SALMAN AL-FARSI
An Inspiring Existence

By
Dr. Sayed Hassan Akhlaq
Lecturer at the Catholic University of America
Lecture by Dr. Sayed Hassan Akhlaq

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Shaykh Nooruddeen Durkee
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الحمد لله رب العالمين و العاقبة للمتّقين و الصلوه و السلام على نبيّاه و أوليّائه و آلهّم و أصحابهم اجمعين سيّما سيدنا و مولانا أبي القاسم المصطفى محمد و اهل بيته الاطهار و صحبه الأخيار

INTRODUCTION

First of all I have to thank Shaikh Nooruddeen Durkee and Shaikh Ahmed Abdur Rashid, in other words The Islamic Study Center, Green Mountain School, that gave me the opportunity to take part in this great Event. As you know discussion on the unseen facts is difficult not only for western people who tend to be very busy in their daily lives, but also for the Islamic world that is dominated by a superficial understanding of its religion. Also, both Western everydayness and Muslim superficiality from two opposite sides provide the same seeds for extremism and keep us far from understanding the true nature of a human being as a seeker of the truth and eternity. Finally, allow me to thank again Shaikh Nooruddeen for his spiritual and inspiring program. I hope the supreme God ‘Allah Jalla Jajalahu’ helps me to discuss what He likes and what is in accordance with our needs regarding
Hazrat Salam al-Farsi (May God make his grade higher\(^1\)).

My discussion here does not follow an historical approach. By which I mean I’m not looking merely at historical facts and evaluating old data to promote my historical information; instead I have taken an existential approach which examines the historical narration on Salman\(^{(AM)}\) to discover our human potential for the truth. My discussion, also, is neither a theological exploration to analyze certain firm doctrines; rather it is an empathetic approach to Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s faith which helps us to redefine what faith asks from us and what it does for us. In addition, my discussion is not a scholarly mystical debate to reduce faith to a spiritual state or Sufi interests, but is rather a gaze at a role model who tries to motivate us regardless of our diversity of place and time. Hazrat-e Salman\(^{(AM)}\) acts like a mirror that can show us our own capacities, challenges, and opportunities. We can renew our faith and our relationship with God in offering the discussion of all Saints including Salman\(^{(AM)}\). I hope it can be like a holy visit or Ziyarah which inspires us to find our path in our particular situations. I would like to show my commitment to this by asking God’s blessing in reciting a part of Salman\(^{(AM)}\) Ziarat:

\(^{1}\) Aala-allah Maqamah (اعلى الله مقامه): AM.
“O Salman, I beg God who appointed you for honesty in religion, that He may give me a life like your life and a death like your death. You have not broken your commitment”.

Salman (AM) was an honest, outstanding, and wise companion of the prophet Muhammad (SAAW) who can be seen as a true role model for Muslims, including Sunni and Shia denominations. He had a share in the sacred experiences of the highest level of faith as called “Wilayah” as well as in spreading Islam among non-Arabs especially in ancient Persia. Mostly Muslim is known as “MuSalman” among Farsi, Turkish and Indian speakers instead of “Muslim,” which is a popular Arabic term. It is said that “MuSalman” is an Arabicized form of Salman (AM) through adding “Mim”, which is a sign of the objective case (Maf’uli), to show their honor of Salman (AM) in contrast to “Mawali,” the freed slaves who in times past were used by Arabs. However, Salman (AM)’s unique experience is a clear link between the inner and outer side of religion on one hand and theory and practice on the other. His rationally-oriented conversions from a variety of faiths and his dealings with the newly converted

2 “Mim” is the Arabic name for the letter “M”. “U” after “M” in “Musalmaan” is only written to aid in pronunciation.
people present a very realistic attempt to attain the truth and to apply it.

This discussion will be threefold: in the first section, I will present a short report of Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s life. This stage examines his searching of the truth. Secondly, we will look at Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s characteristic traits. This stage offers several examples of Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s faith in action. The last section will make Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s experience of faith relevant to us. This stage will attempt to describe how Salman\(^{(AM)}\) exemplifies the truth. Therefore, in the following I will be discussing how Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s knowledge, qualities, and spirit move our own hearts toward a higher religious ideal.

1) THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

Ruzbih (the previous name of Salman\(^{(AM)}\)) was born in Isfahan, located today in Iran. His father was a Zoroastrian who was very eager to have a very religious son in his faith. Salman\(^{(AM)}\) grew up as a Zoroastrian but became interested in Christianity when he accidentally met a Church. He spent a couple of hours in church exploring the new faith and asking the many questions he had in mind, including the origin of the new religion. Although his father forced him to stay home which prevented him from contact with Christians, he asked the
Christians to inform him when a Caravan would be approaching Damascus (the Levant, al-Shaam) so that he might journey with them to that city to learn more about Christianity. He escaped from his house leaving all things to follow his heart’s quest for the truth when he finally became aware of a Caravan traveling to al-Shaam. Converting to Christianity, he started to experience his new faith under the teaching of a great bishop of Damascus but was upset with the bishop’s practices which showed him to be a corrupt and greedy person collecting money for himself instead of helping the poor through almsgiving. Salman(AM) continued studying and experiencing Christianity under the supervision of the bishop’s very pious successor. When he was on his deathbed Salman(AM) asked to be introduced to another saintly bishop. This bishop advised Salman(AM) to travel to Mosul in Iraq to follow yet another bishop. Once in Iraq Salman(AM) served several years under this pious bishop who, before he passed away, advised Salman(AM) to travel to Nusaybin in Turkey to complete his spiritual journey under supervision of the bishop there. Salman(AM) said that this last bishop informed him about a prophet who was supposed to appear in the land of palms and dates. He also gave him the means for testing the legitimacy of the expected prophet. All these introductions to successive bishops are evidence of Salman(AM)’s persistent
search of the truth. In the path to reach the land of palms and dates, he joined a group approaching there, but after awhile they betrayed him and sold him to a Jew and lastly delivered him to another master who was living in Yasrib, first name of Medina, in Saudi Arabia. Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} was working for his master in Medina when he became aware of a person migrating from Mecca to Medina who called himself a prophet. He visited the prophet several times, examining and evaluating him to know whether or not he was a true prophet. Finally he converted to Islam and became a loyal companion of the prophet while he was a slave. Later he was freed by help of the prophet and his companions who paid the ransom and established a grove for his master. He remained close to the prophet and was accustomed to answer the people’s question of his ancestry with “I am Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)}, the son of Islam and the child of Adam.” Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} proved to be an innovator when he suggested digging a defensive trench before the battle of Khandaq and using catapults in the battle of Ta’if. Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} lived as a close companion of the prophet and his family especially Fatimah Zahra\textsuperscript{(SA)} and Ali Ibn Abitalib\textsuperscript{(AS)}. He acted as a religious supervisor in spreading Islam among Iranians. He was appointed as the governor of Al-Mada’in (Ctesiphon) and presented a unique and unseen model of a pious governor who did not merely
inhabit his castle as Persian Kings often did. It is narrated that he died also in a very unique way which was blessed with conversation with those who already had died. In addition, Imam Ali Ibn Abitalib\(^{(AS)}\) miraculously journeyed to his deathbed to pray for him. Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s shrine is a popular place for pilgrimages still seeking the truth.

Before moving to the next section, let’s pay attention to some insightful points in regards to Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s biography that can inspire us. We can say Salman\(^{(AM)}\) actually lived as a journeyer inside and out. He always liked to make his current state more ideal. He fully distinguished between the current and desired situation by constantly moving from the first to the second. Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s horizons involved new struggles and discoveries. In the outward world he traveled from Persia to Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Saudi, and he finally returned back to Persia, the same land, but with a completely different identity. This new identity was a revision of the one the nature gifted him with. Not only Ruzbih changed to Salman\(^{(AM)}\), but also a true seeker has found his aim, and a restless individual has rested in eternity. As we will see later the temporary joined eternity within Salman\(^{(AM)}\). He followed his special path without copying others. Salman\(^{(AM)}\) tasted the faith in accordance with his taste, not a popular taste. He was not merely one
among Zoroastrians, Christians, and Muslims like the others. Salman\(^{(AM)}\)'s story is alive for us because still it asks us to become clear about our own faiths, empower our commitments to more sublime values, and show us the human potential to break the binding chains of stereotypes, mass medias, everydayness, losing ourselves in business, and belittling the basic questions of life, the world, and truth in a nihilistic era. His history inspires us to not leave the search of truth in spite of facing many problems. He shows that for the sake of truth it is worthwhile to leave our usual locations, relatives, and even ideas. Overcoming the limitations of space and time is one aspect of his journey. Salman\(^{(AM)}\) gives us a hope that the truth is not very far from us but needs only a true commitment and journey. He accepted physical slavery, but did not become hopeless or limited to others’ conception of truth. His criticism of the first bishop shows us that behaviors are good criteria to evaluate clergymen; he is devoted to the truth not to the individual. He tested the prophet to be sure of his honesty. He left his hometown to seek out religious truth at its source; he was careful with whom he listened to. He was open to the “other” and at the same time he was cautious not to lose himself.

As we will see in the following, faith was a self-realizing process for him. Salman\(^{(AM)}\) appears to me
like Buddha who has broken the chains that had been established by his family. He has reached enlightenment, preached his faith, and has also married spirituality with socio-political affairs. Finally, Islam for Salman(AM) was not something merely external, but he also experienced it in his soul. This point reminds us of the connection between Salman(AM) and Musalman.

2) FAITH IN ACTION

The long and intensive journey of Salman(AM) granted him a great wisdom of life that formed his way of thoughts and actions. His profound background in different faiths as well as his personal quest for the truth enriched his wisdom. I would like to share with you his enlightened wisdom on three subjects that inform our ideas about Zuhd (asceticism), government, and the knowledge.

There are several accounts narrating Salman(AM)’s speech of asceticism that bring us into the heart of his inspiring wisdom. By forming brotherhood among inhabitants and immigrants, the prophet
made Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} and Abu al-Darda\textsuperscript{(AR)} brothers\textsuperscript{3}. Once, Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} paid a visit to Abu Ad-Darda and found his wife dressed in shabby clothes. Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} asked her why she was in that state. She replied, your brother Abu Ad-Darda is not interested in the luxuries of this world. Meanwhile Abu Ad-Darda came and prepared a meal for Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)}. Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} requested Abu Ad-Darda to eat with him, but Abu Ad-Darda said, "I am fasting." Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} said, "I am not going to eat unless you eat." So, Abu Ad-Darda ate with him. Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} decided to stay that night there. After a part of the night had passed, Abu Ad-Darda' got up to spend the rest of night praying, but Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} asked him to sleep and Abu Ad-Darda complied. After a short time Abu Ad-Darda again got up to pray but Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} told him to go back to sleep. When it was the last moments of the night, Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} told him to get up then, and both of them offered the night prayer. Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} told Abu Ad-Darda, "Your Lord has a right over you, your body ought to be cared for, and you have obligations to your family; so you must do all these things" Abu Ad-Darda came to the Prophet and narrated the whole story. The Prophet said, "Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} has spoken the truth." This is how

\textsuperscript{3} Although, there are some narrations that the prophet made a brotherhood between Salman and Abuzar, but this issue is not a crucial part of this discussion.
Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} guided his brother when he was being overly ascetic. There is one more confrontation of Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} with Abu Ad-Darda which happened later, when Abu Ad-Darda became the governor of Damascus and Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} governor of Al-Mada’in.

Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} received a letter from his brother Abu ad-Darda, saying: After we departed from each other, God granted me great wealth and a few kids. I am living in the holy land. So I would like you to join me to become sanctified. Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} replied that he should be aware that happiness is not having wealth and kids, but is being patient and productive with your knowledge. Also, the land doesn’t make us sacred, but rather what we do and what we provide for hereafter.

These two opposing thoughts teach the true faithful the nature of sanctity. The first story happened in Medina while Muslims were living in difficult economical circumstances. The second happened in the new lands of Islam that brought very great wealth and eased the Muslims’ lives. Advice for asceticism was expected in Medina and for easiness in Damascus while Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} gave the opposite advice. Being a good Muslim involves living according to principles and caring for our heart and soul. The next narration presents a complete image of Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)}’s concept of asceticism.
One day Salman\(^{(AM)}\) was managing his yearly expenses in advance. An ascetic saw him and criticized Salman\(^{(AM)}\), accusing him of lack of *Zuhd* (asceticism): “who knows maybe you will pass away today or tomorrow”. Salman\(^{(AM)}\) answered “why do you not think of my life as you think of my death? Do you not know that if a person cannot afford his daily life, he becomes anxious and impatient? But when he can afford he becomes free from pressure and stress”. At this point, Salman\(^{(AM)}\) did not see a conflict between worldly and otherworldly affairs. If my heart is fully affected by worldly interests I am not a Sufi or ascetic even if I have nothing. If my heart is devoted fully to good and virtue I am a Sufi and ascetic even if I have plenty of wealth and commodities. The real matter is who my heart’s lord is and my spirit’s owner as Rums says:

چیست دنیا از خدا غافل بدن
نه قماش و نقره و میزان و زن
آب در کشتی هلاک کشتی است
آب اندر زیر کشتی پشتی است

“What is the world we are to leave? It is being unaware of God, not simply living with commodities, money, business, and family. Water is savior when run under the ship; it is killer when it enters in.”
As a result, Salman\(^{(AM)}\)'s approach to asceticism is a balanced one. A true Muslim first of all makes a balance among a variety of powers within including ambition and despair, lust and sexual aversion, fear and anger, passion and feeling, reason and love, and overkill and neglecting. Then, he makes a balance in relationships among the members of his family to give them their rights while being a loving spouse, caring parent, and nice relative to spend quality times with. It can spread over friends, colleagues, neighbors, and go forth to be good, beneficial, and empathetic to improve peace, happiness, and cooperation. In Islamic morality, all constructive relationships are based on the marriage between sociability and individual authenticity. We can discover this fact in Salman\(^{(AM)}\)'s government.

Salman\(^{(AM)}\) served for about two decades as the governor of *al-Mada‘in* (Ctesiphon), a region that had recently converted to Islam and had experienced the strong Sasanian Empire. He did not appear as an emperor or a king who lived in an ivory tower but rather went among the people. Since he was humble, Salman\(^{(AM)}\) behaved as a layman. Once when he was passing the bazaar, a traveler from Damascus saw him thinking he was a delivery man. So he asked Salman\(^{(AM)}\) to carry his luggage. While Salman\(^{(AM)}\) was transferring the luggage, some people saw him and respectfully
offered him help, but he said he himself wanted to do it. The traveler from Damascus was surprised by these respectful offers, and asked who this man was. He answered that he is Salman\(^{(AM)}\), the devoted companion of the prophet and the governor of their state. The traveler was shocked and apologized and asked Salman\(^{(AM)}\) to leave off carrying the luggage to himself. Salman\(^{(AM)}\) did not leave the job, saying that he was doing this for the sake of God and would not leave it till he reached the destination.

Salman\(^{(AM)}\) was also accustomed to distribute his gubernatorial salary to the poor as charity, saying “I like to eat by the work of my own hands”. He remained true to his convictions without seeking to excuse himself although he had good excuses. Once in Medina, the second Caliph asked Salman\(^{(AM)}\), “Do I look like a king or a caliph for the prophet?” He answered: “If you spend even a penny of the Muslims’ tax in an illegal way you are king; otherwise you are a caliph”. This honest and true-to-self remark of Salman\(^{(AM)}\) affected the caliph to the point that he cried. Imam Ghazzali wrote that the caliph was encouraging Salman\(^{(AM)}\) to tell him his deficiencies because of Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s clear, passionate, and brave character. Salman\(^{(AM)}\) usually paid his expenses through mat weaving. One day the Caliph sent him a letter denouncing five different matters: his lack of control of the previous
governor of al-Mada’in, Huzaifa^{(AR)}, his living like poor people, not spending his salary, dealing overly gently with people, and not showing people the might of the government. Salman^{(AM)} replied using some verses of the Quran and traditions of the prophet, saying that a pious person is not allowed to be a pessimist, a spy, or be negative to others; living like a poor person is better than being greedy, stealing, or talking much about oneself. He continued that he spent his salary for his judgment day and did not care about the taste of food; being in service of his people—which was also the habit of the prophet—is better than being proud while committing sins. He did not want to make a show of his power to the people, but rather to help them learn and practice better the Quran and al-Sunnah.

It is said that Salman^{(AM)} held an open exegetical course of the Quran in the Castle of al-Mada’in to improve people’s knowledge of the book. He picked Sura or the chapter Joseph to discuss an attractive story that includes remarks about government, honesty, piety, modesty, cooperation, management of crucial moments, and the results of both good and bad deeds.

Salman^{(AM)}’s governance was a role model of the Islamic concept of Wilayah a system that helps, instead of forces people to understand and practice Islam through managing daily affairs toward both
present and perpetual happiness. Here, he did not show force as we also see in the letter of the Caliph. Salman\(^{(AM)}\) did not allow the new position to change him at all. He believed strongly that taking power is an opportunity to serve people, not a chance to sell oneself to people or gather more money. Indeed, Salman\(^{(AM)}\) was at the level of perfection in that he transcended both pride and prestige, rather than allowing these to gain the upper hand. The inner wealth of Salman\(^{(AM)}\) was such that he was able to easily avoid the seduction of external wealth.

The last point brings us to Salman\(^{(AM)}\)'s wisdom and knowledge. Imam Ali\(^{(AS)}\) described him as Luqman\(^{(AS)}\) the Wise, which captures a title of a chapter of the Quran. The Imam added that Salman\(^{(AM)}\) is one of us, the family of the prophet. Where can you find one like to Salman\(^{(AM)}\) who is like Luqman al-Hakim\(^{(AS)}\) who knows the first and the last subjects of the true knowledge. He is an endless ocean\(^4\).

Salman\(^{(AM)}\) was very keen to know more. Once he brought his visitor to the sea of Al-Mada’in, asking him to drink as much as possible. After that, he asked if his drink reduced the amount of water in the sea. He answered that it did not. Salman\(^{(AM)}\)

\(^{4}\) Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Vol. 18, p. 36-38.
continued just as the water has not reduced so is wisdom not exhausted regardless the degree of learning. He spent several nights with the prophet alone to learn more, as is narrated by the prophet’s wife. Salman\(^{(AM)}\) wanted people to learn the meaning of ritual and the nature of religion, instead of limiting them to the superficial. This is why he translated the Quran to Persian. It is said that Salman\(^{(AM)}\) translated the first chapter of the Quran, *Suraah al-Fatiyah*, into Persian to help new converts to Islam to recite it in their praying (*Salat*) till they can read the original Arabic *Sura*. Additionally, it is narrated that he wrote a book on Catholicism that shows his interest in dialogue among religions and faiths. The Prophet’s saying that Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s chest is an endless ocean inspires us to think and learn more from him, not in the mode of an historical survey, but as the currently forgotten search for faith’s true nature.

3) THE EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE FAITH

Significant questions can be raised regarding the relationship of the prophet and his family to ordinary Muslims. Is there an impenetrable separation between them which merely allows one side to be admired and the other side to admire?
The Quranic verses and Islamic traditions give a negative answer to this question. They emphasize what is common between the prophet’s family and the people so that the latter may learn from the former, follow them, and obtain a sharing in their holy experiences. From this perspective, faith is a path that should renew us every moment. Regarding God (55:29) “every moment He is in a new state” and in regards to the faithful they must constantly pray that God may “Guide us to the straight path” (اَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ المُسْتَقِيمَ). Therefore, the search for truth and faith in action are steps toward an existential perfection and enlightened fulfillment. If we would like to use the Islamic terms, we can say faith (Iman) has three levels: knowing the truth (علم الیقين), experiencing the truth (عين الیقين), and living with truth (حق الیقين). This is like first becoming aware of the fire, then seeing it, and finally burning within. Of course, reaching the highest level of faith is not obligatory for all the faithful, but it is a further option for the ambitious which involves a greater struggle.

Salman (AM) was one among the seekers who reached that level and became an example of faith. So, talking about Salman (AM) is a discussion first of the different levels of faith and secondly is a motivation for aiming higher. I would like to discuss these two points more.
Usually we have a one-sided view of things. For example the journey toward heaven and the truth is often viewed in mostly human terms. As the faithful, however, we must recognize that the truth is more eager to seek us than we are to seek it. The prophet Muhammad once said: “Paradise is eager to meet Ali\(^{(AS)}\), Ammar\(^{(AR)}\), Salman\(^{(AM)}\), and Abuzar\(^{(AR)}\).” It means, although the majority of people are interested in going to Paradise, only a few reach the peak of perfection that heaven and Paradise is expecting of them. Out of the prophet’s companions, Salman\(^{(AM)}\) and Abuzar were notable for reaching some of these highest levels of spiritual perfection. At the same time, there is a big difference between Salman\(^{(AM)}\) and Abuzar as the two role models of faithful. Imam Ali Ibn al-Hussain\(^{(AS)}\) said:

( والله لو علم أبوذر ما في قلب Salman لقتلله و لقد اخى رسول الله بينهما. فما ظنكم بسائر الخلق، إن العلماء صعب مصعب، لا يتحمله الا نبيُّ مرسهل، او ملك مقرّب، او عبد مؤمن امتنى الله قلبه للأيمان. و إنما صار Salman من العلماء لأنه أمره ما اهل البيت، فلذلك نسبته إلى العلماء

“By God, although the prophet made them brothers, if Abuzar had known what was in the heart of Salman\(^{(AM)}\) he would have killed him.” If this sort

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of opposition could exist between two men of high spirituality, “then what do you think is the case with other people? The knowledge of [divine] scholars is very hard to reach except for one of these three: the transmitted prophet, the close angel, and the faithful whose heart has been tested for faith. Salman⁴⁹ became one of these scholars because he was a person from our household; this is why he is accounted among the scholars.”

This insightful Hadith states clearly that the perfectibility of faith is compatible with the perfectibility of our being. That is to say the faith gives us an opportunity to explore and realize our potential. There is a famous poem of Imam Ali⁴⁹ saying:

أَتَزعُمُ أَنَّكَ جَرمٌ صَغير
وَفيكَ انطُوى العَلَمُ الأَكبر
دَوَاَوْكَ فيكَ وَما تُبصِرُ
وَذاَوُكَ مَنْكَ وَما تُشْعَرُ

“Do you think that you are a little mass? A greater world is inside you. Your remedy is in you but you cannot see it. Your pain originates from you but you do not understand.”

We have within us a potentiality for permanent happiness, peace, and close association with God. The actualization of this potentiality is accomplished through Religion. This is another form of the Quranic saying:
“O faithful, give your answer to God and his messenger, when he calls you to that which will give you life; and know that God comes between the person and his heart, and that to Him you shall all be gathered” (8:24).

The path to God involves traversing long ways from us to God, from God to God, and from God to people. Each step has its unique particularities and struggles and leads to profound existential findings. Therefore, the higher faithful must not belittle the lower because of lack of some behaviors and duties, and the lower is not allowed to envy the higher and their gifts. Also, the faithful is advised to keep the spiritual secrets hidden as the Persian poem of Hafiz is told about Mansoor Hallaj:

گفت آن یار کز او گشت سر دار بلند
جرمش این بود که اسرار هویدا می‌کرد

“He said: this loyal friend, who gave the gallows a good reputation, committed the crime of revealing the secrets.”

Encouraging and inspiring people to reach the higher levels of faith demonstrated the core of Sufism and the spirit of the prophet. This is Rumi’s
understanding of the prophet’s *Isra* and *Miraj* (the night journey of the ascension):

"Get up for an ascension if you a part of the messenger’s people. Kiss the moon’s face if you are on the high roof. He split the moon, why are you like a [dark] cloud? Why are you so lazy while he is so fast and elegant?"

Salman\(^{(AM)}\) is one clear example who reached the highest level of faith and enjoyed the prophet’s spiritual findings. The two main Islamic denominations, Sunni and Shia, have narrated that once when there was an argument between the *Muhajirs* and the *Ansar* that each of the two parties claimed that Salman\(^{(AM)}\) belonged to them. At this juncture the Prophet put an end to the dispute with a decisive order and said: "Salman\(^{(AM)}\) is neither *Muhajir* nor *Ansar*. He is one of us. He is one of my Household." We know that recognizing the first Muslims as two groups (*Muhajir* and *Ansar*) originated from the Islamic practice to characterize people by their faith, rather than tribe. This new identity was a progression to recognize people’s faith, knowledge, and free will. But in discussion of
Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} we reach a higher state of religion, higher than ordinary good Muslims. This is the stage of “household” (اهل البيت), the family of the prophet in faith. The holy Quran narrates Hazrat Ibrahim\textsuperscript{(AS)}’s saying that (“Whosever follow me, he is surely of me” (14:36).

It declares the connection in faith as the substantial bond that is more important than physical relatives regarding existential accomplishment and spiritual fulfillment. The verse of Tathir (33:33) manifests the purification as the basic characteristic of the spiritual family of the prophet. Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)}’s life and his endless struggle toward truth can be considered as a clear sign that he had been attempting to reach such a spiritual level. It is narrated that some people came to Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} in the time of his power in al-Mada’in asking him if he was Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} al-Farsi? He replied that he was. They continued and asked him if he was the companion of the holy prophet? He answered that he did not know. On account of his humble and simple way of life, they doubted whether he was really Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} and decided to seek the true one. Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)} told them, “I am who you are looking for. I saw the prophet and used to stay with him. But his true companion is he who will enter paradise with him. What can I do for you?” This story shows Salman\textsuperscript{(AM)}’s great ambition and goal to
live in heaven with the prophet. The fact that the prophet repeated this statement about Salman\(^{(AM)}\) in different times and places proves his recognition of Salman\(^{(AM)}\)'s high degree of faith. Salman\(^{(AM)}\) reached the level that Imam Sadiq\(^{(AS)}\) said: Do not call Salman\(^{(AM)}\) of Pars, but call Salman\(^{(AM)}\) of Muhammad\(^{(SAWS)}\).

I would like to end this section asking what was the origin of purification and perfection of Salman\(^{(AM)}\)? There are several Hadiths who refer to his high level of knowledge as we said in relation to Abuzar and Luqman\(^{(AS)}\). One key point comes from this Hadith: It is said that Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib\(^{(AS)}\) on his way to the battle of Siffin met a Monk who converted to Islam through facing Imam Ali\(^{(AS)}\) and decided to accompany Imam in the battle. He was martyred there. After the battle, the Imam came to his body, prayed for him and praised him highly saying, “He is one of our ‘household’ (أهل البيت)\(^6\).” There are plenty of Hadiths that help us to understand more but we have no time to repeat them here. The conclusion is that in regards to the Shia infallible Imams’ Hidiths this special knowledge covers at least awareness of other religions and faiths. The first subject of knowledge

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here refers to the previous religions, and the last subject of true knowledge (علم الآخر) refers to the prophet’s religion, and the endless ocean refers to the truth of the prophet and Imam Ali (عِلم أَلْبِی و علم علیّ و امر آلّنبی و امر علیّ).

As a result, this discussion of Salman (AM) highlights the following significant issues: the loyal search for truth, stability in higher values, constant struggle, having authenticity, recognizing the reality of currently neglected graded levels of interior perfection, practicing faith to the same extent we serve and help people toward peace and happiness, possessing an ambition for the truth as well as moderation regarding worldly luxuries, examining the faith, and of course having interest to learn from other religions. This is the story of human capacity that was realized in and revealed through Salman (AM).

I would like to finish my speech by some Du’aas.

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7 See al-Rijal Kashshi, section of Salmaan al-Farsi, Hadith No. 26 & 26 & 37.
CLOSING DU’AAS

May God help us to obtain more knowledge about and from Salman\(^{(AM)}\) so that we may take part in establishing a better family, community and world.

May God make us more closely approach Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s faith, understanding, character, and devotion to the Truth.

May God inspire our community with Salmaam\(^{(AM)}\)’s deep knowledge and correct practice of Islam.

May God give us a share of the intimate friendship between Salman\(^{(AM)}\) and the holy prophet.

May God for Salman\(^{(AM)}\)’s honor give us a higher ambition and motivation for the transcendental values, happiness here and hereafter, and a higher degree of faith.

And May God make our relationship with the prophet and his family more productive and inspiring.