

THE  
ALL-EMBRACING  
MESSAGE OF ISLAM





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MESSAGE OF ISLAM

HIS HOLINESS

SHEIKH ELNAYYAL ABU GROON

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Library of Congress Control Number:	2016911999	
ISBN:	Hardcover	978-1-5144-9973-3
	Softcover	978-1-5144-9972-6
	eBook	978-1-5144-9971-9

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Print information available on the last page.

Rev. date: 08/08/2016

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Sheikh Elnayyal Abu Groon, descendent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), was born in Sudan, 1948 in Abu Groon, the home of the Sufi traditional institution of his renowned grandfather Sheikh Muhammad Abu Groon. His father Sheikh Abdel Qadir was a unique reformer of virtues upon the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He raised his son upon loving Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and living pure Islam. He graduated in Law, University of Khartoum in 1970, has been High Court Judge and Legal Affairs Minister. Written many books on revision of Islamic thought and heritage that created scholarly debates and shed light on the roots of current world tension.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Prof Omnia Amin for initiating the translation of the Arabic version of this book. I am also grateful for Mr Rick London for his editing remarks and for Ms Diana Baker, Ms Joanna Wilkinson and Ms Hilary Cumberland for their helpful comments. I also thank Dr Abdalla Yassin OBE, Dr Khalid Habbani, Dr Manar Bushra, Dr Mohamed Yassin, Mr Mohammed El-Amin El-Tigany, and Dr Saad El-Din Hussein for their contribution to the translation of the first edition in 2008. I also thank Dr Abdalla Yassin OBE and Mrs Sadia Qamar for their effort in the current edition of this book. Above all, I thank God, the Merciful, for enabling me to attempt through this book to reflect a glimpse of Prophet Muhammad's message and mercy to all humanity.

Elnayyal Abu Groon  
6 June 2016



*To those who seek love, peace, and happiness yet they don't know they are Muslims.*

*To the followers of Abrahamic faith (Jews, Christians, Sabians, and Muslims) who lost their religious identity and belonging.*

*To the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) who do not know their status in the final message of Islam.*

*To the followers of the final message who excommunicated the People of the Book and other humans from the all-embracing message of Islam.*



In the name of Allah (God), the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

*We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as a universal Messenger to all people<sup>1</sup> (34:28).*

*O Prophet, verily, We have sent you as*

1. *An eternal paradigm*
2. *A bearer of good tidings*
3. *A herald*
4. *Inviting (people) to God, the Merciful, by His permission*
5. *A luminous source of light (33:45–46).*

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<sup>1</sup> The translation we have referred to are well-known English translations such as Yusuf Ali, Marmaduke Pickthall, A. J. Arberry, but our version is based on the Arabic Qur'an.



## INTRODUCTION

The mercy of God, the most Merciful, takes priority over His anger according to the *Qudsi Hadith*<sup>2</sup>: *'Indeed, My mercy surpassed My anger.'*<sup>3</sup> This hadith raises the following question: were messengers sent from God to deliver mercy to people, or to set up a scale of accountability to hold people responsible for their errors to punish them?

There is no doubt that what the messengers have delivered from God is mercy for humankind. However, a criterion for people's good and bad actions is needed to show them where these actions place them in relation to the endless mercy of God that He, the Creator, has intended and delivered to them. Knowing this, people are sure to incline to His mercy by doing good deeds and abandon their errors. Hence, the Merciful God overlooks their wrong deeds and does not hold them accountable for the sins they have earned. *'Your Lord is the Most Forgiving, the Lord of mercy, if He were to hold them for what they have earned [of sins], He would have hastened upon them the suffering'* (18:58).

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<sup>2</sup> Qudsi Hadith is a saying of God, The Merciful, other than the Holy Quran to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

<sup>3</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari.

The message of Islam is mercy from the merciful God if we agree that what had been delivered from Him through His messengers is mercy for people. However, some Muslim preachers chose the second part of the opening question as the main focal point of their way of *Da'wah* or preaching Islam by not emphasising mercy, but focusing on the punishment of God. Thus, they used the measure of people's good and bad actions to frighten, terrorize, and threaten people. They even drove them to a state of despair and hopelessness from the mercy of God.

As for those people who do not respond to these preacher's terrifying warnings of God's punishment, they are not only persecuted but could be executed! Therefore, those preachers distanced people from God's mercy, while God said in the *Qudsi Hadith*, '*My mercy surpassed My anger*.' As He also said in the Holy Quran, '*My mercy encompassed everything*' (7:156). Isn't it more appropriate for those preachers to present to the people this mercy, which takes in everything including anger?

Many people, however, committed the crime of separating the Message from the Messenger (PBUH), claiming the ability of interpreting the message themselves without the need to refer to the one who delivered it. Furthermore, they gave themselves the right to hold the Prophet himself accountable for their own innovations, rulings, and interpretations in an attempt to find fault with his conveyance of the message, as if God has not chosen for His message the most befitting of all His creation in terms of knowledge, morality, and beauty of form! Little did they know that consequent to this separation, they have grievously misjudged and strayed through their misinterpretations and misconceptions in comprehending the mercy that God has bestowed upon people!

The message of God is inseparable from the one (PBUH) who delivered it. God, describing the message, said, '*Surely, We have been sending Mercy from your Lord. It is He who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing*' (44:5-6).

Therefore, the high moral character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the perfect representation and soul of the Holy Quran, which is the message of mercy from God. Thus, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is in essence, the mercy of God, the Merciful, *And We have not sent you (O Muhammad), but as mercy for all creation*' (21:107). He

(PBUH) is the mercy for all people because mercy includes everyone. '*We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as a universal messenger to all people*' (34:28). He (PBUH) also said about himself, *Indeed, I am a gift of mercy [to all creation]*<sup>4</sup> thus confirming that for the message of God, he (PBUH) is the sole exemplar and authority because he is the mercy, which is the message known as Islam.

He (PBUH) said, '*Verily, I have been sent to perfect high moral qualities*<sup>5</sup>.' These are the moral qualities for which God, the Merciful, had praised him, and with them He sent him to teach all people, *And indeed, you are of a great integrity of morals*' (68:4). Therefore, he was sent to complete and perfect the highest moral attributes, i.e., to approve and seal what has been preached by the previous messengers (may the prayers of God be upon them) since they have all been sent to form virtuous communities. So he (PBUH) is the seal of the messages, the first in creation<sup>6</sup>, and the aim (*Qiblah*) of the prayers (of God, the Merciful, His angels, and the believers): '*Verily, God and His angels pray upon the Prophet. O you who have attained to faith, pray upon him and accept him wilfully [as your guide and role model]*' (33:56).

Since his Message is the all-embracing of all previous messages, God, the Merciful set him as the perfect model for humanity to follow; and the summit of the goal for those seeking human perfection and testified to that by making the Prophet's throwing His own throwing<sup>7</sup>, obeying him is obeying God<sup>8</sup>, pledging to him is pledging to God<sup>9</sup>, and his order is the Divine Order of God<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Mustadrak Al-Haakim.

<sup>5</sup> Musnad Ahmad.

<sup>6</sup> 'A man asked the Prophet since when was he a Prophet; Prophet Muhammad replied: Before the creation of Adam.' – Musnad Ahmad.

<sup>7</sup> '... and it was not you who threw (sand into their eyes, O Prophet), when you did throw it, but it was God who threw it' [8:17].

<sup>8</sup> 'Whoever obeys the Prophet has indeed obeyed God' [4:80].

<sup>9</sup> 'Indeed, those who pledge their allegiance to you have indeed pledged their allegiance to God, the hand of God above their hands' [48:10].

<sup>10</sup> 'The command you make is not yours (but is in fact the Divine Order of God, The Merciful)' [3:128].



## THE AIM OF THE MESSAGE

The school of Muhammad (PBUH) is indeed the greatest school in the history of humanity, as God, the Merciful, in His Glory and Holiness, has Himself praised its founder, Muhammad (PBUH), in His eternal speech (The Holy Quran) for his high moral qualities and has sworn an oath on that. God has the utmost greatest authoritative command over people. Hence, He is in no need to swear an oath to the people to reinforce His words or actions! Therefore, His oath is but a declaration of the one (Muhammad (PBUH)) whom He has described in the Holy Quran as the greatest and praised him for his high moral qualities. God says, '*I swear by* "Noon" and the Pen and what they write. By the Grace of your Lord, you (O Muhammad) are not mad or possessed. And indeed, you deserve and shall have a lasting reward. And indeed, you are of a great integrity of morals' (68:1–4). Hence, Muhammad (PBUH) is the best and greatest teacher in the school of human life, and for that reason, in his own words he has stated that he has been sent as a teacher<sup>11</sup>.

Of all the prophets, Muhammad's essence (PBUH) was the first to be created, and he was the last of them to be sent with this sealing message as the teacher for all humanity: *And We have indeed sent you*

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<sup>11</sup> Sunan Ibn Majah

*(O Muhammad) to all people, a bearer of glad tidings and a herald, but most people do not know' (34:28).*

Certainly, this teaching is the purpose of His message. He (PBUH) has been sent as the divine example of human perfection to be followed by all people, inspiring them by his great integrity of morals. Just by seeing him (PBUH) or hearing him speak, people's conduct would settle upon the straight path without straying or having any doubts. Hearts would incline toward him immediately upon seeing him or knowing about him as his manners were free from any kind of rudeness: '*Had you (O Muhammad) been harsh or hard-hearted, they would have left you*' (3:159). In him, souls find all what they seek and love. Hence, they will be at peace and free from anxiety as they understand their purpose; and their path will be clarified and made simple by this great teacher: '*And We have bestowed upon you the knowledge (O Muhammad) to clarify to people what has been sent to them*' (16:44).

This great teacher (PBUH) has been sent to all people to teach them the high moral qualities, which distinguished him from the rest of the creation including prophets, messengers, witnesses of the truth, and saints. God, the Creator of the universe, supreme and divine in His domain, praised Muhammad (PBUH) for these moral qualities and described them as great: '*And indeed, you are of a great integrity of morals*' (68:4).

Prophet Muhammad, the teacher of good conduct and modesty, said, '*Verily, I have been sent to perfect high moral qualities*'<sup>12</sup>. Even those who have faith and do righteous deeds are in need of him, for without him, they are in darkness as God has sent him as '*a luminous source of light*' (33:46); '*So that he may lead those who have faith and do good deeds from darkness to light*' (65:11). Achieving this is the peak of human aspiration. He said, '*On the day of resurrection, there is nothing that exceeds good conduct on the scale of a person of faith.*'<sup>13</sup> And this, indeed, is the aim of the message.

One should not think that devotion to fasting and night prayers completes ones worship, and that this is the sole aim of the message, so

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<sup>12</sup> Musnad Ahmad

<sup>13</sup> Sunan Tirmithi

that people may say that such a person ‘is the pigeon of the mosque’<sup>14</sup> (i.e. a devout worshipper). The people who fast and gossip slanderously about others behind their backs have actually broken their fast, as if they were eating the flesh of the one whom they speak ill of: *‘And do not spy nor backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would then abhor the one [who does that!]’* (49:12). The Messenger also says, *‘Many are the people who fast and gain nothing from their fasting except hunger and thirst’*<sup>15</sup>.

Likewise, those whose prayers have not prevented them from evil and immoral deeds are equal to those who have not prayed, since God has prescribed prayer as a means of protection from evil and immoral deeds: *‘Surely, prayer prevents from evil and immoral deeds’* (29:45). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the most truthful, said, *‘With high moral qualities, a person of faith reaches the status of one who is devoutly praying and fasting’*<sup>16</sup>.

As has been emphasised, high moral qualities are the aim of the message and whoever is described to have these qualities, in fact, is the closest to the Messenger of God on the day when one is most in need of salvation: *‘Indeed, the most beloved and closest to me of you in the hereafter are those of the highest moral qualities’*<sup>17</sup>. *‘It was said to the Messenger of God, Muhammad (PBUH), that a woman prays the whole night and fasts the whole day, but some of her words are hurtful to her neighbours. He said, ‘There is no good in her, she is in hell’*<sup>18</sup>.

Good conduct differentiates from fasting and night prayer by not exposing the person to characteristics of boasting, pride, and vanity that wipe out good deeds. Good conduct is also a virtue that extends to others in a manner similar to charitable spending. However, the latter might get affected by boasting and undue reminding of others of favours the person has done, as the Merciful said, *‘And don’t remind others of favours [that you do], proudly boasting’* (74:6). Therefore, prayer and fasting only benefits the individual performing these acts even if

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<sup>14</sup> This is a phrase used to describe those who spend most of their time in the mosques.

<sup>15</sup> Sunan Tirmithi

<sup>16</sup> Majma’ al-Zawa’id

<sup>17</sup> Sahih Ibn Habban

<sup>18</sup> Mustadrak Al-Hakim.

they are safe from affliction, while good conduct is always safe from affliction; and moreover, its benefit extends to others.

The teacher (PBUH) continued guiding people and clarifying the ethics and the high moral qualities to elevate them from the ‘darkness’ of misconduct, rough dealings, tense relationships, and expression of anger to the light of brotherhood, good conduct, love, and tolerance. He elaborated that, *‘Religion is interaction with good conduct.’* This good conduct has been the foundation of interaction. Therefore, compulsion did not exist in religion in all aspects of life in people’s interaction between themselves, between a ruler and his people, or between people and their creator, and even when preaching. The Holy Quran states: *‘Would you then compel people to become believers?’* (10:99)

Here, the message shines brightly to illuminate its aim clearly, as the Master of high moral qualities explains: *‘He who harms a thimmi [a person who is living with Muslims upon a covenant of peaceful coexistence, i.e., citizenship] has indeed harmed me and will answer to me on the Day of Resurrection’*<sup>19</sup>. No one should be considered inferior or discriminated against because of their faith nor should they be forced to change their faith and accept another. It is a religious obligation for human beings to treat fellow human beings in accordance with their humanity without compulsion or humiliation, as the great teacher said, *‘Religion is interaction with good conduct.’*

He presented an example of this principle himself when he stood in respect as a funeral passed by. Then someone objected and pointed out that the funeral was for a Jew. In response, the Prophet (PBUH) said, *‘Is he not a human being?’*<sup>20</sup> When his companions once asked him to lay a curse upon their persecutors, he replied, *‘I have not been sent to lay curses, but I have been sent as a mercy’*<sup>21</sup>.

A non-believer once entered the mosque of the Prophet (PBUH) and urinated in it. The Prophet’s companions rushed to him, criticising and terrifying him, and wanted to beat him. The Prophet (PBUH) stopped them, consoled him, and said to him, *‘Arab brother, this mosque is not intended for what you have done, but it is built for the reverence of God, the Merciful.’* The integrity of the Prophet so

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<sup>19</sup> Kashf al-Khafa’

<sup>20</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

<sup>21</sup> Sahih Muslim

captivated the non-believer, who there and then embraced Islam and prayed, 'O God, have mercy on me and Muhammad, but on no one else.' The Prophet (PBUH) gently pointed out to him, *'You have constrained what is infinite'*<sup>22</sup>.

The Prophet had once been asleep with his sword cushioned underneath him when a non-believer snatched it and said to him, 'Who will save you from me, Muhammad?' He said, '*God, the Merciful.*' At that moment, the sword slipped from the man's hand and the Prophet took it and said to him, *'Now, who will save you from me?*' The non-believer said, 'Your clemency O Muhammad.' So the Prophet (PBUH), there and then, left him without compelling him to say, 'There is no God but God, the Merciful' to become a Muslim. He said, *'He who kills a thimmi will never smell the scent of heaven even though its scent can be detected over the distance traversed in forty years'*<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Sahih Ibn Habban

<sup>23</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari



## THE ONENESS OF THE MESSAGE

God said to Muhammad (PBUH), '*To you (O Muhammad), we sent by the divine truth, the Book, confirming the books that came before it and embracing them*' (5:48). And He revealed each of them (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) as a perfect entity with no faults therein from Him. God said, '*For all we have ordained among you a portal and a clear path [to God]*' (5:48). He also said to them (the people of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad), '*So pursue ambitiously the virtues and good deeds,*' (5:48) in order to create virtuous communities. Hence, all religions from God, the Merciful, are the all-embracing Islam—one God, one Message.

However, people have distorted and misrepresented the meaning of the scriptures to serve their purposes (to dominate people with, or to transform it into a political system). This act of changing the meaning of the words or their contexts is unacceptable. Also, it is the cause of the apparent disagreement and conflict between religions. This distortion and misrepresentation, as debatable and unacceptable as it is, should still be dealt with in accordance with the aim of the message, which is high moral qualities, as they are the essence of interaction in religion. Therefore, the one who disagrees with the message should not be forced to give up what he believes in as it is up to God, the Merciful, to judge his case, as He said, '*To God, the Merciful, you*

*shall all return, and He will then inform you on what you used to dissent in' (5:48). As to those who remained steadfast and committed to the original scriptures of their religion, they shall have their reward from God, glory be to Him, who said, 'Surely, those who have faith [the people of Prophet Muhammad], those who returned to God [upon the way of prophet, Moses], the supporters [of Jesus upon the way of God: Christians], and the Sabians<sup>24</sup> whosoever believes in God Almighty and the Day After (the Day of Judgement) and does good deeds will have their reward from their Lord, and neither shall fear befall on them nor shall they grieve' (2:62).*

The book of the children of Israel or the people of Moses is made up of the commandments and the *Torah* that God has revealed unto His messenger, Moses (may peace be upon him) and He named it the *Book of Moses* as He said, *'And before this was the book of Moses sent as a guide and mercy, and this book [the Quran], which confirms it, sent in an Arabic tongue to forewarn the wrongdoers and to give glad tidings to those who better their conduct'* (46:12). Therefore, since the *Torah* is a holy book, whoever denies it has surely rejected what has been revealed unto Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Moreover, the law of the *Torah* has been further approved by God, the Merciful, in the message of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in his book, the Holy Quran: *'We ordained therein (in the Torah) for them (the people of Moses) that a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds, their equivalent in seeking justice and whoever grants his forgiveness, this shall be atonement for him. And those who do not judge by what God has revealed are indeed the wrongdoers'* (5:45). This proves that Islam is the message of God delivered to people by all His messengers from Prophet Adam to Prophet Muhammad (prayers and blessings be upon them).

The Holy Quran also reveals: *'And we followed in their [those prophets] footsteps with Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming the Torah that is before him, and We gave him the Injeel [the gospel] wherein there is guidance and light, and confirming the Torah that is before it, and*

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<sup>24</sup> A monotheistic sect equivalent to the People of the Book. Theories about the source of their monotheism vary from being *Noahide Laws* observers before Prophet Abraham, through adherents to the Psalms of David, to being followers of John the Baptist.

*being a guidance and an exhortation to those who are heedful of God, the Merciful' (5:46).*

The Book of the Christians is the Gospel, which God had revealed unto Jesus, the son of Mary, and Spirit of God, may peace be upon him. It is a sacred book from God, and whoever denies it has in fact denied faith in what has been sent to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The gospel is the divine truth if they kept it safe. Today, Christians have all the right to hold by it, and they are not to be asked to leave it and believe in something else, as some Muslims think. However, some extremists among these Muslims may call for forcing the people of the book (the followers of the Prophets of children of Israel: Jewish and Christians) to abandon their divine portal (their book) and their God-chosen path in order to follow them, while the Merciful says, '*So, the people of the Injeel (Gospel) should judge by what God, the Merciful, has revealed therein' (5:47).*

If the people of the Book would explicitly observe and follow the truth of their holy books, they will reach a state of transcendence described by God in the verse: *'If they had effected the Torah and the Injeel (Bible), and that which was revealed unto them from their Lord, they would have certainly enjoyed abundance from above and from underfoot' (5:66).* Despite the misinterpretation in some their holy books sent to them, the Merciful said, *'Among them are people committed to the divine path, but the deeds of many of them are unrighteous' (5:66).*

Today, fault can only be found in them, not bringing into effect the complete teachings of the Torah and the *Injeel*, and not in them embracing the religion of Moses and Jesus! The Merciful said, *'Say (O Muhammad), O People of the Book! You are unto naught till you effect the Torah and the Injeel (Bible) and what had been revealed unto you from your Lord' (5:68).* Jesus, the son of Mary (peace be upon him) came to endorse Moses (peace be upon him) and his book. Also, the gospel confirms Moses' Torah further affirming the oneness of the message, which is the all-embracing Islam. The Merciful said, *'Jesus, the son of Mary, said, "O children of Israel! I am the messenger of God sent to you, confirming the Torah before me, and heralding the arrival of a messenger coming after me whose name is Ahmed (the worthy of all praises)' (61:6).*

The Book of the Muslims is the Holy Quran of Muhammad (PBUH) as revealed by God unto him: '*Confirming the books that came before it and embracing them*' (5:48). In relevance to this, God said, '*Indeed, the religion to God, the Graceful, is Islam*' (3:19). Meaning that all the religions delivered by the messengers (peace be upon them) convey one message, which is 'there is no God, only Allah,' and this is the all-embracing Islam. '*Those who deny God and His messengers by segregating between God and His messengers and saying, "We believe in some and deny others" wanting to create a dividing path. Truly, those are the disbelievers, and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating suffering*' (4:150–1).

Islam preserved the sanctity of the places of worship in all faiths without discriminating between them. The Merciful says, '*Had it not been for the intervention of God, safeguarding people by each other, there would surely have been destroyed monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of God is abundantly praised*' (22:40). It is therefore all Muslims' duty to respect all places of worship, be it a hermitage, church, synagogue, or monastery. They should not deprecate any of these places, but should sincerely respect their sacredness as they respect the sacredness of the mosque. Since '*those who have faith [the people of Prophet Muhammad], and those who returned to God [upon the way prophet Moses] and the supporters [of Jesus upon the way of God: Christians] and the Sabians whosoever believes in God Almighty and the Day After [the Day of Judgement] and does good deeds will have their reward from their Lord, and neither shall fear befall on them nor shall they grieve*' (2:62). This means that their religion is Islam because God, the Merciful, has accepted from them what they were upon and He does not accept anything but Islam as He said, '*And whosoever seeks a religion other than Islam (the all-embracing Islam), it will not be accepted from him*' (3:85). And also, because all messengers have been sent with this same Message.

The Merciful said, '*Wherein God undertook the covenant of the prophets (saying) regarding that which I have bestowed upon you of books and wisdom, heralded by the advent of a messenger (Muhammad PBUH) confirming that which you have, you are to believe in him and to advocate him. He said, "Do you consent [to this covenant] and pledge to be bound by it to Me?" They said, "We do consent." He said, "So bear witness and I shall be with you among those who bear witness"*' (3:81). This asserts the

all-embracing nature of the message of Prophet Muhammad and the fact that none of the messengers or prophets has deviated from its path. It is from here that the oneness of the message stems.

Since God has undertaken a pledge from all His Prophets and messengers (and consequently their followers) to believe in His messenger, Muhammad (PBUH), this entails acknowledging his leadership and supporting him in what he brought forth. God made them attest to that, and He, glory be to Him, also bore witness with them! So no Messenger has been sent without Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) having approved what he was sent to deliver. Therefore, it is a religious obligation to believe in all the messengers and their messages. None of them has deviated from Islam, which is the religion connected to God for which He has undertaken the pledge of the prophets and messengers to accept and comply with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Therefore, whoever rejects anything in the preceding religions has in fact denied their endorsement by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).



## WORSHIP (I'BAADAH)

If God, the Merciful, requires His creation to worship Him according to His words, *'And I have not created the jinn and the humans but to worship Me,'* (51:56) that is to say 'to know Me' then this implies that his creation should follow His messengers to know what He requires from them by way of living in all aspects of life. As the Merciful said, *'Surely, We have sent Our messengers with clear evidence [of their status], and with them we revealed the book and the scale of justice, so people may conduct themselves with fairness'* (57:25). This is what God requires from people: *'So people may conduct themselves with fairness,'* and to this aim, He has sent all His messengers.

God supported them with clear evidence of their status to be recognized by people and be distinguishable from them by their relationship with Him. He then sent with them the book to clarify His guidance for morality and good conduct and the scale of justice to set right all actions, and to observe discipline in all interactions to remove inequality and double standards in settling people's matters and affairs. He said in His Holy Quran, *'Woe be to those who deal in unfairness, those who when they claim their rights from people, they take their due, but when they should give [people their rights] by measure or by weight to them, they give less than is due'* (83:1-3).

So the messenger is the teacher of God's requirement for His creation in the way of worship so they may know Him. The messenger, Muhammad (PBUH), has indeed clarified to the people this requirement by saying to them, *'Religion is interaction with good conduct.'* This leaves no ground for any person to proclaim that God required humankind to be faultless and sinless. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the conveyer of God's message, who does not speak out of his own accord, said, *'If it had not been in your nature to sin, God would have done away with you and would have created people who sin, and then seek His forgiveness, and hence, He will grant it to them'*<sup>25</sup>.

God, the Merciful, also said in the Quran, *'Say, O my I'bad [humans and jinn who are created mainly for His worship] who have transgressed excessively upon themselves! Do not despair of the mercy of God for indeed, God forgives all sins. It is He who is ever Forgiving, Most Merciful'* (39:53). Thus, the message brought forth by every Prophet sent by God shows that there are wrongdoings called *sins* and *evil deeds* and that the Sovereign and Ruler, glory be to Him, will punish their doers in the hereafter. However, He may also forgive them because He described Himself as the all-Forgiving, Clement, Merciful, Pardoning and Forgiver of all sins.

Furthermore, had God not forgiven them and passed His judgement on them to enter hell, the Prophet (PBUH) may save them from punishment by his intercession that is granted for the grave sinners of his followers. The Prophet (PBUH) said, *'My intercession is for the grave sinners of my Ummah (followers of Muhammad and those who believe in him in all religions)'*<sup>26</sup>. God, the Merciful, said, *'Those (the Jews and the Christians) unto whom We have sent the revelation before it (the Quran) believe in it, and when it is recited to them they say we believe in it. Verily, it is the truth from our Lord. Indeed, we have already been Muslims before this, those will receive their reward twofold for their patience'* (28:52–54).

On the other hand, there are also righteous deeds, and their doer will be blessed in this life and rewarded in the hereafter by the Sovereign, the Just Ruler. The message also clarifies that people are

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<sup>25</sup> Sahih Muslim

<sup>26</sup> Sahih Ibn Habban

required to have good conduct, and to do righteous deeds in order to be among those who neither fear nor grief befalls them. The divine legislations has clarified the foundations for such interaction between people by which they attain the grace of God, and by which righteous communities are formed. He comprehensively included these legislations in His book, which He revealed to messengers, and those who abide by them and follow the guidance of their messenger are the best worshippers among people.

Among the acts of worship that God, the Merciful praised their doers are: *'The worshippers of the Compassionate are those who tread on earth gently, and when addressed by the ignorant (people), they respond with peace'* (25:63). Such worshippers are those who shun pride; who avoid the ignorant (about God's requirement of people); who kneel earnestly in prayer, pray at night, appealing fervently to God, the Merciful, to save them from the torment of hell; who spend without being wasteful; who do not take the life of others, violating the sanctity given to life by God, the Merciful; and who avoid adultery, false testimonials, and frivolous speech, respecting God's verses, praying to Him to better their spouses and offspring, and hoping to be exemplars among virtuous people. God, the Merciful, promised those people in all religions a good ending and an eternal life full of bliss: *'Those are the ones who will be rewarded with the highest place in heaven because of their patient endurance. Therein, they shall be received with salutations and peace, dwelling therein eternally, a beautiful place of rest and residence'* (25:75–6).

God, the Merciful, also said, describing the members of the righteous community: *'Those who properly perform their prayer (70:23), and those in whose wealth is a consigned right for the pauper and the deprived (70:24–5); and those who have faith in the Day of Judgement (70:26); and those who are considerate of the punishment of their Lord, for the punishment of their Lord is that before which none can feel secure (70:27–8); and those who guard their chastity, except with their spouses or those with whom they have married by word of honour where they are not to blame; and whosoever sought (to satisfy their desire) beyond this, those are the transgressors (70:29–31); and those who guard what they have been entrusted with, and also their pledges (70:32); and those who stand firm in their testimonies (70:33); and those who uphold their prayer; those shall in heaven be rewarded generously (70:–34–35).'* In fact, the aim

of the message is the development of a righteous community where integrity of morals, love, and peace is superior.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, '*Smiling in your brother's face is an act of benevolence*<sup>27</sup>. (*The utterance of* a kind word is an act of benevolence<sup>28</sup>,' and '*Charity quenches the Lord's wrath*<sup>29</sup>.' God, the Merciful also said, '*Surely, the charitable men and women who give a benevolent loan to God [lend a bounteous contribution] shall be repaid manifold, and shall have a generous reward*' (57:18). So God, the Merciful, considered people's charity as a debt on Him and a benevolent loan, multiplied manifold in return. Moreover, they shall have from Him a generous reward.

It is not the aim of the message to demand from people to be free of sins and to reject the sinners, degrade, defame, and expose them. Protection (from exposure) is, in fact, one of the aims of Islam, as Prophet Muhammad says, '*Whoever protects a Muslim (from being exposed), God, the Merciful, will protect him on the Day of Resurrection*<sup>30</sup>.' Even if someone were to see with his own eyes a man having sexual intercourse with a woman who is not his wife, he shall be punished by being whipped eighty lashes if he speaks forth about it without having other three witnesses; and further testimony (in court) on his part will henceforth not be accepted until he repents: *And those who disgrace chaste women and do not bring four eye witnesses, whip them eighty lashes and do not accept their testimony at all and those are the defilers*,' (24:4) '*Those who disgrace unsuspecting, chaste, women of faith are condemned in this life and in the hereafter and shall have a grievous suffering*' (24:23).

So regarding the protection of women and their rights, religion has been the most uncompromising amongst all legislations to the extent that God Almighty condemned to damnation all those who slander women in this life and the hereafter, and He promised them a grievous suffering. Herein resides the secret to society's order. As for those who believe that a disciplined society is attained through spying on people's faults, prying on them and revealing their private affairs,

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<sup>27</sup> Sunan Tirmithi

<sup>28</sup> Musnad Ahmad

<sup>29</sup> Sahih Ibn Habban

<sup>30</sup> Musnad Ahmad

and punishing them after their exposure, they should know that this is not Islam. Such behaviour may be attributed to anything else, but definitely not to Islam.

On the contrary, Islam based society's harmony on protecting privacy, turning a blind eye to other's personal faults, and scolding and punishing those who pry on people's privacy. Once a man came to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in tears, mourning the deterioration of people's morals, presumptuously concerned for society's discipline, and said to him, 'I saw a man with a woman fornicating, O Messenger of God.' The Prophet (PBUH) gently rebuked him saying, '*It would have been more appropriate for you to cover them up with your garment*<sup>31</sup>.' And he (PBUH) is the most concerned for the welfare of people and their society, as attested to by God, the Merciful: '*(he is) exceedingly concerned for you*' (9:228). '*The Prophet is the guardian of all people of faith more so than their selves*' (33:6).

In acknowledging women's distinct status, the Prophet (PBUH) said, '*Be good to women*<sup>32</sup> and *whoever honours women is a noble person*<sup>33</sup>. *Also, the best among you are those who are good to their womenfolk*<sup>34</sup>'.

God, the Merciful, said, '*And do not ill-treat them (women) to constrain them*' (65:6).

The Prophet (PBUH), affirming women's rights said, '*Paradise is at the feet of Mothers*<sup>35</sup>'.

As God, the Merciful, said, '*With averseness, his mother bore him. And with averseness, she gave birth to him*' (46:15).

Therefore, it does not stand to reason that the Prophet (PBUH) who said, '*From your world, women have been made beloved to me*<sup>36</sup>', should be referred to as the one who said that the majority of those in hell are women<sup>37</sup>! In fact, he said, '*Women are the soulmates of men*<sup>38</sup>'.

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<sup>31</sup> Musnad Ahmad

<sup>32</sup> Sahih Muslim

<sup>33</sup> Kashf al Khafa'a

<sup>34</sup> Sunan Ibn Majah

<sup>35</sup> Al-Kamil Fi Doa'faa Al Rijal

<sup>36</sup> Mustadrak Al-Hakim

<sup>37</sup> Sahih Muslim

<sup>38</sup> Sunan Tirmithi

If the aim of worship is the salvation and happiness of the creation in the eternal life, then those who believe in the messengers are those who adhere most to their messages in order to achieve this happiness. But some people limited the concept of worship to the tight boundaries of physical acts like fasting, recitation of the Holy Quran, and night prayers, as if those comprise the essence of worship for a person to be righteous for a virtuous society. Whereas worship embraces all of the person's behaviours and actions to be righteous for a virtuous society as '*Religiousness is interaction with good conduct*<sup>39</sup>'.

Refraining from causing harm to others may be enough for the person to be described as a good Muslim in the society, as the Prophet (PBUH) says, '*The Muslim is the one from whose harm, by hand or tongue, people are safe*<sup>40</sup>.' The Muslim here includes all Muslims of all faiths—Christianity, Judaism, and others. God, the Merciful, said, '*Verily, those who lower their voices before the messenger of God are indeed the ones whose hearts God has proven unto righteousness for them is forgiveness and great reward*' (49:3). Here, the mere act of lowering one's voice has a great reward. God, the Merciful, also stressed, '*... and lower your voice ...*' (31:19).

The best deeds are those carried out in the cause of God (*Fi Sabil Allah*), i.e., for the sake of attaining the blessing of God, the Merciful. In fact, attaining this blessing in all religions is explicitly 'the glorious choice of God for humankind,' and it is that which the messengers called for. *Jihad* (striving one's self toward attaining the blessing of God) is where a Muslim directs all his efforts and actions to achieve the glorious choice of God. It does not necessitate war and fighting. Thus, people who insist on holding steadfastly to what the messengers brought forth and exhort themselves upon it, ignoring hardship and opposition until they are forced to leave their homeland, indeed, such people are considered to be striving in the cause of God to attain His blessing with their money and their souls.

Being compelled to leave their homeland cannot be considered anything less than *Jihad*. God said, '*If you have indeed departed your homes Jihad [striving in my cause] to attain my blessing*' (60:1). Leaving one's home generally may or may not be *Jihad* (for the sake

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<sup>39</sup> Sahih Muslim

<sup>40</sup> Sunan Al-Nasaa'i

of attaining the blessing of God). However, in this context, it is *Jihad*, but it definitely does not mean fighting. In fact, *Jihad* is the apex and summit of worship one can perform according to the Prophet's saying<sup>41</sup>, and the greatest of it is *Jihadul Nafs*: striving to control one's self or one's own desires, which the Prophet (PBUH) has described as the greatest *Jihad*. Consequently, people who die striving to attain the blessing of God, the Merciful, even if in their bed, have died martyrs without fighting.

The Prophet (PBUH) said, '*The majority of the martyrs in my Ummah* (followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and those who believe in him in all religions) *are those who die in their deathbed, whereas one may be killed in the battle field, but only God knows his intention*<sup>42</sup>.'

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<sup>41</sup> 'Jihad is the apex of Islam' Sunan Tirmithi

<sup>42</sup> Musnad Ahmad



## THE MANNER OF PREACHING

Those who rebuke the sinners with their cruel preaching are themselves in need of it. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, *'Facilitate, do not complicate (life). Bring joyful tidings, do not repel (people from God)<sup>43</sup>'*. And he also said, *'Make people love God, the Merciful, and make them lovable to Him, then He will love you<sup>44</sup>'*. This is because those who make mistakes need support and need to be reminded of His mercy. He does not ask them to be free of sins, but it is enough to seek His forgiveness once mistakes happen. This is the manner of preaching which induces good character. In fact, rebuke and cruel preaching never create the righteous, faultless society because this is an impossible objective so long as people remains human beings. The Prophet (PBUH) said, *'All the sons of Adam are predisposed to sin, and the best of the sinners are those who repeatedly repent<sup>45</sup>'*.

Therefore, the most befitting act, instead of rebuke and cruel preaching, is to encourage people to do righteous deeds. When people's deeds become righteous, their wrongdoings decrease and their characters improve. Good character cannot be attained except when

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<sup>43</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

<sup>44</sup> Al Awliya' Ibn Abi Aldunya

<sup>45</sup> Mustadrak Al-Hakim

the person believes in the divine abstract existence of God. If people reach this state of belief through the teacher (PBUH), then they will have faith in God, the Merciful, and His messenger. They will find themselves receiving and accepting all that the Prophet says, in accord with the saying of God, the Merciful: *'Nor does he (Muhammad) speak with any inclination (other than that of God, the Merciful)' (53:3).* Hence, they will hear from him that he (PBUH) has been sent to all people as a bearer of glad tidings, as a herald, and as a teacher to them; and that he (PBUH) has no control over them as the messenger has, but to deliver the message of God, while the actual Ruler and King is God The Exalted. Therefore, the person will only have to be constantly heedful of the presence of the omniscient God, the Supreme Ruler, from whom nothing is concealed in the heavens or on earth.

Then how such person's dealings and behaviour will be affected after their realisation of this fact? No doubt they will be conscious of God, the Merciful the Ruler and King in every action they take, awaiting with great expectation their scale to become heavier on the day of judgement. Therefore, all their dealings and interactions will be religious acts and the saying of the Prophet will befit them: *'Religion is interaction with good conduct.'* They will be observing God, the Exalted in all their deeds, movements, and settlement, seeking to please the Sovereign, the Truth. They will be seeking the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the earnest purpose of learning from him how to please and obtain the blessing of this Great Sovereign. Hence, their seeking and behaviour would be in harmony with the Holy verse: *'And whatever the messenger consigns unto you, take it, and from whatever he forbids you, abstain'* (59:7).

So when they hear Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) say *'verily, I have been sent to perfect high moral qualities,'* it will become clear to them that this is the true aim of the message rather than secluding one's self in fasting, performing night prayers, and spiritual exercise in order to acquire supernatural qualities like walking on water or fire and flying. Those who acquire such qualities by which they can defy the laws of nature and believe that this is the aim of the message have, in fact, gone astray. This is because the aim of the message is interaction with good conduct and not acquiring paranormal phenomena, which are not appropriate for preaching the message in order to create a virtuous society.

Moreover, the paranormal phenomena may lead to self-conceit and vanity, which is worse than sin. The Prophet (PBUH) said, *If you did not sin, I would have feared for you what is worse than sin—self-conceit*<sup>46</sup>. Those who acquire miraculous powers may think that by possessing these abilities, they are secure from the unforeseen challenging of God, the Sovereign. Such persons who are keen and persistent in these pursuits with the intention of meeting God with their presumed perfect acts are in fact aiming at being secure from this unforeseen checking, thereby losing their purpose in this life and the hereafter: *In fact, none regard themselves to be secure from the unforeseen challenging of God except the losers*’ (7:99). Moreover, calling to the way of God on the basis of supernatural abilities to persuade people to believe will not achieve any results. Therefore, it was excluded: *Nothing has prevented Us from sending [this message, like the earlier ones] with miraculous signs, save Our knowledge that former people have denied them*’ (17:59).

The miracles of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are innumerable and surpassed all the special miracles of the previous messengers, amongst whom one has brought the dead back to life and created from mud a creature that can fly. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has in fact been endowed with the miracle of bringing things into existence from nothing, which no previous prophet has been endowed with, as he once fed to satisfaction a whole army with two handfuls of barley. This means that a blessing and an increment had occurred to this amount of barley to become ample enough to feed an army because it is impossible to feed a few number of people with such an amount.

Jesus, peace be upon him, who created from mud a resemblance of a bird, has created it from substances (water and earth), which he did not originally create but were already created by God, the Best of Creators. The Holy Quran cites Jesus saying, *I create for you from mud in the form of a bird and then breathe into it, hence, it becomes a flying creature with the permission of God*’ (3:49).

As for satiating the hunger of more than ten persons, let alone an army of several thousands, by two handfuls of barley, this is beyond possibility and cannot be accounted for without the occurrence of a miracle of creating barley sufficient to feed that number. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has also been endowed with other miracles such

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<sup>46</sup> Al-Bayhaqi & Majma’ al Zawa’id

as returning a ruptured eye back to its place, replacing an amputated limb, knowing who is in heaven and who is in hell, who will live to see certain events, causing the sun to move backwards in the sky after sunset, splitting the moon, and many others. In spite of all those previously mentioned miracles, he (PBUH) was not sent with them as evidence of his prophethood or message. God, The well acquainted with His creation, said: *'Nothing has prevented Us from sending [this message, like the earlier ones] with miraculous signs, save [Our knowledge] that former people have denied them'* (17:59). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) confirmed: *'Verily, I have been sent to perfect high moral qualities<sup>47</sup>'*. He also said, *'The Muslim is the one from whose harm by tongue or hand people are safe<sup>48</sup>. The person of faith is the one whom people trust<sup>49</sup>, and 'whoever believes in God, the Merciful, and the Day After is expected to speak good or remain silent<sup>50</sup>'*. Also, in denouncing prejudice and partisanship, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says, *'Renounce it. For indeed, it is repulsive<sup>51</sup>'*.

Since with partisanship, brotherhood does not exist in society. In fact, Islam, the aim of all the messages, is the achievement of this brotherhood between people, since *'a Muslim is the sibling of a Muslim, they neither fail nor oppress each other<sup>52</sup>'*, and *'Muslims in their compassion and mercy toward each other are like one body. If one part is ill, the rest of the body will join in the suffering by fever and lack of sleep<sup>53</sup>'*. We should not disregard the fact that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent to all humankind. Therefore, his address is to Muslims universally in all religions.

All the messengers of God, the Merciful, came to reform people, but it was necessary for every messenger to enlighten his followers about the divine abstract existence of God, which is the call for humankind to unify through monotheism: *'There is one God, only Allah.'* So when a Messenger achieves this, he will have the obedience

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<sup>47</sup> Musnad Ahmad

<sup>48</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

<sup>49</sup> Sahih Ibn Habban

<sup>50</sup> Sahih Muslim

<sup>51</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

<sup>52</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

<sup>53</sup> Sahih Muslim

of his people who will then accede to him and become Muslims because they have faith in him as the Messenger of God, the Merciful. Hence, he will instruct them with what is necessary to better their conditions in this world and the hereafter. The Merciful said, *'And We have made them (the Messengers) standard models, enlightening (people) with Our permission. And We have inspired them to do good deeds, perform prayers, and give Zakat (alms), and indeed, they were worshippers of Us'* (21:73). So the messengers of God, the Merciful, enlightened people about the existence of the one God: *'There is one God, only Allah'*, and this exemplifies the oneness of the message. Furthermore, they inspired them to do righteous deeds in order to create a virtuous society.



## ISLAM

All messengers, as previously mentioned, have been sent by God, the Merciful, with religion which is Islam: *'We do not discriminate between any of His messengers'* (2:285). Because He said, *'Indeed, the religion to God is Islam'* (3:19). Therefore, all the messengers of the heavenly religions are Muslims. Abraham, peace be upon him, was a Muslim and was not of those who associate partners with God: *'So Abraham consigned unto his sons (to be Muslims), and so did Jacob saying, "My sons, indeed, God, the Beneficent, has assigned this religion for you (all), then do not die except as Muslims'* (2:132).

The followers of Jesus (peace be upon him) also confirm that they are Muslims: *'The disciples said, "We are the apostles of God. We have faith in God, the Beneficent, and attest that we are Muslims'* (3:52).

And Noah (peace be upon him) said, *'My reward is only from God, the Beneficent, and I have been commanded to be a Muslim'* (10:72).

And Moses said (to the Children of Israel): *'O my people, if you have faith in God, the Beneficent, then rely on Him if indeed you are Muslims'* (10:84).

Then came the saying of God, the Beneficent, *Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but was bonded to the all-embracing Islam, and he was not of those who associate partners with God, the Merciful*’ (3:67). In spite of the fact that Abraham preceded Christianity and Judaism, God described him as belonging to neither. Why has this obvious point been asserted with such strength? Negating his belonging to either religion, although he preceded them, is only an emphasis on the call on people to prohibit partisanship into the confines of sects, and to prevent disintegration of the unity under the umbrella of the all-embracing Islam that has been brought forth by all messengers including Abraham, the father of messengers: *And do not be of those who associate partners with God, of those who have disintegrated the unity of their religion, and became sects, every sect rejoicing in what they believe*’ (30:31–2).

In fact, Judaism, Christianity, and Sabianism are subtitles under the umbrella of the all-embracing Islam similar to *Shiites* and *Sunnis* in the religion of Muhammad (PBUH); and Catholics and Protestants in the religion of Jesus, peace be upon him, and all of them are Muslims. Thus, the all-embracing Islam is not confined to Judaism, Christianity, or Sabianism. That is to say, it is inappropriate for a Jew to confine the all-embracing Islam to Judaism only, or for a Christian to do likewise, but in fact some did: *And they say, “Be Jews or Christians (so) you will become enlightened.” Say (Muhammad), ‘Instead, (we follow) the religion of Abraham, a Muslim bonded to the all-embracing Islam and not of those who associate partners with God’*” (2:135).

In fact, each of them was biased toward his belief: *And never will the Jews and the Christians accept you unless you follow their religious sects*’ (2:120). They have become fanatically adherent to their respective religious sects, and so refused to accept God, the Beneficent, sending whoever he pleases to whomever he pleases. In addition, they envisage that there is no religion like theirs. God, the Beneficent, said, *‘O people of the Book! Do not be unrightfully excessive in your religion’* (4:171). This unrightful excessiveness and extremism is what prevents them from coexisting with other religions under the wide umbrella of the

all- embracing Islam. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as the final messenger to reveal freedom of faith and religion, and to clarify the scope of the all-embracing Islam that encompasses all religions without the fanaticism practised by some of the followers of the Holy books, and by those who are ignorant amongst his own followers. God, the Beneficent, said: *'The Jews say, "The Christians are unto nothing (of the truth)." And the Christians say, "The Jews are unto nothing [of the truth]" in spite of the fact that they (both) recite the book. Likewise, those who have no knowledge [the ignorant amongst the followers of Prophet Muhammad] say the same'* (2:113).

Therefore, it is more appropriate for the Jews not to disprove Christianity and for the Christians not to disprove Judaism, and for both of them not to look with arrogance and discontent at the followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) should also not deny the previous religions of Judaism and Christianity; otherwise, they will be like them and the verse *'Likewise, those who have no knowledge say the same'* (2:113) would befit them.

Saying that the Christians are unto nothing and the Jews are unto nothing is, in fact, wronging other religions that have been sent by God, the Merciful, which are all Islam. It is beyond the realm of reason for God to send a faulty religion for He is above sending it faulty or incomplete, as everything that comes from Him is absolute perfection.

All Glory and Praise be to God, the Beneficent who sent all His messengers with the perfect wholesome message of Islam: *'Say (followers of Muhammad), we have faith in God and in that which is revealed unto us. And in that which was revealed unto Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and his sons [the tribes], and that which was given to Moses, Jesus, and the other prophets from their Lord. We do not differentiate between any of them [as Messengers of God], and to Him, we are Muslims [surrendering ourselves]'* (2:136).

God has concluded their succession with His beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in order to clarify for all the people what has been sent to them: *'And We have sent you the revelation (O Muhammad) to clarify to people what has been sent to them'* (16:44). And to clear away and rectify any deviation, which had been incurred by the people upon the former religions. He also said, *'O people of the Book! Our messenger*

*has come to you, revealing and clarifying to you much of what you have concealed of the book, and of much, he is most pardoning. There has come to you from God a light (Muhammad) and an enlightening book*’ (5:15). Therefore, no one should ascribe incompleteness to God’s religion that had been sent to the Jews and the Christians, challenging the perfection of His actions. So, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) came with his message, ‘*Confirming the books that came before it, and embracing them . . .*’ (5:48) and removing the fanatical religious attitudes of some Jews and Christians who reject any religion other than their own.

He founded the principle of freedom of religion that no compulsion should exist in matters of faith and interaction, and he approved all former religions sent by God. Hence, he established the freedom of faith, which, if viewed without partisanship, is the all-embracing Islam. Every religion that came from God, the Beneficent is the Truth, as He said, *If they (people of the Book) had applied the Torah and the Injeel (Bible), and that which was revealed unto them from their Lord, they would have certainly enjoyed abundance from above and from underfoot*’ (5:66). He also said, *Indeed, We have sent the Torah wherein there is guidance and light by which all the prophets who are Muslims adjudicate to those (of the Jews) who sought enlightenment*’ (5:44). So the followers of all religions within the realm of the all-embracing Islam, the followers of Muhammad, the Christians, the Jews, and the Sabians, are member parties under its vast and all-embracing umbrella. They shall have their reward from their Lord and neither fear nor grief shall befall them if they fulfil the conditions of having faith in God, the Beneficent and the Day After, and doing the righteous deed, which is good conduct, since *‘Religion is interaction with good conduct’*.

The knowledge that all religions, which came from God, are Islam, and are the truth, dispels the bias of all people toward their book and their religion. This bias is the partisanship about which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, *‘Renounce it. For indeed, it is repulsive*<sup>54</sup>*.’* This knowledge is indeed the foundation of faith tolerance with which good conduct is achieved between the followers of all religions. In fact, the bias of the Jews to their religion led to their loss of the privilege, which God, the Merciful had bestowed upon them, as He stated in the Holy Quran: *‘And We have indeed given the children of*

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<sup>54</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

*Israel the book, the authority of law, prophethood, and We have bestowed upon them pure provisions, favoured them over others, and provided them with sound enlightenment from the realm of divine order' (45:16–17).* Accordingly, they thought highly of themselves to the extent that they rejected other religions and felt superior to others: *'And they did not become sects except after the knowledge (that the message is one). An act of injustice between themselves'* (45:17). Even this dissention should be left to God, the Justice, to deal with, since people should not be persecuted for their faith nor be forced to leave it and embrace another: *'Indeed, your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection on their dissention'* (45:17).

Likewise, many of the Arabs believe that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is their own prophet, and not the universal messenger for all people. Since his message embraces and approves all preceding religions, they believe themselves to be better than the former nations, not recognizing that there is no privilege in their being Arabs. The true privilege, however, is for the *Ummah* of Prophet Muhammad (society of Muslims in all religions) where there is no privilege for an Arab over a non-Arab nor for a white person over a black one, except by heedfulness of God, the Beneficent. Most of them misunderstood the saying of God: *'You were the best society brought forth for humankind'* (3:110).

By thinking that the society of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were the Arabs only, despite the fact that the Prophet (PBUH) has made it very clear that there is no privilege for Arabs over others except by heedfulness of God, the Beneficent. Therefore, whoever believes otherwise should reflect on the words of God: *'The Arabs are the worst in disbelief and hypocrisy, and most worthy of not knowing the limits of what has been revealed by God to His messenger (Muhammad)'* (9:97). And His saying: *'And among the Arabs around you are hypocrites, and (also) from the residents of Medina who have perfected the practice of hypocrisy'* (9:101). *The Arabs said, "We have faith." Say (to them), you do not have faith, but you should say "We have surrendered (become Muslims) as Faith has yet to enter your hearts'* (49:14).

So the *Ummah* (faith society) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are the Muslims from all races and all religions. *'We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as a universal messenger to all people'* (34:28). Regarding their ethnic origin, all Arabs, Jews, and Christians belong

to Adam, and Adam is from dust; thus, clarified Muhammad, the Prophet of Mercy (PBUH). The society of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the best community brought forth for people because it embraces Muslims in all religions. Therefore, the book of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has come endorsing and embracing all the messages before it, and not rejecting them. It was the criterion<sup>55</sup> and the principal reference that embraced them all. God, the Beneficent has sent this Book to His Beloved Prophet, Muhammad (PBUH) '*to proclaim his transcendence over all religion*' (9:33) with his high moral qualities, his establishment of faith tolerance, freedom of thought, and freedom of faith.



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<sup>55</sup> (as mentioned in the Holy Quran in verse [25:1])

## HOW TO PREACH THE MESSAGE

To call for knowing God, the Beneficent, is the base from which all messengers start the reformation to create virtuous societies that have high moral qualities. After believing in God, comes having faith in His Prophet: '*O believers, be heedful of God and have faith in his messenger*' (57:28), who conveys the divine legislation from Him, and is thus deserves to be obeyed: '*And We have not sent forth a messenger, but (for him) to be obeyed in accordance with the will of God*' (4:64). Henceforth, the messenger establishes the teachings that refine society in order to perfect high moral qualities.

A poet<sup>56</sup> said:

Teach youngsters the knowledge that shows them the ways of life, but before that, teach them manners.

Another poet<sup>57</sup> said:

Nations with good manners prevail. Once their good manners are lost, then perish they shall.

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<sup>56</sup> Mohammed Saeed Al-Abbasy

<sup>57</sup> Ahmed Shawqy

The manners that religions call for commence with respect for the human being, for whose sake the message of God has been delivered. The creator thus honours them, so that the Prophet's way of preaching the message may come in harmony with this honouring. God, the Beneficent, said, '*We have honoured the children of Adam*' (17:70).

He then favoured them above many of His creation: '*And we have favoured them much more than many of our creation*' (17:70). Prophet Muhammad asserted the honoured status of the human being as he said, '*Human beings are dependants on God, the Beneficent, and the most beloved to Him are those who benefit them most*<sup>58</sup>'. Imam Ali said that people are of two kinds: '*Your brother in religion or your equal in creation.*'

God, the Merciful, said, '*O people! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other. Verily, the most honoured of you in the view of God, the Beneficent, is (the one who is) the most heedful of Him among you. And God is All-Knowing and All-Aware*' (49:13). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said, '*There is no merit for an Arab over a non-Arab nor for a white person over a black person except through piety*<sup>59</sup>'.

The apex of good manners is piety, which cannot be an attribute of hypocrites, criminals, immoral persons, or liars. It describes those who do not inflict harm on others, and whose goodness surpasses them. Such persons are those who devote all their efforts toward reform with the Prophet (PBUH) as their guide and role model.

The reform of the human being is indeed the aim of the message: '*If God, the Beneficent, guides one person through you, it is better for you than to have the best of wealth*<sup>60</sup>'.

Prophet Muhammad once looked at the *Kaaba* (the holy house in *Makkah*) and said, '*How wonderful you are and how wonderful is your scent, how grand you are and how grand is your sacredness. By the One in whose hand Muhammad's life is, the sacredness of a believer is even grander than yours*<sup>61</sup>'.

Thus, prophets were sent by God with the message to reform human beings morally and spiritually until, to God,

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<sup>58</sup> Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir, Imam AlTabarani

<sup>59</sup> Musnad Ahmad

<sup>60</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

<sup>61</sup> Sunan Ibn Majah

they become greater than the *Kaaba* and the angels. Some people might misinterpret the following verse of the Holy Quran and think that the angels are better than Jesus: *'Neither Christ will disdain being a worshipper of God nor shall the closest angels'* (4:172). What is implied in this verse is not the favouring of the angels over Jesus, the Soul of God, the Beneficent, and son of Mary. Rather, the verse stresses the fact that they are all worshippers of God. In spite of the fact that Jesus was born only to a mother (without a biological father), he will not abstain from worshipping God nor shall the angels who have neither a mother nor a father.

The refinement of humankind is the purpose of sending all messengers with the message. Accordingly, the way of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in calling to God was totally devoid of any trace of harshness or cruelty, for he was created free of them. He was the example of divine perfection: *'And a luminous source of light'* (33:46). The Beneficent says, *'Had you (O Muhammad) been harsh or hard-hearted, they would have left you'* (3:159).

If a certain situation required sternness, he would then be ordered by God, the Beneficent, to be stern because his manners were entirely devoid of it: *'O Prophet! Strive hard against the opposers and the hypocrites, and be stern with them'* (9:73). He was thus praised by his creator for having high moral qualities. Striving (*Jihad*) here means to contend with firm words and sound argument, and does not mean using the sword. This has been clearly illustrated by the use of the command to strive (*Jihad*) against the opposers and the hypocrites together; a fact which excludes the call for war, since war cannot be waged against hypocrites who exist amongst the queues of the Muslims and cannot be singled out.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, *'Amongst my companions are twelve hypocrites. Eight of them will never enter paradise until a hawser<sup>62</sup> enters through the eye of a needle<sup>63</sup>'*. So, striving (*Jihad*) against them can only mean the use of firm words of warning because firmness is used as an adjective to describe words, not to describe war. Thus, the Prophet (PBUH) would become a herald to them and a foreteller of

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<sup>62</sup> A very thick rope for towing, anchoring, or tying up a ship.

<sup>63</sup> Sahih Muslim

painful suffering: '*Foretell them of painful suffering,*' (3:21) a warning, which befits both the opposers and the hypocrites.

The bearing of glad tidings is for those who have faith even if their foot slips by a major sin. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says, '*Whoever commits a sin and realises that God is aware of his deed will be forgiven even if he does not ask for forgiveness*<sup>64</sup>'. Because the believers who sin are better than the hypocrites. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said, '*A worshipper committed a sin and said, "God, I have sinned, please forgive me."* So God will say, '*My worshipper knows that he has a God who might forgive sins or punish for them. I have forgiven my worshipper.*' Then after a while, he sinned again and said '*I have sinned once more, please forgive me.*' So God will say, '*My worshipper has learnt that he has a God who might forgive sins or punish for them. I have forgiven my worshipper.*' Then after a while, he commits another sin, and for the third time says '*I have sinned, so forgive me.*' God will say, '*My worshipper has learnt that he has a God who might forgive sins or punish for them. I have forgiven my worshipper three times. He is to do what he desires*<sup>65</sup>'.

Striving (*Jihad*) with words is more powerful than striving with the sword because the effect of the word is profounder on the addressees and is more pronounced than that of the sword. A sword ends life, but words endure so long as life continues. The sword and wars were not used to force people into Islam during the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The battle of *Badr*<sup>66</sup> was aimed at the trade caravan of the opponents from the tribe of *Quraysh* in order to recompense the losses of the immigrants who were unjustly forced out of their homes. It was *Quraysh* who had insisted on going to war after their trade caravan was secured, as they had wanted to flaunt their strength and to humiliate Muslims in their own land. The battle of *Uhud*<sup>67</sup> was in defence of the city of *Medina* against the opponents who had attacked it, and the battle of *Al Ahzab*<sup>68</sup> had also been a

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<sup>64</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

<sup>65</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

<sup>66</sup> A place near Medina

<sup>67</sup> A mountain in Medina

<sup>68</sup> Allied confederates: the union of all enemies of the Prophet (PBUH) and his followers.

defensive response to an attack by the enemies on *Medina*. So Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in all these battles, was on the defensive position.

As for the conquest of *Makkah*, it was not a war in the known sense. There was no fighting and no one was killed apart from those killed by Khaled (one of the leaders) upon entering *Makkah* despite the clear commands of the Prophet (PBUH). Therefore, he (PBUH) said, '*O God, I am not responsible for what Khalid Ibn Al Waleed has done.*'

No women were enslaved, no prisoners of war were taken, and there was no looting. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not appoint a governor over *Makkah* to collect taxes. Above all, he did not order them to proclaim that *there is no God, only Allah*, and did not force anyone to proclaim that he, Muhammad, is the messenger of God. The wars of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were only carried out in self-defence. God does not love transgression even if it were for the sake of spreading the message: '*There is no compulsion in religion*' (2:256). '*Will you then compel people against their will to believe?*' (10:99) If compulsion has any place in the manner of preaching Islam, then the first thing the people of *Makkah* would have been asked to do after the conquest would be to convert to Islam.

The following saying that is claimed to have been said by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) contradicts his manner of conveying the message: '*I was ordered to battle with people until they say there is no God, but Allah. Once they say that, their life and wealth are safe from me and their judgement is left to God.*'<sup>69</sup> This saying also contradicts the saying of God: '*Invite (O Muhammad) (all) toward attaining the blessing of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and debate with them in ways that are best and most gracious*' (16:125).

It is impossible that a saying would come from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to contradict the Holy Quran. The source from which this saying has been taken is not faultless; therefore, the above contradictions should be taken into consideration to challenge the authenticity of the saying. Furthermore, God said: '*And do not debate with the People of the Book except with the best and most gracious means*' (29:46) because spreading the message among those who are not Muslims is accomplished through wisdom and good sermons.

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<sup>69</sup> Sahih Muslim

However, among Muslims in all religions, there is no need to preach the message, but the aim is to reform the conduct, since they are already Muslims. If the ungracious reminder is forbidden in calling non-Muslims to Islam, then for Muslims in all religions, it is absolutely prohibited: *'Death suffices as a reminder'*<sup>70</sup>.

The way to preach has been defined by God in the Holy Quran, and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has established it in his methodology, and no other person has the authority to change this manner of preaching. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, *'Make people love God, the Beneficent, and make them lovable to Him, then He will love you'*<sup>71</sup>. And he said, *'Facilitate, do not complicate (life), bring joyful tidings, do not repel'*<sup>72</sup>.

Violence was never a method for spreading the message. This was made clear in the conquest of *Makkah*. The aim behind the conquest was to break down the dominance of the leaders who opposed the preaching of the forbearance of Islam, forbade the freedom of thought, and would not tolerate other's rights to portray different values and ideas. God says, *'Fight the chief opponents who have no faith. They do not abide by their oaths'* (9:12) because they are the ones who control and influence their people and forbid them from listening to other opinions, thereby repressing the freedom of thought. Therefore, conquering *Makkah* was not in order to enforce a certain opinion or religion. Rather, it was to liberate the people of *Makkah* from the oppressive regime, which was averse to, and violent toward all new beliefs and forms of freedom of thought.

The conquest of *Makkah* sets a clear example of why and how war is waged in Islam. The purpose of the conquest was not to impose a religion on people, as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not ask the people of *Makkah* to proclaim that there is no God, only Allah; instead, he left them free to think and believe as they wished. He made Islam lovable to them, so they would embrace it willingly, and he used to give some of the non-believers who listened to him like Abu Sofian a portion from the *Zakat* (alms) money.

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<sup>70</sup> Majma' al-Zawa'id

<sup>71</sup> Al Awliya' Ibn Abi Aldunya

<sup>72</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would not have waged war against them if they had allowed freedom of thought and had not violated the truce<sup>73</sup> and had not interfered with people's freedom of choice. God said, '*Whoever desires to believe can do so, and whoever desires to reject is free to do so*' (18:29). This is what the message advocated, in clear contrast and contradiction to the attitude of tyrannical rulers. God also said, '*If you were to be put in authority, would you then do mischief in the land and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are the people whom God has cursed*' (47:22–23).

Tyranny was the reason why God had sent Prophet Moses (PBUH) to the Pharaoh, '*Go to the Pharaoh, for he had indeed transgressed all bounds*' (20:24). Therefore, waging wars had never been a way of preaching Islam. No fighting took place in the conquest of *Makkah*. If war is forced upon Muslims, then they would have to defend themselves, but if the enemy then calls for peace, even if the Muslims felt that victory was on their side, they should comply. As God, the Beneficent, says, '*But if the enemy inclines toward peace, you too incline toward it*' (8:61).

The style of preaching Islam extends to honourable dealings with the enemies who do not attempt to fight, as God said, '*God does not forbid you from dealing kindly and honourably with those who did not fight you for (your) faith, and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, God, the Beneficent, loves those who are honourable*' (60:8).

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<sup>73</sup> Al-Hudaybiya treaty of peace



## LEGISLATION

God has called people to His religion - their natural disposition: '*So set your face steadfastly toward the religion, turning away from all that is false in accordance with the natural disposition, which God has instilled into humans, not to allow any change to corrupt what God has created. This is the steadfast religion, but most people do not know*' (30:30). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) clarified, '*Religion is good interaction upon moral principles.*'

Religion is natural because nature was created by God Almighty who meant religion to be the code of conduct for humans in nature, equally as He meant the laws of nature to be the way things behave the way they are. Moral principles are consistent equally, as the laws of nature are. Both sets of laws are given the same description by God: *Sunan* or consistent ways; therefore, religion is always in harmony with nature.

The divine legislation for humans is morality and good conduct—the aim of the message from God to all His messengers. It is meant to organize social relationships, and to regulate dealings and interactions, i.e., to set the boundaries (*Hudood*) that specify the rights of people that shouldn't be violated, and the balance of nature that shouldn't be corrupted as well as to secure people's happiness in this world and the one after. Therefore, law abiding at the level that preserves the rights

of humans and nature is the threshold or the lowest level of morality and good conduct that prevents the person from corruption and going astray, while interacting upon morality and good conduct secures happiness of the person all the way. God said, *'None the less, there shall most certainly come unto you guidance from Me, and the one who follows My guidance will not go astray, and neither will he be unhappy'* (20:123).

Moreover, the consistency of the laws of nature in favour of the well-being of humans is influenced by the extent to which humans abide by the laws of morality and good conduct. God said, *'But as for him who shall turn away from the exemplar of My Message, his shall be a destitute life'* (20:124). *Corruption appeared on land and sea because of (the evil) which humans' hands had done'* (30:41). Also, *'Yet if the people of those communities had but attained to faith and maintained morality and good conduct, We would indeed have opened up for them blessings out of heaven and earth'* (7:96).

The legislation of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) came holistic including both the laws of Moses (PBUH) for preservation of human rights, and the compassion of Jesus (PBUH) for fostering love and maintaining morality and good conduct. God, the Beneficent described Muhammed's legislation as *'confirming the books that came before it and embracing them'* (5:48).

The aim of the Islamic Shariah or the Islamic legislation or the message of Prophet Muhammad is to refine people and raise them from a life without law and morality to transcendent manners at the apex of which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), whom God has praised, is enthroned: *'to proclaim his transcendence over all religion'* (48:28). So he thus remains the exemplar and the teacher of this message and of all messages that constitute the religion to God. From him are to be taken the principles of these messages and the methodology of preaching and spreading them, as God says, *'We have not sent you (O Muhammad), but as a universal messenger to all people'* (34:28).

Despite the fact that the Shariah law or the entire message of Islam is essential for the well-being of humans including the balance of nature, God has given people the right of whether to accept it wilfully or reject it. Therefore, no one has the right to force it upon people even if that one be a prophet of God or a political leader. God Almighty said, *'Say (O Muhammad to them), believe in it or do not believe'* (17:107). Thus, He established the absence of compulsion—the

Quranic term equivalent to ‘freedom’—for all human beings: *‘Let there be no compulsion in matters of faith and interactions* (2:256). *Whoever wishes to believe, believe; and whoever wishes to disbelieve, disbelieve’* (18:29).

God, the Beneficent began with the family, the nucleus of society: *‘And we have consigned the human being to be kind to his parents. With suffering, his mother bore him, and with suffering, she gave birth to him’* (46:15). Then God defined the boundaries of dealing with parents: *‘Do not say to them “uff” (humpf)’* (17:23). Which is the least utterance of contempt a person makes that shows how sacred the parents are. He added, *‘Nor scold them,’* (17:23) which includes not raising one’s voice. He also made it a duty to pray for them: *‘And say, “My Lord, have mercy on them as they have cherished me in childhood”* (17:23). He said, *“Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be gentle in dealing with parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in life, do not say to them “uff” (humpf) nor scold them, but address them honourably. And out of mercy and kindness, be humble in dealing with the, and say, “My Lord, have mercy on them as they have cherished me in childhood”* (17:23–4).

Attentiveness to the family is so important that it comes immediately after having faith in God, the Beneficent, and in His Prophet (PBUH): *‘Say, “Behold, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited you from.” Do not associate anything as partner with Him, and be gentle in dealing with parents’* (6:151).

Subsequent to attentiveness to the parents, God, the Beneficent, urges people to be benevolent and give attention to kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are kin, neighbours who are near, the companion in need, the wayfarer (you meet), and those who are affiliated to you by word of honour (4:36). To whomever does not respond to this ordainment, by dealing benevolently with them, God says, *‘Verily, God does not love the arrogant, the vainglorious. Those who act niggardly, and enjoin niggardliness on others and hide what God has bestowed upon them from His bounty’* (4:36–37).

Those who refuse to acknowledge the Grace of God upon them and conceal the blessing, which He has bestowed upon them, are in fact deniers and ungrateful to His blessing: *‘And We have prepared, for those who are ungrateful, a humiliating suffering’* (4:37). Though God warns against miserliness, He also warns against extravagance:

*'And do not squander your wealth in the manner of a spendthrift. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the devils, and the devil is ungrateful to his Lord'* (17:26–27). Then He warns against killing one's children out of fear of poverty: *'Do not kill your children for reason of deprivation. We shall provide sustenance for you and for them,'* (6:151) which exemplifies heedfulness to the rights and welfare of children.

The establishment of rules regulating the conduct of society continues: *'Abstain from shameful deeds whether publicly or privately'* (6:151).

The lawgiver also stresses the importance of preservation of human life: *'Do not take the life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law'* (6:151). The sanctity given to life by God is such that if one kills a single person wrongfully, it will be like killing all people, as He said, *'Anyone who kills a person, unless it be legal punishment for murder or for spreading mischief in the land, it would be as if he had killed all people'* (5:32).

He also made it imperative to manage the wealth of orphans or those who have not come of age with prudence: *'Do not attempt to manage an orphan's wealth except with honour and prudence until they attain the age of maturity'* (6:152).

Then He clarifies the way to interact commercially: *'And give due measure and weight with equity. We do not assign unto any soul, but that which it can bear'* (6:152).

Then God addressed observing truthfulness in speech: *'If you give your word, be fair even if it is against a kinsperson'* (6:153). A Muslim is expected to speak only the truth. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had been asked if a believer lies, and he said 'No' and he recited the saying of God: *'Verily, it is the non-believers who make up lies'* (16:105).

Then follows fulfilling one's pledged promise: *'And fulfil the promises you make under the name of God. He has thus entrusted you that you may be heedful'* (6:152).

The Lawgiver demands taking great care in handling news: *'O believers, if a depraved person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest you harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of remorse for what you have done'* (49:6).

He orders people to promote peace between inimical parties even if this necessitates enforcing peace upon the perpetrator, as the following verse reveals: *If two parties among the believers fall into dispute, make peace between them. But if one of them then transgresses against the other, then fight against the one that transgresses until it complies with the divine order (legislation). If it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair. For God loves those who are fair* (49:9).

Establishing justice upon the divine legislation (that maintains the God-given right of everyone) is indeed the aim of reconciliation and termination of disputes in Islam. Therefore, God has ordered establishing justice under all circumstances and in all situations regardless of personal issues. He said: *And the hatred of others (to you) should not drive you away from being just* (5:8). *Verily, the believers are brothers, so make peace between your brothers and be heedful of God that you may receive mercy* (49:10).

*O believers, no group of men should mock another group, as they might be better than them* (49:11).

*Nor should women mock other women, as they might be better than them* (49:11).

*And do not scorn or slander each other* (49:11).

*And do not call each other by offensive names. Heinous is the wicked name-calling after belief, and those who do not repent are indeed the transgressors* (49:11).

*O believers avoid much of suspicion for suspicion in some cases is a sin* (49:12).

*And do not spy* (49:12).

*Nor backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of one's own dead brother? You would then abhor this* (49:12).

*And do not endorse that which has not come to your knowledge, for every act of hearing or of seeing or of perception in the heart will be enquired into* (17:36).

*Do not tread on earth flamboyantly, for you cannot penetrate the earth (by your weight) nor attain the height of mountains* (17:37).

*Do not undervalue people's possessions* (26:183).

*And do not act wickedly on Earth, spreading corruption* (26:183).

These legislations in the message of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are in effect inclusive of all messages, as he has endorsed them, saying: *I am the institution of knowledge and Ali is its portal*<sup>74</sup>. Therefore, it is not to be expected that those who have faith in Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) should act with aversion toward the believers in other religions. However, some Muslims among the followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are seen to be strongly averse to the followers of other religions, and sometimes even to their messengers. Their aversion has reached such a point where there is a noticeable lack of manners with respect to Jesus, peace be upon him, who is the soul of God. They might even interact with animosity toward those who glorify him, as if such persons are no longer upon the religion of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The divinity of God precludes that He deliver religions that are faulty, such that He tries to amend them in a succeeding message. Every religion that came from God is the Islam, which all prophets have brought forth: ‘*We do not differentiate between any of His messengers*’ (2:285). God says, ‘*And those who believe in God and His messengers and do not differentiate between any of them, He shall give them their rewards. For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful*’ (4:152). Hence, ‘*The religion to God is Islam*’ (3:19). However, some followers of the prophets of those religions have distorted the meanings of the words of God according to their desire; and only this is unacceptable for those religions. As for the Muslims who follow Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), he had foreseen for them that: ‘*You will follow the ways of those who came before you span by span and cubit by cubit*<sup>75</sup> even if they entered a lizard’s hole you would follow them.<sup>76</sup>’ This means that the followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), too, would distort the meanings in his religion, as those before them had done, and in fact they have.

Dear Muslim, you should not feel embarrassed to show respect and sanctification to Jesus, peace be upon him, the Soul of God, despite what is said about you by the ignorant Muslims, and some of those who claim to be knowledgeable yet they think that the following of

<sup>74</sup> Mustadrak Al-Hakim

<sup>75</sup> The span (*shibr*) and cubit (*dhira'a*) were used to measure distances

<sup>76</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) entails hating other prophets; whereas it is their duty to respect other prophets and hold them sacred. Otherwise, it is feared that you may be one of those who will not believe in Jesus, peace be upon him, when he reappears and reigns over the world by the truth if you live until the time of his reappearance—a fact which some Muslims among the followers of Muhammad deny. Some of them think we are still far away from that time, while we see that it is soon: *'And of the People of the Book there shall be some who will indeed believe in him (Jesus) before his death. And on the Day of Judgement, he will be a witness to them'* (4:159).

*'And (Jesus) shall be a sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgement)'* (43:61).

How would you feel, you who have been informed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) about the reappearance of Jesus, peace be upon him, as a just ruler at the end of time, if you found that the believers in other religions have outpaced you in believing in him? God said, *'And there are, certainly, among the People of the Book, those who believe in God and in that which has been revealed unto you, and in that which has been revealed unto them solemnly obeisant to God. They will not trade the verses of God for a little gain. For them is a reward with their Lord, indeed God is swift in retribution'* (3:199).

The Beneficent also said: *'Those whom We have given the book rejoice at what has been revealed unto you, but some factions deny part of it'* (13:36). Do not place yourself among these factions and become one of the deniers. To degrade the previous religions is to degrade the prophets who delivered them. While this is clearly lack of honourable manners, it moreover constitutes disbelief in the message of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The person who defames previous messages is in fact questioning the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) because he (PBUH) came *confirming the books that came before him, and embracing them* (5:48); As God has said to the prophets, peace be upon them, *'Then comes to you a messenger, confirming what you have (of the book)'* (3:81).

Acknowledging the truthfulness of the previous messages is in fact acknowledgement of the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The truth in them should be held in deep reverence. *'And upon God, the Merciful, is the guidance to the straight path'* (16:9).



## EPILOGUE

God, the Compassionate, intended mercy for all His creation to be happy in this world and the one after. Therefore, He sent all the messengers (PBUt) to their people with one message of mercy, i.e., one religion—Islam. However, the variation seen among the messages that all of the messengers (PBUt) came with is in fact due to what the followers of the messengers understood from them. This could be due to misunderstanding, intended by them to dominate people with, or to transform it into a political system. The messengers came one after the other with the same message to clarify the course of religion to secure happiness of his creation, not to track their mistakes for accountability and punishment!

The message is in fact truth from God meant for the happiness of people by creating virtuous societies upon morality and good conduct—the way of His noble messengers, may the prayers of God be with them. Therefore, if a society is blessed with morality, then love and peace will prevail and it will attain happiness. This is the aim of the message and the objective of worship in the teachings of all messengers—religiousness is achieving excellence in conduct upon high moral principles. Therefore, having faith in the messengers, in what they came with from God and in their books, is a fundamental component of the final and sealing message because there is no

dissimilarity between what the messengers (Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, PBU) came with from God (2:285).

Since the message of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is final and sealing, it has to clarify everything (before and after) including clarification of the matters of difference between the people of the Book (16:64). Regarding the purpose of sending him (PBUH), there is no more clarification than what he (PBUH) mentioned: *I have been sent to perfect moral character.* This means that the previous messengers (PBU) have but one message: to create a society on firm grounds of high moral qualities because moral values are constants (i.e., they never change across time, places, and humans).

This clarifies that all the prophets since Adam, peace be upon them, are Muslims. If Moses is a Muslim, then his followers are; and if Jesus is a Muslim, then his followers are; and this is the essence of the one message. Therefore, we find that God, Most Exalted, addressed the people of each messenger with a description specific for them in the Holy Quran. He addressed the people of Moses and Jesus (PBU): 'Ya ahl Al-kitab – O people of the Book'; and He said 'Ya ayyuha alladheena amanoo – O you who believe' to the people of Muhammad (PBUH). Hence, the people addressed by God will be clearly specified. However, if the address was, 'O Muslims,' it would not be possible to know which sect is meant by such an address because the one who follows Moses is a Muslim, and the one who follows Jesus is a Muslim.

However, each of these faith communities excluded the others and closed themselves within their local boundaries, believing that they are the only ones upon the truth! This unrightfully excessiveness and extremism is what prevents them from coexisting with other religions under the wide umbrella of the all-embracing Islam. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as the final messenger to reveal freedom of faith and religion, and to clarify the scope of the all-embracing Islam that encompasses all religions without the fanaticism practised by some of the followers of the Holy books and by those who are ignorant amongst his own followers.

Preaching this great message should regard the God-given dignity and freedom of people. All messengers had one style of conveying their messages—kind sharing with their people. Muhammad (PBUH) never forced the religion upon people even when he conquered Makkah, he never forced or commanded people to say there is no God but Allah.

People were not attracted to the message except for its beauty and its content of love and happiness as there is no compulsion in the religion (2:256).

In the final message, miracles that defy the laws of nature were excluded as means of preaching because they also defy human intellect by emphasising its limitations rather than entertaining it with knowledge. That is why most people are sceptic regarding miracles. Blind faith will never guide people in the challenging walks of life. Since the human being is created upon natural inclination toward beauty in nature and human character, the legislation of the message of God came in harmony with the laws of nature and emphasising the universality and consistency of moral principles. Such legislation is not in need of convincing evidence or human effort to support it because it is the Truth (Huqq).

There is nothing more powerful than the truth; the truth is founded and maintained only by the truth. Indeed, the truth is not in need of any support because whatever has to be supported is weak. Hence, the call to the way of God was established by God, the Truth. It did not depend on manpower, wealth, or a powerful ruler to compel people to conform by its teachings. People were attracted to the call of God because of its intrinsic virtue, as virtues are naturally attractive and no one is forced to accept them. If a society is blessed with morality, then peace will prevail and it will attain happiness, and the final message was meant to complete and perfect this objective.

Given that the final message is more clear and explicit (to people), it was necessary to illustrate this religion, which is moral character by a physical example, so that even those whose intellect is unable to grasp the concept may know it and see it by their own eyes.

The divine clarification of the message came to show people that the inclusiveness of moral character, its perfection, and its greatness are all embodied in the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Therefore, He praised Him for it, so that people should know, rather, should see the truth and the great moral character personified in the auspicious Muhammadan essence. That is because the Truth (*Haqq*) cannot be seen devoid of matter! '*They have witnessed that the messenger is Truth (Haqq)*' (3:86). In fact, Muhammad, the messenger of God (PBUH), is Truth (*Haqq*) and he is the Message, he is the Mercy, and he is the ultimate moral character (68:4).

After the clarification and personification of the religion in Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), its matter became clear to people by knowledge and vision; therefore, they have but to choose when God said, *'Say: the truth (Haqq) is from your Lord (O people), then who so wills may believe, and who so wills may disbelieve'* (18:29).



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

His Holiness, Sheikh Elnayyal Abdel Gadir Abu Groon, a descendent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)<sup>77</sup>, was born in 1948 in Abu Groon, a village established by, and named after, his renowned grandfather (H. H. Sheikh/Muhammad Abu Groon) to be the home of his Sufi Traditional Institution. Unlike many traditional Sufis, H. H. Sheikh/Muhammad Abu Groon (1860–1936) relied on unwavering adherence to *Taqwa* (God-consciousness) in endeavouring the deep realms of the divine truth, empowered exclusively by love of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and certainty about his spiritual path. His son, H. H. Sheikh/Abdel Gadir (1907–2000), the father of Sheikh Elnayyal, followed the way of his predecessor also through the love of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

After actualisation of the divine love and the love of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), he developed his own style of relaying the knowledge and wisdom of the Prophet (PBUH) and the beauty of following his path to attain good conduct in a format of poems and rhymes, easy and perceivable by everybody. His son described him as a unique comprehensive school of social development upon the footsteps

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<sup>77</sup> Prayers and Blessings of God, The Merciful be upon Him, His parents, and His family

of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He raised his son, Sheikh Elnayyal, in this climate of the love of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and devoted him to learning the pure message of Islam in their traditional institution besides academic education.

Since his childhood, Sheikh Elnayyal followed the way of his forefathers in actualising divine and Prophetic love. Moreover, he started exploring the sources of Islam: the *Holy Quran and Sunnah* (reports on Prophetic tradition) as well as the major works in Islamic thought and Sufism. His personal library includes thousands of books on the various sources of Islamic knowledge. He graduated from the Faculty of Law, University of Khartoum in 1970 and took a number of positions including being judge in the high court and minister of legal affairs.

In the early 1970s, the author wrote his first book *Al-Sirat Al-Mustaqeem (The Straight Path)*, a comprehensive short account on Islamic theology. Many commentators at that time agreed on two points about this book: 1) it was the first rational and convincing argumentation of the core elements of the religion, viz. *Islam* (knowing God and being grateful to Him), *Iman* (loving God and his Messenger), and *Ihsan* (achieving excellence in Islam and Iman) that tackles difficult issues like *Qadar* (Divine Decree); 2) its style was unique in illustrating these subtle religious concepts as each and every word was very carefully chosen to serve the precise meaning intended by the author.

Since then, and empowered by the love of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the author wrote series of books on different aspects of religion using his own unprecedented rigorous methodology of research. This included the following criteria for checking the authenticity of the prophetic traditions (reports of *Sunnah*) and the accuracy of interpretations of the Holy Quran, as these constitute the sources of Islamic heritage:

1. The Messenger (PBUH) is the sole reference and exemplar of the message of God, ‘. . . and whatever the Messenger consigns unto you, take it, and from whatever he forbids you, abstain’ (59:7). Abu Groon said, ‘The one whom God has chosen to deliver His message will never be but the supreme example of its understanding and practice. Hence, the perfection of acting

upon it cannot be seen except through him. And whatsoever is obscured from the message is not clarified except through the chosen one's actions or words. To hold a position other than this is to accuse the Messenger (PBUH) of deficiency regarding the conveyance of his message due to ignorance or to an error in conduct on his part. This would imply that he is not the standard reference concerning what he was sent with! Such a position, in fact, compromises the relationship between the Messenger (PBUH) and the One who sent him since this is the criterion for such a reference.' Therefore, an alleged text of Sunnah or interpretation of a verse of the Holy Quran that conflicts or disregards the role and status of the Messenger (PBUH) should be rejected.

2. The infallibility or *Ismah* of the Prophet (PBHH) stems from the fact that he is *Haqq* (the absolute Truth); '*How would Allah guide the people who disbelieved after their acceptance of faith and witnessed that the Messenger is Haqq (absolute Truth)*' (3:86). Abu Groon said, 'In fact, the *Ismah* or infallibility of the Prophet (PBUH) doesn't mean that he makes no mistakes. The one who doesn't make mistakes must be following a set path; if he followed the path perfectly, he will be described as *ma'soom* (infallible or the one who makes no mistakes). As for Muhammad (PBUH), he is the one who set up the path, which is followed by he who makes mistakes and he who doesn't. In fact, his *Ismah* is embodied in his action, *I follow only that which is revealed to me*' (6:50). Equally, his sanctity stems from his special relation to God, the Merciful, being the most beloved to Him of all His creation.' This means that whatever he has said, done, or approved of was in essence the act of God who said, '*Verily, in the Messenger of God, you have a good example [to follow]*' (33:21). This entails that any alleged text of Sunnah or interpretation of the Holy Qur'an that violates his *Ismah* or sanctity should be excluded.
3. Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an is the God-given right of His Messenger (PBUH): '*And We revealed to you (oh Muhammed) the Dhikr [knowledge], so that you clarify to the people what was sent down to them and that they might contemplate*' (16:44). Abu Groon said, 'The way Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH) knows God is intimate awareness. He (PBUH) knows the meaning of His revelation and His intent for His creation. Therefore, any human being other than him (PBUH) will fall short in interpreting fully the Qur'an no matter how much one struggles since it is the words of God, the Exalted, its wonders infinite, marvels immeasurable, and total knowledge beyond human comprehension. Therefore, the context of any interpretation of, or reflections on the words of God, the Most Great, must include the love of God for His Messenger (PBUH), his status and *Isma*, and the nature and aim of the Message, which are mercy and morality respectively. Therefore, an interpretation of the Holy Quran out of this context is inaccurate and should not be attributed to God.

In the late 1970s, the author launched a series of accounts in religious advice named *Al-Wasiyyah (The Kind Advice)* on theological conflicts, historical controversies, and contemporary issues in Islam. From the early nineties to 2006, elaborating on the same subject, he wrote a series of books named *Al-Rassa'il (The Messages)*. Some of which resulted in hostile confrontations with the religious authorities in the government of the Sudan. In 2008, the author launched a series of books on *Revisions of Islamic Thought*. The Arabic version of the current book is included in part one of this series and was published after being acknowledged by the Ministry of Guidance and Orientation as a unique contribution to interfaith relations, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence.

Here are short descriptions of selected publications of H. H. Sheikh Elnayyal Abu Groon that are relevant to the current book:

*Islam and the State* (in Arabic): in this book, he challenged all theories and political movements that advocate Islam as a system of governance and argued with textual evidence that Islam is religion from God to people where He said: 'There is no compulsion in religion' while a state is a political system of governance imposed on people by law.

*The Remedy of Souls* (Arabic and English) in which he refuted nineteen accusations by scholars in Islamic heritage, of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in alleged prophetic traditions (Sunnah/ Hadith), as well as interpretations of the Holy Qur'an.

*Accusations of the Master of God's Messengers by Qur'an Interpreters* (Arabic, English version in process) in which the author presented a comprehensive methodology of understanding the Holy Qur'an, and then as an example, he presented some serious accusations of the Prophet (PBUH) in interpretations given by the leading scholar of exegesis, Ibn Jarir El-Tabari.



