

Goal
of
Religion

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, hatred and fear reign supreme. People fear for their lives and properties in every corner of this world. The atrocity and injustice in our world are unprecedented in human history. People live in hate and kill each other without hesitation or remorse in the name of national interest, self defense, freedom fighting, liberation, and any other name they can think of. Fear-mongering, dishonest, and corrupt political and social agendas as well as religious conflicts are fueling animosities and hatred. People's ignorance and mistrust of any opposing or differing views, beliefs, values, and principals, along with their blind emotional and behavioral extremism and fanaticism are fueled by their political, social, industrial, and religious leaders. This vicious circle – of expansion of power, wealth, and authority; ignorance, mistrust, conflicts of interest, extremism, and fanaticism; despise, hatred, and war – is destroying human civilization. It is time to stop and look at the root cause of this problem.

In this book, we attempt to shed light on one of the most important factors of today's terrorism and wars throughout the world, and that is religion. In this attempt, we also provide a roadmap for all who aspire to make this world a better place to live for everyone, a place where we all can live happily in kindness with peace of mind and without fear or anxiety.

This book consists of four sections – the first section focuses on the purpose of religion in general and how it creates an ideal environment for mankind to live in, the second section defines justice and human rights, while the third section outlines the responsibilities and duties of Muslims. The fourth section presents our conclusion.

In the first section, “The Goal of Religion”, we will define religion and proceed to explore the purpose of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism, which is to create a world free of injustice, poverty, ignorance, dishonesty, hatred, fanaticism, prejudice, racism, and war; a world where mankind can deservedly live harmoniously with kindness and respect.

In the second section, “Justice, Fairness, and Human Rights”, we will review God's reason for sending his prophets, Holy Scriptures, and laws, and we will provide clear definitions for justice and human rights. We will also examine the verses from The Scriptures that relate to justice and human rights.

In the third section of the book, “Real Muslim and their Duties”, we will arrive at a clear and precise definition for Islam and Muslims to help clarify some of the misconceptions that readers may have about them. We will then explore the major duties of true Muslims, including good deeds, monotheism, and elimination of poverty and ignorance, followed by the need for unity and cooperation in achieving the religion's goal.

In the conclusion, we will provide a summary of key points and a roadmap to attain the religion's goal.

Throughout this short book, certain topics are discussed in repetition in an attempt to highlight their relative importance and reinforce key concepts.

It is our sincere hope that reading this book will be a pleasant experience for the readers and that it will help provide a much deeper understanding of the true religion and its goal. We also hope the readers will continue their education on the subject and contribute to the effort to unite the religious, the righteous, and the reformers in an attempt to encourage people to uphold true justice and build a new world based on justice, peace, kindness, contentment, happiness, and fulfillment for all.

Please send your comments and questions by e-mail to goalofreligion@gmail.com, and I will be more than glad to answer your questions as best as I can. Please keep in mind that the only references that will be used to answer your questions are the Holy Scriptures and their teachings.

THE GOAL OF RELIGION

In this section, we will discuss what religion is and introduce readers to the goal of religion – which is to unite people to stand for and uphold justice and to build a world based on fair and equitable justice for all, a world free of oppression, corruption, poverty, ignorance, racism, hatred, and war. Only in such a world will it be possible for people to live in harmony, peace, happiness, contentment, and personal fulfillment. We will also examine the reasons why many corrupt religious, political, and social leaders have committed the most heinous crimes in the name of religion.

WHAT IS RELIGION

For years, people have been killing each other in the name of religion. Wars have been fought, and many men, women, and children have been murdered in the name of religion. In today's world, nothing is more abused than religion. Atrocities, murders, and crimes are committed in the name of God and religion. Some believe they are the only righteous ones and everyone else is an infidel. Some religious leaders call the prophet of God a "terrorist". These divisions and self-prophecies made by people or groups of people have been ongoing throughout the times, and they are the reasons for the conflicts amongst religious people. Corrupt religious, political, and social leaders have used our ignorance and misunderstanding of religion to promote their own agendas. They do not want true religion to be known to humanity. They have a vested interest in keeping everyone close-minded, superstitious, and ignorant about religion, which has the most impact on their way of life.

The primary reason for such abuse of religion throughout history is the malicious practice by misguided influential leaders of misleading people by taking advantage of superstitions, misinformation, man-made rituals, and traditions to create divisions and distrust among the religious followers to prevent them from trusting and respecting each other. Divisions, mistrust, ignorance, and misunderstandings have created all the problems associated with religion throughout history.

So, what is religion? Religion is God's commandments conveyed to us through the prophets and the Holy Scriptures. The main goal of religion is to make a world in which people's rights are protected and where there is no sign of injustice, indignity, poverty, dishonesty,

ignorance, hatred, extremism, racism, oppression, corruption, or war. Without a doubt, everyone wishes to live in such a world.

God informs everyone: "The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - the which We have sent by inspiration to you (Muhammad) - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that you should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein" (Quran, 42:13). In another verse, we learn that God has established the same religion for all His prophets. "Say: We believe in God and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and what was given to Moses and Jesus and to the prophets from their Lord; we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit." (Quran, 3:84). It is further emphasized that "you will never find a change in the way of God." (Quran, 17:77, 33:62, and 35:43). So why are people of faith fighting and killing each other in the name of God, who repeatedly proclaims that He will not change His ways. Where do all these differences and disputes come from?

God commands everyone to make no division in religion. And yet, in today's world, there is much animosity amongst the followers of religion. Are they, in fact, following God's commandments?

We want to emphasize the command, "Make no division in religion." This is a command to everyone, regardless of their faith or the Scripture they follow. But, unfortunately, people have been killing each other in the name of religion for years. The Crusades that took place from 1095-1291 are an example. Subsequent crusades continued into the 16th century and, still, in one form or another, continue to this date. More recently, we should take a look at conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland or between Sunnis and Shias in Iraq. These are a few examples of people who dispute, create conflicts, and wage wars against each other in the name of religion. How can they claim to be followers of God when they are directly disobeying God's commands and creating division in religion? It seems we are all forgetting about the essence of religion.

The definition of religion discussed does not contradict the right of any individual to practice his or her faith's details and rituals. God states, "To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He has given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues" (Quran, 5:48). This implies that although every group has the same religion, one that prescribes submission to God, everyone should practice his or her own faith's details and rituals. So, we should set aside our differences and make no division in religion. That is God's command, and we should take it to heart.

In the Quran, God says, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (Quran, 2:256). This implies that to submit to God, one should willingly commit his heart and soul to

God. The Bible also states that one should choose to obey God's commandment through knowledge and strive in the way of God with all of his or her being and possessions. "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Bible, Matthew, 22:37). From these verses, it is obvious that religion cannot be forced upon anyone, and there is no compulsion in religion.

In the Quran, God says He "has imposed no difficulties on you in religion" (Quran, 22:78). Compare this to all of our man-made traditions and difficulties that exist in the way people follow religion today. God says, "If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden, We will do away with your small sins" (Quran, 4:31). He also says, "Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds, only (falling into) small faults, verily your Lord is ample in forgiveness" (Quran, 53:32). God tells everyone that He is the most forgiving, and if people stay away from the great sins, He will forgive small sins and faults. But, unfortunately, the religious leaders have written thousands of books about those small sins and faults that God has said He will forgive. They obviously think they know better and write books about some sins that God has not even mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. What is the motivation of these so-called religious leaders?

Throughout the centuries, some misguided religious leaders have created many traditions and ceremonies to protect their power and stature in the name of religion. They include singing, dancing, self-beating, celebrations, lamentations, and ceremonial clothing – including robes, hats, and turbans. These ceremonies and traditions have nothing to do with true religion. However, it is important to know that God has intentionally made some differences in the laws, rituals, and details of each faith; they all have their own unique way of practicing. Such details and rituals have nothing to do with the main goal of religion. People should not allow these minor differences to create divisions amongst them. They should understand that religion's goal is for people to stand for and uphold justice to improve humanity's way of life.

It is noteworthy to mention that throughout recent history, true religion has never ruled any society. It has always been abused by dictators and religious leaders for their personal benefits and power. They have abused religion to deceive people to promote their self-serving agendas.

It is important to note that there are many who criticize religion based on the actions of an individual, a group of people, or even a government. This is only a deception on the part of such people. Those individuals, groups, or governments should be evaluated based on their actions. They are the ones who either act according to religion or in contradiction to it. One should never evaluate or judge religion based on actions of individuals, group, or governments.

THE GOAL

The goal of religion is to fulfill the greatness God has bestowed upon mankind. So, throughout the years, God has sent us His commandments as the foundations for building a world where people are treated with justice, fairness, kindness, and equity, and a world where there is no sign of injustice, indignity, oppression, corruption, poverty, ignorance, dishonesty, fraud, hatred, extremism, prejudice, racism, or war. In other words, religion's main goal is to lay the foundation for a world in which justice and fairness are for all and where no one's rights are violated or disregarded.

The main obstacle for establishing the glorious world that God has intended for us as conveyed through His commandments is the undue influence of greedy and misguided dictators and political, industrial, and religious leaders who would resort to murder, deception, oppression, and any other criminal acts to preserve and expand their power, authority, and wealth. Unfortunately, even today in the 21st century, we are witnessing the most heinous crimes and dreadful acts being committed by those serving such misguided leaders and influential people against their fellow men for the sake of gaining more power, authority, or wealth.

Religion teaches everyone to obey almighty God's commandments, as He is the only one who is worthy of unquestionable devotion and servitude. His commandments are solely for the benefit of mankind, as He has no need for power or wealth. In contrast, those with power in military, political, or religious arenas demand and expect their followers to blindly comply with their commands. Throughout history, because their primary motive has been to enforce blind obedience of their people, which is against religious teachings, those in power have always been contemptuous of religion.

Claiming they are the only righteous believers, extremist groups use different tactics, many of which include criminal acts against their fellow religious men and believers of other faiths. They also claim that anyone who follows God in a different manner is an infidel and deserves to be destroyed.

Ignorant people who commit these atrocities in the name of God and religion never understood that the goal of religion is to unite the religious, the righteous, and the reformers to rise and stand for justice. They blindly follow their leaders who have no notion of this invaluable goal, and thus create divisions in religion in direct contradiction to God's commandments.

Many world leaders, politicians, and dictators regularly commit enormous budgets to the development and production of their ever-growing arsenal of powerful bombs and destructive weapons. They intend to improve their military capabilities so they can rapidly destroy any opposing parties who are not in complete agreement with them. Furthermore, they constantly try to justify their crimes against the opposing parties by equating lack of

support with outright opposition, hence the phrase, "If you are not with us, you are against us."

How long do people have to tolerate the expenditure of such enormous resources for military ambitions to produce and unleash more powerful and destructive weapons on their fellow men? Why not utilize these resources to enhance the quality of life for mankind and to eliminate homelessness, poverty, starvation, and disease?

According to estimates by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the allocation of \$80 billion would suffice to meet the basic necessities of the world population, including safe drinking water, nourishment, shelter, basic education, and health care. This is such a modest amount as compared to the U.S. military budget alone, which in 2007 exceeded \$430 billion, excluding an additional \$120 billion earmarked for Iraq and Afghanistan operations. Such a contrast in objectives and priorities can only be considered as inhumane and a total disregard for the well-being of mankind. These crimes against humanity are committed primarily by misleading the public through the spread of misinformation, fear mongering, and fabricated accusations. Keeping the public uninformed and misguided provides many of the military, political, and/or religious leaders with an opportunity to benefit from such criminal acts.

To put an end to any further inhumane and oppressive conducts in our world, it is essential that all the righteous, the reformers, and those who believe in God to awaken and study their Holy Scriptures. Only then will they realize the simple truth and understand the underlying motivation for the consistent attempt by dictators and corrupt political, industrial, and religious leaders as well as influential politicians to hide it from them for such a long time. This simple truth is the recognition of the fact that people, in general, regardless of their differences, are all seeking a world free of oppression, poverty, ignorance, indignity, hatred, extremism, prejudice, racism, and war. In such a world, people would have peace of mind, happiness, fulfillment, and contentment, and would also treat each other with kindness, friendship, tolerance, and care.

By pondering upon the Holy Scriptures and their commandments, the faithful and the righteous will realize that, for centuries, they have been misled by their self-serving, power-hungry, ambitious, and arrogant leaders who maintained their power and wealth by creating divisions in religion and eliminating any impediment to their authority.

People have been misled and manipulated by their leaders to ignore the goal of religion and stay away from the Holy Scriptures. They have become subservient to the wishes of their leaders to bring about hatred, war, oppression, poverty, and disparity.

Education is the key to discover the real truth and differentiate it from the false beliefs and superstitions that are used to deceive people. This education can only be obtained through studying and pondering about the commandments of the Holy Scriptures to recognize their goal, which is to enable man to live without any fear from his fellow men and to have peace of mind knowing that his individual rights are protected in society and that he will be treated with respect and dignity.

We should all disregard the writings of people who have knowingly or unknowingly distorted the word of God, either for their personal benefit or for someone else's. If there is any doubt about anyone's genuineness in their words or writings, one should compare them to the Holy Scriptures and discard those that are inconsistent with the Scriptures.

Upon awakening to the truth, people should collectively stand up to their self-serving and arrogant leaders, politicians, and corrupt religious authorities who manipulate religion for their own gain. They should further demand that all their available resources be committed to building a world where justice, respect for human rights, tolerance, inclusion, generosity, care, and harmony are practiced without any exception. They should also demand an immediate end to any injustice, indignity, oppression, poverty, fraud, ignorance, indignity, hatred, extremism, prejudice, racism, war, and destruction of human lives and belongings.

A world with justice for all is what we all deserve.

DELUSION OR REALITY

Among His many living creations, God chose to grant human beings a unique blend of intelligence, imagination, creativity, and communication abilities to establish and continuously enhance their living conditions and societies. However, men driven by their greed and misguided beliefs in what brings them happiness focus their efforts on pursuing their self-indulgence in materialistic luxuries and desires rather than the important tenets of life. These widespread fantasies and delusions drive men into criminal and dishonest conducts, including theft, fraud, embezzlement, drug dealing, and murder.

When we genuinely examine our real needs in life, outside of our delusional thinking, we clearly recognize that it does not take much effort and resources to fulfill them. Therefore, instead of wasteful spending and indulgence in luxuries that would result in jealousy, hatred, and hostility, if we devote our resources in following God's teachings to help the needy and poor, create jobs and opportunities, and support valuable causes and charities, we will not only bring about more harmonious and caring societies, but will also achieve a far deeper sense of self-fulfillment and pleasure.

As evident in our contemporary societies, people indoctrinated in false beliefs about their self worth are trapped in a chaotic rat race in pursuit of money, power, luxuries, and short-term pleasures. Such a never-ending pursuit not only has prevented us from achieving true, long-lasting happiness and better societies, but has also caused a significant rise in crimes, drug and alcohol addiction, stress and illnesses, depression and mental disorders, hatred, suicide, broken families, poverty, moral decay, corruption, violence, and wars.

True happiness, contentment, and peace of mind is achievable through enhancing the quality of life for all members of society by expanding mankind's abilities and efforts in science, art, medicine, generosity, compassion, and reform. Therefore, constructive competition is encouraged to hasten these advancements. People should compete in doing good deeds, generosity, compassion, kindness, and reform, and they should take part and participate in the progression of science, art, and medicine.

Money, power, and the resources of society should be more synergistically used to unite people to eliminate poverty, illiteracy, corruption, oppression, and violation of human rights. To achieve such noble purposes, man must realize the simple fact that the pursuit of money and luxury as a source of happiness is a futile effort and that, in the end, he will not be able to take any of his possessions with him once he departs from this life. While money, power, and authority are God's blessings, true happiness and self-fulfillment can only be achieved if such blessings are utilized to enhance the quality of life for all rather than the pursuit of a wasteful and extravagant lifestyle at the expense of others.

It is quite unfortunate that dictators and political, industrial, and religious leaders who are in unique positions to use their powers and influence to serve their societies and lead by example often, instead, abuse their privileges, expect full autonomy, and selfishly exploit the rights and possessions of others for their own benefits. Such a flagrant disregard for the rights of others compel the religious, the righteous, and reform-minded individuals to steadfastly unite together to fight off this unlawful foray into their rights and possessions.

In a fair and equitable society, people's rights and dignities must be protected; education, health care, and opportunities should be available to all; and people should be entitled to pursue their goals and happiness without fear of injustice, oppression, corruption, racism, hatred, and war.

ACTIONS NOT WORDS

The word “*obey*” and its derivatives have been repeatedly used in the Holy Scriptures. They have specifically been used when referring to God’s commandments. Obey means “to carry out or fulfill the command, order, or instruction.” As the definition implies, to obey is the act of carrying out. Therefore, obeying God’s commandments is the act of carrying out his commands. Hence, people who praise God in words only but do not act in compliance with his command are disobedient.

This segment will examine several verses from the Holy Scriptures about obedience, and will clarify that people’s actions, not words, make them righteous and are what gives them the privilege of entering the kingdom of heaven in the hereafter.

Verses from the Bible:

“Not every one that said to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity” (Matthew, 7:21-23).

“...what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? He said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments. He said to him, Which ones? Jesus said, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother, and, you shall love your Neighbor as yourself” (Matthew, 19:16-19).

“... A man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard’. He answered and said ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said ‘I go, sir’ and did not go. “Which one of the two did the will of his father?” They said to him, The first” (Matthew, 21:28-31).

“...My mother and my brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it” (Luke, 8:21).

"...Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke, 11:28).

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have the works? Can faith save him? ...Thus also faith by itself, it does not have works, is dead... But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without work is dead" (James, 2:14-20).

"My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John, 3:18).

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James, 1:22).

"You see then that a man is justified by work, and not by faith only... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without work is dead also" (James, 2:24, 26).

Verses from the Quran:

"God has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power)" (Quran, 24:55).

"...Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves" with their actions and beliefs (Quran, 13:11).

"There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle you, and he calls God to witness about what is in his heart; yet is he the most contentious of enemies... But God does not love mischief" (Quran, 2:204, 205).

"Those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, - any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work *righteousness*, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve." (Quran, 2:62, 5:69).

"But those who have faith and work *righteousness*, they are companions of the Garden:" (Quran, 2:82).

"Yes! whoever submits himself entirely to God and he is the doer of good (to others) he has his reward from his Lord" (Quran, 2:112).

"So believe in God. And His apostles: And if ye believe and do right, ye have a reward without measure" (Quran, 3:179).

"If any do deeds of *righteousness*, - be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them." (Quran, 4:124).

"Why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to God that you should say that which you do not do" (Quran, 61:2, 3). God declares that saying things one does not do - words with no actions - is hateful.

Verses from the Torah:

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God Commanded him, so did he" (Genesis, 6:22).

"Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis, 26:5).

"... and they said, All that the LORD has said will we do, and be obedient" (Exodus, 24:7).

"If you walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;" (Leviticus, 26:3).

"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

"That you may love the LORD your God, and that you may obey his voice," (Deuteronomy 30:20).

"Fear God, and keep his commandments:" (Ecclesiastes, 12:13).

"Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you" (Jeremiah, 11:4).

These verses clearly instruct everyone that it is imperative to obey God's commandments. Therefore, the actions of a person - and not his or her words - determine if he or she has submitted to the will of God. And whoever submits to the will of God will be blessed in this world and in the hereafter. Anyone who acts according to God's commandments - does not commit murder, does not commit adultery, does not steal, does not bear false witness, honors his or her father and mother, and loves his or her neighbor as himself or herself, and does not covet nor lie - shall enter the kingdom of heaven. But anyone who praises God and his prophets in words yet acts in defiance of God's commandments will not enter the

kingdom of heaven. God also makes it clear that no one, and this includes religious and political leaders, is permitted to add or take anything from His commandments.

If we look at the “Avoiding Ten Evils” section of Buddha’s teachings, it is evident that it is all about abstaining from committing certain acts and, therefore, the only people who are in compliance with Buddha’s teaching are not the ones who just meditate and recite the words of Buddha but the ones who also do not commit those acts.

JUSTICE, FAIRNESS, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Justice and fairness in society are based on respecting, preserving, and protecting individual rights. These rights, which form the foundations for individual happiness and fulfillment, include respect for people's lives, peace of mind, possessions, dignity, honor, parents, and neighbors.

Everyone is equal in the eyes of the law, meaning there should be no preferential or discriminatory practices in the judicial system, and individuals should be treated based on their actions. Therefore, regardless of their background and status in society, a murderer, a thief, a drug dealer, and someone who has committed a misdemeanor should not be treated equally. Similarly, people should be rewarded equitably based on their actions and works; therefore, a doctor, a scientist, and an unskilled person do not deserve the same rewards.

Justice and fairness are the goal of religion. God said, "Certainly We sent Our messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice" (Quran, 57:25). There are several important points in this verse. First, it states that all the prophets are sent for the purpose of teaching mankind how to "stand forth in justice." Second, it commands mankind to "stand forth," which tells everyone to rise up against injustice and make a united effort to bring justice to the world. Third, it commands all "men," which indicates that everyone – irrespective of their nationality, race, age, or other factors – should rise up and uphold justice.

Everyone – particularly the religious, the righteous, and the reformers – should unite and pursue this goal to achieve justice and fairness in the world. People should use every available means of communication to promote this goal and make everyone strive for a world in which our rights are protected, we have peace of mind, and are happy and content. We should be able to live in a world where there is no sign of injustice, indignity, ignorance, poverty, corruption, violence, dishonesty, hatred, fanaticism, racism, oppression, or war. This is the world mankind deserves and should strive for.

People should focus on this goal and stop concentrating on their differences and other irrelevant issues. This would eliminate the "divide and conquer" opportunity that dictators, corrupt politicians, and religious leaders have used to advance their causes.

These self-serving and corrupt leaders will not give up their power and authority without resistance. Therefore, the religious, the righteous, and the reformers should unite and utilize their resources and available mass media communication technologies – including books, magazines, brochures, audio and video tapes, disks, poetry, music, theater, movies, television, and Internet – to spread this message and confront anyone who opposes this goal.

People should also use their voting powers and elect representatives who will use legislative tools to achieve this goal.

God has granted mankind the abilities and intelligence required to achieve this goal. He has also instructed us on how to reach this goal. People must actively use their resources and make every effort to bring about the necessary changes for achieving this goal. If we do not strive to achieve this goal with all of our possessions and resources, and with our hearts and souls, then we have none to blame but ourselves for the existence of injustice, ignorance, indignity, poverty, fanaticism, hatred, racism, corruptness, oppression, or war in the world.

In the next segments, we will review some of the commandments found in the religious Scriptures that are meant to protect human rights.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE BIBLE (NEW- TESTAMENT)

Let us review the following verses from the New Testament of the Bible:

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew, 5:6).

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew, 5:10).

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew, 5:20).

"...For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew, 9:13).

"Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew, 13:43).

"...I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew, 15:24).

"...what good deed must I do to have eternal life? So he said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments. He said to him, Which ones? Jesus said, You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew, 19:16-19).

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others" (Mathew, 23:23).

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew, 23:27-28).

"...but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew, 25:46).

"...I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark, 2:17).

"You know the commandments, Do not commit Adultery' Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor your father and mother" (Mark, 10:19).

"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke, 5:32).

"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others" (Luke, 11:42).

"You know the commandments, Do not commit Adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother" (Luke, 18:20).

"For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (Romans, 2:13).

"... you shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Romans, 13:9).

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Corinthians, 6:9)

"Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness" (1 Timothy, 6:11).

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled" (1 Peter, 3:14).

It is clear that justice, righteousness, and protecting people's rights are God's commandments and are demanded of everyone.

Christians should make every effort to make this a world where God's commandments are obeyed and enforced. They should actively work for and participate in building such a world. These verses show that having faith and believing are not sufficient alone and must be complemented by actions (refer to section "Actions not Words"). Christians should know that Jesus did not come to destroy the laws and prophets that had come before him. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, Till heaven and earth pass, one stroke or one pronunciation mark shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whoever shall do and teach them, the same

shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mathew, 5:17-20).

By understanding these and similar verses, true Christians recognize that anyone – regardless of who that person is – who exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, which is achieved by obeying God's commandments, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, Christians should strive to achieve the goal of religion for humanity, which is to rise up and uphold justice so we can all live in a world that is full of kindness, happiness, peace, and justice, and where there is no sign of injustice, indignity, oppression, corruption, poverty, ignorance, hatred, extremism, prejudice, racism, or war. This is what God has intended for mankind. Therefore, any true Christian should stop divisions, disputes, and bickering, and should join hands and unite with the people of faith, the righteous, and the reformers to utilize their combined resources to the best of their abilities in order to carry out God's commandments and achieve this invaluable goal.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE QURAN

God tells us that human life is sacred and should not be taken by anyone. "Nor take life - which God has made sacred- except for just cause" (Quran, 17:33). "Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you - that you do not associate anything with Him and show kindness to your parents, ... and do not take life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law:" (Quran, 6:151).

Other verses in the Quran also show the value of human life. "We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one killed a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" (Quran, 5:32).

Also, God commands us to stay away from adultery. "Nor come near to ADULTERY: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils)" (Quran, 17:32). There are several reasons for this command, including that the act of adultery threatens the stability of the family unit and can potentially lead to its destruction.

There are three categories of animals in nature: In the first category, the offspring do not need either of the parents after the birth. Turtles and frogs are examples. In the second category, the offspring require one of the parents, mainly the mother, for nourishment. Cats and dogs are examples. In the third category, the infant is nurtured and cared for by both parents. Pigeons are an example. In this category, the infants are incapable of taking care of themselves. Raising the offspring to self-sufficiency requires the cooperation of both parents. Humans are part of this category, and their offspring require more nurturing and caring than any other living being. This requirement necessitates the formation and continuation of a stable family unit to nurture the children. Therefore, religion promotes marriage and forbids adultery, which, as discussed, is a risk to the formation of a stable family unit. Family units that are built upon the covenant of marriage tend to be more stable, and, of course, such stable families provide an ideal environment for raising the human offspring.

The following commands in the Quran ensure that individuals' properties and possessions are protected:

"And do not devour your property among yourselves by false means and offer it not as bribe to the authorities that you may devour a part of the wealth of other people wrongfully while you know" (Quran, 2:188).

"...do not devour your property among yourselves falsely, except that it be trading by your mutual consent;" (Quran, 4:29).

"Woe to those that deal in fraud, those who, when they have to receive by measure from men, exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due" (Quran, 83:1-3).

The Quran states that everyone will be responsible and accountable for all of their actions on Judgment Day, no matter how great or small. Therefore, a true believer will respect, protect, and preserve everyone else's financial rights, and will not steal, embezzle, rob, swindle, cheat, or defraud anything – no matter how small or significant – from anyone.

God also forbids us from slandering and defaming; name calling; ridiculing; being suspicious of, spying on, or falsely accusing others.

"O ye who believe! Let not some men among you ridicule others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed: And those who do not repent are (indeed) transgressors. ... Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: And spy not on each other behind their backs" (Quran, 49:11, 12).

God forbids us from spreading rumors or news we are not certain of because it could bring harm to an innocent person. False rumors can ruin people's lives, destroy people's reputations, and bring about disgrace, misery, and despair. "O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest you harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done" (Quran, 49:6). "For, you began to learn it from each other's tongue and then you uttered with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge, and you thought it to be a light matter, while in the sight of God it was a grievous thing" (Quran, 24:15). God commands that no one should ever spread rumors that could result in another person's misery, sadness, or anger (Quran, 24:17).

God also commands us to be kind to our parents, relatives, neighbors, the needy, orphans, companions, wayfarers, and slaves – and to treat them well.

"... be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbor of (your) kin and the alien neighbor, and the companion in a journey and the wayfarer and those whom your right hands possess" and in 2:83 "And remember We

took a covenant from the Children of Israel (to this effect): Worship none but God; treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need; speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practice regular charity." (Quran, 4:36).

God also teaches mankind how to treat our parents and how to show gratitude and appreciation for everything they went through to raise us as children. "Thy Lord has decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor" (Quran, 17:23). In another verse, God states, " ... Show gratitude to Me and to your parents" (Quran, 31:15).

In another verse, God commands kindness to both parents. "We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents" (Quran, 46:15).

It is worth noticing that although slavery existed during earlier times, the Quran orders treating slaves well and promotes freeing slaves as an alternative for the punishment of some sins.

Now, let us examine the importance of justice.

"...stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice..." (Quran, 4:135).

"...- whenever you speak, speak justly even if a near relative is concerned;" (Quran, 6:152).

"...when you judge between people, that you judge with justice ... " (Quran, 4:58).

"Surely God enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion;" (Quran, 16:90).

"...My Lord has commanded justice ... " (Quran, 7:29).

"...let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety:" (Quran, 5:8).

God commands us to be on the side of justice. When testifying in any matter, only the truth should be taken into account. Friendships, family connections, maternal/paternal relationships, hatred, and enmities should not impact the testimony nor affect the course of justice. **No relationship is more important than justice.**

Testifying against rich, powerful, poor, or needy individuals should be for the sake of the truth and for promoting justice. Sometimes people incline to change their testimony and side with the rich and powerful in exchange for some future favor or protection. People also sometimes change their testimony because they pity the poor or needy. In such a case, people should help the poor and needy with their own possessions rather than stepping on truth and justice. Truth should be upheld in any testimony, and people should remember that God is aware of everything.

No one's social or religious status and power should impact the truth or deter the course of justice. No one should distort information, decline to testify, or perplex the truth to change the course of justice.

Until humans stand for justice and protect others' rights, justice will continue to be just another dazzling word that will be used frequently to deceive other human beings.

God's commandments order everyone to put justice above all friendships, hatred, and enmities. People should always be just and promote justice for everyone without any exceptions. This is the pillar for building a society where people can live in happiness with peace of mind and where their rights are protected and preserved. Therefore, one should always keep in mind: **Justice is above all friendships and hatred.**

By pondering upon the aforementioned verses, anyone who believes in the Quran and claims to be Muslim should recognize that the goal of religion is for people to rise up and uphold justice so they can live in a world that is full of kindness, happiness, peace, and where there is no sign of injustice, indignity, oppression, corruption, poverty, ignorance, hatred, extremism, prejudice, racism, or war. This is what God commanded mankind. Therefore, any true believer of the Quran and any true Muslim will stop divisions, disputes, and bickering, and will join hands and unite with all the people of faith, the righteous, and the reformers to utilize their combined resources to the best of their abilities to carry out God's commandments in order to achieve this invaluable goal.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE TORAH (OLD TESTAMENT)

"Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the land which LORD your God is giving you. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house, You shall not covet your neighbors' wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is your neighbor's" (Exodus, 20:12-17).

These commandments are all repeated and reiterated in Deuteronomy 5:16-21.

The following verse affirms that no one, including religious leaders, is permitted to add or delete anything from God's commandments and that we should all obey His commandments. "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy, 4:2).

The following verses from the Torah:

"...that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice," (Genesis 18:19).

"Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds" (Isaiah, 3:10).

"Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless" (Isaiah, 10:1-2).

"No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil" (Isaiah, 59:4).

"Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the strangers, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place" (Jeremiah, 22:3).

"Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it" (Micah, 2:1).

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah, 6:8).

"And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart" (Zechariah, 7:10).

"You shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another...You shall do no injustice in judgment. Not be partial to the poor nor honor the person of mighty" (Leviticus, 19:11, 15).

"Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy" (Ps, 2:3).

"Keep justice, and do righteousness" (Isaiah, 56:1).

These verses clearly identify that justice, righteousness, and protecting people's rights are God's commandments and are demanded of everyone.

There are many more reaffirmations of these verses in the Torah. Therefore, the Jewish people should strive for achieving the goal of religion for humanity, which is to rise up and uphold justice so they can live in a world that is full of kindness, happiness, peace, and justice, and where there is no sign of injustice, indignity, oppression, corruption, poverty, ignorance, hatred, extremism, prejudice, racism, or war. This is what God commanded mankind. Therefore, any true Jewish person who follows the ways of Abraham and Moses will stop divisions, disputes, and bickering, and will join hands and unite with all the people of faith, the righteous, and the reformers, and utilize their combined resources to the best of their abilities to carry out God's commandments in order to achieve this invaluable goal.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BUDDHISM

Buddhism is a religion/philosophy based upon the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, known as Buddha (486-566 B.C.). In his teachings, Buddha claims, "I will teach you the Truth and the Path leading to the Truth."

Buddhism is a philosophy or way of life to more than 300 million people around the world. The Buddhist path can be summed up as a way to lead a moral life, to be mindful and aware of thoughts and actions, and to develop wisdom and understanding.

In Sigalovada Sutta, Buddha said the followings to Sigalaka:

"Inasmuch, young householder, as the noble disciple has eradicated the four vices in conduct, inasmuch as he commits no evil action in four ways, ... ,he is favored in this world and in the world beyond. Upon the dissolution of the body, after death, he is born in a happy heavenly realm.

"What are the four vices in conduct that he has eradicated? The destruction of life, householder, is a vice and so are stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. These are the four vices that he has eradicated."

... He spoke yet again: Killing, stealing, lying and adultery, These four evils the wise never praise.

"In which four ways does one commit no evil action? Led by desire does one commit evil. Led by anger does one commit evil. Led by ignorance does one commit evil. Led by fear does one commit evil "But inasmuch as the noble disciple is not led by desire, anger, ignorance, and fear, he commits no evil."

..."And how, young man, does the noble disciple protect the six directions? These six directions should be known: mother and father as the east, teachers as the south, spouse and family as the west, friends and colleagues as the north, workers and servants as the lower direction, and ascetics and Brahmans as the upper direction. "In five ways should a mother and father as the eastern direction be respected by a child: 'I will support them who supported

me; I will do my duty to them; I will maintain the family lineage and tradition; I will be worthy of my inheritance; and I will make donations on behalf of dead ancestors.”

In the “Avoiding Ten Evils” section, Buddha said:

All acts of living creatures become bad by ten things, and by avoiding the ten things they become good. There are three evils of the body, four evils of the tongue, and three evils of the mind.

The evils of the body are, murder, theft, and adultery; of the tongue, lying, slander, abuse, and idle talk; of the mind, covetousness, hatred, and error.

I exhort you to avoid the ten evils:

1. Kill not, but have regard for life.
2. Steal not, neither do ye rob; but help everybody to be master of the fruits of his labor.
3. Abstain from impurity, and lead a life of chastity.
4. Lie not, but be truthful. Speak the truth with discretion, fearlessly and in loving heart.
5. Invent not evil reports, neither do ye repeat them. Carp not, but look for the good sides of your fellow-beings, so that ye may with sincerity defend them against their enemies.
6. Swear not, but speak decently and with dignity.
7. Waste not the time with gossip, but speak to the purpose or keep silence.
8. Covet not, nor envy, but rejoice at the fortunes of other people.
9. Cleanse your heart of malice and cherish no hatred, not even against your enemies; but embrace all living beings with kindness.
10. Free your mind of ignorance and be anxious to learn the truth, especially in the one thing that is needful, lest you fall a prey either to skepticism or to errors. Skepticism will make you indifferent and errors will lead you astray.

Buddha’s teachings make it clear that justice, righteousness, and protecting people’s rights are demanded of everyone.

If followers of Buddha understand the teachings of Buddha, they shall live without committing any of the ten evils, which are killing, adultery, stealing, lying, jealousy, hatred, spreading false rumors, gossip, and false accusations. They should try to build a world where no one is committing any of these evil deeds. This sounds very much like the goal of the religious, the righteous, and the reformers. Therefore, a true Buddhist will stop creating division, disputes, and bickering, and will join hands and unite with all the people of faith, the righteous, and the reformers, and utilize their combined resources to the best of their abilities to eliminate the ten evils throughout the world. It is then that people can live in kindness, happiness, justice, and peace.

By reviewing the commands and teachings of the Scriptures regarding justice, fairness, and protection of human's rights, it is evident that if the followers of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism – who comprise about four billion people, approximately two-thirds of the world population – stop divisions and disputes, join hands, unite, and use their combined resources, they can easily achieve the goal of religion and build a world that is full of kindness, happiness, peace, and justice, and where there is no sign of injustice, indignity, oppression, corruption, poverty, ignorance, hatred, extremism, prejudice, racism, or war.

REAL MUSLIMS AND THEIR DUTIES

In the first section, we discussed the goal of religion and what is required to achieve this goal. This section will start by introducing Islam. Because there are so many misconceptions about Islam, it is necessary to explain the definition of Islam in order to clarify any misconceptions. Then, some of the most important duties of Muslims, which are required to achieve the goal of religion, are reviewed in the context of the Quran.

WHAT IS ISLAM?

The word Islam means to surrender, submit, or bow to God's will and no one else. No one has the right nor deserves to be devotedly obeyed and followed except God.

The word Muslim was first used by Abraham. "It is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims" (Quran, 22:78).

The word Muslim is a noun derived from the word Islam, and it means someone who has accepted Islam as his or her religion. It may also be used as an adjective.

Do not confuse Islam with what so-called religious leaders, political leaders, or ignorant people in the media, academic, and religious and social groups are portraying as Islam. Do not allow the Islamophobic propaganda blind you of the true meaning of Islam. People falsify, distort, and misrepresent the truth for their own interests. Study and understand the meaning of Islam through the Quran and do not believe anyone who is in conflict with the teachings of the Quran. When many who believe they are Muslim do not know what it means to be a Muslim, how can we expect others that only learned about Islam and Muslims by listening to ignorant political, social, and religious leaders – or by listening to the biased and prejudiced newscasts, or reading unfair and predisposed articles – have any notion of what true Islam is? Leave your premeditated judgments aside for the moment, read this segment without any preconceived notions, and then think about the possibility of deceit and fraud on behalf of people who depict Islam and religion as anything but the way to a better life for everyone.

Consider the following verses from the Quran:

"The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah – that which We have sent by inspiration to you – and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus:

Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein:" (Quran, 42:13).

"Your God is One God. Submit then your wills to Him (in Islam): and give the good news to those who humble themselves" (Quran, 22:34).

"Abraham was not a Jew nor a Christian but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim, and he was not one of the polytheists" (Quran, 3:67).

Noah says "no reward have I asked of you: my reward is only due from God, and I have been commanded to be of those who submit to God's will (in Islam)" (Quran, 10:72).

"And this was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob; "Oh my sons! God has chosen the Faith for you; then die not except in the Faith of Islam." Were you present when death came to Jacob, when he said to his sons: "What will you worship after me?" They said: "We shall worship your God and the God of your fathers, of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, the one (True) God. To Him we bow (in Islam)"" (Quran, 2:132,133).

Joseph says "...make me die a Muslim and unite me with the righteous" (Quran, 12:101).

"And Moses said, `O my people, if you have believed in God, then in HIM put your trust, if you have truly submitted to His Will.'" (Quran, 10:84).

"When Jesus found Unbelief on their part He said: "Who will be My helpers to (the work of) God." Said the disciples: "We are God's helpers: We believe in God, and do you bear witness that we are Muslims" (Quran, 3:52).

"Say, Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for God, the Lord of the worlds; No associate has He; and this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit" (Quran, 6:162,163).

"If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God), it shall not be accepted from him;" (Quran, 3:85).

"The Religion before God is Islam (submission to His Will): Nor did the People of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them" (Quran, 3:19).

The verses clearly indicate that to follow religion is to submit to God's will. Each and every prophet conveyed God's message to mankind. All the prophets are Muslim, which is to say they submitted to the will of God.

These verses have no contradiction with the fact that everyone should practice his or her own faith's details and rituals. As God said in the Quran, "...To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He has given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues" (Quran, 5:48). Although every group has the same religion, which is submission to God or Islam, everyone will be tested by his or her own Scriptures, and they should prove their devotion to God with different rituals and practices.

Therefore, a Muslim, one who submits to God's will, only obeys God commands without any question. To be a Muslim, one should study the Holy Scriptures to understand God's commandments and should act accordingly.

Everyone should be God's devoted servant and make no division in the religion.

God orders everyone to "Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord and do not follow guardians besides Him" (Quran, 7:3). This verse makes it clear that no one should follow anyone else's writings or teachings if they are inconsistent with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. Such teachings or writings will take people away from the righteous path.

There is no need to follow anyone's writings or teachings to recognize the path to righteousness and to live in contentment, happiness, and delight in this world and in the hereafter; everything is clearly and concisely stated in the Holy Scriptures.

"Have you not seen those who assert that they believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you? Their (real) wish is to resort together for judgment (in their disputes) to the Evil One, though they were ordered to reject him. But Satan's wish is to lead them astray far away (from the right)." (Quran, 4:60). God is warning us that most people have strayed from the true religion, and instead of reading, understanding, and acting according to God's commandments, they follow the opinions of others. There are no certainties about the true intentions of people who write about or teach religion. Their writings and teachings should always be weighed against the Holy Scriptures, and if there are any inconsistencies, they should be ignored and disregarded.

Again, to clear any misconceptions, a true Muslim is defined as one who believes in God; one who submits, surrenders, and bows to the will of God; and one who obeys God's commandments. The names people call themselves are irrelevant. Any Christian, Jew, Buddhist, or follower of any other faith who obeys God's commandments and submits to God's will is a true Muslim.

DUTIES OF MUSLIMS

A true Muslim is someone who only submits, surrenders, and bows to God's will and no one else. Such a person will obey God's commands and strive for achieving the goal of religion as it is stated in the Quran. "Certainly We sent Our messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice" (Quran, 57:25). God tells everyone that He sent the prophets, Holy Scriptures, and laws so that people rise up and stand for justice. This is the foundation for building a world that is full of happiness, kindness, peace, and justice, and where there is no sign of injustice, indignity, oppression, corruption, poverty, ignorance, hatred, extremism, fanaticism, racism, or war.

To achieve this goal, the religious, the righteous, and the reformers should join hands and unite. They should do their utmost, use all their resources – be it their finances, authority, power, or time – and utilize all the available mass media communication tools – including books, magazines, newspapers, brochures, pictures, painting, music, poetry, theater, film, radio, television, audio and video tapes and CDs, cell phones, text messaging, video messaging, the Internet, and any other technology that becomes available – to promote this goal and build the world mankind deserves. This requires a commitment from the heart and soul with sincerity and enthusiasm. People should use their best approach to encourage everyone to join in, as it is commanded in the Quran. "Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious" (Quran, 16:125). People should be gracious, pleasant, and amiable in their discussion with others, and should use wisdom, insight, logic, and common sense to invite everyone to join in, actively participate, and be part of the effort to achieve the goal of religion. Mankind's prosperity and happiness is dependent upon this.

Every Muslim should actively practice and participate in doing good deeds, strive for the betterment of other people and society, practice monotheism, establish regular prayer, give to charity and spend in the way of God, and cooperate and unite with fellow humans to stand for justice.

As for future generations, there should be programs in place to educate children with love, patience, and serenity about the Holy Scriptures. Education should include human ethics and morality so that children grow up to love the world and be happy, righteous, virtuous, and benevolent. Education must ensure that children are raised as kind and humane people who despise cruelty, ruthlessness, viciousness, wickedness, and vindictiveness. Children should be educated and trained in sciences and skills that are required to be successful and productive members of society in tomorrow's world. They should be provided with the education, tools, and resources that enable them to promote and implement the goal of religion throughout the world.

Reward and punishment systems should be implemented throughout society. People should be aware that they will be rewarded for their good deeds and will be punished quickly if they commit any crime or mischief.

Constructive competition in science, art, compassion, generosity, and kindness should be supported, while jealousy, envy, and resentment due to lavishing in luxury, extravagance, and wastefulness should be discouraged.

GOOD DEEDS

A true religious person is righteous, does good deeds, and commits no mischief. Doing good deeds is fundamental for the betterment of society and is, therefore, one of the duties of any true religious person.

Shu'aib, one of God's prophets, tells his people: "And I do not desire to do against you the very thing which I ask you not to do.. I only desire reform (your betterment) to the best of my power; and my success (in my task) can only come from God" (Quran, 11:88).

God tells us, "Those who believe (in the Quran), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabians and the Christians, any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (Quran, 2:62 and 5:69).

"If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them" (Quran, 4:124).

"Those who have faith and do good deeds, they are the best of created beings" (Quran, 98:7).

God commands everyone to make their best effort for the betterment of people and society and to do deeds of righteousness. These are of the key elements required for entering the kingdom of heaven. By now it should be clear that while the rituals and details of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are different, no matter what people call themselves, if they act in righteousness, they shall have no fear and God will reward them.

There are several verses that command people to be righteous. There are also verses that inform everyone that righteous work and doing good deeds are of the requirements for salvation.

To see a selection of these verses, refer to the following

"For those who do good deeds, there shall be the best reward and yet more blessings" (Quran 10:26).

"Surely God enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion;" (Quran, 16:90).

"But those who have faith and work righteousness, they are companions of the Garden: Therein shall they abide (For ever)" (Quran, 2:82).

"To all are degrees (or ranks) according to their deeds: for your Lord is not unmindful of anything that they do" (Quran, 6:132).

"For those who do good is the best (reward) and more (thereto)." (Quran, 10:26).

"Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world: But the things that endure, good deeds, are best in the sight of your Lord," (Quran, 18:46).

God commands everyone to do good deeds and be righteous. But He does not instruct anyone to ignore the good and pure things of this life. None of the commandments suggest that anyone should abandon or forsake the pleasures of this life to achieve salvation.

Look at the following verses:

"O messengers, eat from what is good, and do righteous work. I am aware of what you do." (Quran, 23:51).

"O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for God does not love the wasters. Say: Who has forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of God, which He has produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He has provided) for sustenance?" (Quran, 7:31, 32).

"O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to God" (Quran, 2:172).

"O you who believe! make not unlawful the good things which God has made lawful for you, but commit no excess: for God does not love those given to excess. Eat of the things which God has provided for you, lawful and good" (Quran, 5:87, 88).

The verses make it clear that to give up the good and beautiful things that God has provided for us is not a sign of righteousness. Being righteous means doing good deeds and acting in the interest of everyone. Islam encourages good living and enjoying God's blessings. Muslims should accept, consume, and take advantage of God's blessings. But they should keep moderation in mind and not be wasteful.

"Do no mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): for the Mercy of God is (always) near to those who do good" (Quran, 7:56).

"There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life May dazzle you, and he calls God to witness about what is in his

heart; yet is he the most contentious of enemies. When he turns his back, His aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle. But God does not love mischief" (Quran, 2:204, 205).

"When it is said to them: "Make not mischief on the earth," they say: "Why, we only want to make peace!" Of a surety, they are the ones who make mischief, but they realize (it) not" (Quran, 2:11, 12).

"And follow not the bidding of those who are extravagant, who make mischief in the land, and mend not (their ways)" (Quran, 26:151, 152).

God commands everyone not to commit mischief or follow the ones who commit mischief. He also warns us about people who only speak of righteousness and dazzle everyone with their words – they deceive everyone with their beautiful but misleading slogans, while their actions are dishonest, evil, and mischievous. These dishonest, self-serving, power-hungry, and cunning people make beautiful but misleading sermons, speeches, and writings about righteousness and doing good deeds. But, in their hearts, they wish to stray everyone from the path of righteousness. They think, plan, and deceive everyone on purpose so they can gain more power, authority, control, and wealth. They neither understand nor care about protecting society. They do not comprehend that their actions will hurt them as well as their families, relatives, and friends. They do not understand that an unethical environment disgraces and humiliates everyone in it.

To protect and preserve their morality and righteousness, most of the religious, the righteous, and the reformers have hesitated and refused to get involved in the affairs of society. Therefore, they have unknowingly empowered dictators, and corrupt politicians and religious leaders to take control and reign, and to spread tyranny, oppression, and mischief. If the religious, the righteous, and the reformers, who are the silent majority, come out of their shells, unite, prevent mischief, and work for the betterment of societies, they can easily stop dictators, and corrupt politicians and religious leaders, who are the vocal and powerful minority, and successfully eliminate the power and tyranny of the minorities that create disasters, calamities, and misfortunes.

There are two groups of people who commit mischief in this world. The first group commits mischief because its members are ignorant, foolish, unaware, and have no common sense. But the second group is composed of people who purposely commit mischief and attempt to spread it in the world. They deceive by claiming to be righteous and hiding behind that façade. To deal with the first group, education is key. Through education and understanding, they should be guided in the way of God and become righteous. Otherwise, they will become part of the second group. But to deal with the second group, everyone should always be on guard. Understanding true religion and its goal is necessary to recognize truth and distinguish it from the lies and frauds in the writings, teachings, and slogans of the corrupt. The ability to recognize the truth is only acquired by studying and pondering upon the Holy

Scriptures. There is no certainty about the validity of anyone's writings or claims about quotations from the prophets and other important religious figures of the past.

In order to minimize the number of people in the first group, children should be educated to understand the goal of religion. The educators must always listen to children, be kind and enthusiastic, and teach them with compassion and honesty. The educational materials should be made simple, interesting, and easy to understand.

"...Verily never will God change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their actions and beliefs)" (Quran, 13:11).

"Because God will never change the grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in themselves" (Quran, 8:53).

A society will not change unless the people of that society start believing and taking actions to change it. To transform a society to the better requires just a few people to start believing and taking actions to educate others and promote their message. People will gradually comprehend and grasp the message and will realize the need for betterment of society. When there are enough devoted people with enough resources who participate with all their possessions and livelihood, then the snowball effect will take over and there will be no stopping the changes until the conditions of society improve.

Looking back at history, one can easily recognize that uniting people and getting everyone to cooperate together have created the world's great empires. But after reaching their greatness, different groups change their ways to dispersion, obstruction, and division to gain more wealth, authority, and control.

Therefore, each group starts to obstruct and delay what should be done, exaggerating deficiencies and flaws, and trying to discredit other groups for their own advantage. History has shown that this vicious cycle caused the downfall of every great empire.

Wisdom is utilizing knowledge and experience with common sense and insight. To improve the world and the societies we live in, people should act wisely – educate themselves, examine and learn from history's lessons, recognize and respect others' beliefs, and use those beliefs to convince everyone to unite, participate, cooperate, and direct their societies and governments to bring about honesty, truthfulness, betterment, peace, and protection of human rights into the world affairs.

A building made with substandard materials will crumble sooner or later. In today's world, the building materials of each society are the people who support the government financially or in any other way. Today's lobbyists through donations, contributions, and bribes support the candidates who support their causes. They are the source of legislations that are in direct opposition to the public's interests. Until people get involved in the affairs of society and eliminate this phenomenon, there will be no betterment of

society. To prevent this kind of injustice, the righteous, the reformers, and the religious should join hands and invite all the voiceless people to get involved. To invite anyone to join this cause, we should use the guidelines that have been laid out in the Quran. "Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious" (Quran, 16:125).

True Muslims will get their reward in this life and in the hereafter. They should utilize their resources and work with the righteous and the reformers – even outside of religion's context – to promote betterment of the world. They should happily strive to follow God's commandments, which build a world full of happiness, kindness, peace, and justice, and where there is no sign of injustice, indignity, oppression, corruption, poverty, ignorance, hatred, extremism, fanaticism, racism, or war. Doing good deeds, helping one another, preventing shameful and evil deeds, active participation, and unity are required for achieving this goal, and they are, therefore, the duty of every Muslim.

MONOTHEISM

“Monotheism” means there is only one master, one Lord who is to be devotedly obeyed. It means being an obedient servant and to submit only to one master, one commander, and one ruler – God. Monotheism is having one Lord or master, whereas polytheism means having several masters and lords. Let us examine the following verses.

In the Quran, Joseph asks “O my two companions of the prison! (I ask you): are many lords differing among themselves better, or the One God, Supreme and Irresistible?” (Quran, 12:39).

“God sets forth a parable - a man belonging to several partners, who disagree with one another, and a man belonging wholly to one man, are the two equal in condition?” (Quran, 39:29).

It is evident that having one master and serving only one master – a master who has no need for his servants and whose commands are for the betterment of his servants’ lives – is not comparable to having and obeying multiple masters.

“They have no protector other than Him; nor does He share His Command with any person whatsoever” (Quran, 18:26). God commands people to always look to Him as their protector, and tells them He will not share his dominion with anyone. God forbids anyone from passing a law, making a ruling, or making a judgment against His commandments. All the manmade laws and rulings should be in accord with His commandments.

Imagine the kind of world we would have when people understand and truly believe that there is only one master, one Lord, and that He is the one everyone – even dictators, kings, governors, chiefs, the powerful, the rich, and religious leaders – should submit to and obey. No one should issue any commands or rulings against God’s commandments. No one is anybody else’s master, no one should expect to be obeyed without question, and no one may issue any decree that is for their own – or for their own group’s – profiteering and against God’s commandments.

There are inherent conflicts between monotheism and dictators, kings, chiefs, governors, rulers, and some religious leaders. They are constantly attempting to expand their power, authority, and control, and they expect everyone to obey them and their orders loyally. They obviously oppose monotheism. Therefore, it is the duty of any Muslim to contest the authority of such people, to not allow them to rule or govern in such a manner, and to make sure no one is bowed to or unconditionally obeyed except God.

"... They were commanded to worship but One God. there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: (Far is He) from having the partners they associate (with Him)" (Quran, 9:31).

"Say: "Is it some one other than God that you order me to worship, O you ignorant ones?" " (Quran, 39:64).

"Say: "What! shall I seek a Lord other than God? When He is the Lord of all things;" " (Quran, 6:164).

God repeatedly commands everyone to not take anyone as His partner, to serve no one except Him, and to worship only Him. God is the only one with absolute power and control.

To "worship" means to serve with absolute obedience. A servant only obeys his master and does not obey anyone or any entity that is against the master.

God commands the Prophet Mohammad "Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God. that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than God" (Quran, 3:64).

"That you should worship none but God" (Quran, 11:2).

"That you serve none but God" (Quran, 11:26).

"Behold, Luqman said to his son by way of instruction: "O my son! join not in worship (others) with God: for false worship is indeed the highest wrong-doing." " (Quran, 31:13).

"Say: "I am commanded to worship God, and not to join partners with Him. Unto Him do I call, and unto Him is my return." " (Quran, 13:36).

"Say: "I have been forbidden to invoke those whom you invoke besides God, seeing that the Clear Signs have come to me from my Lord; and I have been commanded to bow (in Islam) to the Lord of the Worlds" " (Quran, 40:66).

"Follow what you are taught by inspiration from your Lord: there is no god but He: and turn aside from those who join gods with God" (Quran, 6:106).

"Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you - that you do not associate anything with Him" (Quran, 6:151). God clearly and unequivocally tells everyone that no one should be worshipped (served) except Him.

Prophet Mohammad was a servant of God; he obeyed and followed God's revelations. He did not make any laws or rules of his own. As part of daily prayers, we repeatedly say, "And I testify that Muhammad is His servant and His prophet," which is a reminder that no one, not even the prophets, deserve to be worshipped – let alone any religious leader, dictator, king, or chief.

God commands the prophet, "Your duty is only to preach the clear Message" (Quran, 16:82). This command was repeated 11 times. It is quite clear that God is the only one to be worshipped and served, and that His commands, and only His commands, are to be obeyed.

ELIMINATION OF IGNORANCE

One of the most troublesome problems of humanity is ignorance, lack of knowledge, or false and incorrect knowledge. Everyone believes they know what they are talking about, while, in fact, nothing is farther from the truth. Most of the time, people are just repeating what they have heard or what they have read. They really have no knowledge of the issue. Children and teenagers repeatedly say, "I know, I know," without having any knowledge of the subject. This trait carries over to adulthood and old age. People debate and discuss issues without having any true knowledge of the subject. They even insist that their points of view are the correct ones. Most people's knowledge of a subject, compared to what they do not know about it, is like a drop of water compared to an ocean. For example, a top professor of medicine has knowledge of his or her specialty, but his or her knowledge outside of his or her expertise is limited. And, furthermore, his or her knowledge in philosophy, economy, and politics is even more limited. Even the most educated and learned ones have knowledge of only a few subjects. Additionally, most people forget most of what they have learned. As it is said, people usually end up forgetting more than they learn during their lifetime.

What do we know about the billions of galaxies and billions of stars in each galaxy? What do we know about the villages and towns that exist on Earth? What do we know about what kinds of people live in our neighborhood, let alone about people who live in other cities, states, and countries? How much do we really know about a candidate for presidency, Senate, Congress, or anything else we vote for? Do we know the real price of the items we purchase? Do we really know how various systems and organs are working in our body? How much do we really know about our Holy Scriptures? And so on and so forth. As an old saying goes, "A wise man knows how much he does not know."

Cunning and devious people deceive and defraud innocents by taking advantage of their ignorance. They make them feel and believe they know all there is to know about religion; they deceive everyone in the name of religion, faith, philosophy, politics, race, nationality, human rights, democracy, freedom, security, terrorism, etc. They use ignorance to divert people from reality and truth and to constantly deceive them; they prevent people from realizing the truth about important issues humanity is facing. But everyone should be aware that they will be held responsible. "And do not follow that of which you have no knowledge. Verily, the ear and the eye and the heart - you are responsible for using them" (Quran 17:36).

The subject of this book is to understand the goal of religion. How many people amongst the readers, their relatives, friends, and acquaintances have studied their own religion's Holy Scriptures enough to remember every important commandment, let alone the commandments in the other Holy Scriptures?

"When it is said to them: "Follow what God has revealed:" They say: "Nay! We shall follow the ways of our fathers." What! even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?" (Quran, 2:170).

People have learned about religion through what they have heard from their parents, relatives, friends, mentors, or religious leaders – that is if they have attended their mosques, churches, or temples. They are like blinds led by blinds. The reliability of these sources is seriously questionable, because most of them have learned about religion through similar unreliable sources. Very few of them have ever studied and pondered upon the Holy Scriptures, and those who really and truly understood religion either shy away from telling the truth or are discouraged about people's ignorance and lack of understanding. Unfortunately, most people act and talk like they know all there is to know about religion. They promote their understanding of religious concepts and insist on it without ever studying the Holy Scriptures.

Ignorant and naïve people believe these sources are men of God and that everything they say or write is true. But the fact of the matter is that most of these sources have no, or very little, knowledge of the true religion. They make riddles and conceal the truth. They obscure the truth about religion. They are the reason for divisions and conflicts amongst religious people.

"Those who conceal the clear (Signs) We have sent down, and the Guidance, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book, on them shall be God's curse, and the curse of those of those entitled to curse" (Quran, 2:159). God warns of what awaits those who conceal and defraud the truth. We should all study the Holy Scriptures and understand religion in order to prevent them from committing fraud and deceit.

"Have you any hope that they will be true to you when a party of them used to listen to the word of God, then used to change it, after they had understood it, knowingly?" (Quran, 2:75). God warns about people who knowingly distort and change His word. Some of them refer to their perversions as interpretations of the Holy Scriptures.

The corrupt religious leaders commit these perversions and concealments to protect and preserve their powers and standing in society. They write and give speeches to make the wishes of dictators or authorities appear to be in line with God's commandments.

And, unfortunately, many innocent but ignorant people believe in these writings or sermons. These innocent but ignorant people unknowingly contribute to this evil cause by spreading these fallacies throughout society as though it was the truth. They shun anyone who makes any objection to these fallacies and tries to reveal the truth about religion by referring them to the Holy Scriptures. They label them as infidels or unbelievers, or they

confront and renounce them and say, "Are you the only one who understands this?" Or, "What you are saying is against our beloved religious leader's teachings."

"And some of them are illiterate, they know not the book but their own false notions, and they do nothing but conjecture. Woe, then, to those who write the book with their hands and then say: This is from God, so that they may take for it a small price; woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn" (Quran 2:78,79).

"And, surely, among them is a party who twist their tongues while reciting the Book that you may think it to be part of the Book, while it is not part of the Book. And they say 'It is from God;' while it is not from God; and they utter a lie against God while they know!" (Quran, 3:78).

God warns about people who attempt to hide the truth through their writings and speeches. God has warned us about four groups of people: first group, purposely distort the truth about religion; second group, fabricate or conjecture whatever suits them or their mentor or master; third group, make speeches full of lies that people believe are based on the Holy Scriptures; fourth group, write books and articles claiming they are interpreting commandments of God or words of prophets when they have no real knowledge of either one.

Everyone should put an end to the proliferation and dissemination of all the nonsense, rubbish, and superstitions that are being labeled as part of religion; reject anyone who misinforms or misleads people by claims, writings, and speeches that are not according to the Holy Scriptures; and ignore the fallacies that have been carved into their minds as true religion. The only way is to start from scratch, unlearn everything about religion, and relearn the truth by studying and pondering on the Holy Scriptures.

To reaffirm the discussions of this segment, look at the following verses from the Bible:

"So practice and observe whatever they tell you—but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice" (Matthew, 23:3).

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows' houses, even while for a pretence you make long prayers: therefore you shall receive greater condemnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (Mathew 23:13-15).

REAL NECESSITIES OF LIFE

Every living creature requires air, water, food, a partner, and safety to live and procreate. Additionally, humans need clothing and a dwelling. So, let us examine how much resources a person requires to satisfy his or her existential needs.

Air is available on earth to everyone – that is if we don't pollute it beyond safety limits.

In today's world, drinking water is almost available to everyone. By utilizing dams, reservoirs, desalination plants, water purification plants, and water pipes, humans have made water accessible to almost everyone. Further, there are infrastructure development projects underway to make drinking water available to the very few who do not have access to clean drinking water. Again, this is if we do not pollute our water resources beyond the point of no return.

How much food do we really need? A sandwich will fill most everyone up, and any more than that will cause indigestion and stomach pain, and may even require medication to relieve the symptoms of overeating. If one stops eating before he or she feels full, as is recommended by many health professionals, he or she will be healthier and feel better. Research studies have shown that animals, which are on very low-calorie diets, live longer. Moreover, overeating creates complications such as obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and many other diseases. Just consider the fact that two-thirds of the U.S. population is obese. The epidemic of obesity has resulted in more cases of diabetes, heart problems, and other medical conditions. The cost of dealing with obesity-related diseases is astronomical and is increasing rapidly. We spend a lot of our valuable resources to prevent these diseases. How many resources would a society save if these diseases were reduced by proper eating? How much money would the world save if there was no need for various diets to lose those extra pounds gained by overindulgence?

Look at the amount of food wasted in many developed countries. For example, the amount of food wasted every day in Las Vegas is more than what is required to eliminate starvation in a few African countries. If everyone stops wastefulness, how many lives can be saved from starvation or hunger?

As for our requirements for clothing, every person can only dress in one set of clothes at a time, and, therefore, only needs a few sets of clothing to alternate between and wear at different occasions. So, again, there is no need to have a lot of clothes to live comfortably. People buy and accumulate many clothing items – especially designer brands – just to satisfy their delusions and fantasies, whereas it is not a necessity of life. The same is true about jewelry and ornaments that people spend exorbitant amounts of money on just to show off.

How many partners does one really need to satisfy his or her natural and sexual desires as well as procreation requirements? The answer is one will suffice. But looking at history, examples of polygamy are numerous. "And he (Solomon) had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines:" (Old Testaments 1 King, 11:3). "For he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines;" (2 Chronicles, 11:21 Rehoboam (Son of Solomon)). "But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives" (2 Chronicles 13:21 Abijah, son of Rehoboam). There are a few reasons why having several wives and concubines was permitted in our forefathers' societies. First, the number of women far exceeded the number of men. Second, the average longevity of women was longer than that of men; even today, it is approximately five years longer. Third, it was men's responsibility to provide for the family and pay for all the household expenses, while women were responsible for nourishing and nurturing the family. Fourth, societies desire to minimize the number of unmarried women due to the economic and social situation.

One of today's fallacies is that the Quran is the only Holy Scripture that allows men to have up to four wives. This fallacy, which is promoted by malicious and ignorant people, is a serious misunderstanding on their part. Reviewing the Holy Scriptures will confirm that polygamy, and having numerous wives and concubines, is legal and acceptable in the Torah and the Bible. The Quran limits the number of wives that one can have, and that is only permissible under certain stringent restrictions and conditions.

In today's developed countries, due to numerous economic and social factors, most married women work and help with household expenses, so having more than one wife is impractical and unjustified. But people still fantasize about having more than one partner and enact it, and that is only to satisfy their delusions and fantasies.

As for humans' need for housing and shelter, which is required for protection from weather conditions – such as rain, snow, heat, and cold – and for privacy – which is a characteristic specific to humans – most families in the world could live very comfortably in a 1-3 bedroom house or shelter, unless it is a family with many children and/or multiple generations living in the same household. So, there is no real need for living in the castles and extravagant homes people yearn for.

Looking at the real necessities of life makes it obvious that people do not require a lot of money or resources to live in comfort. Almost anyone who has skills and works hard, and sometimes even not so hard, is capable of earning enough to provide for these necessities. Therefore, to live a comfortable life, there is no need to step on other people's rights or to take away their resources.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY

Everyone enjoys beauty and splendor, no matter where it is, be it in nature or on a canvas of painting. Humans enjoy observing healthy and playful children, and even kittens or puppies. Everyone enjoys walking in a park or garden filled with flowers, trees, and nice scenery. In the same token, ugliness and hideousness are a burden no matter where they are. People become sad and distressed when they see a homeless person, an ailing or sick person, or even a sick kitten or puppy. They can't stand walking in the ghettos or the abandoned areas full of filth and rubbish. The sight of poor, sick, hungry, needy, or homeless people makes anyone upset and sad.

One of the most detrimental elements of each society is poverty. It is the main cause of hunger, corruption, indignity, homelessness, and crime. Poverty is the underlying cause of many crimes, such as burglary, theft, drug dealing, and even murder. Poverty is the mother of most evils. In order to reduce and eliminate crimes from our society, we should persevere to eliminate poverty. It is the duty of every Muslim to help and contribute by giving to charity and spending in the way of God to eradicate poverty.

One of the most effective ways to eliminate poverty is to provide education, vocational training, and apprenticeship to everyone, and to prepare them for professions required in society. Building elementary schools, high schools, vocational schools, and universities; providing on-the-job training and apprenticeship opportunities; and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to use these facilities enable everyone to learn a skill or a profession. Skilled and professional people have the capability of earning enough to accommodate a comfortable life and contribute to eradication of poverty.

Another effective approach is to create more jobs, provide more employment opportunities, or facilitate entrepreneurship for everyone so people can provide for their essential necessities of life. This will reduce, if not eliminate, poverty, hunger, and some crimes. Formations of investing institutions, banks, or cooperatives, and using people's donations and capitals to create small businesses, which produce what society needs, will create jobs for many people and will, therefore, greatly contribute to reduction of poverty. This idea – creation of micro loans to start micro businesses – has been implemented and proven effective in several countries.

THE QURAN AND POVERTY

In the Quran, the words “poor”, “indigent”, and their derivatives have been repeated 38 times – 13 times for people with not enough income and 25 times for people with no income at all. Please note that the Quran differentiates between the people that have no income and those who do not earn enough to suffice for their basic necessities of life, but in this discussion, we will use the terms interchangeably.

In the Quran, God commands us to give to the poor and needy in several verses.

“But it is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity;” (Quran, 2:177).

“Whatever God has given to HIS Messenger as spoils from the people of the towns, it is for God and for the Messenger and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, in order that it may not circulate only among those of you who are rich. And whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain from it” (Quran, 59:7).

“They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever wealth you spend, it is for the parents and the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, and whatever good you do, God surely knows it” (Quran, 2:215).

“So give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the wayfarer” (Quran, 30:38).

The Quran has informed us that everyone should help the needy, orphans, relatives, and wayfarers; should spend in the way of God; should not be wasteful and squander; and should use their wealth and resources for the betterment of society. If everyone follows these instructions, poverty will be eradicated from human society. We will discuss each one of these topics in the next few segments.

CHARITY

In the Quran, the word "charity" is mentioned 30 times, 3 times alone and 27 times in conjunction with the word "prayer." To review a selection of these verses, refer to the following:

"And be steadfast in prayer; practice regular charity;" (Quran, 2:43).

"... those who establish regular prayer and practice regular charity and believe in God and in the Last Day: To them shall We soon give a great reward" (Quran, 4:162).

"And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship God, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith); to establish regular prayer; and to practice regular charity; and that is the Religion Right and Straight" (Quran, 98:5).

Collected charities should be spent for the purposes are mentioned in the Quran. "Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of God. and for the wayfarer: (thus is it) ordained by God" (Quran, 9:60).

"...Then is it only a part of the Book that you believe in, and you reject the rest? but what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life? and on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty. For God is not unmindful of what you do." (Quran, 2:85). God warns about believing in parts of the book and rejecting other parts. So how can a person withhold charity and claim to be a truly faithful? As it has been said in a proverb, "It is money, it is not life, that can be given up so easily!"

In verses 4:13, 2:3, 8:3, 22:35, and 63:10 of the Quran, the word "spend" - in the way of God and for doing good deeds - is used. "Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what we have provided for them" (Quran, 2:3). Spending in the way of God and for doing good deeds is one of the traits of the believers. Therefore, all true Muslims who submit to God's will and obey His commandments must give to charity and spend in the way of God and do good deeds. The amount of charity is not clearly defined in the Quran, and it depends on society's conditions. When charity is used for investments, to create jobs and to increase employment, then, in turn, the beneficiaries would contribute to charity. This will create perpetual and ever-increasing revenue, which can be used to prevent poverty and hunger in society. "Only those are Believers who have believed in God and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of God: Such are the

sincere ones" The Quran states that a true believer will strive with all his belongings – the more they have, the more they should contribute – in the cause of God (Quran, 49:15)..

"And spend something (in charity) out of the substance which We have bestowed on you, before Death should come to any of you and he should say, 'O my Lord! why did you not give me respite for a little while? I should then have given (largely) in charity, and I should have been one of the doers of good' " (Quran, 63:10). God forewarns everyone to spend before death comes upon them. There is no remorse after death.

WASTEFULNESS

"... wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for God does not love the wasters" (Quran, 7:31).

"And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer: But squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones;" (Quran, 17:26, 27).

"...But waste not by excess: for God does not love the wasters" (Quran, 6:141).

God clearly commands that no one should be wasteful. This applies to food, clothing, housing, and every other expenditure. People should spend as much as it is necessary without being wasteful and excessive.

"Know that the life of this world is only a play and a pastime, and an adornment, and a source of boasting among yourselves, and of rivalry in multiplying riches and children... And the life of this world is nothing but temporary enjoyment of delusive things. Vie, then, with one another in seeking forgiveness from your Lord and for a Garden the value whereof is equal to the value of the heaven and the earth; it has been prepared for those who believe in God and His Messengers." (Quran, 57:20, 21). God tells everyone that this life is temporary and that everyone should strive for God's blessings, which are infinite and everlasting. People are living in luxury and extravagance and brag about their wealth and properties. They brag about their houses, their cars, their boats, their paintings, and other material possessions. All their wealth and properties are used to show off and brag rather than to help others and provide a better society for everyone. "O you who believe ! surely, among your wives and your children are some who are your

enemies, so beware of them. And if you overlook and forgive and pardon, then, surely, God is Most Forgiving, ever Merciful. Your possessions and your children are only a trial, and God it is with Whom is a great reward" (Quran, 64:14, 15). God warns us about our wives and children, and about our belongings. They are for trials, and one should not stray from the way of God nor oppress and betray others to increase his or her wealth and belongings.

If people set aside their fantasies and delusions and look at life more realistically, they will realize they are being wasteful, and that is the root of most financial problems in society. Most people earn more than enough to provide for the basic necessities of their lives. If they help the poor and needy, give to charity, spend in the way of God and do good deeds, invest to create jobs for the jobless and to prevent the suffering and indignity of other human beings, the basic elements required for achieving the goal of religion are at hand.

IDLE CAPITAL

"...And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God. announce unto them a most grievous penalty- On the Day when heat will be produced out of that (wealth) in the fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs - 'This is the (treasure) which you buried for yourselves: taste you, then, the (treasures) you buried!'" (Quran, 9:34, 35) God informs everyone that burying capital - in those days, gold and silver - or allowing capital to stay idle and not be spent or used for creating jobs and producing items for the betterment of society will not be tolerated.

The assets and resources of a society should be used to promote prosperity, create more job opportunities, provide health care, promote entrepreneurship, and produce more food and other essential goods and merchandises that are needed. This will reduce poverty, hunger, and crimes, will protect the dignity of the poor and needy, and will improve quality of life for everyone in society.

BROTHERHOOD

"... hold fast, all together, by the rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude God's favor on you; for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren;" (Quran, 3:103).

"And those who came after them say: "Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith, and leave not, in our hearts, rancor (or sense of injury) against those who have believed" (Quran, 59:10).

"The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your brothers;" (Quran, 49:10).

God states that He changed people's enmities to brotherhood. He commands everyone to be like brothers and to make peace between their brothers. But look at what the so-called religious leaders and their followers are doing today. Rather than holding together like brothers, they have divided religion into many sects, they kill their Muslim brothers, and they commit the most heinous crimes and atrocities in the name of religion. How can such people say they are submitting to God's will and obeying His commands?

A true Muslim is anyone who submits to God's will and obeys His commands devotedly. Muslims should make peace and reconcile, and they should not divide. We can achieve peace and reconciliation by following the Quran and other Holy Scriptures. However, following traditions, writings, or teachings of people that knowingly or unknowingly are in defiance with the Quran or other Holy Scriptures results in divisions and conflicts. Most so-called Muslims are Muslims by name only. They suppose they are acting according to God's commandments, but, in reality, they are following the teachings of someone they believe in, such as their mentors, fathers, relatives, or religious leaders. The majority of Muslims have not studied the Quran and other Holy Scriptures, and their actions are in defiance of commands therein.

People should promote peace, brotherhood, and kindness to one another, and stop divisions and enmities.

COOPERATION

"...help one another in righteousness and in piety; but help not one another in sin and transgression" (Quran, 5:2).

"Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving Clear Signs: For them is a dreadful penalty," (Quran, 3:105).

"Those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Serbians, any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (Quran, 2:62). (Also see Quran, 5:69.)

"Say: "We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to God" (Quran, 2:136). (Also see Quran, 3:84.)

These verses make it clear that everyone should help and cooperate with each other. They should not divide and fall into disputes. These commands are for the followers of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and all other prophets.

"Certainly We sent Our messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice" (Quran, 57:25). God explains He has sent prophets, Holy Scriptures, and laws so people would rise up for justice. The command "to stand forth in justice" implies the need for cooperation amongst the followers of the prophets. Therefore, the followers of all the prophets, the righteous, and the reformers should unite, cooperate, utilize their resources, and strive with their possessions and beings to stand for and uphold justice.

NEED FOR UNITY

Throughout this book, the goal of religion was explained, and the difficulties in achieving this goal were explored. As we see in the Quran, "Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving Clear Signs:" (Quran, 3:105). God commands everyone to not divide, which implies the need for unity.

The difficulties facing every person to uphold justice and protect everyone's rights are obvious. To achieve this invaluable goal, everyone should unite and make every attempt to counteract the forces against succeeding in this endeavor. These forces, which include dictators, corrupt religious leaders and politicians and their followers, will do anything to have their authority and control enforced. United, we can stand up to them and uphold justice and protect everyone's rights despite their opposition.

As we mentioned before, the great empires and republics of the world have been created when their people have united and cooperated with each other to bring greatness to their nations. But the same empires and republics have been weakened and/or destroyed when people started to divide and dispute.

There is power in unity and weakness in division. "And obey God and His Messenger, and fall into no disputes, lest you lose heart and your power depart;" (Quran, 8:46). "And hold fast, all together, by the rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude God's favor on you; for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, you became brethren;" (Quran, 3:103). God informs everyone that power is lost through dispute and division but gained by unity and holding together. We should unite and prevent division and stand up for justice and the protection of everyone's rights.

Ignorant people with their foolishness and mischief have created division in religion and changed brotherhood to enmities and hatred in the name of Quran and other Holy Scriptures. "The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - the which We have sent by inspiration to you - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein:" (Quran, 42:13).

"Certainly We sent Our messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice" (Quran, 57:25).

"Say: 'We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to God (in Islam).' " (Quran, 2:136).

"Say: 'We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to God do we bow our will (in Islam)' " (Quran, 3:84).

God informs us that the same religion has been revealed to different prophets and that He forbids division. In the Quran, the word "religion" has always been in singular form and is never mentioned in plural form. All the prophets are messengers of the same God, and they have all been inspired by the same commandments. Abraham was chosen years before Moses and Jesus, yet, "Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to God (Which is Islam), and he joined not gods with God" (Quran, 3:67). "O People of the Book! Why do you dispute about Abraham, when the Law and the Gospel Were not revealed till after him? Have you no understanding?" (Quran, 3:65). God informs everyone that Abraham was neither Jewish nor Christian, but that he was true in his faith and bowed to the will of God; that is to say, he was Muslim.

"It was We who revealed the law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to God's will..." (Quran, 5:44).

"And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him:" (Quran, 5:46).

God explains that there is guidance and light in the Law (the Torah, Old Testament) and the Gospel (the Bible, New Testament). But this guidance and light was not only in the Torah and the Bible, because Abraham, who was born many years before both of these Scriptures, was also true in his faith. Therefore, the guidance and light had been revealed to Abraham as well. So, it is important to remember that God's guidance and light have been revealed to all the prophets and are not exclusive to any prophet or book. Divisions must stop. United, we shall stand for justice, and we shall protect everyone's rights.

"And do not dispute with the followers of the Book except by what is best, except those of them who act unjustly, and say: We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him do we submit" (Quran, 29:46). "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name? And then will I declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness" (Bible, Matthew 7:21-23). These verses explain that people of the Books should stop disputes and divisions and should submit to God's will and act accordingly. Therefore, anyone who submits to God's will and does what He commands will be blessed and will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Everyone must be true in their faith, act according to God's will, and try hard and strive with their possessions and resources in the way of God to promote and spread God's commandments, which are the guiding light for reaching true happiness and delight. All people of faith should set an example for other people by their actions, sincerity, candor, honesty, integrity, truthfulness, and righteousness. Our merciful God, our Creator, is aware of human's imperfections, shortcomings, and flaws, and He takes into account our characters, true needs, and desires. God has revealed His commandments through His prophets as the guiding light for mankind to achieve greatness and to live a life full of happiness and fulfillment. We should take His commandments to heart and, and we should act accordingly. United, we shall stand for and uphold Justice.

GOD'S WARNING

"When it is said to them: 'Follow what God has revealed:' They say: 'Nay! we shall follow the ways of our fathers.' What! even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?" (Quran, 2:170). God talks about people who follow their parents' ways even though they had no true knowledge of religion either. As one looks back in time, it can be realized that there were less and less opportunities for research and access to the books and the Holy Scriptures. Imagine when there was no print – what would people do without having access to the Holy Scriptures? Where and how did they get their guidance? They blindly followed their parents, relatives, friends, mentors, and corrupt religious leaders because they believed they were being taught the truth. As a religious philosopher writes, "If their parents were misunderstood and ignorant, should they pay the penalty for their misunderstanding and ignorance?"

Until a few centuries ago, the majority of people were illiterate, and there was very little access to the Holy Scriptures, if any at all. They were mostly in their original languages and were not translated to many languages as they are today. There was no print technology to reproduce them. So, getting a copy of the Holy Scriptures and studying them was only for a select few. But today, there is no excuse for not studying and reading the Holy Scriptures. They are available in print, on audiotapes and CDs, and online in almost any language. Many organizations send anyone a free copy, just by asking. So, why are most people still following others rather than going to the source of the commandments? Reviewing some verses from the Quran will shed light on this question.

"Then would those who are followed clear themselves of those who follow (them): They would see the penalty, and all relations between them would be cut off. And those who followed would say: 'If only we had one more chance, we would clear ourselves of them, as they have cleared themselves of us.' Thus will God show them (the fruits of) their deeds as (nothing but) regrets. Nor will there be a way for them out of the Fire" (Quran, 2:166,167). God warns us about following anyone blindly. That is not an acceptable excuse. There is no forgiveness when one strays by following corrupt and ignorant mentors, parents, relatives, friends, religious and social leaders, or, for that matter, anyone else. It is the responsibility of each person to learn and understand God's commandments by studying the Holy Scriptures, not by blindly following anyone.

"On the day when their faces are turned over in the Fire, they say: 'Oh, would that we had obeyed Allah and had obeyed His messenger!' And they will say, 'Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones and they led us astray from the way' " (Quran,

33:66, 67). God warns that following anyone, be it a chief or religious leader, is not an acceptable excuse if we stray from the right path.

"And if you obey most of those in the earth, they will lead you astray from Allah's way; they follow but conjecture and they only lie" (Quran, 6:116).

"But most of them follow nothing but fancy: truly fancy can be of no avail against truth. Verily God is well aware of all that they do" (Quran, 10:36).

"And the Unbelievers say to those who believe: 'Follow our path, and we will bear (the consequences) of your faults.' Never in the least will they bear their faults: in fact they are liars! They will bear their own burdens, and (other) burdens along with their own, and on the Day of Judgments they will be called to account for their falsehoods" (Quran, 29:12, 13).

God warns us about following baseless fantasies and beliefs, and about people who will try to stray everyone from the true path without any remorse. He will not accept any of these excuses for straying from the right path.

God has repeatedly warned us about ignorance and following anyone blindly without knowledge. People should spend more time studying and thinking about the Holy Scriptures and spend less time on worthless and vain writings, lectures, and teachings. God will reward His servants for their devotion and sincerity.

GOD'S PROMISE

God promises, "O ye who believe! shall I point out to you a commerce which will deliver you from a painful punishment? You shall believe in God and His Messenger, and struggle hard in God's way with your property and your lives; that is better for you, did you but know! He will forgive you your sins and bring you into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, and pleasant dwellings in Gardens of Eden. That is the supreme triumph. And another (favor will He bestow,) which ye do love, help from God and a speedy victory" (Quran, 61:10-13). These verses were revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the second year of Hujra, the Prophet's departure from Mecca. Six years later, in 8 A.H., Mecca was under his control, and two years later, in 10 A.H., all of Arabia was under the influence of Islam as God had promised.

Today, if the religious, the righteous, and the reformers unite, utilize their resources, and use all of the available mass media communication technologies to spread God's commandments and work in the way of God, a speedy victory awaits, as God has promised. The world will be full of happiness, kindness, peace, and justice; and everyone's rights will be respected and protected.

Being victorious in this endeavor is dependant upon unity, proceeding wisely, and choosing the right course of action. But power-hungry and vicious dictators and corrupt religious leaders and politicians who have taken away people's tranquility and peace of mind and have stepped on their rights are going to try their best to create division, conflict, and fear to stop and eliminate any progress. They and their supporters will pretend to be part of this effort and will act with enthusiasm and passion to attract people's attention and to instigate emotional extremism and fanaticism among people to change the focus and direction of this undertaking.

People who pursue God's will and commandments should be realistic, avoid extremism, and act wisely. They should educate themselves and act in righteousness; strive for betterment of others and society; and promote the true religion, the goal of the prophets, and the Holy Scriptures. Rather than spending enormous amounts of resources for building monumental mosques, churches, or temples, they should unite and spend their resources to promote and spread God's commandments.

Taking the first steps will be difficult, but this movement will gradually grow and speed up, and the snowball effect will make it a worldwide phenomenon and, as God has promised, a speedy victory will be at hand.

But beware. Do not create idols of anyone. Do not create more evil dictators and leaders that will do the same thing that today's corrupt political, social, and religious leaders are

doing. Remember that there is no perfect human being, and everyone has the potential for corruption and oppression. As it is stated in the Quran, "Man, indeed, transgresses, if he sees himself he has no need" (Quran, 96:6, 7). We must be wary of people who sees themselves as powerful people and without any need. They will definitely transgress and bring about oppression, injustice, extremism, etc. all over again. We must stop anyone from attempting to seize power or claim they should be obeyed without question. Remember that no one deserves to be obeyed devotedly except God.

CONCLUSION

We demonstrated that the goal of religion, which is conveyed to us through the prophets and the Scriptures, is:

“To build a world in which justice and fairness applies to everyone, and where there is no sign of injustice, oppression, corruption, poverty, ignorance, indignity, hatred, extremism, racism, prejudice, or war; a world where mankind lives in happiness, kindness, and fulfillment with contentment and peace of mind.”

We discussed the fact that God has revealed the same religion to all His prophets and commanded everyone to make no division in religion. God has affirmed that all the prophets, Holy Scriptures, and laws are sent so people would stand for and uphold justice. Names and rituals are unimportant. What matters are good deeds, good thoughts, and good words.

“It is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims” (Quran, 22:78). God says it was Abraham who originally used the term “Muslim”. In the same verse, God declares that He “has imposed no difficulties on you in religion”. God declares religion as “And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship God, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith); to establish regular prayer; and to practice regular charity; and that is the Religion Right and Straight” (Quran, 98:5).

God tells us that some things are not mentioned in the Quran so that we will not have difficulty. So why do we have so many books and interpretations about things God has left out? “Ask not about things which, if revealed to you, would cause you trouble, though if you ask about them while the Qur'an is being sent down they will be revealed to you. God has left them out on purpose” (Quran, 5:101).

“Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in God has grasped the most trustworthy hand- hold, that never breaks” (Quran, 2:256). This verse implies that people should understand the teachings of religion, choose to obey God’s commandments through knowledge, strive in the way of God with all their beings and possessions, and stand for justice. No one can be forced to accept religion.

God informs us that there is guidance and light in the Torah (Old Testament), the Bible (New Testament), and the Quran. Each one of these Scriptures confirms the previous one. God intentionally made people different, and He judges everyone based on the Scriptures they were given. He also says people should set aside their differences and unite with one

another to achieve the stated goal of religion. "But they (mankind) have broken their religion among them into sects, each group rejoicing in its tenets" (Quran, 23:53). God has commanded us not to divide in religion. However, we continue to divide ourselves into different sects. Members of each group falsely believe they are the only righteous ones and that all others are wicked, sinful, and immoral, whereas each group should respect other's beliefs and values as long as they are according to God's commandments. They must stop name-calling and abstain from falsely accusing each other and creating divisions. Comments made by a so-called religious leader calling one of the prophets of God a "terrorist" must stop because it only fuels division and animosity. Everyone must concentrate on their commonalities, which are God's commandments and the stated goal of religion. They should stop focusing on rituals and minor differences.

True Muslims, people who submit to God's will, should invite everyone to the way of God. They should utilize their wisdom, insight, intelligence, reasoning, and knowledge to engage in discussions with their best approach and conduct. They should respond to others' rudeness and harshness with gentleness, calmness, and peacefulness, as it is commanded in the following verses:

"Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance" (Quran, 16:125).

"Nor can goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and you was hatred become as it were your friend and intimate! And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, none but persons of the greatest good fortune" (Quran, 41:34, 35).

"Say: "This is my way: I do invite unto God, on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes, I and whoever follows me. Glory to God. and never will I join gods with God" (Quran, 12:108).

A true Muslim, one who submits to God's will, listens with patience and tolerance. The prayer of Moses states, "O my Lord! Expand me my breast; Ease my task for me; and remove the impediment from my speech, so they may understand what I say," should be used as the guide for everyone, in the manner and approach of their discussions with others (Quran, 20:25-28). These verses should be used as the guide for everyone in the manner and approach of their discussions with others.

Anyone knows that most people have grown up in a limited and small environment and have been knowingly or unknowingly misled by their corrupt religious, social, or political leaders, or relatives and friends. They have constantly been blitzed by one-sided views,

judgments, and outlooks in every situation, and have been brainwashed by one-sided media reporting and journalism.

People have acquired erroneous and flawed information by either reading the writings of or listening to people who intentionally or unintentionally have distorted, altered, or misinterpreted God's commandments. Their belief systems and opinions are developed based on these misleading notions. Unfortunately, they have no clue that their beliefs and opinions are based on false information and are erroneous and flawed. They believe from the bottom of their hearts that they are right and that anyone else with different beliefs is wrong. Therefore, it is the duty of every Muslim to listen and converse with such misinformed people while being patient and tolerant. Using undisputable truth from the Holy Scriptures, Muslims should identify the flaws in peoples' beliefs and inform them in the best manner possible, without offending them.

"It was We who revealed the law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. ... And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear God. To you We sent the scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: ...To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He has given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God" (Quran, 5:44-48). God says He sent the Law (the Torah, Old Testament), the Gospel (the Bible, New Testament), and the Quran, each one confirming the previous one, and there is guidance and light in all of them. God created people in different groups, and He will test and judge each group with what He has instructed them. People of every faith prove their submission to God with different rituals and practices, but they all have one common religion, and that is submission to God, or Islam. We should concentrate on our shared beliefs and common religion, and stop focusing on our differences. We should set aside those differences and make no division in religion. That is God's command, and we should take it to heart.

It is noteworthy to remember that God does not change His ways – as stated in the Quran (verses 17:77, 33:62, 48:23) –, and, therefore, His commandments to everyone are the same. According to His will, there are minor differences in performing details and rituals, such as praying and fasting. There are also some changes to the laws that determine the penalty for committing a sin. But the goal of religion – which is the reason for sending all the prophets, Holy Scriptures, and laws – is for people to rise up and stand for justice, to build a world that is full of kindness, peace, and justice, and where there is no sign of injustice, poverty, adultery, defrauding, stealing, lying, indignity, oppression, corruption, ignorance, hatred, extremism, fanaticism, racism, or war.

Most of those who think they are against religion have never understood the true religion. When they understand the true religion and its goal, most of them will gladly join in and unite with the religious, the righteous, and the reformers, and will try hard with their resources to build a prosperous a world for this generation and generations to come.

There are some pessimists that constantly say, "This cannot be done" or "If it could be done, it would have been done by now." They do not realize that one of the main reasons for not achieving this goal is that promoting this idea without access to today's available mass media communication technology has been nearly impossible. But consider what humans have accomplished utilizing these technologies. How long did it take for Russia and China to become Communist? And how long it did take for Russia's fall from Communism? Would such events have been possible without access to propaganda machines that utilizes mass media communication technologies?

Today's superior technologies for communication, media, and traveling have presented us with a unique opportunity for educating and promoting the true goal of religion in a very short time. Tomorrow will bring more advanced technologies that will accelerate this progress. By educating and promoting the goal of religion to the masses, the prospect for unity is more realistic than ever before. Unity and cooperation will empower us to rise up and stand for justice. With justice reigning supreme in the world, we shall have a world that we deserve, a world full of happiness, kindness, and fulfillment for everyone.

**Achieving the goal of religion is the only choice
we have to attain the good life we all deserve.**

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Everything in the universe – stars, planets, mountains, oceans, plants, and all living creatures – is made up of tiny invisible particles called atoms. These tiny particles bind together and form our universe and everything in it.

Imagine if we put aside our differences, eliminated our divisions, and joined hands, cooperated, and united with one another. There is nothing beyond our reach.

Take the first step: Educate yourself and help others to get educated about true religion. Then join hands, cooperate, and unite to spread and implement the goal of religion.

Build a world where justice and fairness is for all; a world where there is no sign of injustice, oppression, corruption, poverty, ignorance, indignity, hatred, extremism, racism, prejudice, or war; a world where mankind lives in happiness, kindness, and fulfillment with contentment and peace of mind.

We must start today.