

believer out of a staunch disbeliever, a scholar out of an ignorant person - if He so wills. And if He so wills, He can let a believer turn into a disbeliever or a rustic into a scholar. He brought Ibrāhīm out of an idol-worshipper. He let the son of Prophet Nūḥ remain an infidel. Strange but true, the son of an 'ālim (scholar) can remain illiterate and the son of someone illiterate can become an 'ālim.

A discerning reader will not fail to notice the eloquent order in which Allah's most perfect power that reigns and runs the universe from the cosmos to the soul of man has been demonstrated so effectively.

### The special merit of this verse:

Imām al-Baghawī reports a *ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he said: It is Allah's promise that anyone who recites, after every Ṣalāh, the Sūrah al-Fatiḥah, Āyah al-Kursī, two verses of 'Āl-'Imrān, that is رَبِّهِمْ مَالِكُ الْمَلِكِ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ (2:18) and the present verse from بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (26-27), He will make his abode in Paradise, and have him placed in the Sacred Enclosure, and bless him with His mercy seventy times every day, and fulfil seventy of his needs, and protect him against every envier and enemy and make him prevail over them.

### Verses 28 - 30

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ نَفْسَهُ وَيُحَذِّرْكُمْ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ إِنْ تَخَفُوا مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ أَوْ تُبْدُوهُ يُعَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ وَيَعْلَمَ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحَضَّرًا شَيْئًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدَّلُو أَنْ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهَا أَمَدًا ۗ بَعِيدًا ۗ وَيُحَذِّرْكُمْ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٣٠﴾

The believers must not take the disbelievers as friends instead of the believers. And whoever does that has no relation with Allah whatsoever, unless you guard

yourselves against an apprehension from them. And Allah warns you of Himself and to Allah is the return. [28] Say: "Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah will know it." And He knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is powerful over everything. [29] On the day, when everybody shall find brought before him whatever good he did and whatever evil he did, he will wish that there were a long distance between him and that (day). And Allah warns you of Himself. And Allah is compassionate to (His) servants. [30]

### Commentary

In these verses, Muslims have been instructed not to take disbelievers as their friends. Those who act against this instruction have been sternly warned: Those who take them as friends will find that their bond of love and friendship with Allah has been cut off. Any emotionally involved friendship that comes from the heart is absolutely forbidden (*Ḥaram*). However, a formal friendship at the level of mutual dealings is, no doubt, permissible; but, that too is not favoured if unnecessary.

Verses dealing with this subject have appeared at many places in the Holy Qur'an with varying shades of meaning. It was said in Sūrah al-Mumtahinah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ

O those who believe, do not take My enemy and your enemy as friends having love for them. (60:1)

Then, towards the end it was said:

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْهُ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

And whoever from among you does this he has gone astray from the right path. (60:1)

Elsewhere it was said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ

O those who believe, do not take Jews or Christians as friends (for) they are friends among themselves. And whoever has friendship with them, he is one of them. (5:51)

And it appears in Sūrah al-Mujādalah:

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ  
كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ

You shall not find those who believe in Allah and in the Here-  
after having friendship with those who have enmity with Al-  
lah and His messenger, even though they may be their fathers  
or sons or brothers or members of their tribe. (58:22)

### Relations with disbelievers

In verses cited above and in many other verses of the Holy Qur'an, Muslims have been strongly prevented from '*Muwālat*' with non-Muslims, that is, from indulging in relations based on love and friendship. Looking at these clear instructions, non-Muslims who are not aware of the true intention and application of this rule start thinking that the religion of Muslims does not seem to have any place for toleration or bilateral relations or even common courtesy.

On the other hand, there are a large number of verses from the Holy Qur'an, the words and acts of the noble Prophet ﷺ, the practice of the rightly-guided *Khulafā'* and other revered Companions, which bring to light injunctions and actual modes of dealing with non-Muslims by way of favour, compassion, generosity, sympathy and concern, which has little or no parallel in world history. A superficial look on these different attitudes may sense a sort of contradiction therein. But, this feeling is a result of only a cursory study of the true teachings of the Qur'an. If we collect all verses of the Qur'an, relating to this subject which appear at several different places and study them all together, we shall find nothing which could bother non-Muslims nor shall there remain any doubt of contradiction in the text of the Qur'an and Ḥadīth. With this need in view, given below is a full explanation of this point which will, hopefully, bring forth the distinction between various shades of friendship and the reality behind each of them. In addition to this, we shall also get to know what levels of friendship are permissible or impermissible and also the reasons why a certain level has been disallowed.

The truth of the matter is that there are different degrees or steps or levels in relations between two persons or groups. The first degree

of such relations comes from the heart, that of affection and love involving intense emotional commitment. This is called *Muwālat* or close friendship. This sort of friendship is restricted to true Muslims. A Muslim is not permitted to have this kind of relationship with a non-Muslim.

The second degree is that of *Muwāsāt*, which means relationship based on sympathy, kindness and concern. It includes charitable help and support, condolence and consolation and any well-meaning attitude of wishing well. Barring disbelievers who are at war with Muslims, this kind of relationship is permissible with all other non-Muslims. A detailed explanation of this approach has appeared in Sūrah al-Mumtahinah (60:8) :

لَا يَنْهَىٰكُمْ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِمَا تِلْكَ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُواكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ

Allah does not forbid you from treating those who do not fight you on your faith, nor have they driven you out of your homes, with benevolence and equity.

The third degree is that of *Mudārāt* which means relations based on customary cordiality, adequacy in courtesy, pleasant and friendly behaviour and mannerly politeness. This too is permissible with all non-Muslims, specially so, when the objective is to present them with some beneficial aspect of the Faith, or when they are guests, or the purpose is to stay safe from any possible harm coming through them. The words, *إِلَّا أَنْ تَقْرَأُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً*, (unless you guard yourselves against an apprehension from them) appearing in this verse mean this degree of *Mudārāt* which, in other words, means that *Muwālat* or friendship with disbelievers is not permissible except when you are in a situation where you want to defend yourself against them. Since *Mudārāt* or sympathetic relations somewhat resemble *Muwālat* or friendship, it was exempted from the category of *Muwālat*. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

The fourth degree is that of *Mu'āmalāt* or dealings. It means dealings and transactions in business or employment or wages or industry or technology. These too are permissible with non-Muslims, except when such dealings harm the general body of Muslims. The continued practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the rightly-guided *Khulafā'*

and other Companions prove it so. It is on this basis that Muslim jurists have prohibited the sale of arms to disbelievers who are at war with Muslims. However, trade and activities allied to it have been permitted. Also allowed is having them as employees or being employed in their plants and institutions.

To sum up, as for the four degrees of relations with non-Muslims, we now know that friendship which binds a Muslim in very close ties with non-Muslims is not permissible under any condition. Relations based on benevolence, humane interest and concern are permitted with all but the belligerent ones. Similarly, politeness and friendly treatment is also permissible when the purpose is to entertain a guest, convey Islamic teachings to non-Muslims or to stay safe against being hurt or harmed by them.

Now, let us look at what our noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who graced this world as the universal mercy, did for non-Muslims. He demonstrated such compassion, generosity and politeness while dealing with them that it would be difficult to find its example in the world history. When Makkah was in the grip of famine, he personally went out to help his enemies who had made him leave his home town. Then, came the conquest of Makkah. All these enemies fell under his power and control. He set all of them free saying: لَا تَنْتَرِبُوا عَلَيْنَا الْيَوْمَ which means - 'Not only that you are being given amnesty this day, we are not censuring you at all for your past tyranny against us either.' When non-Muslim prisoners of war were presented before him, he treated them with such tenderness which many cannot claim to have done even in respect of their children. The disbelievers inflicted on him all sorts of injuries and pain but he never raised his hand in revenge. He did not even wish ill of them. A delegation from the tribe of Banū Thaḳīf who had not embraced Islam upto that time came to visit him. They were given the honour of staying in the Mosque of the Prophet, a place regarded by Muslims as most honourable.

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه gave stipends and allowances to needy non-Muslim *dhimmīs*, an elegant conduct the examples of which are spread all over in the accounts of dealings credited to the rightly-guided *Khulafā'* and the noble Companions. Let us bear in mind that all these were in one or the other form of *Mu'wāsāt* (concern)

or *Mudārāt* (cordiality) or *Mu'āmalāt* (dealings). It had nothing to do with *Muwālāt* or close and intimate friendship which had been forbidden.

The aforesaid explanations clarify two things: firstly, Islam teaches its adherents all possible tolerance, decency and benevolence while dealing with non-Muslims; secondly, the superficial contradiction sensed with regard to the verse forbidding friendship with non-Muslims stands removed.

However, there is a possible question which still remains unanswered. The question is: 'Why has the Qur'an chosen to so strongly block close friendship with disbelievers, so much so that it has not allowed it in favour of any disbeliever under any condition? What is the wisdom behind it? One of the reasons, a particular one, is that Islam does not see man existing in this world like common animals or jungle trees and blades of grass which sprout, grow, flourish and die and that is the end of it. Instead of that, man's life in this world is a purposeful life. All stages and phases of his life, that is, his eating, drinking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, even his living and dying, all revolve around a central purpose. As long as what he does conforms to this purpose, all he does is correct and sound. If these are against that purpose, then, they are all wrong. The poet-sage Rūmī said it so well:

زندگی از بهر ذکر و بندگی ست  
 بے عبادت زندگی شرمندگی ست

The purpose of life is to remember the Creator and serve Him well

Life without that devotion is nothing but shame

In his view and in the view of all right-minded people, when man abandons this purpose, he does not remain the human being he was created to be:

آنچه می بینی خلاف آدم اند  
 نیستند آدم غلاف آدم اند

What you see is a crowd of anti-men

They are not men, they are just the shell of men

The Holy Qur'an has made human beings declare this purpose as their solemn creed in the following words: *قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ*

(My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds." (6:162)

Now, when it stands established that the purpose of man's life is to obey and worship Allah, the Lord of the worlds, everything else including all affairs of life in this world -- business, government, politics, personal and social relations -- must invariably follow this purpose. It follows, therefore, that those who are against this purpose are the worst enemies of man. Since Satan is the foremost in this enmity, the Holy Qur'an says: إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا. (Surely, Satan is your enemy, so take him as enemy. 35:6).

Thus, those who follow the alluring dictates of the Satan and oppose the injunctions of Allah brought by the blessed prophets عليهم السلام can hardly be the kind of people to deserve deep love and friendship based on close ties and any degree of intimacy. It is just not possible for a person who has a definite purpose in life, and who has all his friendships and enmities, agreements and disagreements subservient to this central purpose, to do something like this. The same subject has been stated in a *hadīth* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: مَنْ أَحَبَّ لِلَّهِ وَأَبْغَضَ لِلَّهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَكْمَلَ إِيمَانَهُ. (Whoever loves for the sake of Allah and hates for the sake of Allah alone, has perfected his faith) (Bukhārī and Muslim). From here we know that 'Imān or faith remains incomplete unless man subordinates his love and friendship and his hatred and enmity to Allah Almighty. Therefore, any deep emotional commitment by a true Muslim in the known forms of love and friendship has to be exclusively for one who is with him all the way in the pursuit of this noble purpose and certainly obedient to what his Lord has commanded him to do. This is why the Holy Qur'an has, in verses cited at the beginning of the commentary, said that the one who maintains relations based on deep love and friendship with disbelievers is one of them.

The last verse (30) says that 'Allah warns you of Himself' lest you should indulge in friendship with disbelievers for the sake of fleeting interests and objectives and thus invite the anger of Allah. And since close friendship (*Muwālat*) relates to the heart and the affairs of the heart are known to none but Allah, it is possible that a person may actually be intensely in love for and friendship with disbelievers, but

may deny it verbally. Therefore, the earlier verse (29) has already covered it by saying: "whether you conceal what is in your hearts, or disclose it, Allah shall know it." No denial or false claim is tenable before Him.

### Verses 31 - 32

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ  
 ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾ قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ  
 فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Say (O Prophet): "If you do love Allah, follow me; Allah shall love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [31]

Say: "Obey Allah and the Messenger." Then, should they turn back, Allah does not love the disbelievers." [32]

### Sequence

In previous verses, there was affirmation of Allah's Oneness and the condemnation of disbelief in it. Affirmed now is the belief in prophethood as well as the necessity of following the Messenger so that we stand informed that the rejection of prophethood or refusal to obey the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is also an act of disbelief (*kufr*) like the rejection of the Oneness of Allah.

### Commentary

Love is something secret. Whether or not a person loves another person, or loves less or more, are questions which cannot be answered precisely. There is no measure or yard-stick to determine the truth of the matter except that one makes an educated guess based on visible conditions and dealings, for love leaves traces and signs which could help in recognizing it as such. Now, in these verses, Allah Almighty tells those who claimed that they loved Allah and hoped to be loved by Him above the real criterion of His love. In other words, if a person living in the world of today claims that he loves his Creator and Master, then, he must test it on the touch-stone of his obedience to the Messenger, that is, match it against the frequency and quality of where and how he has been following him. Once this is done, the genuine and the fake of it will be exposed right there. How much true a person