



## The Affirmative Image of Christians in The Qur'an

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### ABSTRACT

"Christianity" is one of the religions closest to Islam historically. In the Qur'an, the followers of Christ are mentioned or addressed both in specific words and also under general titles along with followers of other religions. Due to the abundance of mentions of Christians in the Qur'an, gaining accurate knowledge of this people from the perspective of the Qur'an is necessary for Islamic society. The Quran takes a realistic and friendly approach to portray the followers and disciples of Jesus, which can serve as a model for communication with them in the present time. Gathering affirmative verses about the followers of Jesus helps to reconsider the pattern of communication with them, and from this perspective, it becomes a window to understanding the unity of religions and achieving world peace. This descriptive-analytical study aims to collect and systematize the Qur'anic verses about Christians in the first place, and then, with the help of Quran commentators, it points out the reasons for naming, interpretations, and addressing of "Christians" in the Qur'an as Nasārā, to state that although the followers of Christ have been criticized and rebuked in some verses, in many cases, they have been praised according to the verses of the Qur'an. Also, based on the findings of this study, it was found that in those verses that refer to the distortion of the word of God, there was no criticism of Christians.

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## 1. Introduction

Christ's departure from Jerusalem and the spread of his followers to various lands, including the Arab regions, brought the good news of Christianity. The arrival of Christianity in the Arabian Peninsula promised various connections and interactions for Arabs who later converted to Islam. An examination of the Qur'an's encounter with Christian culture shows that the Qur'an's treatment of this culture was corrective. Also, the rules of the Qur'an about Christianity are a mixture of fixed and variable rules (Puya Zadeh, 1996: 10).

Faith is a belief that is manifested in words and deeds. In this regard, the views of Christianity and Islam are the same. The difference among religions and ideologies lies in the content of the three pillars of thought, behavior, and action, as well as their functions in life. Therefore, the content and function are modeled by the environmental strategies of each religion and ideology after its spread and influence in the world. The content, which contains the truths of enduring faith, appears in various forms that are appropriate to the conditions of revelation or the conditions of human evolution (El-Kik, 2001: 149). According to the Qur'an, «*To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety*» (5:48) (5:48) (translation by Yusuf Ali). Therefore, some researchers are trying to nurture a good relationship between Islam and Christianity. For example, the dialog congress emphasized the joint attempt to maintain moral values published on Islam and Christianity:

«The church praises Muslims who worship the One God, the Living and Unique God, the Merciful... They strive with all their might to obey God's commands, although understanding of it is hidden from us just as Ibrahim was serving God, to whom the religion of Islam basically belongs. Muslims cherish Christ as the Prophet, and although disagreements and animosities over the centuries have brought the relationship between Christianity and Islam to a standstill, this Congress has ignored all and tried to encourage mutual understanding and efforts to promote the values of social justice, morality, peace, and freedom and to spread them to include all people». (El-Kik, 2001: 151)

Historically and geographically, the closest religion to Islam is "Christianity". It seems necessary to study the type and manner of the Qur'an's treatment of «Christians», the followers of the greatest heavenly religion today in terms of the number and geographical extent of its believers. Because it can change the way Muslims look at them and, as a result, change the way the countless followers of these two great religions interact with each other. Due to the geographical dispersion of their settlement, which encompasses almost the whole of the present world, it lays the foundation for lasting peace between them and brings about a new order in the present world.

Reflecting the positive image of Christians in the Qur'an provides the context for constructive dialogue. The existence of a constructive and unifying dialogue has a direct effect on solving many of the world's problems. But this important matter requires appropriate platforms, one of which is dialogue on the axis of common affairs and with an understanding of many positive commonalities such as beliefs, ideas, ideals, pains, and common feelings, which can achieve the realization of global dialogue (Arzani, 2015: 103).

According to the searches on the subject of the positive image of Christians in the Qur'an, the authors of these lines have not found previous studies on this subject. Of course, there are some dissertation theses or essays concerning the study of the beliefs of Christ and Christians in the Qur'an, and Christianity, or legal, social, or comparative studies between the Bible and the Qur'an, such as Thomas, D., & Roggema, B. (2011). *Christian-Muslim Relations*. Brill; Goddard, H. (2000). *A history of Christian-Muslim relations*. New Amsterdam Books; New Amsterdam Books, Goddard, H. (2003). *Christians and Muslims: from double standards to mutual understanding*. Routledge, Zebiri, K. (2014). *Muslims and Christians face to face*. Simon and Schuster, Watt, W. M. (2013). *Muslim-Christian Encounters (Routledge Revivals): Perceptions and Misperceptions*. Routledge, Robinson, N. (1991). *Christ in Islam and Christianity*. State University of New York Press, Arzani, H., & Ehtemam, H. (2015). *Holy Koran's Pattern in the Cultural Communication of Islam and Christianity* but none of which completely overlap with the perspective of examining the positive characteristics of Christians.

In fact, this study aims at answering the following questions: How does the Qur'an interact with Christians? In what terms are Christians mentioned in the Qur'an? According to the Qur'an, what are the positive characteristics of the followers of Christ?

## 2. Christian: Nasārā in the Quran

Although in some verses of the Qur'an, the followers of Jesus (p.b.u.h) have been criticized and rebuked, in many cases they have been explicitly praised. In this article, with the help of the interpretations of the Qur'an, an attempt is made to explain and examine these cases and their cause and some of the criticisms that are imagined about them, but before that it is necessary to point out their names and reasons of those naming in the Qur'an. In general, they are named and addressed in the Qur'an in two ways.

### 2.1 "Nasārā"

This title has been repeated 5 times in the Quran, and once in the form of «Nasrāni» (3: 67) «*No, Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Nazarene (Nasrāni) He was of pure faith, a submitter (Muslim). He was never of the idolaters.*»)(translation Arberry). which is from the same root - that there are two reports about the reason for this naming: The first statement: because of relating Christians to a village called "Nazareth" (Naṣṣarān), because Jesus (p.b.u.h.) grew up in the city or village of "Nazareth" and was called "Nazarene". (Raghib Isfahānī, 2009: 375; Murtida Zubeydī, 1994: under the word Naṣṣar). It is also stated in Lisān Al-'Arab «Naṣṣarī», «Naṣṣaray», «Naṣṣirah» and «Naṣṣureyyah» [name] was a village in the Levant and Nasārā' [i.e. Christians] are attributed to it. The prevailing scholarly opinion is that the Arabic term al-Nasara is derived from the Arabic term al-nasara derived from the name of Jesus home town of Nazareth in Galilee and that it literally means 'nazarenes' alternately 'nazoreans' that is to say 'people from Nazareth.' (McAuliffe, 2003, vol. 1: 310; Jeffrey, 1983: 280-281)

In another statement, the reason for this naming is because of the companions and helpers (Naṣṣiran which means helpers) of Jesus; Because Jesus (p.b.u.h.) asked them for help and a group accepted his invitation (Raghib Isfahānī, 2009: 375; Blois, 2002: 1-30). Some early commentators on the Quran, both Muslim and Arab Christian, seeking a properly Islamic sense for the term al-nasara have posited a linguistic connection in Arabic on the basis of the shared root consonants n-s-r between the noun al-nasara and the expression ansar allah, 'Gods helpers' as it is used in the Quran to refer apostles (al-hawa-riyyun) in Q 61:14 which is rejected by grammarians on philological grounds. (McAuliffe, 2003, vol. 1: 311)

#### 2.1.1 Study and evaluation of the first statement

The Qur'anic word «Nasārā'» is the plural form of «Nasrāni» (Raghib Isfahānī, 2009: 375), which is identical with «Naṣṣirī». But «Nazareth» is first mentioned in the Bible: «And he dwelt in the city of Nazareth». Here again the prophecy made by the prophets came true: «He will be called a Nazarene» (Matthew, vol. 2: 23). But there is no older independent source that mentions the city. There is no mention of this city in the Old Testament and in the Talmud, and it seems that the reason for not mentioning the name «Nazareth» in the old historical reports is that either such a city did not exist at all or it was a small and insignificant city. The Qur'an never mentions this prophet by a name like «Nasārā'» - as the Bible says - or a name that connects Jesus to a particular city. Jesus (p.b.u.h.) has been mentioned in the Qur'an as «Jesus» and his titles as «Ibn Maryam» and «Messiah» in 3:45 «*When the angels said: 'O Mary, Allah gives you glad tidings of a Word (Be) from Him, whose name is Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary. He shall be honored in this world and in the Everlasting Life and he shall be among those who are close.*» (translation Picktall)

The Gospel of Luke uses the word «Naṣṣirī» to refer to the followers of Jesus (p.b.u.h.): it is proved to us that this man is a seditious person who incites Jews around the world, he is also one of the leaders of the Nasserite sect. (Luke, vol. 5: 24)

#### 2.1.2 Examining the second statement

The word «Naṣṣarī» appears in several verses of the Qur'an. Two of these verses refer specifically to the followers of Jesus, in the words, ﴿ *Those who said, 'We are Naṣṣarī (Nazarenes)*» (5:14) in «*and that the nearest in affection to the believers are those who say: 'We are Naṣṣarī (Nazarenes)*». (5:82) (translation Picktall). The points are first the word Naṣṣarī is mentioned in opposition to the word Jews that these two were of the most important religions of that time which had followers and on the other hand this word is mentioned besides other words of *priests and monks* «*those who said: 'We are*

*Nazarenes. ' That is because amongst them there are priests and monks; and because they are not proud».* (5:82). From the Qur'anic verses it can be inferred that the reason for naming Christians as *Nasari* is a special event that happened to Jesus and his apostles and that is the origin of their naming as «*Nasari*» where Jesus asked, (*Who will be my helpers (Anṣār) in the way of Allah?*) and the disciples answered, (*We are the helpers (Anṣār) of Allah*) (Quran 3:52; 61:14) and the word «*Anṣār*» in these verses is used to refer to the followers of Jesus, i.e. Christians (Aluṣi, 1994, vol. 3: 267-268).

It is noteworthy that the Qur'an describes not only Jesus' contemporaries, but all his followers with the phrase, «*those who said: 'We are Nazarenes*» (5:14,82). This is in fact a reference to the main incident mentioned in the other verses which states that any person who declares himself a «*Christian*» is in fact implicitly claiming that he has taken the same oath as the disciples of Jesus took when they declared themselves as *Anṣar-ullah* after the question of Jesus (3:52 and 61:14) Similar to this story have been depicted in several verses of Quran referring to the followers of Prophet Muhammad. (Surah Al-Hashr: 8) And in another verse, Quran encourages the believers to help God so that God will help them (Surah Muhammad: 7). In addition, it can be said that the word «*Nasari*» means «*Anṣar*» in the Arabic of the Qur'an. And these two are sometimes used interchangeably in Arabic (Ibn Manzūr, 1984: under the word *Nasr*), as Aluṣi in the interpretation of *Ruh al-Ma'ani* has the same opinion. (Aluṣi, 1994, vol. 3: 267-268)

Therefore, it can be said that in the Qur'an, «*Nasari*» and «*Nasrani*» - because of the attribution of Jesus to a village called *Nāṣirah* (Nazareth) - were not the name of Jesus - but were the names of Jesus' followers. Surprisingly according to the Gospels, the first people to visit Jesus (p.b.u.h.) were not from Nazareth, but the Magi who came from the East, who are mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew. (Matthew, 2)

## 2.2 Addressing Christians by general titles

The use of titles such as: «*Those who disbelieve*», «*O people of the Book*», «*from the People of the Book*», «*Those who have received the Book*», «*Those who believe in the Book*» and «*Those who have received the Qur'an only from the book*» in Quran sometimes includes only Jews, sometimes only Christians, sometimes both, and in some other cases all pre-Islamic religions.

We will now refer to verses here that cover all Christians or a group of them. Of course, in these verses, they are all praised:

## 3. The affirmative image of Christians in the Qur'an

In general, the verses that have been revealed about Christians are sometimes a brief introduction of them and sometimes criticize them and sometimes talk of their unsuitable and irrational requests, their baseless complaints, the way Muslims interact with them, their commonalities with Muslims, their superstitions, their punishment and bad fate, their different groups, and the expression of various blessings of God given to them, their prophets and their books, and so on.

But a bunch of verses all refer to praiseworthy descriptions of Christians. Hence, there are seven verses or a collection of Qur'anic verses, all of which describe and praise Christians, and we will try to briefly study and analyze these Qur'anic propositions about this group of Christians:

### 3.1 Christians subject to divine grace

In Surah Baqarah verse 2

«That is the (Holy) Book, where there is no doubt. It is a guidance for the cautious (of evil and Hell)». (translation Picktall).

The subject of this verse consists of two groups, the first is the group of believers (those who believe) are those who are apparently believers and are called faithful (*Mu'min*), and the second is the group of non-Muslims, which itself includes other groups which are: Jews, Christians and Sābeans, people who acknowledge God and the Day of Judgment and some prophets but believe in the influence of some stars in good and evil. In this verse the connecting word "الذين" is repeated, which separates the first group from the second, but the word «and» makes the same verdict applied to them. In this verse, the ruling on the subject is that «*their reward is with their Lord, and they have neither fear nor sorrow*» (Quran 2:277). But no one neither will be rewarded for having these titles as a believer, Jew, Christian, or Sābean nor remain safe from punishment, as the Jews and *Nasari* have said

as the Qur'an says, «They say: 'None but Jews and Nazarenes shall be admitted to Paradise.' Such are their wishful fancies. Say: 'Bring us your proof, if what you say is true'. (2:111) (translation Arberry).

The holy verse, consists of two groups that are subject of the same verdict: the first group is those Muslims who have faith, and the second group includes groups of non-Muslim but *People of the Book* (*Ahl-e-Kitab*), in other words, the sameness of the ruling of non-Muslim who are People of the Book, including Christians in this verse with Muslims show that these names and titles, such as believers, Jews, Christians, Sābeans, have no value in the sight of God, but the greatness and dignity of everyone is dependent on his worship and obedience, not titles. So, none of these titles is useful for its owner, and no description of the attributes of perfection remains for its owner, and it does not benefit him, except with his servitude. (Ṭabataba'ī, 1996, vol. 1: 193)

Therefore, Christians will also be subject to God's grace if they meet the conditions mentioned in the verse.

### 3.2 The superiority of the followers of Jesus over the infidels

«Allah said: '(Prophet) Jesus, I will take you to Me and will raise you to Me, and I will purify you from those who disbelieve. I will make those who follow you above those who disbelieve till the Day of Resurrection. Then, to Me you shall all return, and I shall judge between you as to that you were at variance». (3:55) (translation Arberry)

Two groups are introduced which the main purpose of the verse will be understood after identifying these two groups. The next important issue is to clarify the meaning of supremacy that is discussed in the verse. The first group is «*those who follow you*», and the appearance of it is that the reference of the pronoun "أنت" (means you) is Jesus (Ibn Ashur, 1999, vol. 3: 10). To know who is this group, the context of the verse reveals that it means all the followers of Jesus, who will include true Christians in his time and after him, as well as Muslims (Ṭabataba'ī, 1996, vol. 3: 209), but the nation of Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) after Jesus, either can mean they are after Jesus' ummah in terms of time, as when it is said that someone came after someone, that means, he followed the previous one and is next, or it means because the Prophet of Islam confirms Jesus and The book of him, and whoever acknowledges another one is said to have followed him in fact. In addition, the religion (*Sharia*) of the Prophet of Islam is united with other prophets in terms of monotheism, which is the root of religions, and therefore the Holy Prophet and consequently Muslims are kind of followers of Jesus. (Ṭabarsī, 1909, vol. 2: 760)

The meaning of the discussed verse is that God exalted the Christians (that is, those whose ancestors believed in Jesus (peace be upon him)) over the Jews (that is, those whose ancestors disbelieved in Jesus (peace be upon him) and conspired against him). will give superiority

### 3.3 Faithful and humble Christians before God

«There are some among the People of the Book who believe in Allah, and in what has been sent down to you, and what has been sent down to them, humble to Allah and do not buy with the verses of Allah a little price. Those, their wage shall be with their Lord. Allah is Swift at reckoning». (3:199) (translation Arberry)

According to the context of the previous verses and the (بعض) which means some, it becomes clear that a group of People of the Book, which includes Jews and Christians, who have several distinct attributes are «those who believe in God, they are non-Muslims, they believe in the Qur'an and what have been revealed to Muslims, they believe in what has been revealed to them from the Torah and the Bible, they submit to God's command by obedience and they never sell the divine revelations for a small price, obviously not sell it at any price», because instead of the revelations of God, everything a person receives is worthless. (Ṭabarsī, 1952, vol. 2: 917)

Having these attributes, they will have their reward from God, and the interpretation of refers to the ultimate grace and mercy of God towards them and also refers to the fact that God nurtures and helps them in the path of guidance (Makarim, 1995, vol. 3: 231). Although the appearance of this verse includes all the believers of the Book like what Mujāhid, Ibn Jurayj and Ibn Zayd have said about the dignity of the revelation of this verse and its subject to include all the believers of the Book (Vahidi, 2004: 76), according to the characteristics mentioned for this group, it can be understood that here

believers mostly means Christians, as Jābir ibn ‘Abdullah, Anas ibn Mālik, Ibn ‘Abbas, and Qitadah said that this verse was revealed about Najāshi, who, when he died, Gabriel reported the news to the Prophet on the same day. And the Messenger of God (PBUH) said to his companions: Let us pray for one of your brothers who has died in another land, and when they ask, who is he? He said: Najāshi, who was a Nasrāni believer. Then the Prophet (PBUH) asked for forgiveness for Najāshi and said, Get up and pray for your brother Najāshi, but the hypocrites said, Look at this man who prays for an Abyssinian Nasrāni infidel who has never seen him and did not have the same belief as he has and a verse was revealed in their answer (Abu al-Futūḥ al-Rāzi, 1987, vol. 5: 227). Humility is one of the prominent moral virtues in Christianity. From the point of view of Christians, the presence of humility in the heart of man leads to deep and lasting peace of mind, love for God and people, compassion for everyone, and its opposite, pride, is one of the seven deadly sins. The investigation of humility in the New Testament in this essay indicates that there is a deep connection between Christian beliefs and their behavior patterns, among them is the sinfulness of man and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to punish the sins of men, which was realized in the light of God's mercy and a Christian is required to follow Jesus - who is a gentle person - as his example, and in this way, he will become so strong and humble that he will understand the kingdom. In fact, humility in the New Testament, like the Qur'an, is a requirement of faith in God.

### 3.4 Christians of Moderate nation

«If the People of the Book had believed and kept from evil, We would pardon them their sins and admit them to the Gardens of Delight». «If they had established the Torah and the Gospel and what was sent down to them from their Lord they would be eating from above them and from beneath their feet. Some of them are a righteous nation; but many of them evil is what they do». (5:65-66)(translation Usuf ali)

Regarding «the People of the Book», there are two sayings that in both Jews are common:

**a) Jews and Christians;** according to this saying as implies «*Imtina al-Jaza for Intifa' al-Shart*», therefore this verse implies that neither the Jews nor the Christians have ever believed and observed piety, and as a result, the content of this verse which are excommunicating their sins, entering them to paradises full of all kinds of blessings does not apply to them. Obviously, as this verse is the blame of both groups-it is not compatible with other verses that were mentioned earlier. (Tabarsī, 1993, vol. 3: 343)

**b) Jews only;** based on this saying those who do not believe and do not practice piety are the Jewish people who disbelieved in Jesus and His Book and did not believe and practice piety, so the rewards mentioned in the verse do not apply to them. This is consistent with other verses. Obviously, in this case, Christians are not included in the circle of *لو* and can enter into the paradise mentioned in the verse. If we notice we can understand those who did not put the Torah and the Bible into practice and refused to follow the previous books are the Jewish people, who are also mentioned in several verses of the Qur'an. (Ibn ‘Ashūr, 1999, vol. 5: 149)

The Jewish people will be excluded from the scope of the mentioned rewards due to the existence of *"لو"* *Imtina'iyeh* in the holy verse (Ibid: 148) except for some of them who believe and practice piety and have put the Torah and the Bible into practice. They joined to the *"أُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ"* and are in fact the same Christian believers. The reward promised in this verse to this group is a great reward which is the great blessing of the happiness of the two worlds.

### 3.5 Christians in the circle of friendship with non-arrogant believers

«You will find that the most people in enmity to the believers are the Jews and idolaters, and that the nearest in affection to the believers are those who say: 'We are Nazarenes.' That is because amongst them there are priests and monks; and because they are not proud».

«When they listen to that which was sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes fill with tears as they recognize its truth. They say: 'Lord, we believe. Write us among the witnesses». (5:82, 83)

Two groups are mentioned: those who are the fiercest enemies of the believers and those who are the closest friends to believers. The verse mentions directly that the first group are the people of the Jews as well as the polytheists, which is not the subject of our discussion. But concerning the second group, the verse expresses directly that these people introduce themselves as Nasārā ' The verse does

not suffice to this, and mentions the sign and characteristic of them where the two words " قَسِيْبِيْنَ " and " وَرُهْبَانًا " are mentioned in the holy verse. According to Raghīb, " قَسِيْبِيْنَ " is Arabicized word priest and " رُهْبَانًا ", the plural of " راهبه ", " الرهبة " and " الرهب " meaning fear that is accompanied by avoidance, and also " ترهب " meaning worship, and رهبانية (i.e. monasticism) meaning exaggeration and going to extremes in tolerant of worship (Raghīb Isfahani, 2009, p. 204); This word is also used in the words of the Qur'an in the form of (57: 27).

But these characteristics exclusively include only one group that are Christians (Noss, 2002: 639,627) and thus any ambiguity in identifying the examples of the second group, namely Christians, is removed. In addition, regarding the reason of the revelation of this verse, it has been said that it was revealed about Najashi or a group sent by him or a group from Abyssinia who were all «Nasārā'». (Vahidi, 2004, vol. 1: 107; Ibn Kathīr, 1998, vol. 3: 150)

Likewise, the holy verse states the reason for the friendliness and kindness of the second group towards Muslims is the existence of monks and priests among them and that they are the most kind group towards Muslims because they are not arrogant (Tabarsi, 1993, vol. 3: 362) which is a great praise for this group of People of the Book who are meant to be Christians, in addition, it can be claimed that due to the role of priests and monks as the leader and religious preacher in the Christian community, these characteristics are widespread among them (Christians). The humility of Christ who saves us with his self-emptying and invites his disciples to serve their brothers in love (Luke, vol. 22: 26-27) so that God will be glorified in all of them (1-Peter vol. 4: 10-11) incomparably and The uniqueness is profound. The God of Israel, the king of creation, is a humble God (Jude vol. 9: 11-12) p. 1440 Christ is the humble king that Zechariah had announced will enter Zion with a donkey (Zechariah vol. 9: 9; Matthew vol. 21: 5) with perfection Be humble, gentle, and patient with one another in love. (Ephesians vol. 4: 2)

It is also stated in the verse that this group while hearing the truths that had been revealed to the Prophet caused tears to flow from their eyes because they sought the truth and as they found it in the words of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), it affected their hearts and these all are the proofs and evidence of what has been mentioned before that the Nasārā 'are closer to the believers and their love is greater because they are humble before the truth, so when they hear the truth, they say, «*Oh God, we believe, so write us among the witnesses*». Therefore the mentioned verse is about to express a general rule and the characteristics of a group with the mentioned characteristics and as it was stated, this verse wholly, is the praise of Nasārā' along with mentioning and stating the reason for it.

### 3.6 Distinctive moral characteristics of Christ's followers

«Those to whom We gave the Book before, believe in it».

«When it is recited to them, they say: 'We believe in it, because it is the truth from Our Lord. We surrendered ourselves before it came». «Their wage shall be given them twice, because they have endured patiently, averting evil with good and spending from what We have given them»

«and because when they hear idle talk they turn away from it and say: 'We have our deeds, and you have your deeds. Peace be upon you. We do not desire the ignorant». (28:52-55)

The verses include the situation of Christians (believing Christians or those who believe in the Qur'an); however, it can also include some non-Christians who believe in the Qur'an. Those who, according to the rest of the verse, did not deny their knowledge of the Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) and did not conceal the truth, so they will have two rewards, one reward for believing in their own scripture and one reward for believing in Qur'an, because *they have endured patiently* in their second faith after the first faith, and endured the hardships of opposing the whims that are in accepting both faiths, and also sending away harms of people by their own patience and forbearance. (Abu al-Futuh al-Razi, 1987, vol. 15: 146; Tabatabai, 1996, vol. 16: 55)

Seven good qualities are counted for them in the continuation; For example, when they hear a word that is useless or ugly, they turn away from it and do not retaliate, but say: Our deeds are for us and your deeds are for you, and this is the end of their speech and a sign of ending any struggle and they say peace to you, that means you are safe from our side and you will not be harmed by us, and we consider our honor to be higher to pursue useless conversations with the ignorant, and they are not interested in associating with ignorant people and try to end the conversation with them sooner. (Ibn 'Ashur, 1999, vol. 20: 78; Tabatabai, 1992, vol. 16: 55)

Therefore, the above verse is in praise and also the expression of some privileged moral characteristics in people of the Book, including Christian believers, who, because of the right-seeking spirit in them, submit to what is offered to them from the word of truth and they accept it. Now, either they believe in the Qur'an and Islam as the first possibility and become Muslims, or as the second possibility, they compare the Qur'an with what is stated in the teachings of their scriptures and state that there is one truth in both that we have believed in that one and common truth in both since before.

### 3.7 Tenderness and mercy in the hearts of Christ's followers

«Following them We sent Our (other) Messengers, and We sent following in their footsteps, (Prophet) Jesus, the son of Mary and, gave him the Gospel, and put tenderness and mercy in the hearts of his followers. As for monasticism, they invented it thereby seeking the pleasure of Allah. We did not write it for them, and they did not observe it as it should be observed. We gave to those of them who believed their wage, but many of them are impious». (57:27)

It states that we sent other messengers after Noah and Ibrahim (Ibn 'Ashur, 1999, vol. 27: 378). This meaning is taken from the word تَقْفِيهِ the base form of the verb فَتَقْفِيْنَا and the meaning of قَفِيْت is this "Put something in the following of something constantly " for this reason, the last word of each line of the poem is called (poetry rhyme) because all lines follow the first lines' rhyme. (Tabarsi, 1993, vol. 9: 366)

**Tenderness and mercy** are synonymous with each other or *tenderness* is used to repel evil, and mercy is used to attract good (Alusi, 1994, vol. 14: 190) and placing compassion and mercy in the hearts of the followers of Jesus (p.b.u.h.) may mean God enables them to **tenderness and mercy** among themselves, and as a result, they peacefully lived on the basis of helping each other, just as the companions of the Prophet of Islam are praised for this quality: رُحَمَاءَ بَيْنَهُمْ (merciful to one another) (Qur'an 48:29). (Tabatabai, 1996, vol. 19: 173)

The verse states that we have placed tenderness and mercy in the hearts of Christians, as a result they lived together in peace while helping each other. The verse is about the virtues of Christians who sought the satisfaction of God, because they wanted to obtain the satisfaction of God through the monasticism they invented, even though God had not made it obligatory upon them, and although God says that they did not fulfill it, this will not lower their rank because it was not made obligatory on them by God so by not doing it, they will not be punished. (Fakhruddin Razi, 1999, vol. 29: 474; Ibn Ashur, vol. 27: 382)

### 3.8 Christians have not been among distorters

So far, all that has been said was the praise of the Christians (of course, a group who believe in God and the Day of Judgment and do righteous deeds), but in some verses of the Qur'an, the issue of distortion of the word of Quran a group of the People of the Book has also been raised. It is necessary to study which group is meant. Therefore, we have mentioned a collection of verses of the Qur'an in which the issue of distortion of the divine word has been raised, and we will briefly examine the subject of the ruling on distortion:

**3.8.1** «Some Jews tampered with the words (altering) their places saying: 'We have heard and we disobey, ' and 'Hear, without hearing, ' and 'Observe us (Ra'ina, in Hebrew means evil) ', twisting with their tongues traducing religion. But if they had said: 'We have heard and obey, ' and 'Hear, ' and 'Regard us, ' it would have been better for them, and more upright; but Allah has cursed them for their disbelief, so they do not believe, except a few». (4:46)

In this verse, no matter what the meaning of the word or distortion is, there is no doubt that the distortion according to includes a group of Jews, because the preposition "مِنْ" here is a «*statement*» explaining the meaning of which is mentioned in the previous verse (Fakhruddin Razi, 1999, vol. 10: 92) or it is «*discrimination*» which refers to some of a group (Ibn 'Ashur, 1999, vol. 4: 146), but in both cases, the mentioned group is all or part of "الَّذِينَ هَادُوا" meaning «Jewish people» (Tabari, 1991, vol. 5: 76; Tabatabai, 1996, vol. 4: 364). What is clear, then, is that the verse does not imply Christians having role in distortion.

**3.8.2** «But because they broke their covenant, We cursed them and hardened their hearts. They changed the Words from their places and have forgotten a portion of what they were reminded. Except for a few, you will always find treachery from them, yet pardon them, and forgive; indeed Allah loves the gooddoers». (5:13)



In this verse, according to the pronouns "هم" used in it and also the pronoun "واو" in "يحرّفون", there is talking about a group that has been cursed by God for violating the covenant they made with God, and for this reason God has placed cruelty in their hearts, as a result of which they have distorted the word of God. (Tabatabai, 1996, vol. 5: 240), but the reference of these pronouns according to the previous verse (Qur'ān 5:12) is the name appeared in it, «the children of Israel», which means the Jewish people, and the sentence which is characteristic of this people, also asserts this (Fakhruddin Rāzi, 1999, vol. 3: 323; Tabarsi, 1993, vol. 3: 268) and this verse seeks to express the behavior of this people in violation of the covenant. (Tabari, 1991, vol. 6: 99)

**3.8.3** «O Messenger, do not grieve for those who race into disbelief; those who say with their mouth: 'We believe, ' yet their hearts did not believe, and the Jews who listen to lies and listen to other nations who have not come to you. They pervert the words in their places».

This verse and the verses after it have related parts and all have a similar theme from which it is understood they are about a sect of the People of the Book that chose the holy Prophet to clear if some of the rules of the Torah (The sentence of stoning for adultery) is from the Torah or not, and they hoped that his Holiness would make a verdict against the verdict of the Torah therefore they could find an excuse to escape from the verdict of the Torah. Therefore, they said to each other, if he rules according to your will, accept it, and if he rules the same as Torah, avoid him, and the Messenger of God (p.b.u.h.) referred them to the rule of the Torah. Due to this the People of the Book avoided him. Therefore, the reason of the revelation is the sentence of whipping was replaced by stoning which was specified in the Torah for adultery. (Tabataba'i, 1996, vol. 5: 338)

#### **3.8.4 Surah 2 verse 75**

«Do you then hope that they will believe in you, when some of them have already heard the Word of Allah and knowingly tampered with it, after they understood it!» (Qur'ān 2:75)

This verse and related verses state that because the Jews had the knowledge of religion and the book, and therefore it was more hope that they believe in and help Islam more than other tribes, but after the Messenger of God (p.b.u.h.) emigrated to Medina, the Jew showed a behavior, which turned that hope into despair, and therefore God Almighty says in these verses, do you expect the Jew to believe in you, while some of them after hearing the verses of God, and understanding it (the Qur'an or the covenants?), they distorted it, and in short, concealing the truth, and distorting the word of God is a long-standing tradition of this sect (Tabataba'i, 1996, vol. 1: 213). Therefore, the subject of the ruling on distortion in They hear the word of God and then they distort it is undoubtedly only the Jewish people (Fakhruddin Rāzi, 1999, vol. 3: 559) and therefore does not include Christians.

### **Conclusion**

Collecting positive verses about the followers of Christ helps reconsider the pattern of communication with them and, from this perspective, serves as a window to the unity of religions and world peace. One of the benefits of this effort is that it guides us to comprehensively study religion and simultaneously explore other religions. It motivates us to understand, worship, and enlighten ourselves about religious teachings and related knowledge, promoting the scientific exchange of thoughts for the good and interest of humanity.

The verses examined in this article all contain positive points and praiseworthy descriptions of those Christians who believe in God and the Day of Judgment, and also do righteous deeds. Among other things, they are the best group among the People of the Book and have the most empathy with Muslims. Many of them already believe in the Qur'an and consider themselves Muslims. When the principles of Islam are introduced to them, they respond by saying they already hold the same beliefs and practice them, or they embrace Islam because of their righteous spirit. They are moderates, unlike other sects of the People of the Book, including the Jews. Finally, Christians have an advantage over others until the Day of Judgment - perhaps even Muslims who believe in the mission of Jesus can be included in this ruling - and ultimately, the reward of their good deeds is with God. Additionally, those verses in the Qur'an that discuss the distortion of the divine word do not include Christians, and therefore, it will not criticize them.

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