

**Prophethood and
Prophet
Muhammad**

peace and blessings be upon him

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The Meaning of Prophethood and the Prophets' Mission

God creates every community of beings with a purpose and a guide or a leader. It is inconceivable that God Almighty, Who gave bees a queen, ants a leader, and birds and fish each a guide, would leave us without Prophets to guide us to spiritual, intellectual, and material perfection.

Prophethood is the highest rank and honor that a human can receive from God. It proves the superiority of that human's inner being over all others. A Prophet is like a branch arching out from the Divine to the human realm. He is the very heart and tongue of creation, and possesses a supreme intellect that penetrates into the reality of things and events.

Moreover, he is the ideal being, for all of his faculties are harmoniously excellent and active. He strives and progresses steadily toward

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Heaven, waits upon Divine inspiration or Revelation for the solutions to the problems he faces, and is the connecting point between this world and the Beyond. His body is subject to and follows his heart, figuratively the seat of spiritual intellect, as does his heart. His perceptions and reflections are always directed to the Names and Attributes of God. He goes to what he perceives, and arrives at the desired destination.

A Prophet's perception, developed to the full—seeing, hearing, and thus knowing—surpasses that of all other people. His perception cannot be explained in terms of different light, sound, or other wavelengths. Ordinary people cannot acquire a Prophet's knowledge.

Although we can find God by reflecting upon natural phenomena, we need a Prophet to learn why we were created, where we came from, where we are going, and how to worship our Creator properly. God sent Prophets to teach their people the meaning of creation and the truth of things, to unveil the mysteries behind historical and natural events, and to inform us of our relationship, and that of Divine Scriptures, with the universe.

Prophets guided humanity in intellectual—and thus scientific—illumination.

Everything in the universe tries to exhibit the Names and Attributes of the All-Mighty, All-Encompassing Creator. In the same way, the

Prophets note, affirm, and are faithful to the subtle, mysterious relation between God and His Names and Attributes. As their duty is to know and speak about God, they enter into the true meaning of things and events and then convey it directly and sincerely to humanity.

Without Prophets, we could not have made any scientific progress. While those who adopt evolutionary approaches to explain historical events tend to attribute everything to chance and deterministic evolution, Prophets guided humanity in intellectual—and thus scientific—illumination. Thus, farmers traditionally accept Prophet Adam as their first master, tailors accept Prophet Enoch, ship makers and sailors accept Prophet Noah, and clock makers accept Prophet Joseph. Also, the Prophets' miracles marked the final

points in scientific and technological advances, and urged people to them.

Prophets guided people, through personal conduct and the heavenly religions and Scriptures they conveyed, to develop their inborn capacities and directed them toward the purpose of their creation. Had it not been for them, humanity (the fruit of the tree of creation) would have been left to decay. As humanity needs social justice as much as it needs private inner peace, Prophets taught the laws of life and established the rules for a perfect social life based upon justice.

The Qur'an explicitly declares:

We sent among every people a Messenger (with the command): "Serve God and avoid evil."
(16:36)

But many people gradually forgot these Divine teachings and fell into such errors as deifying the Prophets and others or engaging in idolatry. Even accepting that there must be a tremendous difference between the original and the current form of many religions, it is quite impossible to understand the conditions that caused Confucius to appear in China and Brahma and Buddha in India. It is equally difficult to guess what their original messages were and to what degree they have been corrupted.

If the Qur'an had not introduced Prophethood to us, we would not have an accurate idea of the character, lives, missions, and teachings of many Prophets. One accurate *hadith* says: "A Prophet's disciples will carry out his mission after his death, but some of his followers will later upset everything he established." This is a very important point. Many of the religions we now consider false turned to falsehood, superstition, and legend over time through the deliberate malice of their enemies (or the mistakes of their followers), despite their possible origin in the purest, Divine source.

To say that someone is a Prophet when he is not is unbelief, as is the case with refusing to believe in a true Prophet. We should consider what Buddhism or Brahmanism may have been in their true, original forms, as well as the doctrines attributed to Confucius or the practices and beliefs of Shamanism. Maybe they still have some remnants of what they originally were.

Many once-pure religions have been distorted and altered. Therefore, it is essential to accept the purity of their original foundation. The Qur'an says:

There never was a people without a warner having lived among them. (35:24)
We sent among every people a Messenger. (16:36)

These Revelations declare that God sent Messengers to each group of people. The Qur'an mentions the names of 28 Prophets, out of a total of 124,000. We do not know exactly when and where many of them lived. But we do not have to know such information, for:

We did in times past send Messengers before you; of them there are some whose stories We have related to you, and some whose stories We have not related to you. (40:78)

Recent studies in comparative religion, philosophy, and anthropology reveal that many widely separated communities share certain concepts and practices. Among these are moving from polytheism to monotheism and praying to the One God in times of hardship by raising their hands and asking something from Him. Many such phenomena indicate a singular source and a single teaching. If primitive tribes cut off from civilization and the influence of known Prophets have a sure understanding of His Oneness, though they may have little understanding of how to live according to that

belief, a Messenger must have been sent to them at some time in the past:

For every people there is a Messenger. When their Messenger comes, the matter is judged between them with justice, and they are not wronged. (10:47)

As pointed out above, whenever people fell into darkness after a Prophet, God sent another one to enlighten them again. This continued until the coming of the Last Prophet. The reason for sending Prophets Moses and Jesus required that Prophet Muhammad should be sent. As his message was for everyone, regardless of time or place, Prophethood ended with him.

Due to certain sociological and historical facts, which require a lengthy explanation, Prophet Muhammad was sent as “a mercy for all worlds” (21:107). For this reason, Muslims believe in all of the Prophets and make no distinction among them:

The Messenger believes in what has been sent onto him by his Lord, and so do the believers. They all believe in God and his angels, His Scriptures and His Messengers: “We make no distinction between any of His Messengers”—and they say: “We hear and obey. Grant us Your forgiveness, our Lord; to You is the journeying.” (2:285)

That is why Islam, revealed by God and conveyed to humanity by Prophet Muhammad, is universal and eternal.

Describing Prophethood and narrating the stories of all Prophets is beyond the scope of this book. By focusing on the Prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets, who told us about the other Prophets and Divine

Whenever people fell into darkness after a Prophet, God sent another one.

Scriptures and made our Lord known to us, we will make the other Prophets known and prove their Prophethood.

Belief in God, the source of happiness, and following the Last Prophet and Messenger of God are the keys to prosperity in both worlds. If we want to be saved from despair and all negative aspects of life and attain intellectual, spiritual, and material perfection, we must believe whole-heartedly that Muhammad is the Messenger of God and follow his guidance.

Prophet Muhammad, Peace and Blessings Be upon Him

The Hijaz, had not experienced any social evolution or attained any intellectual development of note.

If we were to imagine ourselves in the world of 1,400 years ago, we would find a completely different world. The opportunity to exchange ideas would be

scarce, and the means of communication limited and undeveloped. Darkness would hold sway, and only a faint glimmer of learning, hardly enough to illumine the horizon of human knowledge, would be visible. The people of that time had a narrow outlook, and their ideas of humanity and things were confined to their limited surroundings. Steeped in ignorance and superstition, their unbelief was so strong and widespread that they refused to consider anything as being lofty and sublime unless it appeared in the garb of the supernatural. They had developed such an inferiority complex that they could not imagine any person having a godly soul or a saintly disposition.

The Prophet's Homeland

In that benighted era, darkness lay heavier and thicker in one land than in any other. The neighboring coun-

tries of Persia, Byzantium, and Egypt possessed a glimmer of civilization and a faint light of learning, but the Arabian peninsula, isolated and cut off by vast oceans of sand, was culturally and intellectually one of the world's most backward areas. The Hijaz, birthplace of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, had not passed through even the limited development of neighboring regions, and had not experienced any social evolution or attained any intellectual development of note. Although their highly developed language could express the finest shades of meaning, a study of their literature reveals the limited extent of their knowledge. All of this shows their low cultural and civilizational standards, their deeply superstitious nature, their barbarous and ferocious customs, and their uncouth and degraded moral standards and conceptions.

It was a land without a government, for every tribe claimed sovereignty and considered itself independent. The only law recognized was that of the jungle. Robbery, arson, and the murder of innocent and weak people was the norm. Life, property, and honor were constantly at risk, and tribes were always at daggers drawn with each other. A trivial incident could engulf them in ferocious warfare, which sometimes developed into a conflagration that would engulf the whole country for decades. In *The Arab Civilization* Joseph Hell writes:

Being unlettered, he read no Jewish or Christian religious texts or had any appreciable relationship with them.

These struggles destroyed the sense of national unity and developed an incurable particularism; each tribe deeming itself self-sufficient and regarding the rest as its legitimate victims for murder, robbery and plunder.

Barely able to discriminate between pure and impure, lawful and unlawful, their concepts of morals, culture, and civilization were primitive and uncouth. Their life was wild and their behavior was barbaric. They reveled in adultery, gambling, and drinking. They stood naked before each other without shame, and women circumambulated the Ka'ba in the nude.

Their prestige called for female infanticide rather than having someone "inferior" become their son-in-law and eventual heir. They married their widowed stepmothers and knew nothing of the manners associated with eating, dressing, and cleanliness. Worshipers of stones, trees, idols, stars, and spirits, they had forgotten the teachings of earlier Prophets. They had an idea that Abraham and Ishmael were their forefathers, but almost all of these forefathers' religious knowledge and understanding of God had been lost.

Muhammad's Life before His Prophethood

Thus was Prophet Muhammad's homeland where he was born in 571. His father 'Abdullah died before he was born, and his mother Amina died when he was 6 years old. Consequently, he was deprived of whatever training and upbringing an Arab child of that time received. During his childhood, he tended flocks of sheep and goats with other Bedouin boys. As education never touched him, he remained completely unlettered and unschooled.

He was the embodiment of modesty in society that was immodest to the core.

The Prophet left the Arabian peninsula only twice. As a youth, he accompanied his uncle Abu

Talib on a trade mission to al-Sham (present-day Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan). The other time was when he led another trade mission to the same region for the widow Khadija, a wealthy Makkan

merchant 15 years his senior. They got married when he was 25, and lived happily together until she died more than 20 years later.

Being unlettered, he read no Jewish or Christian religious texts, or had he any appreciable relationship with them. Makka's ideas and customs were idolatrous and wholly untouched by Christian or Jewish religious thought. Even Makka's *hanifs*, those who followed some of Abraham's pure religion in an adulterated and unclear form and rejected idolatry, were not influenced by Judaism or Christianity. No Jewish or Christian thought is reflected in the surviving poetic heritage of these people. Had the Prophet made any effort to become acquainted with their thought, it would have been noticed.

Moreover, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, avoided the locally popular intellectual forms of poetry and rhetoric even before his Prophethood. History records no distinction that set him over others, except for his moral commitment, trustworthiness, honesty, truthfulness, and integrity. He did not lie, an assertion proven by the fact that not even his worst enemies ever called him a liar. He talked politely and never used obscene or abusive language. His charming personality and excellent manners captivated the hearts of those who met him. He always followed the principles of justice, altruism, and fair play with others, and never deceived anyone or broke his promises.

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was engaged in trade and commerce for years, but never entered into a dishonest transaction. Those who had business dealings with him had full confidence in his integrity. Everyone called him *al-Amin* (the Truthful and the Trustworthy). Even his enemies left their precious belongings with him for safe custody, and he scrupulously fulfilled their trust. He was the embodi-

ment of modesty in a society that was immodest to the core.

Born and raised among people who regarded drunkenness and gambling as virtues, he never drank alcohol or gambled. Surrounded by heartless people, his own heart overflowed with the milk of human kindness. He helped orphans, widows, and the poor, and was hospitable to travelers. Harming no one, he exposed himself to hardship for their sake. Avoiding tribal feuds, he was the foremost worker for reconciliation. He never bowed before any created thing or partook of offerings made to idols, even when he was a child, for he hated all worship devoted to that which was not God. In brief, his towering and radiant personality, when placed in the midst of such a benighted and dark environment, may be likened to a beacon of light illuminating a pitch-dark night, to a diamond shining among a heap of coal.

And What Was His Message?

Suddenly a remarkable change came over him. His heart, illuminated with Divine Light, now had the power for which he had yearned. He left the confinement of the cave to which he used to retire at regular intervals, went to his people, and addressed them in the following strain:

The idols that you worship are mere shams, so stop worshipping them. No person, star, tree, stone, or spirit deserves your worship. Do not bow your heads before them in worship. The entire universe belongs to God Almighty. He alone is the Creator, Nourisher, Sustainer, and thus the real Sovereign before Whom all should bow down and Who is worthy of your prayers and obedience. So worship Him alone and obey His commands.

The theft and plunder, murder and rapine, injustice and cruelty, and all the vices in which you indulge are sins in God's eyes. Leave your evil ways. Speak the truth. Be just. Do not kill anyone, for whoever kills a person unjustly is

like one who has killed all humanity, and whoever saves a person's life is like one who has saved all humanity (5:32). Do not rob anyone, but take your lawful share and give that which is due to others in a just manner.

Do not set up other deities with God, or you will be condemned and forsaken. If one or both of your parents reaches old age and lives with you, speak to them only with respect and, out of mercy, be humble with them. Give your relatives their due. Give to the needy and the traveler, and do not be wasteful. Do not kill your children because you fear poverty or for other reasons. Avoid adultery, for it is indecent and evil. Leave the property of orphans and the weak intact.

Fulfill the covenant, because you will be questioned about it. Do not cheat when you measure and weigh items. Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge, for your ears, eyes, and heart will be questioned about this. Do not walk around arrogantly, for you will never tear the Earth open or attain the mountains in height. Speak kind words to each other, for Satan uses strong words to cause strife. Do not turn your cheek in scorn and anger to others or walk with impudence in the land.

God does not love those who boast, so be modest in bearing and subdue your voice. Do not make fun of others, for they may be better than you. Do not find fault with each other or call each other by offensive nicknames. Avoid most suspicion, for some suspicion is a sin. Do not spy on or gossip about each other. Be staunch followers of justice and witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents and relatives, regardless if they are rich or poor. Do not deviate by following caprice. Be steadfast witnesses for God in equity, and do not let your hatred of others seduce you to be unjust toward them.

Restrain your rage and pardon the offences of others. Good and evil deeds are not alike, so repel the evil deed with a good one; thus both of you can overcome your enmity and become loyal friends. The recompense for an intentional evil is a similar evil; but whoever pardons and amends the evil-doer with kindness and love will be re-

warded by God. Avoid alcohol and games of chance, for God has forbidden them.

You are human beings, and all human beings are equal in God's eyes. No one is born with the slur of shame on his or her face or the mantle of honor around his or her neck. The only high and honored people are the God-conscious and pious, true in words and deeds. Distinctions of birth and glory of race are not criteria of greatness and honor.

On a day after you die, you will appear before a Supreme Court and account for all your deeds, none of which can be hidden. Your life's record will be an open book to God. Your fate will be determined by your good or bad actions. In the court of the True Judge – the Omniscient God – there can be no unfair recommendation or favoritism. You cannot bribe Him, and your pedigree or parentage will be ignored. True faith and good deeds alone will benefit you at that time. Those who have done them fully shall reside in the Heaven of eternal happiness, while those who did not shall reside in the fire of Hell. (This passage was for the most part edited and summarized from *Towards Understanding Islam* by al-Mawdudi, I.I.F.S.O., 1970, 59-60)

Muhammad as a Prophet and Messenger of God

For 40 years, Muhammad lived as an ordinary man among his people. He was not known as a statesman, preacher, or orator. No one had heard him impart wisdom and knowledge, or discuss principles of metaphysics, ethics, law, politics, economy, or sociology. He had no reputation as a soldier, nor was he known as a great general. He had said nothing about God, angels, revealed Books, early Prophets, bygone nations, the Day of Judgment, life after death, or Heaven and Hell. No doubt he had an excellent character and charming manners and was well-behaved, yet nothing marked him out as one who would accomplish something great and revolutionary. His acquaintances knew him as a sober, calm, gentle, and trustworthy citizen of good

nature. But when he left Hira cave with a new message, he was completely transformed.

When he began preaching, his people stood in awe and wonder, bedazzled by his wonderful eloquence and oratory skill. It was so impressive and captivating

“I want neither wealth nor power. God has commissioned me to warn humanity.”

that even his greatest enemies were afraid to listen to it, lest it penetrate their hearts or very beings and make them abandon their traditional religion and culture. It was so beyond comparison that no Arab poet, preacher, or orator, no matter how proficient skilled, could equal its beautiful language and splendid diction when he challenged them to do so. Although they collaborated, they could not produce even one line that could compare to those he recited.

Facing immediate and severe opposition, he confronted his opponents with a smile and remained undeterred by their criticism and coercion. When the people realized that their threats did not frighten this noble man and that the severest tribulations inflicted on him and his followers had no effect, they tried another tactic—but that too was destined to fail.

A deputation of the leading members of the Quraysh (his tribe) offered him a bribe to abandon his mission:

If you want wealth, we will amass for you as much as you wish; if you want honor and power, we will swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king; if you want beauty, you shall have the hand of the most beautiful maiden of your choice.

The terms were extremely tempting for any ordinary person, but they were of no significance in the Prophet’s eyes. His reply fell like a bomb upon the

deputation, who thought they had played their trump card:

I want neither wealth nor power. God has commissioned me to warn humanity. I deliver His message to you. If you accept it, you shall have felicity and joy in this life and eternal bliss in the life hereafter. If you reject it, God will decide between you and me.

On another occasion he said to his uncle, who was being pressured by the tribal leaders to persuade him to abandon his mission:

O uncle! Should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left so as to make me renounce this mission, I shall not do so. I will never give it up. Either it will please God to make it triumph or I shall perish in the attempt.

The faith, perseverance, and resolution with which he conducted his mission to its ultimate success is an eloquent proof of the supreme truth of his cause. Had there been the slightest doubt or uncertainty in his heart, he would never have been able to brave the storm that continued in all its fury for 23 long years.

The unlettered Prophet spoke with a learning and wisdom that no one had displayed before and none could show subsequently.

The unlettered Prophet spoke with a learning and wisdom that no one had displayed before and none could show subsequently. He expounded the intricate problems of metaphysics and theology; delivered speeches on why nations and empires rise and fall and supported his thesis with historical examples; taught ethical canons and principles of culture; and formulated such laws of social culture, economic organization, group conduct, and international relations that even eminent thinkers and scholars could

grasp their true wisdom only after life-long research and vast experience. Their beauties, indeed, unfold themselves progressively as humanity advances in theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

This silent and peace-loving merchant who had never handled a sword, who had no military training, and who had participated in only one battle (as a spectator!), suddenly turned into such a brave soldier that he never retreated in the fiercest battles, and became such a great general that he conquered Arabia in 9 years, this at a time of primitive weaponry and very poor means of communication. His military acumen and efficiency developed the military spirit to such a mighty level that he infused a motley crowd of Arabs with the training and discipline necessary to overthrow one of the two superpowers of his day—Sassanid Persia and the Eastern Roman Empire—and to utterly defeat the other. These Arabs became the masters of the greater part of the then-known world within a few decades.

This reserved and quiet man who, for 40 years, had given no indication of political interest or activity, suddenly appeared on the world stage as such a

Prophet Muhammad is the only person in which all excellent characteristics are blended into one personality.

great statesman that, without the aid of modern media or telecommunications, he united the scattered inhabitants of a 1.2 million square mile desert—a people who were warlike, ignorant, unruly, uncultured, and plunged in internecine tribal warfare—under one banner, law, religion, culture, civilization, and form of government. Sir William Muir, no friend of Islam, admits:

The first peculiarity, then, which attracts our attention, is the subdivision of the Arabs into innumerable bodies... each independent of the oth-

ers: restless and often at war amongst themselves; and even when united by blood or by interest, ever ready on some significant cause to separate and give way to an implacable hostility. Thus at the era of Islam the retrospect of Arabian history exhibits, as in the kaleidoscope, an ever-varying state of combination and repulsion, such as had hitherto rendered abortive any attempt at a general union... The problem had yet to be solved, by what force these tribes could be subdued or drawn to one common center; and it was solved by Muhammad. (Muir, *Life of Muhammad*, Osnabrück, Biblio, 1988)

He changed the modes of thought, habits, and morals of these people. He turned the uncouth into the cultured, the barbarous into the civilized, the evildoers and bad characters into pious, God-conscious, and righteous people. Their unruly and stiff-necked natures were transformed into models of obedience and submission to law and order. A nation that had produced no great figure worth the name for centuries gave birth, under his influence and guidance, to thousands of noble souls who went to far-off lands to preach and teach the principles of religion, morals, and civilization.

In the cavalcade of world history, this sublime figure towers high above all the great people and heroes of all nations. None of them possessed the degree of genius that would allow them to make a deep impression on more than one or two aspects of human life. Some are exponents of theories and ideas, but deficient in practical action, people of action who suffered from paucity of knowledge, or renowned only as statesmen; others were masters of strategy and maneuvering, totally focused on one aspect of social life so that others were overlooked, devoting their energies to ethical and spiritual verities, but ignoring economics and politics, or taking to economics and politics, while neglecting morals and spirituality.

In short, one comes across heroes who are adept and expert in one walk of life only. Prophet Muhammad was the only person in which all excellent characteristics are blended into one personality. He was a man of wisdom, a seer, and a living embodiment of his own teachings; he was a great statesman as well as a military genius; a legislator and a teacher of morals; a spiritual luminary as well as a religious guide.

His vision penetrated every aspect of life, and he adorned whatever he touched. His orders and commandments cover a vast field, from regulating international relations to such daily habits as eating, drinking, and cleanliness. On the foundations of his teaching, he established a civilization and a culture and produced such a fine equilibrium among the conflicting aspects of life that no flaw, deficiency, or incompleteness can be found therein. Can anyone point to another example of such a perfect personality?

He ruled his country, but was so selfless and modest that he remained very modest and sparing in his habits. He continued to live simple in his humble thatch-and-mud cottage, sleeping on a mattress, wearing coarse clothes, eating the simplest food, and sometimes experiencing the pangs of hunger. He spent whole nights standing in prayer before his Lord, helped the destitute and penniless, and worked like a laborer when necessary, never considering it to be beneath his dignity.

Even when he lay dying, he showed not the slightest taint of royal pomp or hauteur so enjoyed by the rich. Like an ordinary man, he sat and walked with people and shared their joys and sorrows. He mixed and mingled with crowds so easily and naturally that a stranger or an outsider found it hard to recognize him as his nation's leader and ruler. Once a Bedouin came and asked for Muhammad while he was serving his Companions. His answer enshrines an eternal principle:

“The master of the nation is the one who serves it”
(Daylami, *al-Firdaws*, 2:324).

This is the tribute of Lamartine, the French historian to the person of the Holy Prophet of Islam:

Never has a man set himself, voluntarily or involuntarily, a more sublime aim, since this aim was superhuman: to subvert superstitions which had been interposed between man and his Creator, to render God unto man and man unto God; to restore the rational and sacred idea of divinity amidst the chaos of the material and disfigured gods of idolatry then existing. Never has a man undertaken a work so far beyond human power with so feeble a means, for he had in the conception as well as in the execution of such a great design no other instrument than himself, and no other aid, except a handful of men living in a corner of desert. Finally, never has a man accomplished such a huge and lasting revolution in the world, because in less than two centuries after its appearance, Islam, in faith and arms, reigned over the whole of Arabia, and conquered in God's name Persia, Khorasan, Western India, Syria, Abyssinia, all the known continent of Northern Africa, numerous islands of the Mediterranean, Spain, and a part of Gaul.

If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man to Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws, and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislation, empires, peoples, and dynasties, but millions of men [and women] in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls. On the basis of a Book, every letter of which had become law, he created a spiritual nationality which blended together peoples of every tongue and of every race. He left to us as the indelible characteristic of this Muslim nationality, the hatred of false gods and the passion for the One and immaterial God. This

avenging patriotism against the profanation of Heaven formed the virtue of the followers of Muhammad: the conquest of one-third of the earth to his creed was his miracle. The idea of the unity of God proclaimed amidst the exhaustion of fabulous theogonies was in itself such a miracle that upon its utterance from his lips it destroyed all the ancient temples of idols and set on fire one-third of the world. His life, his meditations, his heroic revilings against the superstitions of his country, and his boldness in defying the furies of idolatry; his firmness in enduring them for thirteen years at Mecca, his acceptance of the role of public scorn and nearly becoming a victim of his fellow-countrymen: all these and, finally his incessant preaching, his wars against odds, his faith in his success and his superhuman security in misfortune, his forbearance in victory, his ambition which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayer, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death; all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction. It was his conviction which gave him the power to restore a creed. This creed was twofold, the unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is; the latter telling what God is not. Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial states and of one spiritual state, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask: Is there any man greater than he? (Lamartine, *Historie de la Turquie*, 2:26-27)

In spite of his greatness, the Prophet behaved as an ordinary man with all people. He sought no reward or profit to compensate him for his life-long struggles and endeavors, and left no property for his heirs, for he lived to serve his na-

“By God, I swear I have never seen a man so loved by his followers as Muhammad.”

tion. He did not ask that anything be set aside for him or his descendants, and forbade his progeny from receiving *zakat* so that future Muslims would not give all of their *zakat* to them.

He was deeply loved by his Companions, as evidenced by this historical episode:

A group from the Adal and al-Qarah tribes, who were apparently from the same ancestral stock as the Quraysh and who lived near Makka, came to the Prophet during the third year of the Islamic era and said: "Some of us have chosen Islam, so send a group of Muslims to instruct us what Islam means, teach us the Qur'an, and inform us of Islam's principles and laws."

The Messenger selected six Companions to go with them. Upon reaching the Hudhayl tribe's land, the group halted and the Companions settled down to rest. Suddenly, a group of Hudhayli tribesmen fell upon them like a thunderbolt with their swords drawn. Clearly, the mission either had been a ruse from the beginning or its members had changed their minds en route. At any rate, they sided with the attackers and sought to seize the six Muslims. As soon as the Companions were aware of what was happening, they grabbed their arms and got ready to defend themselves. Three were martyred, and the rest were tied up and taken to Makka, where they were to be delivered to the Quraysh.

Near Makka, 'Abdullah ibn Tariq managed to free his hand and reach for his sword. However, his captors saw what he was doing and stoned him to death. Zayd ibn al-Dathina and Hubayb ibn 'Adiy were carried to Makka, where they were exchanged for two Hudayli captives. Safwan ibn Umayya al-Qurayshi bought Zayd from the person to whom he had been sold so that he could avenge the blood of his father, who had been killed during the Battle of Badr. He took him outside Makka to kill him, and the Quraysh assembled to see what would happen.

Zayd came forward with a courageous gait and did not even tremble. Abu Sufyan, a spectator who wanted to use this chance to extract a statement of contrition and remorse or an avowal of hatred of the Prophet, stepped forward and said: "I adjure you by God, Zayd, do you not wish that Mu-

hammad was with us now in your place so that we might cut off his head, and that you were with your family?" "By God," said Zayd, "not only do I not wish that, I do not wish even a thorn should hurt his foot." Abu Sufyan, astonished, turned to those present and said: "By God, I swear I have never seen a man so loved by his followers as Muhammad."

After a while, Hubayb was taken outside Makka for execution. Requesting the assembled people to let him perform two *rak'at* of prayer, to which they agreed, he did so in all humility, respect, and absorption. Then he spoke to them: "I swear by God that if I did not think that you might think that I was trying to delay my death out of fear, I would have prolonged my prayer."

After condemning Hubayb to crucifixion, his sweet voice was heard, with a perfect spirituality that held everyone in its spell, entreating God with these words: "O God! We have delivered the message of Your Messenger, so inform him of what has been done to us, and tell him my wish of peace and blessings upon him." Meanwhile, God's Messenger was returning his peace, saying: "Upon you be God's peace and blessings, O Hubayb!"

The following account shows the indelible mark that God's Messenger has imprinted on people of every age:

One of Ibn Sina's students told Ibn Sina that his extraordinary understanding and intelligence would cause people to gather around him if he claimed prophethood. Ibn Sina said nothing. When they were travelling together during winter, Ibn Sina woke up one morning at dawn, woke his student, and asked him to fetch some water because he was thirsty. The student procrastinated and made excuses. However much Ibn Sina persisted, the student would not leave his warm bed. At that moment, the cry of the muezzin (caller to prayer) called out from the minaret: "God is the greatest. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God."

Ibn Sina considered this a good opportunity to answer his student, so he said:

"You, who averred that people would believe in me if I claimed to be a prophet, look

now and see how the command I just gave you, who have been my student for years and have benefited from my lessons, has not had the effect of making you leave your warm bed to fetch me some water. But this muezzin strictly obeys the 400-year-old command of the Prophet. He got up from his warm bed, as he does every morning together with hundreds of thousands of others, climbed up to this great height, and bore witness to God's Unity and His Prophet. Look and see how great the difference is!"

The Prophet's name has been pronounced five times a day together with that of God for 1,400 years all over the world.