

## **All Praise Be To God And May His Blessings Be On His Prophets And Righteous Servants.**

As a Muslim, I am writing to clarify my position on the statement of Pope Benedict XVI regarding my religion and prophet, which are esteemed by 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide as well as many impartial and open minded non-Muslims.

It is hard to believe that the Pope, being the scholar he is, was ill- informed about Islam. This makes us, Muslims, feel that he is bent on distorting the truth. The statements were received with much resentment coming at a time when Islam is being subject to an organized attack from many pundits in the West, including politicians with hidden and non-hidden agendas, and media outlets continuing on the tradition of Islamophobia since the time of the Crusades. It feels like the more armies get dispatched to the Islamic East, the more need there is to build up public resentment to the religion and its followers in order to justify military expeditions and absolve the guilt of causing death and destruction to hundreds of thousands of humans and their homes and properties.

The Muslims would have the right to think the Pope's statement was part of a wider orchestrated effort in the West to prepare for more aggression against some of the Muslim countries. This is particularly valid given the history of cooperation between politicians and theologians of the West from the Crusades era through colonialism to present. Those who may be otherwise at “daggers drawn” find a common cause and interest in fighting Islam.

The statement of the Pope addressed various misconceptions about Islam in an attempt to further reinforce them.

One of those misconceptions is the spread of Islam by the sword. It is regrettable this accusation came from the Pope because we, Muslims, believe-- and can substantiate, that Islam came to apply strict conditions to the justification of war and infuse morality into its execution. We believe any comparison between the Quran, the Islamic holy book, to holy books of previous traditions would yield this conclusion. We, also, believe that the history of Islam compared to the history of other religious groups would attest to that very fact. Some, erroneously, may like to look at one point in history, to one place, and form a partial assessment to, in turn, yield biased results. Muslim countries have been subject to the injustices of many centuries of Crusades and colonialism to which the peoples of these regions, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, are trying to recuperate from its long lasting damage. It is the West's moral obligation to help not hinder the process of revival of those peoples and countries to have a better future and more stable world for the generations to come.

The other notion made by the Pope regarding divine will being unchecked and unlimited in Islam is also quiet disturbing because it is common knowledge that the Islamic civilization was the bridge and vehicle through which Europe crossed from its Dark Ages to the era of Enlightenment and Renaissance after years of strife between scientists and theologians, something the Pope must surely be aware of. In Islam, we submit to the

divine will once it is clear to us, but arriving at what it is in a certain matter is done through seeking textual proof as well as using logical reasoning. The dogma in Islam is simple according to the testimony of multitudes of historians and thinkers, who attribute the spread of Islam to its simple and rational creed. The preservation of the word of God without manipulation of the text or its meanings should be a source of pride for the Muslims, not a reason for criticism.

Finally, as for the new virtues Islam had brought about to humanity, they can not be summarized in a few lines, but of them, is the harmonious and effortless balance between this life and the one to come, the body and spirit, worship and productivity, and idealism and realism. It also produced a nation of billions who submit to the one unique God, who has the absolute perfect attributes. Such submission has yielded a nation that has complied with His virtue-reign commands, such as respect for parents/family, abstinence from extra marital relations, prohibition of alcohol and its consequential harms, adherence to daily prayers, almsgiving, fasting, and all other acts of worship that render the heart more pure and refined. It was also Islam that confirmed beyond any shadow of doubt in its text and subsequently the practice of its devout followers that all humans are equal, with no favor for one over the other except by piety. Notably, that is another reason why it continues to attract more followers and spread faster than any other religion.

Finally, I hope the unfortunate conditions of our world will be resolved through wisdom, forbearance, mutual understanding, and cooperation. We owe it to our kids in this ever-increasingly small world we live in.

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