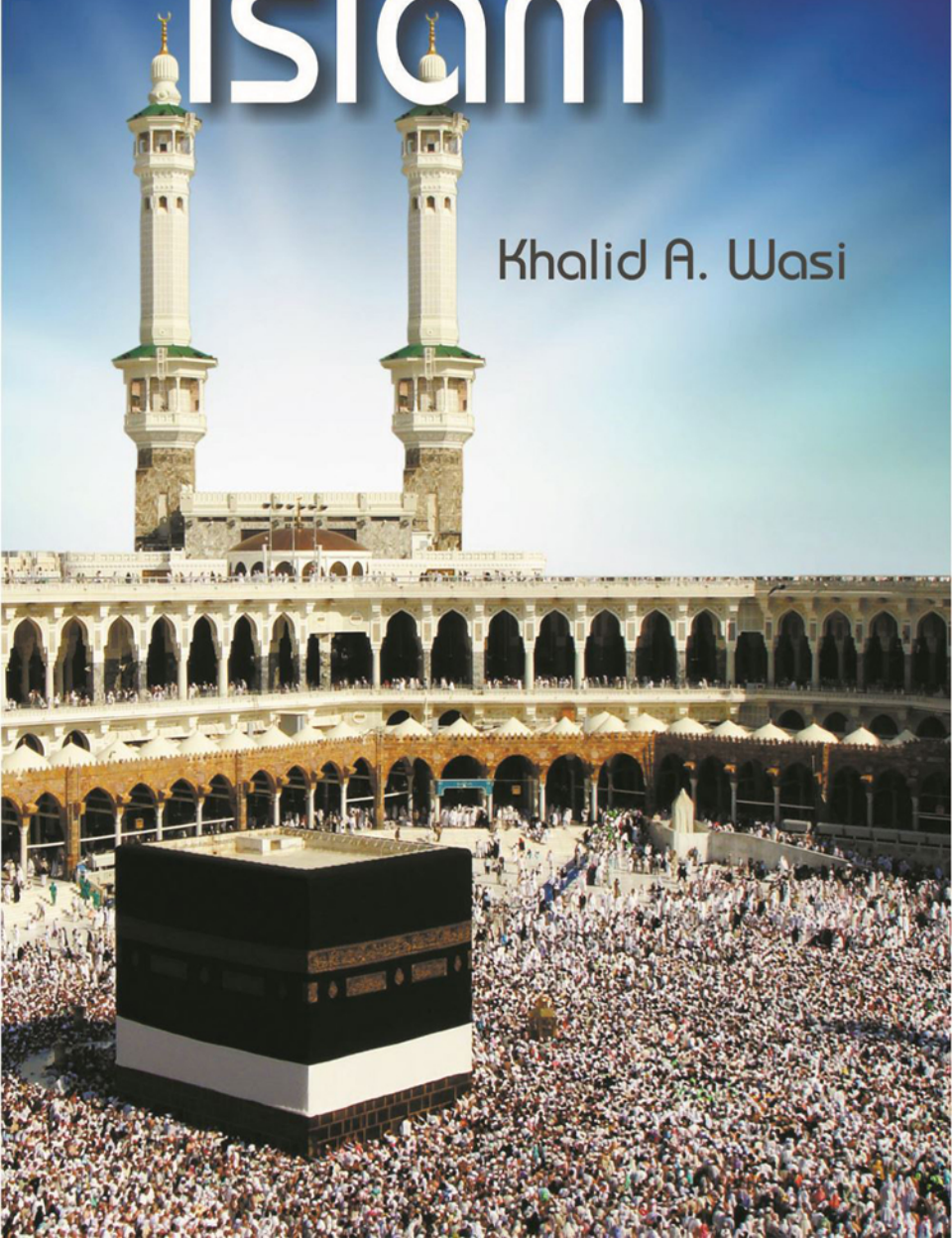


No-Frills Islam

Khalid A. Wasi



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Whenever the prophets name is mentioned you will see pbuh which means peace be upon him.

Preface

The author of this book, *No-Frills Islam*, takes license from his own experiences to write about this religious topic. A shy gnostic, he became concerned that his own experience and insight into religious matters would be lost and decided to impart his simple thoughts on the complex issue of religious ideology and orthodoxy within Islam. Naturally, the author himself has, over many years, read and reflected on the works of many Islamic religion and sociology scholars. For most of his adult life, the author has been a well-known activist for social and economic justice and was the founder of the first registered Islamic organization in Bermuda. As a newspaper and magazine columnist, he has published many articles. He has also worked as a radio talk show host and has appeared several times on national television as a panellist.

He is respected, with a legacy of discussing thought-provoking topics.

Most scholars and writers cite the works of accomplished or recognized visionaries as well as second- and thirdhand information from many acclaimed gnostics. In this work we have a firsthand opinion direct from the pen. The author hopes to capture the imagination and conceptualization of the ordinary person and also that of powerful people such as President Barack Obama, the leader of the free world, and others of similar stature. This, he hopes, will add a dimension that allows readers to see an entitlement to and sense of ownership of an inherent truth. In the author's opinion, all humanity, its leaders included, has an inherent and inalienable right to all revealed words. Rather than fighting a war with bullets and bombs to conquer a people who says it believes in those revealed words, the true victory and only justified *jihad* (war) is ideological and should be a fight against ignorance and pseudo-religious concepts to establish the truth.

The world is at a precipice and could descend further if military warfare is the only weapon in this current theatre. An ideological approach is needed. Perhaps with a clearer perspective we may discover a mutual truth. Book clubs such as Oprah Winfrey's will have

more impact than bombs and are cheaper, with more lasting beneficial effects than the use and development of nuclear weapons, if properly targeted at various audiences. People and leaders always need a morally justified cause, and what better mandate could there be than to follow the call of the religious patriarch Ibrahim, who is the father of all the main players in this current conflict? It was Ibrahim who called them all to one brotherhood. In the author's opinion, Mecca stands as a symbol of unity of the human family. Its center is a zero and devoid of any ideology, symbols, or gods; therefore, its pilgrimage is the fittest habitat for all humanity.

Written by Author

Introduction

All religions have their origins from a seer—or what we call *prophets*—who lived, had an exceptional experience, and developed a broader awareness of the elusive idea of the divine. Their truth was difficult to convey, and for the most part, the followers carried on with a very superficial interpretation of what they learned from their experience. It should be further understood that the essence of what occurred with the prophets was not born out of ideology but rather out of a natural dialectic with situations in their social environments. These movements led by the prophets were natural and organic, born out of natural compassion and true reliance, on a divine hand. It was a way of living for them and not an ideology, and what happened thereafter with the followers and adherents of these organic movements became more of an ideology than an effervescent way of life. No

religion was spared; even if the words survived, they did so often bereft of true meaning.

In a further encumbrance to understanding what the prophets and seers tried to convey through their life experiences, scholarship developed as the official gatekeepers of what was presumed to be the religion or teachings of those prophets. Many prophets brought revealed words which remain in form such as the Sanskrit Vedas, Torah, Ingil, and the Qur'an. Aside from the revealed words, folklore has carried the sayings or tales relating to these prophets as legacies which have survived, having greater impact in many cases than revealed words. As time passed, interpretations of both the revealed words and folklore became engrained as traditions, with all forms of so-called orthodoxies as the presumed proper code for many religions. The unintended consequence is that the succeeding generations began to have higher regard for the traditions than reverence for or true connections with the Author of life or the real missions and lives of their prophets.

At various intervals reformers, also at times called prophets or revivers, came to help bring some enlightenment back to the communities. However, history will, for the most part, reveal that entrenchment in ritual and tradition

often obscured the societies from decent human behaviour and the personal dynamic characters of the figures they were trying to emulate. Instead they thought of themselves as having inherited a form and divine right of favour simply because of their lineage and adherence to practice.

Due to the observance of tradition, particularly when cultural and national influences are entwined, the idea of conversion becomes a difficult proposition for other nationals, so-called “nonbelievers” or would-be converts. As new individuals become attracted to the faith and become highly dependent on scholars to teach them all the intricate procedures in order to acquire that faith, the process is burdened with a host of details and polemics. The natural question is whether it is necessary or whether the divine would make the path complicated or subservient to others who act as intermediaries.

Too often lost is the knowledge of how persons became prophets in the first place. Invariably a little research will ascertain that it was not rigid scholarly training of the traditions and recitation of previous scriptures that caused their enlightenment or raised them to the station of a prophet. Instead it would seem their empathy for the

plight of their fellow humans, their thirst for truth, and a way to deliver persons from their hapless states was a huge prerequisite to their being dynamic persons and called prophets. Many conversions happened after brief encounters and not a long diatribe, so one must consider what the elements of these brief encounters were. It must hold true that the ingredients which raised the prophets and caused conversions and acceptance of their message still hold the same potency today. Why do the succeeding generations, including current and future ones, have to rely on interpretations of history when they can reignite the same flame that created the events of history?

This little book is trying to condense, in just a few words, the essence of Islam in a nutshell, in such a way that avoids the thousands of items of etiquette. While the etiquette may in some instances enhance one's life, when properly understood and contextualized, it is not essential as a matter of faith. The author is of the view that real faith and development come as a result of hunger and thirst—in religious terms, “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” The ultimate pursuit is a connection with the creative source and love towards humanity and the environment. All

true roads somehow lead in that direction. So the following book is a “cut to the bone” idea of Islam which can be embellished in any way needed. There will be an argument from those who ardently insist that following the Prophet is party to faith in the Lord of all the worlds. The author will argue that taking on the challenges of life as the Prophet did is in effect following his lead or his way. The Qur’an (Al-Balad, chapter 90), which was revealed through the Messenger (Prophet), plainly differentiates what is the true way and asks if we know what the high road is, and then describes the high road as “freeing the slave, providing food for the orphan and those in need and helping those who are down in the dust.” The author considers that chapter as clear enough for most anyone to understand. The revelation concludes by saying those who do so are companions of the right hand, while those who refuse are those of the left. That chapter needs no elaboration and its message cannot be mitigated; it is universal and will last through perpetuity.

For those who are unfamiliar with Islam, and even for those who are familiar but would like a simplified idea of it, I want to share a very simple approach towards understanding the faith which is the least complicated and

avoids all the deep dogma and scholarships. This is in no way a repudiation of scholarship or lessening of the importance of research or study. This book follows the reasoning that the path towards all truth, particularly that truth which leads towards harmony with what is believed to be the Originator of life, and if mercy is an attribute of the Fashioner of life, it cannot be complicated or difficult. Being unknown is difficult enough, so how could any divine source have a pathway of access that is utterly cumbersome and difficult to find? Nor would there be true freedom if the doorway was through some form of intercession. If we use the prophets, who were essentially the founders of all the faiths, we will see that it was their character which brought them to the fountain of knowledge and not their scholarship. As many scriptures will confirm, the words of the prophets will remain true forever: the doorways towards that universal fountain are open to everyone and paved with attributes for those seeking truth with humility, sincerity, and charitableness, all of which open the door to real knowledge.

I am sure some persons will reject my simple approach and even attempt to invalidate it. My only refuge is in the revealed words and

in the essential history of the prophets and seers. Nevertheless, the proof of the pie is in the tasting. Once people gain a basic idea of faith in action, they can always increase their understanding through study.

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