble!'. Then some people approached the Copt and urged him to go to the enlightened city of Medina to meet Umar Ibn al-Khattab and complain to him about this behaviour. Upon hearing of his plight, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab- may God be pleased with him- had no other alternative but to summon 'Umar Ibn al-'As and his son. Once they were present before him, the caliph, then, handed a whip to the young Copt, ordering him to flog with it the son of the governor, the conqueror of Egypt. The son of the Copt did flog the son of the governor, but he was then asked by the caliph to also whip the governor's head on the part that was bald. The Copt said: 'O commander of the believers, I have already whipped the person that whipped me'. 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab's reply was: 'Indeed, but he who did that would not have dared that if he had not been encouraged by the power and influence of his father...so, if you want to flog him also, we would see no inconvenient with that'. The caliph, then turned to 'Umar Ibn al-'As- may God be pleased with him, and said his famous adage: 'Since when was it made permissible for you to enslave people, after they had been born free'.⁶

This narrative makes our point amply clear, and is need of no further elaborations. We want to draw attention, however, to the important points conveyed in it, namely that Islam respects the humanity of non-Muslims, it takes responsibility for their protection, enabling them to claim their rights and win their case even against one of the great Muslim

⁶ This account is mentioned in the *Mustadrak* of al-Hakim, following the conditions of the two *sahihs*. Vol 3, p, 706

governors. There are also a number of valuable indications that can be drawn from this narrative. They are as follows:

a. The son of the governor of Egypt was in a contest with the son of a Copt: this by itself underscores the positive role that Islam plays in social harmony. For indeed, what we are witnessing here is a contest between a Muslim and a person from the People of the Book, and this had in no way been in conflict with the superiority of Islam or the exaltedness of the believers.

b. People who had witnessed the injustice against the Copt had urged to request to see the caliph, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab in Medina. Now if these people were from the Muslim community at the time, it is proof that the Islamic way pursued by Muslims in their dealings with others who lived among them in their society, was one which based on the respect of other people’s rights, and on that held their humanity in the highest esteem. If, on the other, they were not from the Muslim community, it is then a further corroboration for the point made earlier, and a historical testimony, which shows clearly that Islam does indeed respect the rights of others and guarantees their protection.

c. When we consider that ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab, the then caliph of the Muslims, summoned the governor and his son, and bear in mind not only the long distance, between Egypt and Medina, that the two had to travel, but also the cost associated with such travel that the public treasury had to disburse for such a purpose, we are in a position to appreciate the extent to which the respect of people’s rights, human dignity, and the protection of human liberty gained primacy in the community, and the extent to which Islam gave these support, even if those concerned by these protections and guarantees, were from the non-Muslim community.

d. We notice in that story that the son of the Copt had won the case before the court of ‘Umar- may God be pleased with him- and that as a result, the caliph had extended a whip to the Copt not only to flog the son of the governor as he was himself flogged, but to also

extend this punishment to his father, the governor of Egypt and its conqueror. Is there a better example of protection of human rights and respect for humanity that comes even close to this? By doing so, has ‘Umar- may God be pleased with him- humiliated Islam or gave ascendancy to Christianity over Islam? Can he be reproached for having acted against the glory of Islam or the superiority of faith? Or did he by so doing, bring to relief the very noble superiority and dignity of Islam and what it really means to be exalted by faith?

e. Also worth noting are the great words used by ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab-may God be pleased with him- to rebuke the governor, when he said: ‘Since when was it made permissible for you to enslave people, after they had been born free?’. This rebuke of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab is proof that enslavement and usurping the fundamental rights of others is a wrong that Islam clearly reproves and never endorses, and it also proof that any such form of injustice is repudiated by Islam: it is not part of the teachings of Islam to encourage one group of people to enslave another, on the contrary, Islam has come to teach humanity to worship God alone, for He alone is worthy of servitude. From this we understand that Islam respects the humanity of mankind, guarantees the protection of their rights and the defence of their dignity. Muslims are to understand that their rule over non-Muslims does not mean they have any right to treat them as if they were their slaves, or that they are permitted to usurp their fundamental rights and trample on their humanity.

f. Notice in this event how ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab had made a distinction between the civil rights and transactions on the one hand, and the matters which pertain to belief and worship on the other: undeniably, Islam considers the beliefs of those Christians and their form of worship false, but in spite of this, the caliph, in his dealing with the people of this false beliefs and forms of worship, does not pressurise them to abandon them. Most importantly, he does not allow even his followers to exert any pressure on the People of the Book to abandon their beliefs. As with regards to civil rights and transactions, he considers that all the members of society stand equal before the law: Muslims cannot enjoy a preferential status.

Having mentioned these six indications- and there are certainly many more that can be drawn from this historical account- we can safely conclude that Islam definitely respects the rights of non-Muslims and that its judiciary and court system does not differentiate between a Muslim and a non-Muslim in matters of rights and their enforcements. We will also take note of the fact usurping the rights of others and trampling on their basic humanity has nothing to do whatsoever with faith and the exaltedness emanating from it, nay it is quite contrary to that, and to the principle of justice and equality around which the heavens and the earth revolve. And if these rights and protections apply to non-Muslims, they apply even more so to the sinful and the disobedient among the Muslims.

To summarise then, now that we have answered the questions with which we have begun this chapter and have journeyed together through the exemplary life of the Prophet (pbuh) and his Companions to gain practical guidance on the issues those questions raise, we affirm the following:

Hardheartedness, harshness and discourtesy, whether it is shown to the transgressors among the Muslims or non-Muslims, and trampling on people's rights- irrespective of their faith or lack thereof- is not in keeping with the true meaning of exaltedness by faith; it in fact belies self-exaltedness, vanity and haughtiness, the type of which often lead to committing oppression God has forbidden to Himself and has made it unlawful between us⁷.

Before concluding this chapter, it is worth recalling some of the edifying and illustrious tableaux that history has painted for us during all those centuries, particularly those which provide us with the best examples of exaltedness by faith, and illustrate its real conception most clearly. In this context, it behoves us to begin with by the mention of the account of that most noble Companion, namely, Abdullah Ibn Hadhafa Bin Qays al-Sahmi- may God be pleased with him. Once, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab had sent an army to the land of Byzantine and among that army was Abdullah Ibn Hadhafa, who ended up being taken as prisoner by the enemy. While in captivity, he was approached by the king of the Byzantines who offered a prominent role in his reign on condition that he abandons Islam and embrace Christianity. Ibn Hadhafa refused the offer and so consequently the king had ordered that he

⁷ Related by Muslim (No 2577/55), on the authority of Abu Dharr- may God be pleased with him- from the Prophet (pbuh) that God revealed to him: "O my servants! I have forbidden oppression to Myself and have made it unlawful to you, therefore do not be an oppressor of one another

be crucified and be aimed at with arrows. Seeing that he was not about to change his decision, he was brought down from his crucifix and then was made to witness the end of a prisoner who was thrown into a large pot boiling with oil. Failing to change his mind, despite having made him witness such a horrible ordeal, the king gave up on him and ordered that Ibn Hadhafa be put to death in the same way that prisoner was. But just as his men were about to carry the task, Ibn Hadhafa began to cry and so the king ordered that he be brought back before him. Asked what made him cry, he said, 'how I wished I had a hundred soul that can be thrown like this for the sake of God'. The king of the Byzantine was taken aback by his answer. He said to him, 'if you only accept to kiss my forehead, I promise I will set you free'. Ibn Hadhafa had then asked the king whether not just him, but all of the Muslim prisoners would be included in this bargain. The king accepted and Ibn Hadhafa kissed his forehead. When Ibn Hadhafa returned, bringing with him all of the Muslim prisoners who were freed as a consequence of his deed, 'Umar, the caliph, kissed his forehead in turn.⁸

In another version of this narrative, it was reported that the king of the Byzantine had ordered his men to keep under house arrest, leaving in that residence nothing but charcoaled swine and a drink mixed with wine. Upon realising that Ibn Hadhafa was neither going to eat nor to drink, they refrained from prolonging his ordeal for fear that he may die. When asked by the king why he refused the food, he replied, 'I was indeed in a situation where God has made it permissible for me to consume that meal, but I did not want to give you the opportunity to rejoice against Islam'.

This narrative contains a variety of aspects which all have to do with exaltedness by faith. Among these are:

1. Ibn Hadhafa's refusal to abandon his religion in exchange for a position of power which the king had proposed to him is an example of transcending the world and its pleasures through exaltedness by faith.
2. The steadfastness that Ibn Hadhafa had shown in the face of terror- when the king of the Byzantine had ordered his crucifixion, his targeting with arrows and when he was made to witness the death of that prisoner and be threatened with the

⁸ Cited by Ibn Hajar in *al-'Isaaba*, 3/4

same fate- is an example of transcending the fear of death and the horrors of torture through exaltedness by faith

3. The fact that Ibn Hadhafa did not eat from the meat of the swine nor drunk the wine, and run the risk of dying as a result, in spite of the fact they were made permissible for him by God under the circumstances, is an example of exaltedness by faith which does not accept that the enemies of Islam gloat over its misfortunes.
4. After the king of the Byzantine had given up on Ibn Hadhafa and became convinced that he was not about to renegade on his religion, he asked him to kiss his forehead in return for freedom in order to save his face. This particular deal belies the troubled psychological state in which the king was in: it gives us the sense that he had indeed seen that Abdullah's moral status was much higher than his, and that he psychologically felt defeated by his strong resolve and somewhat dwarfed by the fantastic sense of exaltedness which emanated from his faith; so much that he felt compelled to recover some of the pride lost in the face of Ibn Hadhafa's unshakable faith
5. Conversely, Abdullah's acceptance to kiss the forehead of the king in return for his freedom and the freedom of those who were caught prisoners with him is an example of exaltedness by faith because it shows his ability to transcend his own arrogance and pride. Indeed, this position of Ibn Hadhafa might baffle some of us, causing them to wonder how it is possible that a man who had remained steadfast in face of murder threats and torture, finally freely accept to kiss the forehead of the Byzantine king. This a very relevant question because in replying to it, we will be in a position to make a distinction between the true and clear conception of faith and what is meant by being exalted by it, on the one hand, and on the other, self-exaltedness and superbia.

In reality, Ibn Hadhafa- may God be pleased with him- was not acting out of self-interest, nor was he motivated by pride or swallowed by his own arrogance. Rather, what mattered for him was Islam; he wanted to follow its path wherever it took him, and his faith in whatever it required of him, always mindful of the interest of his religion in all of his actions. He was not overwhelmed by anything except the light of guidance and the Truth, and that is precisely where the

conception of exaltedness by faith resides. So elevated is the place of faith in his soul, he is able to transcend any of its desires, even it involves his own life and his own esteem. That is why when he had to choose between his life and his religion, he was ready to sacrifice the former for the latter, and when he had to choose between kissing the forehead of the king and remaining in prison alongside his fellows, he chose the latter for the interest of Islam, instead of his own stubbornness and self-pride. Following his stance, God has doubled his rewards: the reward of freeing his fellow Muslims from captivity, and of having his own forehead kissed by the ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, the commander of the believers, and such endorsement suggests that he deserves to have his forehead kissed by every other Muslim. That is indeed a model of exaltedness by faith, and so may God be pleased with Abdullah and may He make him pleased.

In conclusion, and after this fantastic story, we wish to say the following to those who are engaged actively in the propagation of Islam:

Follow the path of Islam wherever it takes you, and do not let all of your actions revolve around yourselves and the promotion of yourself, because true exaltedness emanates from faith and sincere devotion to the ascendancy of religion and not the ascendancy of one’s self. Indeed, anyone who acts sincerely to make the religion of God triumphant, against the wishes of his ego, God will elevate his rank, and he would then be among those who succeeded both in this world and the next. And as for the person, who devotes all of his attention and energy to the furtherance of his status, acting against the ethics of Islam, God will cause his demise and he would be among those who have lost both this world and the next.

O callers to Islam! Beware of undermining the faith under the pretext of the exaltedness by faith or the honour of Islam, and do not be tempted to have an exalted opinion of yourselves thinking you are better than others. We are never certain what the future reserves for us and what it reserves for others, so be extremely cautious of the spread of haughtiness particularly that it may often lead to religious upheaval and remember that people’s hearts are in reality between the fingers of the Merciful who turns them the way He likes.⁹

⁹ Related by Muslim (18/No 2654), on the authority of Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar Ibn al-‘As- may God be pleased with them both.

O Allah! We take refuge in you from the evils of our soul and our deeds. O Allah! You who can turn the hearts as it pleases You, make our hearts steadfast and committed to your religion. O Allah! You who can subserve the hearts, make our hearts subservient to your devotion, and our final prayer is praise be to God the Lard of the worlds

Chapter Two

Exaltedness by Faith Does not Conflict with the Principle of Causality

“Armed with true faith, a true believer should raise above this world of matter and his heart should give no weight to causes”

At first blush, these words sound beautiful and attractive, but upon further consideration we realise they actually contain such distortion that it may lead a Muslim person to understand his religion as if it were a form of monasticism not unlike the one invented by the Christian monks, a religion that was at variance with the message of Islam and its message. Islam is the religion of God who created mankind and has full knowledge of their essential nature, and has, thus, revealed to them laws which are commensurate with their humanity. Because a human being is made of both body and spirit, the Islamic Sharia has taken in consideration both his spiritual and corporeal aspects, such that neither is given primacy over the other or is made to prevail over the other as to curtail its function and its role in his development.

Let us illustrate this with one example. Given that the human body cannot be sustained without food and drink, and given that sexual desires cannot be satisfied without entertaining relations with a partner from the opposite gender, God has made it incumbent upon human beings to seek that which is essential for their survival and the satisfaction of their sexual appetites, and has permitted to them to enjoy those things beyond the strict minimum. But He, on the other hand, has warned them against extravagance and made it detestable to them. Thus and given that the prevalence of desires corrupts the will of mankind, and weakens their moral resolve- and both will and moral resolve have their impetus in the spirit, God enjoined fasting in order to create a balance between the needs of the body and the needs of the spirit. This wisdom is manifested in fasting itself: given that the body cannot sustain continuous fasting beyond a certain length of time, God has determined a most wise regulation for fasting, saying: *“So now, have relations with them and seek that which God has decreed for you. And eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread [of night]. Then complete the fast until the sunset”* (2:187). It is interesting to note that when some of the Companions wanted to observe continuous fasting beyond what the Qur’an had required of them, the Prophet (pbuh) deterred them from such practice. When they said to him, ‘But you do engage in continuous fasting O Messenger of God!’, he replied, “My state is not like yours: My Lord feeds me and gives me to drink, throughout the night” (Related by Bukhari ¹⁰). With this clarification, the Prophet has made that practice specific to him and not others, though he still gave for

¹⁰ No 1964) and Muslim (61/1105), on the authority of Aisha- may God be pleased with her.

that a reason which is in keeping with his humanity and with theirs, his addressees: he said, 'My Lord feeds me and gives me to drink, throughout the night', he did not say, 'I have no need of food nor drink throughout the night'. Rather, by his saying so, he has affirmed that he is being fed and given drink; thus, proving that the condition upon which he was created is potentially still there, in spite of the specificity of his spiritual state, may God bless him and grant him peace.

It is from this comprehensive basis that all of the issues of the Sharia branched out. one of these is the issue of reliance and the procurement of the causes and the means and their consideration. Islam has ensured that reliance on God be a matter of the heart, as for the procurement of the means and the causes, he assigned to the function of the limbs, in order to create the right balance between the spirit and the body and pave the way for their complementarity, as required by the human condition. Indeed, prophetic guidance in this regard was most compelling and it was expressed in the most circumspect and clearest of fashion, when the Prophet (pbuh) was asked by that Bedouin if he should bother to hobble his camel or rely on God: the Prophet (pbuh) said to him: "Hobble it and then rely"¹¹. It is as if by this advice the Prophet (pbuh) was saying to the Bedouin, 'Hobble it with whatever means you have in your disposal, and then rely on He who owns you and owns the means and the causes'. There is certainly no tension between the actions of the limbs and the actions of the heart, just as there is no conflict between outer and inner action, and between procuring for yourself the means and using what is at your disposal to accomplish something and relying at the same time on your Lord, the creator of the means and causes. Rather than tension or conflict, I dare say there is between all of these apparent polarities compatibility and complementarity. It is in fact owing to this interdependence that it wrong to ask whether it is reliance or consideration of the causes that should come first; for whoever asks this question is not unlike the person who asks whether he should close his eyes to listen with his ears or he should block his ear in order to see with his eyes. The issue is that hearing and seeing are not in conflict to warrant such a question: hearing is the function of the ear and seeing is the function of the eyes, and so these two organs cannot possibly collide and nor can their functions. On the contrary, if there is a relationship between the two, it is a relationship of complementarity and interdependence. Hearing captures the sound and sight captures the picture, and together they permit mankind to have

¹¹ Related by Tarmidhi (2517), on the authority of Anas Ibn Malik- may God be pleased with him

cognisance of what is occurring around them. Reliance on God is not much different; it is a both an action of the heart and action of the limbs whose function it is to procure the means and cause and execute them in an orderly manner. And just like it would be right for the binaural sensibility to prevail over visual perception and vice versa, right action also requires a balance between reliance on God and taking stock of the causes and taking steps to procure them in order for our action to accomplish the desired outcome, in a way that gives primacy to neither of them so as not to allow one aspect prevail over the other. Based on this, we can say that whoever has relinquished the study of the causes and the endeavour to procure the means under the pretext of reliance on the providence of God, and whoever has relinquished reliance on God, placing all his faith on the causes, are like that person who closed his eyes in order to listen with his ears, and whoever does so has certainly put himself in a danger, which may cause his death.

As for those who have taken the causes in consideration, but were short of the task because of their excessive reliance, or those who have relied on God, but their reliance on Him was weak due to their excessive reliance on the causes, neither of them will be deprived of some sort of success, but it will be commensurate with both their perfections and their flaws.

Conclusion:

Both reliance on God and the study and procurement of causes are obligations, there is no conflict between them; the former is an action of the heart and the latter is an action of the limbs.¹² Together, these aspects of human action constitute the core of the Islamic Sharia, which views mankind as humans, and thus take into consideration both their spiritual and physical dimensions.

Further conclusions can be derived from the one above:

Although exaltedness by faith entails perfect reliance on God, it does not in any way preclude taking consideration of causes and their procurement. Numerous are the proofs for

¹² It should be made clear that acting on the basis of causality hinges on two things: the legality of the cause itself, as well as the ruling concerning the outcome which that action aims to achieve. In the event where the cause relied upon in that action is legal in its basis, it would be acted upon before establishing the legal ruling of the aim for which it is used because its final ruling hinges on that: if it is established that the aim in question is obligatory and that that aim can only be realised through that cause, acting on that cause would become then obligatory, in compliance with the rule which states that all that is necessary for an obligation to the extent that no completion of that obligation can be had without it, is ipso facto an obligation itself. Hence, whether the aim is recommended, permissible, repugnant or forbidden, the ruling on the cause will always hinge on the ruling of the aim sought, irrespective on the legal basis of the cause itself

the validity of this argument, and they are too conclusive to require demonstration, but we still have included some of them below:

1. Relating the words of Yusuf (pbuh), God- may he be exalted- says: “[Joseph] said, "You will plant for seven years consecutively; and what you harvest leave in its spikes, except a little from which you will eat” (12:47). Here we have an example of the Prophet Yusuf, speaking in his capacity of an expert on economy: he is basically drawing an economic plan for the people of Egypt that will enable them to protect their economy, and improve their livelihoods for the next fourteen years. Thus, he advised them, on the one hand, to leave the grains in their spikes during the fertile years, because that would be the best way to prevent its quality from deteriorating and the surest way to prolong it, but on the other, he advised them not to consume all of it, as a precautionary measure, for the next seven years which were going to be hard. When you look at this economic plan, you realise that it consists of an in depth study of the causes and a plan of action based on the deliberation which ensued from engaging with these causes. This we notice clearly, in spite of the fact that the Prophet Yusuf (pbuh) need not be given a lesson on reliance, because no one relies on God more than Prophets do.
2. Relating the words of Ya‘qub (pbuh), God- may he be exalted- says: “And he said, "O my sons, do not enter from one gate but enter from different gates” (12:67). According to the commentaries of the Qur’an, Ya‘qub (pbuh) had given this advice to his sons before their travel to Egypt, because he was afraid that they may get afflicted by the evil eye. Here too, we have a perfect example of taking causes in consideration to avert a calamity, even though Ya‘qub (pbuh) had perfect faith in destiny and had an unshakable reliance on God.
3. God- may He be exalted- says: “And shake toward you the trunk of the palm tree; it will drop upon you ripe, fresh dates” (19:25). This Qur’anic verse also clearly orders the relation of causes and effects, in that God has seen to it that the shaking of the trunk, the cause, brings the effect of the fall of the dates from the palm tree. From this it is understood that she had to shake the tree to bring about the desired effect, namely the fall of the dates, and that without taking that action, she would have had no dates dropping on her. Given that reliance on God is an obligation- and there is no doubt about that- could we imagine, as we look at this verse, that He would undermine what he enjoined as an

obligation by means of a contradictory discourse? Or is it better to consider, in light of this verse, that we have here an irrevocable proof that the study of causes and taking them in consideration does not conflict with reliance on God, or having faith in Him? It is worth recalling that Maryam (pbuh) was in a highly precarious situation and was, therefore, in dire need of assistance, and that she was at the same time elected by God to undergo a trial that none in the worlds had ever underwent. But despite of this she was still commanded to do her utmost to cause the tree to drop its fruits on her. This is indeed a most subtle indication that human beings have to their utmost to cause the desired effects, by studying the causes and availing themselves of all the possible means to achieve that purpose, and only then rely on God for the concrete realisation of the outcome. In that case God will be sufficient for him, irrespective of his weakness and incapacity.

4. Relating the words of Dawud (pbuh), God- may he be exalted- says: And We taught him the fashioning of coats of armour to protect you from your [enemy in] battle. So will you then be grateful?" (21:80). This Qur'anic verse means that God-may He be exalted-taught Dawud (pbuh) the fabrication of armour which is worn during battle to shield fighter against fatal blows and stabbings, and that He- may He be exalted- bestows these as gifts to His servants and He urges them to give thanks for them in return. There is no doubt that wearing these armours constitute a clear example of considering the causes and securing their procurement. But how is it conceivable that God would urge His servants to give thanks for what He had taught them, if that teaching was not in keeping with Revealed Law, or was in contradiction with the demands of reliance on God?
5. Another proof may be gleaned from the hadith of the Prophet (pbuh), when he has said: "If you hear that the plague has broken out in a land, do not go to it; but if it breaks out in a land where you are present, do not go out escaping from it"(Related by Bukhari ¹³.This hadith constitute a golden rule in quarantine provision which aims at protecting societies against the spread of epidemics. Notice how the Prophet urges for the implementation of quarantine measures in the land where plague had taken hold, advising people who are outside that land not to enter it. This measure does certainly constitute a glaring example of taking causes in consideration in order to avert the spread of the disease, and yet, it was

¹³ No: 5728) and Muslim (92/No 2218), on the authority of Usama Bin Zayd- may God be pleased with him

never in conflict with the principle of reliance on God, nor was it at variance with the requirements of the faith.¹⁴

6. Another proof may be gleaned from the hadith of the Prophet (pbuh), when he has said: “Healing resides in three things: it is in a drink of honey, cupping, or branding with fire [cauterization]”¹⁵. Is this hadith of the Prophet (pbuh) in any in conflict with the words uttered by the friend of the Merciful, Ibrahim (pbuh) when he has said: “And whenever I fall sick, He will cure me” (26:80)? We may also ask this: did the Prophet by so saying attributed healing to a source other than God? We do not think there is anyone that doubts that the Prophet (pbuh) had meant that. Thus, what he (pbuh) is referring to is the causes of healing that God has created in this world and which ultimately are attributed to God, in terms of their causes and effects. Indeed, it is God who created these means and causes and it is also He who in His wisdom has created in them properties which effect cures from diseases. As for Ibrahim (pbuh), he is by uttering those words, only stating clearly that the causer of the causes of healing, who owns them and in whose disposal they are, is the God- may He be exalted.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that by saying what he had, the Prophet (pbuh) has certainly urged his Companions to seek these methods of healing, the benefit of which he had himself concluded by experience. This is also a guidance that the Prophet (pbuh) conveys to the rest of the Islamic nation, namely that they ought to procure for themselves the means of healing. And in this there is nothing which is in conflict with the principle of reliance on God or the exaltedness which emanated from faith.

7. Another proof for the complementarity between faith and reliance on God on the one hand, and the consideration of causes, on the other, may be gleaned from the very actions and behaviours of the Prophet (pbuh) himself. Certainly, the Prophet has a faith that cannot be surpassed nor even matched, and he is the leader of the worlds par excellence in matters pertaining to reliance on God and exaltedness. Did he not say to his uncle: “ I swear by God, if they were to put the sun in my right hand and the moon on my left, on order that I abandon this religion, I will never do so before this religion is granted victory

¹⁴ This advice was followed by the most prominent Companions such as ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab. I invite to reflect on his deep understanding and his perspicacious counsel as he said to the people: “ Indeed, we flee from the destiny of God, but we only flee to the destiny of God again and again

¹⁵ Related by Bukhari (No: 5680; 5681), on the authority of Ibn Abbas- may God be please with him.

from God, or I die to that end”, and did he not say to his companion in the cave as the disbelievers got close to its entrance, ‘ Do not fear, God is with us’ (9:40)?. But in spite of this, he (pbuh) never ignored the causes and had always engaged them in the most creative ways.

Did he not (pbuh) store away provisions to cover his needs and the needs of his family for a year, in spite of the fact he has always been the most trustful of his Lord, and the most confident about his ultimate source of living;?

Did he not (pbuh) cure himself through cupping and sought the advice of two healers regarding his health?

Did he not (pbuh) take part in the Battle of Uhud, wearing two armour shields to protect himself during the fighting?

Did he not (pbuh) dig the trenches around the city of Medina to protect its inhabitants from the onslaughts of the enemies who conspired against them?

Did he not (pbuh) seek the protection of al-Mut‘im Ibn ‘Adiyy upon his return from Ta’if, after failing to enter the city of Mecca on his own?

Did he not (pbuh) enter into pledges with the Jews of Medina to protect his front in the interior from internal challenges?

Did he not (pbuh) defer the Conquest of Khaybar until he had secured the Treaty of Hdaybiyya?

Did he not (pbuh) follow the advice of Hubab Ibn al-Mundhir during the Battle of Badr, moving away from the spot where he had dismounted earlier to a spot near a well closest to the enemy? Surely he could have ignored the advice and say to al-Mundhir something like, ‘there is no need for these strategic moves, this is an issue of faith in and reliance on God’ and that ‘we need to transcend these materialistic calculations’, but why did he not?

Let us now consider what measures and precautions the Prophet (pbuh) took as he prepared to migrate from Mecca to Medina without being detected by the disbelievers. We shall notice the following:

- The night of his migration, the Prophet (pbuh) ordered Ali to sleep in his bed and to use his green Hadhrami cloak as a blanket
- When he came to the house of Abu Bakr to take him with him, he left the house using a back exit, and left Mecca swiftly before dawn

- As he (pbuh) left Mecca, he moved south first, in the direction of the Yemen, which was opposite to the direction of Medina. He travelled in that direction for five miles until he reached the Mountain of Thawr. This was obviously a decoy designed to deceive the disbelievers of Mecca and divert their attention
- He (pbuh) and his companions then entered into one of the caves of the Mountain just mentioned and had spent there three nights. During that time, they used to be visited by Abdullah Ibn Abu Bakr who would brief them on the latest developments concerning the Quraysh, he would stay with them overnight, but then would return to Mecca before sunrise to give the impression that all along he had been by the side of the Quraysh in Mecca
- ‘Amer Ibn Fuhayra used to herd his sheep up to mount Thawr to provide the men in the cave with milk. All the way back and forth, ‘Amer Ibn Fuhayra used to follow the trail of Abdullah Ibn Abu Bakr so the tracks he had left in the sand had been covered by the tracks of the sheep.

All of these measures and precautions the Prophet (pbuh) had taken in order not to be sighted by Quraysh and be able to migrate to Medina safely.

Only when they were in the cave, and the disbelievers stood at the entrance of it, and all other means of escape were used up, and when Abu Bakr had feared they were about to be found, saying to the Prophet, ‘ O Messenger of God, I am afraid that if any of them looked down towards their feet, they would see us’¹⁶

then that unparalleled reliance on God and that noble sense of exaltedness which transcend causes through sheer faith in the causer of the causes, came to the fore, and the Prophet (pbuh) said: “ Do not fear, God is with us” (9:40)

Notice in all of these instances how the Prophet (pbuh) gave causes full consideration and how at the same time he relied fully on God, transcending the causes, in order for you to understand clearly and unequivocally that reliance on causes and God is not an antithetical position; may God grant this Prophet of ours all of His blessings and grant him all the peace that he deserves.

So let us now recapitulate and state clearly that the study of cause and their taking in consideration and endeavouring their procurement to affect the desired outcome for our

¹⁶ Related by Muslim 1/ No 2381

action is an intrinsic part of the Islamic worldview, which clashes with neither the principle of reliance on God nor with the principle of exaltedness by faith. It is true that a believer ought to be armed with the faith which raises him above causes and matter but this should not lead him to suspend the sphere of the causes altogether. Rather than renouncing the causes, he ought to pursue their logic, and after that not expect anything from them, turning instead to God and rely solely on Him to bring the desired outcome of our actions, in compliance with the famous adage which says, ‘abide by the logic of the causes and then disown them’; that is believe in them with your limbs, but do not concede to them any space in your heart.

At this conjunction, it is worth highlighting also that it is actually our reliance on causes with our heart and our infatuation with their efficacy, rather than our recourse to them, which harms the faith and causes our demise. Indeed, to that effect, God- may he be exalted- has said: “And on the day of Hunayn, when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at all” (9:25). This was revealed to highlight the extent to which some Muslims, particularly those had newly embraced Islam, had become conceited. History in fact records that one of them had said prior to that battle, ‘We shall not be defeated, they are but a small army today’¹⁷.

But as for the argument which insists on the necessity of suspending the sphere of causes and ignoring the cause altogether as a way of practicing the principle of reliance on God, we have already demonstrated its falsity, with the help of God the guarantor of success.

Now my dear readers, some might still want to object arguing that God granted victory to Moses (pbuh) against the might of the pharaoh even when the causes and the means of success were nil, not to say that their whole situation was very precarious. This objection relies mainly on the notion that true faith can do away with causes. We say to those people the following: the event of Moses (pbuh) and his people and their plight cannot be used as inference to make the case against the necessity to consider the causes and abide by the logic of causality, in that what saved Moses and his people from the terrors of the pharaoh was a miracle, and as miracles are confined to Prophets, they do not have a bearing on law-making.

¹⁷ These words were related by al-Suyuti in his ‘*Al-Durr Al-Manthur*’ and attributed their source to al-Bayhaqi who on the authority of al-Rabi’- may God be please with him- said that: “On the day of Hunayn a man said, ‘we shall not be defeated, they are but a small army today’. That saying displeased the Messenger of God (pbuh), and soon after God- may he be exalted- revealed, ‘And on the day of Hunayn...’. Al-Rabi’ then added, ‘they were then twelve thousand fighters, among which two thousand were from Mecca

Rather, miracles ought to be seen as a source of comfort for heart of the believers when they restless: through them, they assured that God is always protector of His religion, and always able to grant it victory. Indeed, without that victory which was no doubt miraculous, there would have been no one on earth to worship God, because at that time only Moses (pbuh) and his people believed. Furthermore, if we were to look closely at the details of the flight of Moses (pbuh) who then took his people in the direction of the sea, we would realise that this very step of his (pbuh) was not without attending to causes and without their consideration. Only, when all the avenues had been exhausted, God- may He be exalted- had certainly bestowed victory and succour to his sincere servants, and this is the lesson that we ought to draw. We should remind ourselves, however, that, were Prophets are concerned, this succour and victory cannot always be measured according to a human frame of reference, they are subject to a divine scale: they may be manifested in a way which is commensurate to human rationality as when this victory is marked by the demise of the enemies of Islam, but they may also be manifested in more subtle ways, as in the case of Ibrahim (pbuh), when he was saved from the burning fire or the case of habib al-Najjar whom God elected as one of His martyrs, though he was one of the people God has favoured with his protection and miracles. All in all, these are not matters upon which we can derive Sharia rulings, because they are of the realm of the unseen, which is beyond our perception.

Others might have other objections arguing this time that the Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) had left his wife Hagar and his infant Ismail in a valley where nothing grew, and where there was neither food nor water, and not a soul to seek help from or a means of survival to rely on except God.

In reply to this objection, we say the following:

To begin with, Ibrahim (pbuh) did not forsake his family. Rather, he left them in order to comply with particular order that God had commanded him to carry out, and that was an order over which Ibrahim (pbuh) had no other choice but to obey. It is indeed because this was a command from God that both he and his wife Hagar were appeased, as can be gleaned from the account itself. Hagar had asked Ibrahim: “Is it God who has ordered you so?”, and when he (pbuh) assured her that that was the case, she said: “God will then never abandon us”. She said this because she was fully aware that God is the causer of causes, and that as long as it is He who had commanded this travel, He would cause things to happen in such a way as to protect them and ease their hardship.

We would like at this point to ask a couple of questions: what if God did not order Ibrahim (pbuh) to leave, would he have done so of his own accord? Would Hagar, in those circumstances, have accepted his decision to leave without any further discussion, consultation, or consideration of the causes? What is clear is that this action of Ibrahim (pbuh) is no different from the one he took vis-à-vis his son when he set out to slaughter him: in both occasions, his actions are motivated by submission to God and renouncing the causes altogether.

Some of the Muslim activists keep repeating that the Afghans defeated the Soviet army, relying on a limited number of rifles. In the same vein, they view this confrontation between the Afghans and the Russians as if it were entirely based on the wonders and miracles that God had granted the Mujahedeen.

In response to this point of view we say the following:

1. This view of the events is based on conjecture and wishful thinking which has no basis in reality and does not reflect what really happened on the ground. To begin with, the Afghans did not mount a fight with a limited number of rifles, as it has been contended, but were in fact fighting with heavy and highly developed weaponry, and they used to actually receive all kinds of military aid from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Arab Emirates, not to mention all of support of the Americans and Europeans which was added on top of these. Suffice to mention in this regard that America had supplied the Afghan Mujahedeen with Stinger missiles at a time when even Israel, the spoiled child of America, did not have them and there was money given as well, to the extent that anyone who resided in Afghanistan used to benefit from a special financial aid. It goes without saying that America was doing this for its own interest; it obviously was troubled by the expansion of the influence of the Soviets and feared they may be able to reach the shores of the Arabian Gulf. We mention these things briefly to put everyone in the picture and remind our readers that this was then the reality on the ground, and these were the causes and the factors behind the rise of the Afghan Mujahedeen. Naturally, this is not to deny the fact they also had faith and relied on God in their undertakings, but to argue that they defeated the army of the Soviet Union simply with a limited number of rifles is absolute nonsense.

2. This kind of reasoning does not agree with the immutable and irrevocable laws decreed by God in the universe and which apply without exception save in the situations where God

wills to endow one of His Prophets or saints with miracles. Neither the miracles of the Prophets nor those of the saints can be used as a basis for Sharia rulings.

3. Muslim activists should not be lured by the attractiveness of this type of discourse among the youth who are usually enthused about religion and are eager to do anything for its triumph. Not only is such discourse not accurate historically, it leads to major distortions in our conception of our Sharia and the reality in which we find ourselves, and this undoubtedly constitute a serious threat to the Islamic nation. For the best proof for the negative impact of such discourse, we need only look at all of these emerging theories of jihad whose proponents seem to think that it is fine for those engaged in fighting to completely ignore the laws of causality so long as they have faith. Based on such discourse and the theories which stem from it, we now find people who are ready to fight the whole world, though they have not even a modicum of power or any means to speak of. Indeed, some of them do not even have a shelter where they can feel safe and they have not even found a country ready to help them, but they still want to fight America on the 11th of September, Russia in Chechnya and India in Kashmir, while the target and the theatre of their operations, are countries of the Muslim world like Saudi Arabia, the Yemen, Morocco or Indonesia. And we all know what the consequences of these operations are: they have led to the deaths of a large number of the sons of this Islamic nation without achieving the most basic interests of Islam and Muslims, on the contrary they have only caused more harm to them, creating for them serious challenges, as anyone with open eyes can witness.

It is for this reason that it is imperative today to lay the foundations for a profound understanding based on solid principles, correct data and accurate appraisals, among the sons of the Islamic movement.

In conclusion, to every Muslim who loves his religion, who is proud of his faith and who holds to his beliefs, we would like to say the following:

- A nation which cast aside the causes and fails to observe the laws of causality is a nation constituted of idle and lazy people and is therefore not fit to build a civilisation, nor is befitting of the best of peoples, evolved for mankind
- Taking account of causes does not conflict with the principle of reliance on God, and he sense of exaltedness which emanates from faith

- Taking account of causes is inherent to us and has been sown into our primordial nature by the divine. Hence they are part of His Revealed law which is the path of worship the Almighty has chosen for us, and which consists of the necessity of engaging with the laws and norms He has embedded in the universe
- Whoever wants to reap fruits, let him consider the causes and procure the means for it
- Whoever cast his fish nets in unfertile zones or sowed his seeds in a barren land and then failed to obtain a fruitful outcome; he has only himself to blame
- Whoever has fought without weapons and has protected himself with no armour, let him expect nothing short of defeat and possibly his death
- Whoever engages in jihad without taking account of the conditions surrounding fighting, and then ends up losing and being displaced, he should not blame his Lord nor his religion for that; he also has only himself to blame

My dear Muslim brother:

If you are going to be a true Muslim, embrace all of the teachings of religion, do not accept some them and reject the rest. Take from it those teachings that pertain to reliance on God and to exaltedness by the faith, and by the same token learn from it the importance of sheer endeavour and the importance of causes, and know that in this religion there is no conflict between the laws and the landmarks of Islam. Whoever thinks he has detected a contradiction in these areas or cannot see where the complementarity between its various constituents parts lies, must know that this is due to the flaws in his understanding of Islam and not to some shortcomings inherent to Islam; Islam is the religion of God the all-Knowing the all-Wise.

And know that the best and most perfect guidance is but the guidance of Muhammad, may God grant him His blessing and His peace; who so carefully took account of the causes during his migration that he left nothing to chance, and then he said to his Companion in the cave, ‘do not be afraid, God is with us’ even while the disbelievers were standing close by.

O God! We beseech you to bestow on us an intellect which is rightly guided and an understanding which is accurate, as well as devotion which is upright, and a path which is straight, and the close of our cry will be: ‘Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds’.

Chapter Three

Exaltedness versus Complacency

One of the worst things that can happen to those who are powerful is to be dazzled by their own abilities, becoming thus a victim of their own delusions, while the worst thing that can happen to those who are reckoned among the weak is to be deceived by what they perceive to be their limited abilities. But what surpasses all of these, are those who think they are powerful when they are in fact weak: often the weak is deluded into thinking he is powerful only because his powerful enemy has mentioned him by name, as if this mere mention was a sign that he is causing fear and terror in the heart of his enemy, or that he is indeed able to defeat him at some stage. This kind of delusion does indeed produce some amazing conjectures in the mind of these types of people, and have often led them to a disastrous outcome. Hitler, for instance, was a powerful man, but as soon as he became too proud and too confident of his abilities, he began to expand without taking any precautions and that alone has led to his demise and the end of his power. Also, Saddam was deceived by the massive media coverage about his military might, and he consequently began to fight Iran, and then he invaded Kuwait, which has led to the disunity of the Islamic nation, and he embarked on other adventures which all ended in failure. But the disaster was not limited to these failures and misadventures, it soon destroyed his state and that is how his power ended as well. Then there is the example of al-Qaeda. While it is true that this organisation can no longer be regarded as lacking in wherewithal, it appears that its members are confused as they have announced many ill-conceived ideas: it is as if they have declared war on the whole world simultaneously. They have declared war in America on the 11th of September, they have also declared war against the Russians in Chechnya, and they have also fought India in Kashmir. In addition to this, they have taken their menace to all of the countries of the West, and they have extended their operations to the countries of the Arab and Islamic worlds. Indeed, they have, for instance, carried bomb attacks in Bali, Riyadh, and Casablanca recently and before that they carried these in the Yemen. They did all of that, in spite of the fact they do not actually have the type of capabilities that can affect in any significant way the status quo and the international balance of power. What is striking is that if you were to bring this point to the attention of the members of that organisation, they would tell you we are of the people of the faith and on God we trust. But this is a highly controversial position which can have serious consequences on the Islamic nation, because by so saying they bring forth their faith to compensate for their lack of means, and they propose to surmount their deficit in capabilities and their ill-conceived planning by resorting

to reliance on God. Moreover, the negative consequences of this confusion have not been limited to them; they have extended to all parts of the Muslim world. Since al-Qaeda began its deadly operations, many powerful institutions of the Muslim world have been destroyed and many of its beneficial projects and energies have been wasted, and much confusion have affected the minds of the sons of this nation in ways that are so perilous they even exceed in their peril the impact of the enemy's weaponry. These are facts that everyone can see on the ground now: we first witnessed the fall of Afghanistan, then Iraq, which are both now under the control of America. Today and as a consequence of the actions of al-Qaeda, the countries of the Arab and Muslim worlds are a target of the American war machine. Ever since then, they have been under an unprecedented pressure to do away with whatever remnants of Islam are still extant and to obscure all the traces of Islamic identity, under the pretext of 'The War on Terror'. Such is the currency of this emblem today that none of these countries would dare to even take a neutral position with its regard, let alone oppose it, particularly after the events of 9/11, and all those bombings that took place later in Bali, in Indonesia, Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia, and Casablanca in Morocco.

Now given that these operations of al-Qaeda have had a direct impact on Islam and the lives of Muslims, it behoves us to direct our attention to them to analyse them from every possible angle and reconstruct all of their disparate parts. One way of tackling these bombings is to focus on the thinking which typifies their perpetrators, namely their saying that their designs are based solely on faith which they regard as their only weapon and provision in the face of the might of their enemy and the means by which they hope to stave off the inequalities in military capabilities during war. Hence the present chapter will be devoted to the analysis and discussion of this topic, and we pray that our endeavour and the endeavours of others in this regard will all be of benefit to our religion and our nation.

We should make it clear from the outset that faith is indeed the weapon of the believers, and that it is through it that they emerge victorious. But we need to insist that separating faith from causes in a way that leads to the ignorance of these is fallacious and is at the core of the problem. In the previous chapter we have already demonstrated that there was no conflict between faith and taking account of causes, in this chapter we shall demonstrate, by God's leave, that faith occupies a sphere which the Qur'an has delineated for it, and that it is a moral imperative to take stock of our capabilities and not be complacent about our real abilities before embarking on any war or fighting. The laws of the universe, it needs to be stated again, make exceptions for no one, and they favour non one: if you were only able to confront a tank with a rifle or were only able to confront a rifle with a dagger, and then after that you waged a war against the whole world, following which you become destitute and your organisation destroyed, do not blame that on faith and do not take it on the principle of reliance on God, nor do you have the right to think ill of your Lord; it is yourself you should blame. This is because by so doing you will have acted against the laws of the universe and you will have acted against the way of the Prophet (pbuh) and that of his Companions: they certainly took full consideration of the causes and made sure they were fully cognisant of their own means and capabilities as well as those of their enemies. In what follows, I will provide briefly some of the evidences that attest to that:

1. God- may He be exalted- says: Now, God has lightened [the hardship] for you, and He knows that among you is weakness. So if there are from you one hundred [who are] steadfast, they will overcome two hundred. And if there are among you a thousand, they will overcome two thousand by permission of God. And God is with the steadfast" (8:66)

In this Qur'anic verse, God has bestowed on the believers a faith, the strength of which was set to compensate for their weakness. Hence, He has commanded to remain steadfast in the face of the attacks of their enemy, because their deficit was in terms of the number of fighters and not in terms of military capability. Indeed, if the

military capabilities of the warring parties are equal to the extent that the difference in number of soldiers is insignificant, the power of an army would be appraised not only on the basis of the latter but especially on the former as well. Let us clarify this with an example: imagine that there are ten thousand Muslim fighters on the ground, each one of them equipped with a rifle and engaged in battle against the enemy who is fighting them back with undetectable bomber aircrafts each of which is manned by only five individuals. In that situation would it be incumbent on Muslims to remain steadfast in the face of their enemy if the enemy on that day was equipped with three bombers and counted fifteen fighters in its ranks? Obviously it would not be. And that is because the ten thousand fighters in our example would not stand a chance in the face of even one of these deadly bombers, with its crew of just five individuals. Indeed, no more than one or two of these bombs which these aircrafts are able to unleash, would be enough to obliterate that force of ten thousand fighters, and their rifles would have been of absolutely no use to them.

It is possible that some people might object to our reasoning above, arguing that the intent of the Qur'anic verse mentioned earlier was to lighten the hardship and suspend the obligation of fighting in the case where the military might of the enemy is twice as strong as that of the Muslims, but it still gave the good news concerning the possibility of victory, and hence the verse has made it permissible for Muslims to engage in fighting even if the military force of the enemy is twice as strong as that of the Muslims.

In response to that objection, we say the following:

This permissibility which is referred to in this case is not an 'unconditional' one; it is restricted by a condition, namely the existence of a dominant probability which strongly suggests that by engaging in this fighting some vital interest for Islam and Muslims would be secured. Hence, this fighting ceases to be permissible as soon as it becomes clear that engaging in it will, in all likelihood, either not secure any benefit or will lead to harms that outweighs its benefits. Now if we go back to our example, can we really say that there is any slight presumption or remote probability that those bombers would be repelled with those rifles, let alone the possibility of being brought down by them? If the chances are nil, what public interest or benefit would these type of confrontation bring about? We also need to bear in mind that a

single raid of these bombers aircrafts is by itself able to cause the death of thousands of Muslims. Who would be responsible in that case for such devastating loss of life? How can in light of all these facts have the gall to say, 'Islam allows this kind of fighting'?

Let us imagine for a moment that some members of the Muslim community have decided to volunteer to engage in fighting, not because it was obligatory, but to secure some public interest which they have deemed vital. Does this section of the community have any right to make it incumbent on all Muslims to engage in fighting it cannot sustain and which is not obligatory in the first place; nay one which is fraught with dangerous consequences and harmful social outcomes?

We again ask: Is planning and taking full account of the causes belong to those actions which Islam has made incumbent on us, or are these mere material considerations, which we are urged to transcend by faith?

2. When the Prophet (pbuh) had learnt during the Battle of the Confederates that Muslims did not have the wherewithal and the material means to withstand the onslaughts of their enemy, let alone defeating them, he decided to dig massive trenches around the city of Medina in order to stave off the threat of the enemy. What is striking in this event is that although he, as the Prophet of God, had an unsurpassable faith, and the people around him, his Companions were among the best of people and most steadfast in faith, neither he (pbuh) nor any of his Companions dared to traverse the trenches to go and fight the disbelievers, and neither has he (pbuh) enticed any of his Companions to do that nor has he allowed it to anyone. Rather all that the Prophet aimed to achieve during that ordeal was to dampen the ardour of the confederates and have them leave. He also obviously wanted to keep his nascent army intact and thus protect the power of the Muslims. Furthermore, when news had reached the Prophet (pbuh) that Banu Qurayza have betrayed their pledge, which meant that now there was point of entry in the south of the city from which the confederates could infiltrate- the south being the area where there were no trenches dug because it was guarded by Banu Qurayza- he (pbuh) thought of concluding a peace treaty swiftly with Ghatafan on the basis of the third of the fruits of Medina, which was secured to them in return for not joining Quraysh

and Banu Qurayza and refraining to conspire against him. These measures taken by the Prophet (pbuh) are clear proof that during this ordeal, he did not only think with the logic that says 'faith alone is sufficient, we do not need to take account for the causes or procure for ourselves the means of successes'. Nor did he rely solely on the fact that he had with him an army composed of men who had faith: he (pbuh) made an appraisal of his capabilities and he was not complacent about his true abilities. He knew full well that his army, despite the strong faith of the fighters in its ranks, did not stand a chance in the face of the mighty army of the Confederates. Once that was confirmed to him, he dealt with the whole situation in a manner that was always calculated and always within the strategy and logic of war. This he did even though he (pbuh) is peerless when it comes to reliance on God and having a faith which transcends the stricture of the material world.

3. During the Conquest of Ta'if, the Prophet (pbuh) had surrounded Thaqif and its people for a considerable length of time and had erected a catapult as a key siege weapon against them. However, during those long confrontations many of the Muslim fighters were badly injured, and the Muslim army was still having trouble breaching the fortifications of the city. In light of those difficulties, the Prophet (pbuh) decided to call off the raid and left Thaqif without conquering it. This is another clear example that matters of war are always decided after taking account of one's abilities and capabilities; they are never based solely on the amount of our faith and the amount of our reliance on God. How else can we explain the Prophet's withdrawal from Thaqif?
4. During the second pledge of 'Aqaba, al-'Abbas Bin Nadla- may God be pleased with him- said to the Prophet (pbuh), 'I swear by He who has sent you with the Truth, we are ever so ready to descend on the people of Mina with our swords tomorrow if you wish', and upon hearing this, the Prophet (pbuh) said: "I was not commanded to do that"¹⁸.

Now here's a question: what wisdom was there behind God's command to the Prophet (pbuh) not to engage in war while in Mecca? The reason why that command was given has simply to do with the fact that the balance of power and the means

¹⁸ Related by Ahmed in his Musnad (3/No 460), on the authority of Ka'b Ibn Malik al-Ansari- may God be pleased with him

were not in favour of the very first companions of the Prophet (pbuh) in Mecca. Had the Prophet decided to go to war during that period, it would have led to the eradication of the only believing community on the face of the earth at that time. It is indeed for this reason that God the all-Knowing and the all-Wise has not urged them to embark on fighting. And here we have yet another indication that in fighting we do not limit our considerations to faith, but we factor in also the causes. Faith only comes in when the causes have all been accounted for; its role is to make the difference and God knows best.

5. When we look carefully into, what may be called these days, the political strategies adopted by the Prophet (pbuh) during his struggle against his enemies throughout his prophetic career, we notice that he (pbuh) was always fully cognisant of his capabilities and abilities, and that he was never complacent about his limits as well. This attitude he had, in spite of the fact that he had achieved many important victories that the Arabs, the Persians and the Byzantines all acknowledged, and in spite of the fact that he was after all a Messenger sent by God the Almighty. What is striking about his political strategy is the fact that when he was in Median where he built his first state, he did not entice his enemies against him all at once. On the contrary, we notice that as soon as he settles in the city of Median, he wasted no time to enter into pledges with Jews who were one of its major inhabitants, and ratified with them what we may term as a 'common defence treaty'. Also it is worth noting that he (pbuh) never fought on two fronts at the same time: he did not, for instance, set to conquer Khaybar until he had arranged the peace Treaty of Hdaybiyya with Quraysh, and when the Confederates decided to conspire against him, he swiftly entered into a pledge with Ghatafan to neutralise them. Here we have another clear example that we have no other choice but to take account of our true capabilities and to not be complacent about these matters under the pretext of the exaltedness of faith: there is no conflict between faith, exaltedness, noble superiority and acting on the basis of one's means and according to the logic of causality.
6. During the Battle of Mu'tah, when Khalid Ibn al-Waleed was at the helm of the Muslim army, one of the first things he did was to draw a withdrawal strategy and he retreated from that confrontation to save the Muslim fighters from certain butchery.

Recall that this was the man the Prophet called ‘the sword of God’ and during this battle his army was composed of the finest and most accomplished Companions. When Khalid Ibn al-Waleed had successfully withdrawn his troops and came back safely to Medina, people were scandalised and called them, ‘Deserters!’, but the Prophet (pbuh), upon hearing this, said: “ Nay, they are brave attackers, God willing, and I am one of them”¹⁹. A question: Why did Khalid retreat? And why did the Prophet (pbuh) describe his withdrawal as an offensive? Certainly, it has a lot do with planning, tactics, capabilities and abilities: the Muslim army on that occasion counted three thousand fighters among its rank, but that of the enemy counted two hundred thousand. Khalid was not oblivious of these figures, though he may have had an unshakable faith, and though he was called ‘the sword of God’. Now that you are aware of some facts and figures surrounding that battle, try imagining what the outcome would have been, had Khalid- may God be pleased with him- not retreated? To be sure- and that is no doubt what Khalid himself thought-, it would have led to the total destruction of the nascent Muslim army, and the calamity would have stopped there: it would have very possible that this great loss would have encouraged the Byzantines to move to Medina and dismantle the first Islamic state in Median altogether.

7. In the Encounter of the Bridge, the Persians had requested that the Muslims cross the bridge and came to meet them. The then leader of the Muslim army, Abu ‘Uganda al-Thaqafiyy was prepared to do that , but al-Muthanna Ibn Haritha, who was an expert in military strategy had advised him against such a move, because that would led to disastrous outcomes and it would mad it easy for the enemy to kill large score of Muslim fighters. Still ‘Ubayda did not want to have a bar of it; he was bent on crossing the bridge in order not to give the Persians the chance to claim that Muslims were afraid of confronting them. Abu ‘Ubayda’s decision was certainly motivated by his religious enthusiasm, but the situation required that one abides by a modicum of strategic calculations like al-Muthanna did. On that day religious zeal won over, strategic planning and taking account of one’s capabilities were cast aside and the result was a calamity of tragic proportions: four thousand Muslim fighters killed, including Abu ‘Ubayda al-Thaqafiyy- may God be pleased with him. On the

¹⁹ Please refer to Sirat Ibn Hisham, 5/22:34

day of that grave encounter, neither religious zeal nor complete reliance on God were going to be substitute for war strategy, gaging one's power and that of the enemy and for the study of causes and the law of causality

Now that we have exhausted our proofs which show conclusively that the Prophet and his Companions took full consideration of the causes and made sure they were fully cognisant of their own means and capabilities as well as those of their enemies, I wish to make the following remarks:

Faith plays a specific role in the struggle of Muslims against their enemies within a sphere which the Qur'an has delineated for it. To be sure, exaltedness by faith should not cause to be complacent, forgetful of our real capacities and not mindful of the causes and their logic. As we said earlier, the laws of the universe do not favour or make exceptions for anyone. Whoever cast aside causes and the logic of causality is bound to fail and can only expect defeat; this is the law of God, and the law of God does not alter nor does it deviate.

Now might still want to object arguing that we have made too much of parity in military capability and strategy and do forth, because the Prophet (pbuh) had fought the Battle of Badr with an army which was only one thirds of that of the disbelievers, and that during the Battle of Uhud and the Confederates things were not much different

In answer to this objection, we say that concerning Badr, the Prophet (pbuh) did not actually intend to engage in fighting in the first place: all he wanted initially was to seize the caravans of Abu Sufyan. In the end, these caravans escaped safely as the Meccan Army led by Abu Jahl came to the rescue and began fighting against the Muslims. So for the record, we need to be clear that the Prophet (pbuh) did not initiate the Battle of Badr, deciding to engage the disbelievers with an army that is three times smaller. As for the Battle of Uhud, it was Quraysh who imposed the fighting on the Prophet (pbuh), in attempt to eradicate the newly formed Muslim community in Medina: the Prophet (pbuh) was left with no other alternative but to fight back. Finally, in the case of the Battle of the Confederates, it needs to be made clear that the Prophet (pbuh) and his army were not really partaking in fever pitch battles: the Prophet avoided direct confrontation with the forces of the disbelievers and was content with aiming few arrows here and there, from behind the trenches. This he opted for because he knew that any full on engagement was dicey and had the potential of leading to

the demise of the Muslims altogether. Also, as we said earlier, the trenches around Medina were only on the Northern parts. Once, Banu Qurayza had reneged on their pledge, he wasted no time in concluding a treaty with Ghatafan on the basis of the third of the Medinan date crop. We did explain earlier that all of these measures he had taken in consideration of the military capabilities of the Muslim army and that of their enemy. If you like let us ignore these considerations, and argue- counterfactually- that it is possible for a small army to withstand the force of an army more than twice its size, would we be making a fair comparison if we only took stock of the difference in numbers of fighters and ignored the difference in military capability, particularly when the difference in the latter is glaring? Indeed, can we conceive that a group whose members are equipped only with rifles can withstand the power of a state that fights with intercontinental missiles, and has nuclear capabilities? Would that be rational in any way? Would that be something recommended in the Sharia?

I do not think that the matter deserves even a demonstration, be it rational or textual, and God- may He be exalted-knows best.

We need to draw the attention of the reader now to an important point. It is high time believers began to take decisions and make choices which are commensurate with their circumstances and their abilities in order to avoid two things: the incapacity which is usually followed by despair and failure and the hastiness which is often followed by destruction, ruin and demise.

Any Islamic group or country or even the entire Islamic nation which adopts choices and courses of action that are beyond its true capacity is bound to become a laughing stock in the eyes of other nations. Consider the guidance of the Prophet (pbuh) who said after the Battle of the Confederates was over, 'Now we can conquer them, and they will not be able to conquer us'²⁰ .

Had the Prophet (pbuh) uttered those words in Mecca, when he was weak, would that have been appropriate and suited to the condition he was in? The disbelievers would have certainly thought of these words as hubris and would have poked fun at him (pbuh), and that could have also enticed the disbelievers to move to eradicate the believers who at that time

²⁰ Related by Bukhari (No: 4110), on the authority of Suleyman Ibn Sard- may Go be pleased with him

had only their tired bodies, which were by now run down as a result of continuous torture, though their hearts were no doubt filled with faith.

Anyone who ponders over the Qur'an as it was being revealed in Mecca will not fail to see how it gave primacy to the education of the individual, teaching him how to be patient, and filling his heart with faith, establishing it deep inside, and enlightening their limbs with the highest ethical values and the noblest of moral traits. That was surely a discourse most fitting the condition of a people who were few and reckoned among the weak, and who did not have at their disposal even the means to fend for themselves.

But notice also how that Qur'anic discourse changed when the Prophet (pbuh) migrated to Medina, particularly as the foundations of the Islamic state had begun to gradually take hold. We witness for the first time heavenly commands enjoining the believers to defend the nascent state and then increasingly Qur'anic verses pertaining to legislation and the running of the state and its affairs came to the fore.

Soon after the Islamic state had scored the most resounding victories during the Prophet (pbuh), we begin to notice the gradual expansion of Islam beyond the borders of the Arabian Peninsula, and the earliest glimmerings of it becoming a world religion. During that stage the Islamic state begins to have all sorts of correspondences with Kings and prince; this was a watershed moment in the history of a great civilisation, which was about to rise above all of the other civilisations. Had the Qur'anic discourse in Mecca been the one in Medina, would that have made any sense? Would it at have been fitting to ask the believers who did not own anything to speak of while in Mecca, to embark on jihad and lay and constitute an Islamic state? Would they have been in a position, while in that condition of incapacity, to address Kings and princes, correspond with them and invite them to Islam? Would anyone have bothered listen to them or turn to look in their direction, if they did?

This was but divine wisdom at work. The Prophet (pbuh) as leader of a small group of individuals and then as leader of a whole nation had to deploy all of his prophetic wisdom to bring his community to the shore of safety: he has had to sense and experience for himself what his followers and the next generations of Muslims are able to do, lest he ends up charging them with things that are beyond their capacity: it is often when people are thrust in these kinds of awkward and unrealistic situations that they develop the habit of only paying lip service to or lying about things they feel they cannot do but somehow still perceive as things they ought to do. Indeed, this kind of 'oughtness' might lead some to

playing victim all the time, giving the impression that the whole world is against them. Indeed, to punch above one's weight in matters of truth only leads to the loss of that which is possible in pursuit of the impossible.

Also if we were to ponder over the words of the Prophet (pbuh) as he laid there on his death bed, when he has said: "There will not be two religions in the Arabian Peninsula"²¹. Now had the Prophet (pbuh) said that before the conquest of Mecca, could that section of Arab community who had believed in the Message been able to wage war against all of the Arab tribes, including those which were under the control of the Persians and the Byzantines, which would have dragged also Persia and Rome against them? Relying on his wisdom, the Prophet (pbuh) was not going to allow all of this to happen because he always ensured that he had perfect knowledge of his people and their capacities. It is this wisdom, which has spared the Islamic nation from destruction, ruin and demise that often result from hasty and irresponsible decisions, or from courage and pride that are out of place or from a peculiar sense of exaltedness, which seem to ignore everything else.

Indeed, in the example of the Prophet (pbuh), we have the type of wise and rightly guided leadership, which chooses from the actions, the rulings, and the sayings that which is suited for the capacity of his entire community. Based on this, every leader, and every educator is required to have a closer look into the reality in which his nation, followers and children evolve to be in a position to choose from the rulings of the Islamic Sharia those which are most commensurate. Remember that a wise leader is he who has the ability to combine in himself knowledge of the Sharia and knowledge of the world and also between his capacities, and what the Sharia requires of him, and most importantly, he combines knowledge of the obligations and the exigencies of the world.

The wise leader is the one who combines his knowledge of the Sharia with knowledge of the context in which we live, and it is he who does not cast aside the real world around us, under the pretext of implementing the foundational texts of the Sharia. It is this sort of combination and this sort of harmonious interplay that will ensure the continuous growth of fruits at all times, irrespective of the seasons.

²¹ This is part of a long hadith related by al-Bayhaqi (6/110/11409), on the authority of Hurayra- may God be pleased with him

In conclusion, we would like to whisper a few words in the ears of our virtuous youth who love God and His Messenger, and fervently defend their religion and its most sacred tenets. To them we say the following:

God has laid down the law to us in such a way that we are given many alternatives to choose from as we engage our environment and the world around us; indeed from among these alternatives we have patience, condonation, forgiveness, peace and alliance.

It is incumbent upon Muslims to choose from these that alternative that they deem most suited to their context and most likely to realise for them their public interest and social benefits. This notion that somewhat Islam ought to be confined to jihad as if it were the only alternative before us, and then embark on a long and protracted conflict which we cannot withstand, but that we still embark on, completely oblivious and complacent about our capabilities and our abilities, under the pretext of the exaltedness that emanates from faith, is certainly contrary to the worldview of Islam and its wise Revealed Law. This type of reasoning leads to outcomes that are disastrous and which only serve to assist the enemies of Islam to have the better of the Islamic nation, and allows further plundering, bloodshed, disgrace and humiliation, as has happened in Afghanistan and Iraq, and as has happened in many other Islamic countries, which have been under enormous pressure to get rid of the remaining landmarks of Islam and the traces of the Islamic identity, not to mention the unprecedented restrictions that have been placed on the Islamic movement and its most virtuous youth. ...when are we going to say enough?

We ask you God to guide us and make us a guide to others neither lead us astray nor makes us of those who lead others astray... And Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds'.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my dear brother, I hope that you have enjoyed reading this book, and that you had a pleasurable time exploring its ideas which aimed at bringing together religion and life in the world, and through which I have endeavoured to marry our religious obligations with the demands of the reality of our environment. By doing so, I have attempted to free reason within the domain of the Sharia, in such a way that combines the interests of Islam with those of our countries and our lands and hence realise our felicity in this world as well as the next.

I also hope that this book has tackled many of the issues and concepts that Muslims in general and the youth in particular needed to grasp and apprehend. I hope thus that it has provided answers to many of the thorny issues that have vexed many of the Muslim youth until most recently, that it has opened for them new horizons for understanding and perception in matters pertaining to both their worldly and their other-worldly lives, and that it will constitute a transitory station for a new direction and an advanced stage of maturity. Indeed, I hope this book will constitute for the Muslim youth a platform from which to launch further developments both at the intellectual and the practical levels.

Equally, I pray that will be judged a valuable addition to the efforts already deployed towards the reconstruction of an Islamic thought, which is free of the deviance that has befallen it, and resourceful enough to enlighten to Muslims their path, and delineate for them its milestones, filling their hearts with optimism about the imminent return of the Islamic civilisation to its rightful place among the civilisations of the world, as they journey through the darkness of this present, during which Islam and Muslims are going through times that are unusually precarious.

If there is anything left to say, I would like to address it to the Muslim masses, particularly those who have been overwhelmed by the latest developments which would have caused many to despair, give up and become despondent. To those, I say beware! For despair, despondency and depression are only prelude to the material defeat. Do not allow

depression and hopelessness to take their toll on you, and know that the darkness of the night will vanish and that dawn will break and sunlight will shine again. Do not despair, even during the night there is bound to someone somewhere who will be ready to hold the torch for you to enlighten your path and walk beside you until you reach safely your destination. Never forget that hardship is a harbinger of good news, it announces the arrival of dawn which are usually the darkest period of the night.

Difficulties and hardship have to ease off and vanish, and the mercy of God is always beckoning from near. Thus sooner or later God will restore to this religion its lustre of yester years, this is true promise from an all-Powerful Lord who is not encumbered by anything whether in the heavens or on the earth, so arm your selves with patience and seek God's help. And give your response to God and His Messenger, when He calls you to that which will give you life. And know for certain that God is the Protector of those who have faith; and never would God make your faith of no effect, He is to all people surely full of kindness and most Merciful.

I pray to God that He may accept this work as a work done for His sake and for the sake of earning nothing else but His pleasure, and that He may bless it. I turn to his power and I repudiate mine; whatever good is found in this book, has certainly come from His bounty, I thank Him and praise Him- may He be exalted, and whatever evil is contained in it, I attribute to that to my evil-commanding soul and to the devil, and for this I ask for His forgiveness: "And I do not acquit myself. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful" (12:53)

Finally, I beseech anyone who has read this book to pray for me and for my family a sincere prayer. I look forward to hearing from you and receiving your feedback concerning this book. God willing, you find us most obliging and most accepting to advice and criticism.