

Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid JP Forgiveness and Reconciliation: An Islamic Perspective

Imam Dr Sajid
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Bismillah Hir Rahma Nir Rahim (I begin with name of God the Most Kind the Most Merciful). I greet you with the greetings of Islam (Assalamu Alaykum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakathu (May God's blessing and peace be with us all.)

I am honoured to be asked to speak to you on the important issue of “**Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Islam**”. From the outset I must say I am very grateful to Dr Rev'd Marcus Braybrooke for guiding me on many issues of Interfaith. I have only praise for Universal Peace Federation (UPF) for its good work over the years.

Part of our being human is that we make mistakes, no body is perfect. Sometime we make mistakes without deliberation and intention. But sometime we deliberately sin and do wrong to others. It is said “**to err is human and to forgive is divine**”. Both parts of this statement are very true. As human beings we are responsible, but we do also make mistakes and we are constantly in need of forgiveness.

The concept of forgiveness in the Holy Qur'an is expressed in three terms, (1) *'afw*, (2) *safhu*, and (3) *ghafara*

'Afw means to pardon, to excuse for a fault or an offense or a discourtesy, waiver of punishment and amnesty. Examples of usage in the Holy Qur'an are verses 42:40, 2:187 and 5:95.

Safhu means to turn away from a sin or a misdeed, ignore, etc. Examples of usage in the Holy Qur'an are verses 2:109, 15:85 and 43:89.

Ghafara or maghfira means to cover, to forgive and to remit. Examples of usage in the Holy Qur'an are verses 2:263, 42:37 and 43:43.

For more details see Lane's Lexicon² and Hans Wehr's dictionary³, among others.

The God, Allah is the ultimate power Who can forgive. Forgiveness means closing an account of offense against God or any of His creation. However, forgiveness must meet the criteria of sincerity. God, the All-Knowing, has the knowledge of everything including whatever a person thinks but does not express in words or deeds. An offense may be against (a) a person, (b) a group of persons or society, (c) other creation of God such as animals, plants, land, atmosphere, bodies of water and the life therein, and (d) God, Allah. Muslims understand that an offense against the creation of God is an offense against God.

To receive forgiveness from God there are three requirements:

- (1) Recognising the offense itself and its admission before God.
- (2) Making a commitment not to repeat the offense.
- (3) Asking for forgiveness from God.

If the above three conditions are met in sincerity, forgiveness from God is assured. Sincerity protects a person from repeating the same offense. If a person is sincere he will be helped by God not to repeat; in addition, God will change his punishment for the offense into a reward. If the offense was committed against another human being or society, a fourth condition is added and the order is changed.

- (1) Recognising the offense before those against whom offense was committed and before God.**
- (2) Committing oneself not to repeat the offense.**
- (3) Doing whatever needs to be done to rectify the offense (within reason) and asking pardon of the offended party.**
- (4) Asking God for forgiveness.**

Sometimes there is a party against whom wrong was done but this party cannot forgive, that is the creation of God other than human beings. Examples of offenses against God's creation are torturing animals, killing them without justification (food is a justification), defoliation and burning of trees, poisoning bodies of water thus killing life therein, polluting air, destroying land without justification and so on. Some of these activities may be justified, for example, hunting for food is justifiable but hunting for fun is not.

There are no particular words to say for asking forgiveness. However, Muslims are taught many phrases and words to keep repeating daily asking God's forgiveness. For example:

(1) ***Astaghfiru-Allah*** meaning, "I seek forgiveness from Allah."

(2) ***Subhanaka-Allah humma wa bi hamdika wa ash-hadu al la Ilaha illa Anta astaghfiruka wa atubu ilayk*** meaning "Glory be to You, Allah, and with You Praise (thanks) and I bear witness that there is no deity but You, I ask Your forgiveness and I return to You (in obedience). There are many other similar phrases.

Islam states two aspects of forgiveness:

- a) Allah's forgiveness;
- b) Human forgiveness.

We need both, because we do wrong in our relations to Allah as well as in our relations to each other.

Allah forgives:

"And vie with one another to attain to your Sustainer's forgiveness and to a paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, which has been readied for the God-conscious who spend [in His way] in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and hold in check their anger, and pardon their fellow men because God loves the doers of good; and who, when they have committed a shameful deed or have [otherwise] sinned against themselves, remember God and pray that their sins be forgiven - for who but God could forgive sins? And do not knowingly persist in doing whatever [wrong] they may have done. These it is who shall have as their reward forgiveness from their Sustainer, and gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide: and how excellent a reward for those who labor!" The Holy Qur'an 6 3:133-136

Say: "[Thus speak God] 'O you servants of Mine who have transgressed against your own selves! Despair not of God's mercy: behold, God forgives all sins - for, verily, He Alone is Much-Forgiving, a dispenser of grace!'" The Holy Qur'an 39:53

"God does not like any evil to be mentioned openly, unless it be by him who has been wronged [thereby]. And God is indeed All- Hearing, All-Knowing, whether you do good openly or in secret, or pardon others for evil [done unto you]: for, behold, God is indeed an absolver of sins, infinite in His power." The Holy Qur'an 4:148-149

Above verses are self-explanatory and need no explanation.

The Holy Qur'an teaches that there is only one error that Allah cannot forgive, the error of ascribing partners (or equals) to Allah. Islam ranks this error as a denial of monotheism, and therefore of the supreme nature of Allah himself. (*Shirk*).

God does not forgive idol worship (if maintained until death), and He forgives lesser offenses for whomever He wills. Anyone who idolizes any idol beside God has strayed far astray. (The Holy Qur'an 4:116)

But if he returns to God and pleads sincerely for forgiveness and abandons worshiping other than the one and only God, He will be forgiven.

Leadership must be forgiving:

"And it was by God's grace that thou [O Muhammad (Peace and Blessing of God be upon him- PBUH)] didst deal gently with thy followers: for if thou hadst been harsh and hard of heart, they would indeed have broken away from thee. Pardon them, then, and pray that they be forgiven. And take counsel with them in all matters of public concern; then, when thou hadst decided upon a course of action, place thy trust in God: for, verily God loves those who place their trust in Him." The Holy Qur'an 3:159

Explanation: Allah approved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for his leniency with his followers and taught him to pardon. In addition, Allah instructed the Prophet to counsel with the followers and once a decision in a given matter was taken, follow through with it and trust Allah for results.

Following the example of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Muslim leadership is required to adopt a similar course.

General teachings of forgiveness:

"If ye do good openly or keep it secret, or forgive evil, lo! Allah is forgiving, Powerful." The Holy Qur'an 4:149

"Keep to forgiveness, and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant. And if it should happen that a prompting from Satan stirs thee up [to anger], seek refuge with Allah: behold, He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." The Holy Qur'an 7:199-200

"And let not those who possess dignity and ease among you swear not to give to the near of kin and to the needy, and to refugees for the cause of Allah. Let them forgive and show indulgence. Yearn ye not that Allah may forgive you? Allah is

Forgiving, Merciful." The Holy Qur'an 24:22

"And who shun the more heinous sins and abominations; and who, whenever they are moved to anger, readily forgive." The Holy Qur'an 42:37

"But withal, if one is patient in adversity and forgives - this, behold, is indeed something to set one's heart upon." The Holy Qur'an 42:43

Explanation: These teachings are about doing good to others openly or secretly and forgiveness to those who may have done wrong. Sometimes a wrong may arouse the worst impulses of anger but it is from Satan; seek refuge with Allah from Satan. There may be a case where the one wronged is someone you have been helping but his wrong may arouse your anger to stop helping him; in such a case, Allah is exhorting to continue to help and forgive his transgression.

Allah's Forgiveness:

Allah the Almighty is the most Forgiving. There are many names of Allah given in the Holy Qur'an. Some of which are related to His mercy and forgiveness. Let me mention some of these names.

Al Ghafoor (The Most Forgiving):

The most Forgiving. This name occurs in the Holy Qur'an more than seventy times. There are other names from the same root. The meaning of the "ghafar" is to cover, to hide and from it comes the meaning "to excuse", "to pardon", "to remit" and "to forgive". Allah the Almighty does all these things. In the Holy Qur'an, it is mentioned that Allah does not forgive shirk (without repentance) but He may forgive every other sin for whomsoever He wills.

As Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Indeed! God does not forgive the sin of ascribing partners to Him, but He forgives anything else to whom He pleases, and whoever takes partners with God has gone astray into far error". The Holy Qur'an (4:116)

We must turn to Allah to seek His forgiveness.

Al-'Afuw:

This is another aspect of forgiveness. This name occurs in the Holy Qur'an five times. Literally the word 'Afuw means "to release" "to heal", "to restore", "to remit". It means that Allah "releases us from the burden of punishment due to our sins and mistakes", "to restore our honour after we have dishonoured ourselves by committing sins and making mistakes." In some verses in the Holy Qur'an both names: 'Afuw and Ghafoor occur together.

Al-Tawwab:

This name means The Acceptor of repentance. This name of Allah is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an about 11 times. Allah accepts the repentance of those who sincerely repent and turn to him for forgiveness. The word "Tawwab" gives the sense of "oft-returning" which means that Allah again and again accepts the repentance. We make sins and mistakes then we repent, He accepts our repentance. Then again we commit sins and make mistakes and when we repent, He again very kindly accepts us and gives us another chance. It is important to mention that we have to repent from our sins quickly and turn to God and ask for His forgiveness.

Al-Haleem:

The Clement. This name is mentioned fifteen times in the Holy Qur'an. It means that Allah The Almighty is not quick to judgment. He gives us time. He forebears and is patient with us till we return to Him.

Al-Rahman and al-Rahim:

The most Merciful and Compassionate. These names are the most frequently mentioned in the Qur'an. Al-Rahman is mentioned 57 times and Al-Raheem is mentioned 115 times. Al-Rahman indicates that Allah's mercy is abundant and plenty and Al-Raheem indicates that this is always the case with Allah.

The Holy Qur'an states that Allah is a Judge and He also punishes, but Allah is not bound to punish. The justice of Allah, according to the Holy Qur'an is that Allah does not and will not inflict undue punishment on any person. He will not ignore the good of any person. But if He wishes to forgive any sinner, He has full freedom to do that. His mercy is unlimited and infinite.

There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an and sayings of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) that emphasises the mercy and forgiveness of Allah. In one of the prayers that the Prophet taught, he said:

“O Allah, You are most Forgiving One, You love to forgive, so forgive me.” (Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah).

Thus we all need Allah's mercy and forgiveness all the time.

Human Forgiveness in Islam:

Just as it is important to believe in the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, it is also necessary to base all human relations on forgiveness. How should we expect Allah's forgiveness while we do not forgive those who do wrong to us?! Forgiving each other, even forgiving one's enemies is one of the most important Islamic teaching. In the Qur'an Allah has described the Believers as:

“Those who avoid major sins and acts of indecencies and when they are angry they forgive.” The Holy Qur'an (42:37)

Later in the same Surrah of the Holy Qur'an Allah says:

“The reward of the evil is the evil thereof, but whosoever forgives and makes amends, his reward is upon Allah.” The Holy Qur'an (42:40)

In another Surrahs in the Holy Qur'an “If you punish, then punish with the like of that wherewith you were afflicted. But if you endure patiently, indeed it is better for the patient. Endure you patiently. Your patience is not except through the help of Allah.” **The Holy Qur'an (16:126-127)**

In one Hadith Prophet Mohammad (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him-PBUH) said that Allah has commanded him with nine things. One of them he mentioned was “that I forgive those who do wrong to me.”

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) was the most forgiving person. He was ever ready to forgive his enemies. When he went to Ta'if to preach the message of Allah, its people mistreated him, abused him and hit him with stones. He left the city humiliated and wounded. When he took shelter under a tree, the angel of Allah visited him and told him that Allah sent him to destroy the people of Ta'if because of their sin of maltreating their Prophet. Mohammad (PBUH) prayed to Allah to save the people of Taif, because what they did was out of their ignorance.

Forgiveness:

Forgiveness comes from mercy, and for the fallen soul forgiveness is that aspect of mercy, which saves. God promises us forgiveness for our sins, but we must do our part in trying to make amends for our faults. If we are sincere and repentant, we have no reason to despair of Allah Subhaana wa ta'aala mercy.

Among the many Qur'anic verses, which relate to forgiveness some are the following:

Allah Subhaana wa ta'aala says:

Lo! God pardones not that partners should be ascribed unto Him. He pardones all save that to whom He will. The Holy Qur'an (al-Nisa' 4:116)

(The prophet Joseph said to his brothers): Have no fear this day! May God forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy. (The Holy Qur'an Yusuf 12:92)

Say: O My slaves who have been prodigal to their own hurt! Despair not of the mercy of God, Who forgives all sins. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Compassionate. (The Holy Qur'an al-Zumar 39:53)

He is the Forgiving, the Loving. (The Holy Qur'an al-Buruj 85:14)

Lo! There was a party of My slaves who said: Our Lord! We believe, therefore forgive us and have mercy on us for Thou art Best of all who show mercy. (The Holy Qur'an al-Mu'minun 23:109)

And (O Muhammad) say: My Lord! Forgive and have mercy, for Thou art Best of all who show mercy. (The Holy Qur'an al- Mu'minun 23:118)

(The prophet Moses said, upon slaying the Egyptian):

My Lord! Lo! I have wronged my soul, so forgive me. Then He forgave him. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Compassion- ate. (The Holy Qur'an al-Qasas 28:16)

And from the hadith of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace:

"If none of you had any sins for God to forgive for you, God would bring forth a people with sins that he would forgive for them." ~ Sahih Muslim no. 7140, Kitab al-Tawbah

The Prophet said, "A slave sinned and said, 'O God, forgive me my sin.' God, Blessed and Most High, said, 'My servant sinned and knew that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for them.' Then he sinned again and said, 'O Lord, forgive me my sin.' God, Blessed and Most High, said, 'My servant sinned and knew that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for them.' Then he sinned again and said, 'O Lord, forgive me my sin.' God, Blessed and Most High, said, 'My servant sinned and knew that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for them. Do what you wish, for I have forgiven you.'" ~ Sahih Muslim no. 7162, Kitab al-Tawbah

The Prophet said that God said, "Son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. Son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. Son of Adam, were you to come to Me with faults nearly equal- ing the earth and were you then to meet Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly equal- ing the earth." ~ Sunan al-Tirmidhi no. 3885, Kitab al-Da'awat

Mercy

From reciting the Quran to sitting at table, Muslims begin their actions by saying In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This sacred formula, whose author is God, is based firstly on the supreme name Allah, then on the two names al-Rahman and al-Rahim, both of which derive from rahmah, or mercy, a word which can also mean love, kindness, and compassion. God did not chose two names of wrath (ghadab) or even a balance be- tween mercy and wrath, because with God there is no balance between mercy and wrath. Even wrath, from a certain point of view, is a kind of mercy for the believer, because it can purify his soul and help make him ready to enter Paradise.

Among the Quranic verses, which relate to mercy and compassion are the following:

Allah Subhaana wa ta'aala says:

Say: Unto whom belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth? Say: Unto God. He hath prescribed for Himself mercy.(The Holy Qur'an al-An'am 6:12)

Your Lord hath prescribed for Himself mercy, that whoso of you doeth evil through ignorance and repents afterward thereof and doeth right, (for him) lo! He is Forgiving, Compassionate. (The Holy Qur'an al-An'am (6:54)

My mercy embraces all things, therefore I shall ordain it for those who ward off (evil) and pay the poor-due, and those who believe Our revelations. (The Holy Qur'an al-A'raf 7:156)

Lo! the mercy of Allah Subhaana wa ta'aala is nigh unto the virtuous. (The Holy Qur'an al-A'raf 7:56)

Announce, (O Muhammad) unto My slaves that verily I am the Forgiving, the Compassionate. (The Holy Qur'an al-Hijr 15:49)

Those who bear the Throne, and all who are round about it, hymn the praises of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe (saying): Our Lord! Thou comprehendest all things in mercy and knowledge,

therefore for give those who repent and follow Thy way. Ward off from them the punishment of hell. (The Holy Qur'an Ghafir 40:7)

And from the hadith of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace:

"God says, Great and Glorious is He, 'My mercy outstrips my wrath.'" ~ Sahih Muslim no. 7146, Kitab al-Tawbah

"God is not merciful to one who is not merciful to people." ~ Sahih al-Bukhari no. 7465, Kitab al-Tawhid ~ Sahih Muslim no. 6170, Kitab al-Fada'il

The Messenger of God kissed (his grandson) Hasan, the son of 'Ali, while Aqra' bin Habis al-Tamimi was sitting nearby. Aqra' said, "I have ten children and have not kissed any of them." The Messenger of God looked at him and said, "He who does not show mercy shall not be shown mercy."

~ Sahih al-Bukhari no. 6063, Kitab al-Adab

An old man came looking for the Prophet, and the people were slow in making way for him, so the Prophet said, "He who is unkind to the young and disrespectful to the old is not one of us." ~ Sunan al-Tirmidhi no. 2043, Kitab al-Birr wa'l-Silah

"The merciful are shown mercy by the Merciful. Be merciful to those on earth, and He who is in heaven will be merciful to you. Kinship ties are connecting branches from the Merciful. Whoever maintains them will be maintained by God, and whoever cuts them will be cut off by God."

~ Sunan al-Tirmidhi no. 2049, Kitab al-Birr wa'l-Silah 6

'Aisha (the wife of the Prophet) said, "The Messenger of God never struck anything with his hand, neither woman nor servant. He only did so while struggling in the path of God. Nor did he ever do harm to a thing such as to take vengeance upon its owner. He only did so when God's sacred bounds were violated, and would take vengeance for God, Great and Glorious is He." ~ Sahih Muslim no. 6195, Kitab al-Fada'il

"God made mercy one-hundred parts. He held back ninety-nine parts, and sent down one part to earth. It is from that part that creatures show mercy to each other, such that a mare will lift her hoof over her foal, fearing that she might harm him." ~ Sahih al-Bukhari no. 6066, Kitab al-Adab

"If the believer knew the punishment of God, he would never feel assured of His Garden, and if the unbeliever knew the mercy of God, he would never despair of His Garden." ~ Sahih Muslim no. 7155, Kitab al-Tawbah

Speak Mildly, Softly and Politely:

The Holy Qur'an Al-Baqara 2:83)

The Holy Qur'an

The Holy Prophet. Mohammad (PBUH) said:

"O Allah, guide these people, as they did not know what they were doing."

When he entered the city of Makkah after the victory, the Prophet -peace be upon him- had in front of him some of his staunchest enemies. Those who fought him for many years persecuted his followers and killed many of them. Now he had full power to pay back and punish them for their crimes and for what they did to him and to the Muslims. Instead the Prophet (PBUH) asked them:

"What do you think I shall do to you now?" They pleaded for mercy. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Today I shall say to you what Joseph (referring to Prophet Youssuf (PBUH) as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, (Youssuf Ali 12:92) Prophet Youssuf (PBUH) said to his brothers, 'No blame on you today. Go, you are all free.'" Soon they all came and embraced Islam at his hands. He forgave even Hind who had caused the murder of his uncle Hamza -may Allah be pleased with him. After killing him she had his body mutilated and chewed his liver. When she embraced Islam, the Prophet even forgave her.

A very striking example of forgiveness we find in the Holy Qur'an in reference to the most unfortunate event of "Slander of Sayeda Aicha" (one Prophet Mohammed's wives). Some hypocrites of Madinah tried unrightfully to put dirt on her noble character. One of the slanderers turned out to be Mistah, the cousin of 'Aicha's father Abu Bakr's. Abu Bakr - may Allah be pleased with him- used to give financial help to this young man. After he slandered his daughter, Abu Bakr vowed not to help him any more. But Allah reminded Abu Bakr and through him all the Believers saying:

"Let not those among you who are endowed with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen, those in want and those who migrated in the path of Allah. Let them forgive and overlook. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? Indeed Allah is oft-Forgiving, most Merciful." **The Holy Qur'an** (24:22)

Abu Bakr (May Allah be pleased with him) came out of his home and said, "Yes, indeed, I want Allah's forgiveness. He not only continued to help and support Mistah but he gave him more. Islam emphasises justice and punishment of the wrong doers, but it equally strongly emphasises mercy, kindness and love. Justice, law and order are necessary for the maintenance of a social order, but there is also a need for forgiveness to heal the wounds and to restore good relations between the people.

Thus must not forget that as much as we need Allah's forgiveness for our sins and mistakes, we must forgive those who do wrong to us.

Family situations:

"O You who believe! Behold, among your spouses and your children are enemies unto you: so beware of them! But if you pardon [their faults], and forbear, and forgive- then, behold, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." The Holy Qur'an 64:14

Explanation: In a family, some members may cause a lot of pain by their wrongdoing. Sometimes, a family member may cause others to do wrong and transgress which may cause one to commit a crime but it was not intentional. Allah is exhorting to adopt a forgiving attitude within the family.

Forgiveness often requires the **repentance** of those being forgiven. Depending on the type of wrong committed, forgiveness can come either directly from Allah, or from one's fellow man. In the case of divine forgiveness, the asking for divine forgiveness via repentance is important. In the case of human forgiveness, it is important to both forgive, and to be forgiven.

Peace and Forgiveness: In first step, Islam treats of peace in the *eschatological* sense, as the ultimate goal of human life, almost synonymous with salvation. A second way in which the Islam looks at peace might be called the *psychological* sense, as tranquility and peace of mind, an inner confidence born of faith that enables the religious believer to face adversity without anxiety or despair. Particularly when one is facing the approach of death, the believer can attain a peace of mind, which will enable the person to overcome spiritual turmoil and fear. A third aspect

of peace is *universal* peace. It reflects the widespread conviction of the time that humankind can sink no lower in criminality towards its own kind and expresses the hope for a time of peace and prosperity for all mankind. According to Sayings of our Prophet, the virtues of civilization will prevail, the face of the earth cleaned of filth, and universal peace be secured.

Islam commands that “one believer should not be vexed with another believer for more than three days,” and that so long as there is no reconciliation, both sides perpetually suffer the torments of fear and revenge.” Islam advises us like that: **‘Look at the defect in your own soul that you do not see or do not wish to see. Deduct a share for that. As for the small share which then remains, if you respond with forgiveness, pardon, and magnanimity, in such a way as to conquer your enemy swiftly and safely, then you will have escaped all sin and harm.’** Thus, self-awareness should lead to repentance, repentance to forgiveness, forgiveness to reconciliation and the seeds for a lasting peace are laid.

The “fundamental norm” in Islam that is explained the Qur’anic verse: ‘No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another’ which he used in its meaning of “No one is answerable for another’s faults or errors’. One of the most basic principles of “some human politics”, was “Individuals may be sacrificed for the good of the nation and society. Everything may be sacrificed for the sake of the country.” This “fundamental human law” had resulted in appalling crimes throughout history, including the two World Wars this century, which had “overturned a thousand years of human progress”, and had given the license for the annihilation of ninety innocents on account of ten criminals. Whereas the verse taught the principle that no one was responsible for another’s crimes. And no innocent person could be sacrificed without his consent, even for the whole of humanity. It establishes true justice for mankind.

We must not forget what the Holy Qur’an states: *"Namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another"* (The Holy Qur’an 6: 164). There is a universal rule of law: No one can be punished without evidence. Another important rule: Freedom from guilt is principal, i.e. everybody is innocent unless the opposite is proved. The Holy Prophet of Islam is reported to have said, *"A believer remains within the scope of his religion as long as he doesn't kill another person illegally."*

Allah (SWT), who named Himself **Ar-Rahman** (The Beneficent) and **Ar-Rahim** (The Merciful) is also **Al-Ghafoor** (The Forgiving). His Mercy overtakes His punishment and anger. He is more merciful to His creations than a mother can be to her infants. He created “man with weakness”; thus He knows and we should know that “to err is human,” and “no one is perfect.”

Iblis (Satan), the cursed one, out of envy to Adam, has promised to himself “to attack children of Adam on their way to their journey toward God, so that those who fall prey to his attack will also have the same fate as himself (I will take you down with me!).

So he (satan) says, “I will attack men from the front, behind and sides.” (**The Holy Qur’an 7:17**)

This means he will disguise himself as our friend, as our opponent, and side distractions of the world. He will then make us do wrong by presenting evil as good (poison candy in a nice wrapper), making us angry, jealous, envious, just “follow-the-leader” type, and we wrong ourselves and fall prey to his temptation.

Iblis and his followers have a feast of joy and laugh at mans foolishness, until the man realizes his mistakes, repents and asks for forgiveness and he is forgiven, and then Iblis cries again.

Giving up Hope of the Mercy of Allah is a crime in itself:

“Say: O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God: for God forgives all sins (except shirk): for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (**The Holy Qur’an 39:53**)

“And it is He who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons the evil deed and knows what you do.” (**The Holy Qur’an 42:25**)

In order for forgiveness to be accepted, these conditions should be met

(1) The crime is committed out of ignorance, not with the intention that, “Let us go ahead and commit this crime as Allah is forgiving, so He will forgive us.”

- (2) Quickly turn into shame and repentance after committing a crime out of ignorance
- (3) After asking for forgiveness, make a promise or pledge to “mend his ways”, and to stick to his promise.

Let us examine verses of the Holy Quran.

“...if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented and amended (your conduct), lo! Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (The Holy Qur’an 6:54)

“Forgiveness is only incumbent on Allah towards those who do evil out of ignorance and then turn quickly (in repentance) to Allah. Toward them will Allah turn in mercy; for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.” (The Holy Qur’an 4:17)

“Forgiveness is not for those who do ill until death faces one of them, who then says, “Lo! I repent now, nor for those who die as disbelievers, for such we have prepared a painful doom.” (The Holy Qur’an 4:17)

Hadith Qudsi: Allah, the Almighty, has said:

O Son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O Son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O Son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins as great as the earth, and were you then to face Me ascribing no partners to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.

Hadith is like this. “When Allah accepts repentance and forgives His servant, then recording angels erase their records, organs lose their memories, and earth removes its stains of evidence so that when that person appears before Allah, there is no one to be a witness against him” Subhan Allah.

How to ask for forgiveness when Adam and Eve realized they had done wrong but did not know how to ask for forgiveness:

Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of forgiveness, and his Lord turned toward him, for He is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful. (The Holy Qur’an 2:37)

What were those words taught to Adam?

They said, “Our Lord, we have wronged our souls and if you forgive us not, and bestow not upon us your mercy, we shall be losers. (The Holy Qur’an 7:23)

How did the Prophet Muhammad (AS) teach Aisha (RA) to ask for forgiveness in Ramadan?

O my Lord, forgive me, because you love to forgive, thus forgive me, O you Merciful!

Remember, asking for forgiveness is not just for our sins, but also for our needs as well.

And I have said! Seek forgiveness from your Lord. Lo! He is oft-forgiving (if you ask for forgiveness). He will give you plenty of rain, He will give you wealth and sons, and assign you Heaven and Rivers in the Heaven. (The Holy Qur’an Surah Nuh:10-12)

Thus after repenting and asking for forgiveness, we must mend our ways and not go back to Kufr and fall prey to the tactics of Satan (Iblis) again. While we expect Allah to be kind and merciful and forgive our major and minor sins, we are unforgiving towards our fellow human beings!

God does not forgive idol worship (if maintained until death), and He forgives lesser offenses for whomever He wills. Anyone who idolizes any idol beside God has strayed far astray. 16. (The Holy Qur’an 4:116)

But if he returns to God and pleads sincerely for forgiveness and abandons worshipping other than the one and only God, He will be forgiven. Whenever possible, the Qur'an makes it clear that it is better to forgive another than to attack another. The Qur'an describes the believers (**Muslims**) as those who, **They avoid gross sins and vice, and when angered they forgive. (The Holy Qur'an 42:37) and says that Although the just requital for an injustice is an equivalent retribution, those who pardon and maintain righteousness are rewarded by GOD. He does not love the unjust. 17. (The Holy Qur'an 42:40).**

Moses son of Imran said, "My Lord, who is the greatest of Thy servants in Thy estimation?" and received the reply, "The one who forgives when he is in a position of power." **11. Islam. Hadith of Baihaqi**

Better and more rewarding is God's reward to those who believe and put their trust in Him: who avoid gross sins and indecencies and, when angered, are willing to forgive... Let evil be rewarded by like evil, but he who forgives and seeks reconciliation shall be rewarded by God. He does not love the wrongdoers.... True constancy lies in forgiveness and patient forbearance. **12. Islam. Qur'an 42.36-43**

More Quotes from the Holy Qur'an:

- *"Keep to forgiveness, and enjoin kindness."* The Holy Qur'an 7:199-200
- *"But if you endure patiently (and do not punish), indeed it is better for the patient. Endure you patiently."* The Holy Qur'an 16:126-127
- *"But withal, if one is patient in adversity and forgives — this, behold, is indeed something to set one's heart upon."* The Holy Qur'an 42:43
- *"Let them (the worthy) forgive and show indulgence. Yearn ye not that Allah may forgive you? Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."* The Holy Qur'an 24:22
- *"There is no compulsion in religion."* The Holy Qur'an 2:256 (And thus, it can be reasoned, no need to hold grievances or unforgiveness, believing these to be amongst one's religious obligations.)

If you efface and overlook and forgive, then lo! God is forgiving, merciful. (**18. Islam. The Holy Qur'an 64.14**)

Some things that forgiveness is NOT:

Forgiveness does not mean - tolerating wrong actions

- forgetting what happened

- excusing the one who has done wrong

- lessening the evil of the wrong action

- surrendering our right to justice

Appendix One

Political rationale of the Holy Prophet's external relations (Releasing the prisoners of Badr, forgiveness of Meccans after victory at Makkah Al Mukkaramah)

(Abridged from “Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Methodology and Thought” by AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman, 2nd edition reprint, The International Institute of Islamic Thought, Herndon, Virginia, USA, 1993, pp. 102-108.)

To understand the political rationale of the Prophet’s external policies, we have to examine four basic issues, frequently referred to but misread by traditionalists, which clearly point out the superior political, rather than the purely legalistic, rationale of the Prophet in his conduct of foreign affairs. These are:

1. The prisoners of war captured during the battle of Badr.
2. Lenient policies toward the Quraysh, the archenemies of the early Muslims.
3. The continued respect and tolerance shown to the People of the Book.

In this lecture, we will cover the issues from the book *Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Methodology and Thought* by AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman, 2nd edition reprint, The International Institute of Islamic Thought, Herndon, Virginia, USA, 1993, pp. p.99-115.

1. Prisoners of War from the Battle of Badr

The battle of Badr took place between the Muslims and the tribe of Quraysh in the 2nd year of Hijra. Only two out of about seventy prisoners of war were executed; the remainder were set free upon their paying various amounts of ransom. The battle of Badr was the first major armed confrontation between the Muslims and the Quraysh and other Arab and Jewish tribes of Arabia. This battle came after twelve years of pressure and severe persecution against the Muslims, many of whom were forced to flee, first to Abyssinia and then to Madinah.

While the Quraysh tried to persuade the people of Madinah to expel the Prophet and his Quraysh followers, the Prophet began to establish and consolidate the Muslim force for the inevitable confrontation. He made an honorable peace arrangement (the Madinah Pact) between the Muslims and the Jewish tribes of Madinah, established a brotherhood between the *muhajirun* and the *Ansar*, and personally sent expeditions to the areas Madinah to seek support and establish peace. Ibn Jahsh’s expedition of surveillance ended with the first attack by Muslims against a Quraysh caravan. The importance of this expedition is that it led to the march of the Quraysh army toward Madinah and then to the battle of Badr. The following Quranic verses were revealed in relation of this occasion:

“It is not for any Prophet to have prisoners until he has thoroughly subdued the land” (8:67)

Legalism leads Muslim writers to apology for this verse by arguing the contrast with another verse which reads as follows:

“Therefore, when you meet the unbelievers [in battle], smite at their necks; at length, when you have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly on them; thereafter [is the time for] either generosity or ransom until the burden of war may be lifted.” (47:4)

The argument of these writers is that the first verse is “not a permanent legislation” or ruling. It is the 2nd verse that is the permanent and establish rule for deciding the fate of prisoners of war. The first is only to blame Muslims for having taken prisoners and point out that the “real” will of God is not to take prisoners of war.

This is the modern way of apply the antiquated and static technique of abrogation. Contemporary writers often take a liberal approach by considering the release of prisoners of war as a safe and sound policy, and dismissing the verse of blame (for not killing all the prisoners of war captured at Badr) as something temporary and pertaining only to the period of establishment of the early Muslim state. The other way in which modern writers look at the issue is by rationalizing it into a legal case against war criminals rather than mere prisoners of war.

These writers seem to overlook the significance of the circumstances in directing punitive measures against adversaries of the Muslims. It is clear that the first verse was revealed at a time of extreme pressure on Muslims whereas a close examination of the second verse shows that Muslim victory was foreseen.

In order that we may understand the meaning and significance of actions, policies, and pronouncement related to the early period of Madinah and the circumstances that lead to Badr and resulted from it, we must take a closer look at those part of *Surah al-Anfal* which were revealed in relation to the battle of Badr.

Interestingly enough, some verses advising the Prophet to take extreme measures in order to protect the Muslim community were inserted (on the Prophet's orders) in *Surat al-Anfal* instead of *Surat al-Ahzab*. The latter, it should be realized, refers explicitly to the battle of the Ditch and the subsequent battle of the Banu Qurayzah, but in the contest of a Muslim victory. This shows that *Surat al-Anfal* deals with the pressures facing Muslims in early Madinah only, and is meant to guide Muslims when they are faced with similar circumstances.

Surat al-Anfal reveals to the reader the fears of the Muslims due to their lack of manpower, their need for the employment of psychological warfare, and the free hand of the Prophet to employ all suitable actions to counter the overwhelmingly superior enemy forces. This Surah also illustrates the Muslim call for co-existence and reconciliation on the condition that the persecution of Muslims and hostility against their religion cease.

The verses concerning the prisoners of war taken at the battle of Badr specifically reveal the employment of a threat of extreme punitive action against the enemy on the battle field as a restraining device of psychological warfare. The psychological use of a threat in this way explains why the threat was actually carried out at Badr. The killing of prisoners of war was an extremely rare exception throughout the life of the Prophet. Thus, it is clear that the verses were to serve political rather than legal ends.

2. Quraysh: Honour for the Vanquished

After Khaybar, the Prophet finally put an end to the hostile Jewish power in Madinah and the surrounding areas by stopping their valuable political and financial aid to the anxious, disabled, and exhausted Quraysh.

With the failure of the Quraysh to live up to the peace agreement between themselves and the Prophet, and after they committed a massacre in Makkah itself when their allies (the Banu Bakr) fell upon the Khuza'ah, the Prophet took the opportunity to carry out a surprise master stroke against Makkah. While his psychological warfare succeeded in causing Makkah and the Quraysh to surrender, he ordered no military reprisals, no destruction, and no punishment, even after all the bitter memories and the long nightmare of persecution of Muslims at the hands of the Quraysh. On the contrary, the Prophet took all measures to ensure the safety of Makkah and its inhabitants. He did everything in his power to win their hearts and gain their support. He was now master of Arabia and found it possible and fruitful to follow a policy of leniency and far-reaching generosity toward the Quraysh and other tribes, such as the Hawazin of Taif. The decision also had clear political motives for the Muslims were now strong and secure and, moreover, new plans were already taking shape. After Khaybar, the Prophet realized the inevitability of armed conflict with the great powers of Byzantium and Persia when the first bloody conflict had materialized at Mu'tah between the Muslims and Roman troops. With Arabia and the dominant Quraysh tribe on his side, the Prophet was able to turn north toward the stronghold of Byzantium in northern Arabia. These involvements against northern neighbors also had the advantage of maintaining the cohesion and enthusiasm of the Arab tribes. Armed conflict was inevitable, regardless of any academic argument about whether the new Muslim state should expand.

Upon returning to Madinah from the peaceful conquest of Makkah, the Prophet, in response to the hostile Roman attitude and actions toward the Muslims, led the largest Muslim army of his time northward to Tabuk on the borders of Palestine. This was the last time he led his army before his death. Usamah's expedition was the last Muslim expedition ordered out before he died. Although it was ready before the Prophet's death, it moved toward its destination in the north only upon renewed orders from the newly appointed *khalifah*. Later events proved the political wisdom of the prophet in consolidation the Muslims' power in Arabia before getting involved in armed conflict with the two hostile empires bordering on the north.

3. Freedom of Religion and Belief

The freedom of religion and belief is still an important source of confusion and contradiction in contemporary Muslim political thought. Here, too, the traditional approach contributes to the atmosphere of fear and suspicion between Muslim and non-Muslim peoples because it minimizes communication and makes interaction and cooperation more difficult. The traditional position stems from the classical interpretation of the early sources on the issues of apostasy (*riddah*), the historical case of the forced Islamization of pagan Arabs, and the imposition of the poll tax (*jizyah*) on non-Muslims. Once more, these issues reveal the traditional attitude to be an obstacle to introducing a constructive

Islamic approach to relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims in the world today, and from within a modern Islamic framework in the field of international relations.

Muslim reformists and modernists such as 'Abduh, Rida 'Azzam, al Sa'idi and many others made strenuous efforts to resolve this problem, but it is still not conceptually clear. Apart from other factors, the issue of freedom of belief in Muslim societies is very much in need of unambiguous articulation. For Muslim societies, the issue is not an internal one alone, for it touches on an important ideological aspect of their relationship with other states and peoples. Clarification is essential if Muslim society is to be a truly open one in which civil rights are guaranteed and made available to all its members in a reciprocal relationship between rights and duties, and along pluralistic lines free from religious and sectarian biases. Loyalty and commitment to the welfare of all people and their different systems of law is the only guarantee for the sincere exercise of rights and duties by individual and groups. Freedom of ideology and religion assisted by peaceful and orderly and orderly means of practice and expression, is necessary for healthy, stable, expanding, and progressive societies.

The classical issue of *jizyah* and the People of the Book are discussed in previous lectures and Chapter 2 of this book. We would like to emphasize here that the overall Islamic framework starts ideologically from a genuine concern for one's fellow man. All Muslims, particularly intellectuals, need to focus on this basic emphasis. The fundamental Islamic attitude concerning relations among human beings is expressed in the Quran and Sunnah in terms of love (*tawadduhum*), help (*tuhsinu*), gentleness (*Allati hiya ahsan*), and protection (*dhimmah*). This attitudes, however, should not be confused with situations of confrontation, particularly that of the historical confrontation faced by the early Muslims in Arabia. It was the prophet himself who drew up the honorable agreement of *jizyah* with the friendly Christian tribes of Najran and before that the Madinah Pact with the Jews tribes of Madinah and it was the prophet who waged a war of life and death against some of the same Jewish tribes who sought the destruction of Muslim community. These confrontations were situational and tactical and do not destroy the basis of Islamic ideology. Quranic reference and the detailed accounts of the Sunnah and the *sirah* are aids in revealing the realistic, rational approach of Islam. These details are matters of historical record that signify the pragmatic Islamic policies undertaken by the Prophet in order to secure the safety and success of the Muslim nations.

The issue of all-out war against the pagan Arab tribes unless they turn to Islam can not be understood as ideological oppression. This decision came after the establishment of the Muslim state at Madinah and after the Muslim had undergone about twenty-two years of persecution and war. It is not acceptable to say, as do the traditionalists, that the Prophet was obligated to force them to accept Islam, because the verses concerning the payment of *jizyah* by the People of the Book had not been revealed at the time of Prophet gave the order to force the Arab Bedouins to convert to Islam. In fact, the Prophet never tried at any time to convert the Jews tribes of Madinah or the Arab Christians of Najran by force. The forced Islamization was a decision, after the experience of about 20 years, to protect the human rights of Muslims and Arab peoples alike. The Islamization of the wild Bedouin tribes of the Arabian Peninsula was to provide them with the framework for a structured social system and orderly inter-tribal interaction. The change proved to be sincere, responsible, correct, and in the best interest of the Arab, specially defending their human rights. Contrary to the cultural legacy of other tribal people such as the Mongolians and Germans, the primitive Arab tribes, winning to their exposure to the discipline and rehabilitating effects of Islam, became the bearer of culture and the builders of civilization. The Arabs, along with other Muslim peoples, establish the greatest human civilization in the human history up to that time and contributed a great deal to the continuity and growth of human culture. Allah says in 4:137, 9:10-11, 49:17, 3:103:

"Those who believe, then reject faith, and then believe [again] and [again] reject faith and go on increasing in unbelief, Allah will not forgive them, nor guide them on the way" (4:137)

"And they observe toward the believers neither pact nor honor. These are the transgressor. And if they respect and establish worship and pay *Zakah*, then they are your brothers in religion. We detail Our revelations for a people who have knowledge." (9:10-11)

"They [the desert Arabs] impress on you as a favor that they have embraced Islam. Say, 'Count not your Islam as a favor to me: Ney, God has conferred a favor upon you that He has guided you to the faith'." (49:17)

"And holdfast altogether by the rope which Allah [stressed out to you], and be not divided among yourselves: and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you; for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace you became brothers." (3:103)

If forced conversation were simply an exercise to show superiority, or denial of the right of religions freedom, the Prophet had more reason and time to practice this against the Jewish tribes of Madinah; however, he never attempted that policy either before or after issuing his orders regarding the Islamization of the Arab tribes. As we mentioned in chapter 2, the Quranic terminology is revealing in this respect thus we can see that the case of the Islamization of the Bedouin pagan tribes of the peninsula was a case of establishing a necessary civilized framework for human interacting based on human maturity and dignity. Properly understood it does not destroy but rather reinforced the concept of ideological tolerance and real concern for basic human rights proper for humanity, which is an integral part of the responsibility of the Khalifah.

Appendix Two

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION in World Scriptures

<http://www.unification.net/ws/theme142.htm#11%2311>

The scriptures advocate a large-hearted attitude of forgiveness and tolerance of others' mistakes, even when they cause offense or injury. Forgiveness is far preferable to holding a grudge, which would only fester and poison the spirit. It is preferable to exacting revenge--see *Love Your Enemy*, pp. 999-1002. Furthermore, we are advised to take responsibility for the grudges and injuries which others feel towards us. This is the first of several sections which deal with overcoming disputes, enmity, grudges, and prejudices in personal relationships.

Subvert anger by forgiveness. 1. *Jainism. Samanasuttam 136*

The best deed of a great man is to forgive and forget. 2. *Islam (Shiite). Nahjul Balagha, Saying 201*

Where there is forgiveness, there is God Himself. 3. *Sikhism. Adi Granth, Shalok, Kabir, p. 1372*

If you efface and overlook and forgive, then lo! God is forgiving, merciful. 4. *Islam. Qur'an 64.14*

The superior man tends to forgive wrongs and deals leniently with crimes. 5. *Confucianism. I Ching 40: Release*

If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 6. *Christianity. Matthew 5.23-24*

The Day of Atonement atones for sins against God, not for sins against man, unless the injured person has been appeased. 7. *Judaism. Mishnah, Yoma 8.9*

Show endurance in humiliation and bear no grudge. 8. *Taoism. Treatise on Response and Retribution*

You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. 09. *Judaism and Christianity. Leviticus 19.18*

Shalok, Kabir: On tolerance of the ill-behaved, see *Tattvarthasutra* 7.11, p. 827. *Yoma* 8.9 and *Matthew* 5.23-24: Not only will God not accept the offering of a hypocrite whose piety is a mask for robbery and injury--see *Qur'an* 2.264, p. 428--he also will not accept our offering if another person has a grievance against us, though we might think our actions were justified. Therefore we should take responsibility for others' grievances against us, and avoid all temptations to self-righteousness. *Treatise on Response and Retribution*: Cf. *Analects* 14.11, p. 859.

Who takes vengeance or bears a grudge acts like one who, having cut one hand while handling a knife, avenges himself by stabbing the other hand. 10. *Judaism. Jerusalem Talmud, Nedarim 9.4*

Moses son of Imran said, "My Lord, who is the greatest of Thy servants in Thy estimation?" and received the reply, "The one who forgives when he is in a position of power." 11. *Islam. Hadith of Baihaqi*

Better and more rewarding is God's reward to those who believe and put their trust in Him: who avoid gross sins and indecencies and, when angered, are willing to forgive... Let evil be rewarded by like evil, but he who forgives and seeks reconciliation shall be rewarded by God. He does not love the wrongdoers.... True constancy lies in forgiveness and patient forbearance. 12.Islam. Qur'an 42.36-43

In reconciling a great injury, Some injury is sure to remain. How can this be good? Therefore the sage holds the left-hand tally [obligation] of a contract; He does not blame others. The person of virtue attends to the obligation; The person without virtue attends to the exactions. 13.Taoism. Tao Te Ching 79

Jerusalem Talmud, Nedarim 9.4: Cf. Vachana 248, p. 793; Digha Nikaya i.3, p. 793. Hadith of Baihaqi: Muhammad attributes this teaching to Moses. Qur'an 42.36-43: Vv. 36-37, 40, 43. The Qur'an exalts forgiveness as the way in which the best of people respond to being wronged, yet as a concession to human weakness, it allows that to take revenge is not a sin--see Qur'an 7.33, p. 415. Muhammad in the traditions consistently praises those who would forgive rather than take revenge. On Muhammad's own forgiving nature, see Hadith, p. 569. Ali likewise prohibited his followers from taking revenge for his murder; see Nahjul Balagha, Letter 47, p. 415. Cf. Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi 32, p. 858. Tao Te Ching 79: Cf. Matthew 7.1-5, p. 852; Dhammapada 252-53, p. 852, and related passages on not judging others before correcting oneself.

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."

"Therefore the kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; and as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." 14.Christianity. Matthew 18.21-35

When Jesus was crucified, Roman soldiers pierced him. And Jesus prayed for his enemies: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." [Luke 23:34] Even at the moment of death on the cross, Jesus was so earnest in forgiving. His very last act was motivated by his love for his enemies. He was the supreme form of giving--a paragon of love. The example of Jesus Christ is the absolute standard for all mankind. Just imagine an entire nation composed of Jesus-like men. What would you call it? The Kingdom of Heaven on earth--it could be nothing less. 15.Unification Church. Sun Myung Moon, 10-20-73

Matthew 18.21-35: Cf. The Parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15.11-32, pp. 443f. Sun Myung Moon, 10-20-73: On Jesus' and his disciples' attitude of forgiveness even at their deaths, see Luke 23.34, p. 522; Acts 7.60, pp. 768f. Cf. Sun Myung Moon, 2-21-80, p. 856.

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