



**SAVED FROM THE CURSE**

A.H. Sharif

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the time when man first set his foot on this earth, there have been skirmishes and encounters between people of truth and those against it, between right and wrong. Innocent blood has at time been shed to prevent the truth from prevailing.

One such encounter took place some 1400 years ago in Arabia. But it was a peaceful one between the Muslims and Christians of the time. It was led by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) accompanied by the close members of his family against the Christians of Najran. In Islamic history, it is wellknown as 'Mubahala' and annually observed as a festival of great significance.

The Federation of the K.S.I. Jamats of Africa in Dar es salaam following the recommendation by the World Ahl-ul-Bayt Islamic League, London, had made a timely appeal to observe this great festival in a befitting manner.

In response to this appeal, an effort has been made to publish this book aimed at providing

background to this great historical event and enlightening young and old with the lessons derived from it.

The contents are also meant to show the difference in the basic beliefs of Islam as compared with Christianity. What is noteworthy is how logically Islam had presented its arguments with appealing facts which the most learned Christians of the time could not refute. The contents also afford an opportunity to familiarize the reader the high status of those personalities close to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) who not only stood side by side with him but also sacrificed their all to uphold the truth.

It therefore behoves every Muslim to study and be fully aware of this great event in Islam.

That this small publication will serve a useful purpose of arousing the understanding of the truth is our fervent hope and prayer.

Ramadhan, 1409 A.H.  
April, 1989.

## **NAJRAN**

During the early days of Islam, Najran was situated on the way from Makkah towards Yemen in Hejaz (present day Saudi Arabia). It was a place of much religious importance being a large centre of the Christians who were not idol-worshippers. But they believed in TRINITY i.e. in three Gods: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Ghost (or spirit).

A huge church had been built there and the Christians regarded it as being equal to Kaaba in Makkah — the world centre of all Muslims. Anyone who would enter that church was regarded as safe from all troubles. The church used to own big fertile lands which were presented by Emperor Heracules of Habash (Ethiopia). Besides, the Christian faithfuls donated rich gifts to the church, whose annual income ran into hundred thousands of Dinars.

## **INVITATION TO ISLAM**

At the age forty on receiving the command from Allah, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) commenced

to propagate Islam among his people who were non-believers and idol-worshippers in Makkah and in the neighbouring areas. Initially he had to face considerable opposition in the form of torture, boycott and all sorts of harassment. They even waged wars against him and this animosity lasted for nearly 19 years. In the end, when the Quraish non-believers and enemies of Islam got tired, they came to terms and signed the peace-treaty of Hdaybiyva in the year 6A.H.

Thereafter, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) had good opportunity to propagate Islam beyond the boundaries of Hijaz. He picked some six representatives from his able and trusted companions. They were sent to the kings and rulers of the following countries, carrying letters from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) inviting them to accept Islam:

Persia (Iran)

Room (Rome & Surrounding areas)

Habash (Ethiopia)

Misr (Egypt)

Yamamah (Eastern Arabia)

Yemen Bahrain Hayra (Jordan)

The contents of the letters addressed to the rulers of these countries mainly consisted of salutation and prayer for peace to be bestowed upon those who followed right guidance, and upon those who put their faith in Allah as the One and Only God and in Muhammed (s.a.w.) as His Servant and Messenger. The aim of invitation to Islam was to save those who accepted the Truth from the wrath and punishments of Allah. The Prophet (s.a.w.) addressed in all forty letters to different leaders of the world. Some of the leaders answered with utmost respect and sent gifts with it. But some like Parviz of Persia (Iran) arrogantly rejected the Prophet's invitation to Islam by tearing his letter.

Thus proving that the message of Islam is a peaceful and universal one and not restricted to the Arabs or the people of one country only. Besides, the invitation to believe in Islam was meant to benefit all the people of the world. It was aimed at bringing them on one centre of worshipping Allah, the One and Only God, thus unifying them into a brotherhood of man.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the late Prime Minister of India in his book *Glimpses of the History of the*



*World* writes:

“Muhammaed (s.a.w.) sent messages from Medina to the leaders and kings of the world and invited them to believe in One God and His Messenger. The kings and leaders were perhaps astonished wondering who this unknown man was who dared to issue an order to them.

“The context of these letters illustrate the extraordinary confidence which the Prophet had in his mission. He was able to create the same confidence and faith in his followers and inspire them to the extent that his followers were able to dominate half of the world without difficulty.

“Faith and self confidence are two great characteristics which lead to lofty results”.

## **CALL TO NAJRAN**

One such message and letter was addressed to the Christians of Najran, carried and delivered by four trusted companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). It read as follows:

“In the name of God of Ibrahim, Ishaq and Yakoob

(this letter is) from Muhammed, the Prophet and Messenger — to Asqaf (Aspacof) of Najran.

Praise be to God of Ibrahim, Ishaq and Yakoob. And I invite you to worship God instead of (His) servants (created beings). I invite you to come out of the rule of servants to that of God. If you do not accept my invitation, then you should (at least) pay *jizya* (tax) to the Islamic State (so that your lives and properties may be protected), otherwise you are warned of a danger.”

One may ask herewith that why did the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) commence the letter in the name of God of Ibrahim, Ishaq and Yakoob?

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) wanted to impress upon the Christians of Najran that the belief in One God he was propagating was none other than the same as was done by his ancestors. Also the concept of *Tawhid* i.e. the Unity of God he was inviting them to believe in was the same as was preached by the previous Prophets Ibrahim, Ishaq and Yakoob (a.s.) in whom they (Christians) also believed.

It is also mentioned that the Prophet (s.a.w.) had in

this letter included the following ayat of the Holy Quran:

*Say: O people of the Book, Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall claim no partner to Him, and that none of us shall take other for Lords besides Allah. And if they turn away, then Say: Bear witness that We are they who have surrendered (to Him) (Surah Ale-Imran v. 64)*

## **RESPONSE FROM CHRISTIANS**

On arrival at Najran, the representatives of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) delivered his message to Abu Haris – the Asqaf (Aspacof) and leader of the Church. He read it carefully and then appointed a committee of some important and knowledgeable personalities for consultation and to decide on the matter. One of them named ‘Sherjeel’, a wise and intelligent person, expressing his opinion said:

“Although my religious knowledge is meagre, yet I feel obliged to say that we have been repeatedly hearing from our religious leaders that the Authority of Prophethood will one day transfer from the decendents of Ishaq to those of Ismail.

No wonder therefore that Muhammed (s.a.w.) being from the descendants of Ismail is the promised and predicted Prophet. Let a group from us representing Najran go to Madina and from on-spot close contact with Muhammed (s.a.w.), study the proofs of his Prophethood.”

Sixty people considered as the most wise and knowledgeable from the people of Najran were elected. They were led by three religious and experienced leaders by names Abu Harisa, Abdul Mesih and Abham.

## **ARRIVAL AT MADINA**

The delegation arrived in Madina and entered the mosque donned with posh silky garments, golden rings on thier hands and chains of cross around their necks. The Holy Prophet on seeing them in this fashion was disturbed and he ignored them. They realized that something was wrong and so they contacted Osman bin Affan and Abdul Rehman Bin Auf to know the reason. They were advised to contact Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) who told them, “You should change your dress and if you come in the presence of the Prophet with simple

apparel without any show off, you will certainly be received with courtesy.”

The delegation of Najran changed their style of dress as advised. They then returned to the presence of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who received them with warm welcome and acknowledged their salutations. Before they entered into a discussion, they requestad for permission to say their prayers and this was granted. They were put in one part of the mosque where they could pray with ease and comfort. Then the following conversation took nlace:

## **DISCUSSION WITH THE HOLY PROPHET**

**THE HOLY PROPHET:** I invite you towards belief in *Tawhid* and worship of One God and sub mission to His will. (Then the relevant Quranic ayats Sura Ale-Imran: 64 were recited)

**CHRISTIAN FATHERS:** If by Islam you mean faith in One God of Universe, we have already brought faith on Him and follow His Commands.

**THE HOLY PROPHET:** Islam has its true signs and some of your actions point to the fact that you have not accepted true Islam. How do you claim worship of One God when you do also profess belief in the Trinity and do not abstain from eating Pork (Pig meat) and also believe in God having a son?

**A CHRISTIAN FATHER** from the delegation said: “Certainly he (Jesus) was the son of God because his mother Maryam (Mary) had given birth to him without marriage with anyone in this world (i.e., without father). Therefore obviously his father is the God of this Universe. We also believe in him (Jesus) as God because he used to bring the dead back to life, cure the sick, create birds from earth and causing them to fly. All such actions point to the fact the he is God.”

**THE HOLY PROPHET:** No, he was the servant and creature of God, placed in the womb of Maryam (his mother) and this power and ability was granted to him by God.

At this juncture, Gibrael — the angel of revelation came down with God’s command to tell them:

*Surely the likeness of Isa (Jesus) is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him, Be, and he was (Sura Ale-Imran: 59)*

This meant that if Isa (Jesus) could be called the 'son of God' merely because of the fact he was born without a father, then Adam deserved more of this title (of the 'son of God'), because he was born without a father or mother.

Christian Fathers could not refute this argument; but out of obstinacy they continued to dispute and argue fruitlessly. Then the following ayat of the Holy Quran was revealed:

*And whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: Come, Let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and ourselves and yourselves, then let us humbly pray (to our Lord) and solemnly pray for the curse of Allah upon those who are liars (Surah Ale-Imran: 61)*

## **CHALLENGE OF MUBAHALA**

Now the Holy Prophet reproduced this Quranic verse before the deputation of the Christians

and declared the challenge of ‘Mubahala.’ The term ‘Mubahala’ is derived from it’s Arabic root ‘Bahlah’ which means to curse one another.

The Christian Fathers consulted one another and finally announced their acceptance of the challenge. They then returned to their camp. When Abu Harisa — the leader of the Christian Fathers — reached his tent, he advised his colleagues in these words:

“Tomorrow if Muhammad comes out of his house with the members of his family, then you should never agree to the ‘Mubahala’ i.e, praying to Allah for victory and curse upon those who were liars. But if he brings his companions, they you need not fear at all and you should certainly agree to the ‘Mubahala’.”

But why did Abu Harisa — the Christian leader — give such advice?

The fact is that the advice was based upon human instincts and natural inclinations. It was a question of life and death for both the sides including their family members. If the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) had the slightest doubt in the



truth of his message of Islam, he would not have given the challenge of 'Mubahala' to the Christians. If he had the slightest fear of possible wrath — divine punishment and curse affecting him and the close members of his family, he would not have considered coming out with them to face the Christians.

Now it was agreed between the two parties the contest of 'Mubahala' was to take place in the open desert outside the holy city of Madina.

When on the next day the time of 'Mubahala' approached, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) came out of his residence in this manner: He held Husain (his youngest grandson) in his lap; he held Hasan (his eldest grandson) by his hand, Fatimah (his only daughter) came behind him; and behind her came Ali (his cousin and son-in-law). The Prophet (s.a.w.) said to them:

“When I pray; then you should say ‘Amen’.”

How great indeed was the Prophet (s.a.w.) and how truly faithful were his family members. They came out as witnesses, of his truth on such a great and challenging occasion.

## THE SHINING FACES

No sooner had the sacred caravan of the Holy Prophet appeared on the ground of Mubahala then the Christian Fathers, on seeing their beautiful and shining faces, became awe struck and spellbound. Their hearts trembled and they began to waver on seeing the unparalleled grandeur and splendour of the Ahlul Bayt.

Abu Harisa — the leader and great scholar of the Christian Fathers broke the silence. He asked a person who knew these personages well:

“Who are these persons, who have come with Muhammad?”

The man told him the names and their relationship with the Holy Prophet.

On the other side, the Holy Prophet came to the appointed place, and sat down with the Ahlul Bayt in that very order in which he had brought them. Abu Harisa could hold his patience no longer and he cried out:

“By God, I am seeing such faces that if they were to pray to God to remove the mountain, verily God Almighty would remove the mountain for

them. Oh you people of Najran, if you combat and contest with Muhammad this prayer of invoking curses on the liars, then I tell you, all of you would be destroyed and not a single soul of the Christians would remain on this earth. I feel that it would be better to surrender to them and obey them.”

Thereupon, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) reiterated: “By God, had the Christians of Najran contested with us, they would have been transformed into monkeys and swines. Fire would have rained over them.”

## **THE PEACE TREATY**

When the Christian Fathers refrained from ‘Mubahala’, the Holy Prophet put before them two alternatives: either to embrace Islam or agree to come to terms. But they would not agree to accept Islam and the matter was finally decided by an offer of a treaty which was concluded on the following terms:

- a) Every year, the Christians of Najran would give to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) two thousand pieces of clothing the cost of each would be forty dirhams.

- b) They would also provide thirty horses, thirty camels, thirty armours and thirty spears, temporarily to the Muslim army, if the Holy Prophet would need these in any war battle.

The treaty dictated by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), written by Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) and bearing the signatures of four companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) as witnesses, had these words:

“..... The people of Najran would remain under the protection of God and his Prophet Muhammed (s.a.w.). Their lives, their religion, their lands and property, would all remain safe and it would be the responsibility of God and His Prophel to protect them. This treaty holds good for all people of Najran, whether they were present there or not, whether members of the tribe or dependent upon them, slaves or servants. No change would be made in their previous condition of life, nor would any alteration be made in their rights or privileges. Neither would a Muslim army ever cross their lands nor would they ever be called upon to do free labour ..... etc.”

It is also mentioned that one of the important conditions agreed upon was, that from then on

people would not deal in usury (interest taking) of any sort otherwise the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) would not remain bound in the treaty with them.

It is narrated that after this party of Christian Fathers returned home, two or three well-to-do and respectable persons from Najran came to Madina and willingly accepted Islam and became true Muslims.

## COMMENTS BY SUNNI WRITERS

It is worth noting herewith the views on this event by some of the renown Sunni commentators:

Imam Fakhruddin Razi writes in his *Tafseer-ul-Kabir*:

“When this verse (i.e. Surah Ale-Imran: 61) was revealed to the Holy Prophet, Christians of Najran accepted the challenge of the Mubahala and the Holy Prophet took along with him Husain, Hasan, Fatima and Ali to the field of Muhabala”

And Allama Zamakhshari in his *Tafseer-ul-Kashaf* writes:

“There can be no more authentic and stronger

evidence for the integrity of *Ashabe-Kisa* i.e. Ali bin Abi Talib, Fatimah binte Muhammed, Hasan bin Ali, Husain bin Ali than this Quranic ayat. For in compliance with the order of God, the Holy Prophet summoned his Ahlul Bayt (the people of his house), took Husain in his arms, grasped Hasan's hand in his own, asked Fatimah to follow him and Ali to follow her. This proves that the Ahlul Bayt were those on whom the Quranic ayat was directed." (*Al-Kashaf* v. 1 p. 368).

Saad bin Waqas relates as recorded in *Sahih Muslim* (vol. 7 p. 120 Egypt print), and in *Sunan Al-Tirmizi* (V. 4 p. '293, Madina print):

"When this ayat was revealed, the Holy Prophet sent for Ali bin Abi Talib, Fatimah, Hasan and Husain and prayed to God thus: 'O my God, These are the very Ahlul Bayt of mine'."

Abdulla bin Omar in *Tafseer-ul-Baizawi*, quotes the Holy Prophet to have commented:

"Had there been any soul on the whole earth better than Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husain, God would have commanded me to take (them) along with me to Mubahala. But as they were superior in dignity and respect to all human beings, God

confined His choice only on them for participation in Mubahala.”

## A NON-MUSLIM'S COMMENT

George Sale, whose translation of the Holy Quran first appeared in 1934 writes:

“..... some Christians with their bishop named Abu Hareth coming to Muhammed (S), as ambassadors from the inhabitants of Najran and entering into some disputes with him touching religion and the history of Jesus Christ, they agreed the next morning to abide by the trial (i.e. Mubahala) here mentioned, as a quick way of deciding which of them were in the wrong. Muhammed (S) met them accordingly, accompanied by his daughter Fatema, his son-in-law Ali, and his two grand-sons, Hasan and Hosain, and desired them to wait till he had said his prayers.

But when they (i.e. the Christians) saw him kneel down their resolution failed them, and they durst (did) not venture to curse him but submitted to pay his tribute (i.e. *jizya* – tax).”

## **LESSONS FROM MUBAHALA**

### **ONE GOD BELIEF**

1. Invitations by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) to leaders of Najran and others, demonstrates the utmost significance of pure belief and worship of One God, free of any association with any created being. That it is totally against the teaching and spirit of Islam for man to bow down and worship any other creature.

### **SIMPLICITY IN ISLAM**

2. The initial attitude of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) to the representatives of Najran when they approached him in Madina shows how Islam abhors and dislikes the capitalistic and arrogant mode of dress particularly of silky and golden materials for men. That simplicity in Islam has been the way of life for the true Islamic leaders.

### **GOD'S SONSHIP ILLOGIC**

3. The discussion and arguments between the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and the representatives of Najran demonstrate how weak and baseless is the proof put forward by the Christians regarding Jesus to be the son of God. If Adam



and Eve could be created without father and mother, why not Jesus without a father.

#### **PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE**

4. The terms of the treaty between Christians of Najran and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) portray the Islamic teaching of peaceful co-existence between Muslims and non-muslims. The stipulation of *jizya* (tax) payable by Christians was in return for their protection promised by the Islamic State. The abolition of usury (interest) was for the benefit of the masses at large.

#### **PEACEFUL CONTEST: ISLAM V. CHRISTIANITY:**

5. 'Mubahala' was the first contest between Christians and the Muslims; but it was not a conflict of arms, swords, bows, arrows or spears. Infact, weapons or arms were not used at all. It was not a battle fought for lands, wealth, riches or honour.

#### **DETERMINATION BY SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE**

6. 'Mubahala' was an occassion of right or wrong, truth or falsity, to be found out and determined by means of spiritual struggle.

It was an opportunity to determine whether Christianity or Islam was a true religion.

### **INTERVENTION OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT**

7. 'Mubahala' was a peaceful contest for settling dispute. It was a wish for God's judgement to intervene when solid and logic arguments failed to produce the desired effect.

### **LACK OF CONFIDENCE**

8. 'Mubahala' has shown on which side lay the truth. By their accepting the proposed contest on the first day and withdrawing on the second, it showed the Christians were fully convinced of the truth what the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) was saying and propagating, and that they were on the wrong side. If they had confidence in the truth of their Christian faith, they would not have backed out at the last moment.

### **WHY DID THEY NOT EMBRACE ISLAM?**

9. If 'Mubahala' contest had convinced the Christian Fathers of the truth of Islam, why did they not embrace it?

The fact is that the *waqf* lands of Najran; the rich estate lands which they had received from Emperor Heracles of Abyssinia and Roman kings; rich gifts from the Christian public; the leadership of a great nation and tribe; all these were hard to abandon. The golden chains in the name Christian Church has stopped them from advancing towards the path of truth and salvation.

### **APPOINTMENT BY GOD'S COMMAND**

10. 'Mubahala' has proved the fact that the invitation to the contest between the Christians and Muslims was in full compliance of God's command for the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) to take his Ahlul Bayt as his witnesses to the field. Similarly the question of Prophethood and appointment of his twelve successors could be rightly determined only by God's command.

### **THE GREAT DISTINCTION**

11. 'Mubahala' has also proved the fact that in selecting Ali bin Abi Talib, Fatimah binte Muhammed, Hasan and Husain the grandsons – to accompany the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) on such a historical occasion of determining the truth of Islam, was to portray their great

distinction, virtues and criteria of their *Ismat* – infallibility.

### **AGE NOT CRITERIA OF GREATNESS**

12. 'Mubahala' has also proved the fact that in taking Hasan and Husain despite their young age, as active partners on the field to determine the truth of Islam, they were born with virtues and knowledge. That age is not the criteria of one's greatness.
  
13. 'Mubahala' has finally proved the fact that true Islam lies with that sect and those followers who derive their religious knowledge and guidance from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and his Ahlul Bayt the divinely appointed successors.

As Islam had emerged triumphant against Christianity on the occasion of 'Mubahala', this day is of great significance and great Eid day – a festival in Islamic History.

In commemoration of the 1400 years since this great event took place, it behoves every Muslim to study and understand the truth and participate in its propagatation.

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