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We have decided to archive the papers in this series after undergoing substantive revisions which can now be found in our newly published e-book *The Final Prophet: Proofs for the Prophethood of Muhammad*. We will also make webpage versions of the articles available in the near future and will include links when available.

Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research

The Accomplishments of the Prophet
: *The Proofs of Prophethood Series*

Mohammad Elshinawy



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Author Biography

Mohammad Elshinawy is a Graduate of English Literature at Brooklyn College, NYC. He studied at College of Hadith at the Islamic University of Madinah, and is currently completing his Bachelors in Islamic Studies at Mishkah University. He has translated major works for the International Islamic Publishing House, the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America, and Mishkah University.

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In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Grantor of Mercy

The Accomplishments of The Prophet ﷺ

“Ye shall know them by their fruits.”¹ In this paper, we continue our journey of establishing the proofs of prophethood by examining Muhammad’s ﷺ accomplishments. What exactly did this man accomplish? What fruits were born from his ministry? And do his achievements represent extraordinary talent and virtue, or mere hyperbolic adulation by his followers?

It should first be noted that Muhammad’s ﷺ greatest accomplishment was not restricted to being the most adored person among his contemporaries and future generations for over a millennium, as true as that may be. It also was not restricted to momentary political dominance over wide regions, for had this been the case, one might consider him comparable to Constantine, Alexander the Great, or Genghis Khan. It also was not limited to an incident of religious inspiration that lives on for centuries, lest someone conflate it with Christendom’s account of the crucifixion. It also was not contained solely in an admirable lifestyle of self-restraint, existential wisdom, and benevolence, as is credited to Buddha and Confucius. No, there was something different about Muhammad ﷺ—something that leaves those who discover it awestruck. What was it? It was the fact that no single milestone immortalized his legacy, but rather a series of remarkable feats that converged in one person. This is what fascinated and bewildered so many over the past millennium and a half, leaving them wondering: *Can this really be? Could such a person have existed outside of legends? Is there any other plausible explanation for this? Perhaps I really am standing before prophethood?*

John William Draper (d. 1882), an English-American scientist, physician, philosopher, and historian, writes,

Four years after the death of Justinian, A.D. 569, was born in Mecca, in Arabia, the man who, of all men, has exercised the greatest influence upon the human race... To be the religious head of many empires, to guide the

¹ Matthew 7:16, KJV

*daily life of one-third of the human race, may perhaps justify the title of a Messenger of God.*²

There is no leap of faith required here, at least not in accepting his prophethood. Claiming that sheer luck is responsible for all of these accomplishments being combined in any one individual, let alone Muhammad ﷺ, can only sprout from someone uninformed about reality or perverted by prejudice. Consider the enigma of a man who himself was illiterate, born in a backwards and feuding Arabia, isolated from the arts, philosophies, politics, warfare, and education of the developed empires surrounding it. Consider that this very man steps forward—overnight—with a call whose profundity, impact, and permanence remain peerless. The speed at which his religion spread, the global command of his call until today, and the positive influence of this single individual was—and will remain—unparalleled in human history; and Draper was certainly not the only non-Muslim historian in the West who recognized this.

As Alphonse de Lamartine (d. 1869), a French historian, exquisitely put it,

If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls. On the basis of a Book, every letter of which has become law, he created a spiritual nationality which has blended together peoples of every tongue and of every race. He has left to us as the indelible characteristic of this Muslim nationality, the hatred of false gods and the passion for the One and immaterial God. This avenging patriotism against the profanation of Heaven formed the virtue of the followers of Muhammad: the conquest of one third of the earth to his creed was his miracle. The idea of the unity of God

² See: *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, John William Draper, 1863

proclaimed amidst the exhaustion of fabulous theogonies, was in itself such a miracle that upon its utterance from his lips it destroyed all the ancient temples of idols and set on fire one third of the world. His life, his meditations, his heroic stance against the superstitions of his country, and his boldness in defying the furies of idolatry; his firmness in enduring them for thirteen years at Mecca, his acceptance of the role of public scorn and almost of being a victim of his fellow-countrymen: all these and, finally his incessant preaching, his wars against odds, his faith in his success and his superhuman security in misfortune, the forbearance in victory, his ambition, which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death; all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. This dogma was twofold, the unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is, the latter telling what God is not; the one overthrowing false gods with the sword, the other starting an idea with words. Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images, the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire; that is Muhammad. As regards all the standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask: is there any man greater than he?³

A Love Larger than Life

Has anyone in human history ever been as deeply loved as the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ? Many underestimate, or perhaps are unfamiliar with, the esteem and emulation this figure has garnered for a second millennium now. Others may realize it, then hastily assume that just-as-impressive shares of adoration must have been achieved by somebody else in human history. But a more critical examination tells another story.

During his life, the Prophet's Companions yearned to sacrifice life and limb to defend him ﷺ. When the Prophet ﷺ was knocked unconscious during the

³ See: *Histoire De La Turquie*, by Alphonse de Lamartine

Battle of Uḥud, for instance, his Companions displayed extraordinary heroism as they rushed to his rescue. Abu Dujāna (ra) welcomed volleys of arrows landing in his back as he hovered over the Prophet ﷺ. Anas b. an-Naḍr (ra) dove into the crowds until over ninety wounds of sword, spear, and arrow were found on his martyred body. Abu Talḥa (ra) shielded the Prophet ﷺ from injury with his bare chest when he found nothing else, and pleaded with him after he revived, “Do not look, O Messenger of Allah! [I would rather] My neck [be struck] than yours!” Talḥa b. ‘Ubaydillāh (ra) lifted the Prophet ﷺ onto a boulder, then returned to drive back the onslaught, then returned yet again to bring the Prophet ﷺ to even safer ground. Nusayba b. Ka‘b (ra) was a fearless woman who snatched swords away from men and charged at many physically stronger warriors at Uḥud, until she fell to a saber-strike on her collarbone which would hemorrhage later to grant her martyrdom. By the time the dust had finally cleared, their selfless displays of love for the Prophet ﷺ were eternalized in history forever. Upon returning to the city of Madinah, a woman from the Banu Dinār tribe was told that her husband, father, and brother were all killed at Uḥud. She retorted, “But what happened to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?” They replied, “He is safe and well, just as you wish him to be.” She said, “Show him to me; I must see for myself.” When she finally saw him, she said, “Every tragedy besides [losing] you is insignificant, O Messenger of Allah.”⁴ This single day’s events, not all captured here, are but a microcosm reflecting the ethos of love and endearment that surrounded the Final Prophet of God ﷺ for the duration of his twenty-three-year ministry.

A few years after Uḥud, ‘Urwa b. Mas‘ūd came as an envoy of the then enemy tribe of Quraysh, seeking to negotiate a treaty with Muhammad ﷺ. After spending three days among the Muslims, he returned to Mecca and briefed Quraysh with these observations:

O gathering of Quraysh, I have visited Chosroes [of Persia] in his kingdom, and Caesar [of Rome] in his kingdom, and the Negus [of Abyssinia] in his kingdom. But by God, I have never seen a king so revered among a people like Muhammad. He does not wash himself except that they rush to catch the

⁴ See: al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzi was-Siyar*

*droplets of water [falling from his body], nor does one of his hairs fall except that they take it. Whenever he speaks, they immediately lower their voices, and none stares at him directly out of reverence for him. He has offered you good terms, so accept them, for I do not see them ever deserting him. Now make your decision.*⁵

Even decades after the Prophet's ﷺ death, we find a Companion like 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ (ra) laying on his deathbed reminiscing about his life prior to Islam, recalling how he transformed from being a militant adversary of the Prophet ﷺ to one of his greatest followers. Amidst his recollections, he says,

*Then, no one was dearer to me than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and none was more exalted in my eyes than him. I could not even stare at him directly out of reverence for him, and thus if I am asked to describe his features, I would not be able to describe them, for I have never eyed him fully.*⁶

The Companions who outlived the Prophet ﷺ burned with similar passion and longing; an entire generation who remained incapable of hearing his name without their hearts trembling, their eyes overflowing with tears, anticipating reuniting with him in the hereafter. Bilāl b. Rabāḥ (ra) was a freed Ethiopian slave who was among the first handful to accept Islam at the hands of the Prophet ﷺ, tolerating unthinkable torture for defying his masters and embracing the religion of Muhammad. He would survive to become the very first *muezzin* (caller to prayer) in Muslim history. Needless to say, loving Muhammad ﷺ flowed in Bilāl's veins, and surviving him brought him sorrow that only a reunion could heal. Nine years later, as Bilāl (ra) lay on his own deathbed in Damascus, he heard his wife say, "O my grief! O my Bilāl!" To that, he retorted, "O my joy! Tomorrow I meet my loved ones: Muhammad and his companions!"⁷

Countless thousands have since inherited this love of the Final Prophet ﷺ en route to becoming icons of truth, justice, and contribution in world history. Among these were vanguards who developed profound insight into sacred truths,

⁵ See: *Sahih al-Bukhārī* (2529) and *as-Sīra* by Ibn Hishām (2/312)

⁶ Collected by Muslim (711)

⁷ See: *al-Muḥtaḍarīn* (294) by Ibn Abi ad-Dunyā, and *at-Tārikh* (10/475) by Ibn 'Asākir

performed tangible and intellectual wonders, and ascended to rare heights in the footsteps of their beloved, the unlettered Prophet ﷺ. Innumerable meticulous scholars, literary geniuses, selfless altruists, accomplished statesmen, and virtuous generals believed emulating Muhammad ﷺ was the gateway to true excellence in all endeavors and indispensable for being a torchbearer for humanity. Even today, nearly a third of this planet continues to govern their lives—in one respect or another—in ways that reflect their veneration of Muhammad ﷺ. Muslims certainly do not worship Muhammad, only God, but see his persona as their earthly pivot of faith, and his example as the paragon of virtue and thereby their conduit to God's pleasure.

Throughout the Muslim world, it is customary to say 'May the peace and blessings of God be upon him' after mentioning the Prophet. As a result, during the Friday communal prayer any mention of the Prophet's name by the preacher during the sermon will elicit a collective murmur of prayers for Muhammad from the congregation. In such settings, the person of the Prophet becomes the common focus of Muslims' ritual attention. Remembering Muhammad and honouring his Sunnah act as the earthly focal point from which attention is directed upward to God.⁸

Today, the Muslims' exaltation of the man who connected them with their Creator has made "Muhammad" the most [popular baby name in London](#), where Muslims to date account for only about 12% of the population. Generation after generation, his devout followers continue exploring his every word, rigorously pursuing everything traceable to him, and mimicking his lifestyle down to the motions of his fingers during prayer. How many figures in human history have won such adoration, an adoration that translated into actions, for fifteen centuries and counting?

David George Hogarth (d. 1927), a British scholar and archeologist, said,

Serious or trivial, his daily behavior has instituted a canon which millions observe this day with conscious memory. No one regarded by any section of

⁸ Brown, Jonathan AC, *Muhammad: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press (2011)

*the human race as Perfect Man has ever been imitated so minutely. The conduct of the founder of Christianity has not governed the ordinary life of his followers. Moreover, no founder of a religion has left on so solitary an eminence as the Muslim apostle.*⁹

It is fascinating that Muhammad's name foretold this phenomenon before its occurrence. *Muhammad* literally means 'the oft-praised one,' and no person in humanity has received greater praise and recognition than he ﷺ. Even without the exposure opportunities of social media, without an account on Twitter or Facebook or Instagram or Whatsapp, Muhammad ﷺ has amassed 1.6 billion followers in today's world. Does it not stir amazement to consider how with this one human being, 1400 years after he passed away, there is no second that passes except that he is praised all around the world? In the Muslim call to prayer (*adhān*) which takes place every second around the world, followed by the prayer (*ṣalāh*) itself, supplicating for Muhammad and testifying to his prophethood is echoed day and night. Should one not marvel at just how emotionally attached people remain to Muhammad, and how they continue to express the most passionate defense of him when he is slighted?

In fact, God had Himself foretold this by saying, "And we have raised for you your repute."¹⁰ This verse was revealed during the early Meccan years, at a time when the Muslims were a mere handful of weak people and it was unsure what would happen to Islam, but to think how the verse is fulfilled now, when Muhammad ﷺ is mentioned and remembered by hundreds of millions of people all over the world is incredible.

The World's Greatest Success Story

Appreciation of his teachings aside, a momentary glance at just the Prophet's ﷺ life and his "secular success" has demanded attention from scholars worldwide.

As Karen Armstrong, an acclaimed author on comparative religion, puts it,

⁹ Hogarth, David H., *Arabia*, first published in 1923

¹⁰ Sūrat ash-Sharḥ (94): 4

*Islam is a religion of success. Unlike Christianity, which has as its main image, in the west at least, a man dying in a devastating, disgraceful, helpless death... Mohammed was not an apparent failure. He was a dazzling success, politically as well as in spirituality, and Islam went from strength to strength to strength.*¹¹

Michael Hart, another contemporary American historian, who authored *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, succinctly illustrates this mind-boggling success story as follows:

My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels. Of humble origins, Muhammad founded and promulgated one of the world's great religions, and became an immensely effective political leader. Today, thirteen centuries after his death, his influence is still powerful and pervasive. The majority of the persons in this book had the advantage of being born and raised in centers of civilization, highly cultured or politically pivotal nations. Muhammad, however, was born in the year 570, in the city of Mecca, in southern Arabia, at that time a backward area of the world, far from the centers of trade, art, and learning. Orphaned at age six, he was reared in modest surroundings. Islamic tradition tells us that he was illiterate. His economic position improved when, at age twenty-five, he married a wealthy widow. Nevertheless, as he approached forty, there was little outward indication that he was a remarkable person.

Most Arabs at that time were pagans, who believed in many gods. There were, however, in Mecca, a small number of Jews and Christians; it was from them no doubt that Muhammad first learned of a single, omnipotent God who ruled the entire universe. When he was forty years old, Muhammad became convinced that this one true God (Allah) was speaking to him, and had chosen him to spread the true faith. For three years,

¹¹ Transcribed: Bill Moyers Interviews Karen Armstrong, PBS, March 2002

Muhammad preached only to close friends and associates. Then, about 613, he began preaching in public. As he slowly gained converts, the Meccan authorities came to consider him a dangerous nuisance. In 622, fearing for his safety, Muhammad fled to Medina (a city some 200 miles north of Mecca), where he had been offered a position of considerable political power.

This flight, called the Hegira, was the turning point of the Prophet's life. In Mecca, he had few followers. In Medina, he had many more, and he soon acquired an influence that made him a virtual dictator. During the next few years, while Muhammad's following grew rapidly, a series of battles were fought between Medina and Mecca. This was ended in 630 with Muhammad's triumphant return to Mecca as conqueror. The remaining two and one-half years of his life witnessed the rapid conversion of the Arab tribes to the new religion. When Muhammad died, in 632, he was the effective ruler of all of southern Arabia. The Bedouin tribesmen of Arabia had a reputation as fierce warriors. But their number was small; and plagued by disunity and internecine warfare, they had been no match for the larger armies of the kingdoms in the settled agricultural areas to the north. However, unified by Muhammad for the first time in history, and inspired by their fervent belief in the one true God, these small Arab armies now embarked upon one of the most astonishing series of conquests in human history.¹²

As Lamartine said earlier, it was not just the astonishing series of conquests and worldly success that made Muhammad unique. Rather, it was the meager means through which he accomplished this, the selfless relinquishment of his material gains once he attained them, and the retention of his transcendent purpose despite all these accomplishments, that marked his greatness.

Bosworth Smith (d. 1908), a reverend schoolmaster and author, writes,

¹² See: *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, by Michael H. Hart

*By a fortune absolutely unique in history, Mohammed is a threefold founder of a nation, of an empire, and of a religion... Head of the State as well as the Church; he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar, without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a police force, without a fixed revenue. If ever a man ruled by a right divine, it was Muhammad, for he had all the powers without their supports. He cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life.*¹³

That final sentence from Smith is what some consider the reason for Muhammad's ﷺ unprecedented power and undying influence. It was the combined fact of successfully winning control over so much of this world while not allowing an iota of it to control him. Muslims believe that only God could have fused these two phenomena inside one man, and that He reinforced his claim to prophethood with these material and moral triumphs. As Edward Gibbon puts it,

*The greatest success of Muhammad's life was effected by sheer moral force... It is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder, the same pure and perfect impression which he engraved at Mecca and Medina is preserved after the revolutions of twelve centuries by the Indian, the African and the Turkish proselytes of the Koran...*¹⁴

Similarly, after the renowned Mahatma Gandhi (d. 1948) found himself in prison with the Prophet's biography, he was able to identify the secret behind the Prophet ﷺ overcoming insurmountable odds and reaching such stations of global success. He says,

I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today an undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of

¹³ See: *Muhammed and Muhammedanism*, by Bosworth Smith

¹⁴ See: Edward Gibbon and Simon Oakley, *History of the Saracen Empire*, London (1870), p. 92

*the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle.*¹⁵

Restoring the Unity of God

The Final Prophet ﷺ accomplished the rare feat of providing the world with impeccable clarity on the identity of God, His oneness, and His perfection, a clarity that aligned with both human nature and rationality, and thus became the hallmark of Islam. He proposed a simple and intuitive theology that described to people their Creator, and the path to Him, in a way that was bound to spread like wildfire all across the globe. It was a unique proposal, one that struck such a deep chord in humanity that it effectively stripped them of some of their most hindering tendencies—such as the blind conformity that all cultures perpetuate, and the deification of people that has occurred in so many civilizations. Muhammad ﷺ unearthed for a vulnerable world their long-lost sanctuary; direct access to the One True God, the Most Merciful. He ﷺ refused to rest until they knew that only through singling God out in devotion would one find contentment and satisfaction, and that only through Him would their moral compasses be set aright. For those who understand that only disorder can exist outside an authentic God-centric lifestyle, the incalculable utility of this single accomplishment by Muhammad ﷺ can be realized. Restoring the unity of God in people's lives resulted in restoring order and meaning to life, as it did away with the notion of life being a destination-less journey. And for those incapable of seeing the utility of an authentic theology in our age, perhaps a good start is considering the emerging fascination with “spiritual intelligence” in the turmoil-filled modern world, along with the [significantly lower homicide and suicide rates in Muslim countries](#) (also see: [Suicide and Islam; NCBI](#)).

Alphonse de Lamartine says on this point,

¹⁵ Gandhi, Mahatma. “My Jail Experiences.” Young India (11th September 1924): p. 304

Never has a man proposed for himself, voluntarily or involuntarily, a goal more sublime, since this goal was beyond measure: undermine the superstitions placed between the creature and the Creator; give back God to man and man to God, reinstate the rational and saintly idea of divinity in the midst of this prevailing chaos of material and disfigured gods of idolatry. Never has a man accomplished in such short time such an immense and long lasting revolution in the world, since less than two centuries after his prediction, Islam, preaching and armed, ruled over three Arabias and conquered to God's unity Persia, the Khorasan of Transoxania, Western India, Syria, Egypt, Abyssinia, and all the known continent of Northern Africa, many islands of the Mediterranean, Spain, and part of Gaul.¹⁶

Edward Gibbon adds,

The Mahometans have uniformly withstood the temptation of reducing the object of their faith and devotion to a level with the senses and imagination of man. 'I believe in One God and Mahomet the Apostle of God' is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honors of the prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue, and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion.¹⁷

This purest conceptualization of monotheism was inculcated into the followers of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: an absolutely personal relationship with God, one void of every intermediary and human interference. This strict monotheism placed all men and women on equal footing before God and with equal access to God. This helped shape the egalitarian nature of Islam, providing a social narrative in which the holiness of men was not evidenced in their material possessions or social class, but rather in their acts of piety and righteousness.

¹⁶ See: *Histoire De La Turquie*, by Alphonse de Lamartine

¹⁷ See: Edward Gibbon and Simon Oakley, *History of the Saracen Empire*, London (1870), p. 92

Furthermore, the theology he brought either explained away or absorbed the other religions and competing theologies about God, consolidating all into one coherent monotheistic worldview. This was the explanatory power of Islam which gave it immense intellectual appeal: its compelling ability to satisfy all the existential questions about God and creation. As for its spiritual appeal, that too was a driving force behind its continued imprint on the minds and hearts of people. After all, the greatest miracle of Muhammad ﷺ (see forthcoming article: *The Prophet's Miracles*) was the Quran which stands as God's verbatim address to humanity, available to be imbibed firsthand by anyone who studies it until the end of time.

Revolutionizing Human Rights

After rectifying man's bond with his Maker, mending people's relationships with one another was the natural next step. This accomplishment of the Final Prophet ﷺ was not merely one of advocating for virtues such as kindness, empathy, and humility in people's interpersonal exchanges, but also one that involved setting a flawless system in play to ensure that these abstract concepts would unfold on the ground. He ﷺ fraternized with all people, despite their differences, and purged their prejudices, and said in his Farewell Sermon, "O people, your Lord is one, and your father is one. You are all from Adam, and Adam is from dust. The noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-conscious."¹⁸ Islam affirmed a universal human brotherhood, a brotherhood that recognized the dignity of every human being, and demanded an end to every form of bigotry based on race, color, or class. What is more, the universal brotherhood that Islam established was based on cooperation between people for the upliftment of society and humanity as a whole.

Humanity has suffered countless casualties based on social classification. Some based it on lineage (ethnic patriotism), others on financial standing (socioeconomic class), and others on skin color (racial supremacy). Historically, these distinctions led to more than just bitter arguments, but also endless hatred, conflict, and generations of carnage. Islam came to a people that were knee-deep in feudal discriminatory tendencies and transformed that society into a model of social

¹⁸ Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt (49): 13

harmony in which all were liberated from the shackles of discrimination, and “superiority” was based only on piety—which only God could judge and all could compete for.

Arnold Toynbee (d. 1975), a research professor of international history at the University of London, in his book *Civilization on Trial* said,

*The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding moral achievements of Islam, and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue.*¹⁹

Some may argue that what the Prophet ﷺ did was even more brilliant than eliminating bigotry and racism; rather he argued that racial and linguistic diversity should be appreciated and embraced.

The late Malik Shabazz, aka Malcolm X, recognized this in his famous 1964 *Letter from Mecca*,

*America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, and even eaten with people who in America would have been considered white—but the white attitude was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color.*²⁰

Certainly, it was not just racism that the Prophet ﷺ eradicated when establishing social justice, but tyrannical classism as well. When one considers just how much human rights are but a political philosophy in our modern times, a veneer to justify capitalistically driven wars, it's no wonder why historians marvel at the moral accomplishments of Muhammad. Certainly, sincere people of conscience who genuinely advocate for human rights do exist everywhere, but who among today's

¹⁹ Toynbee, Arnold, *Civilization on Trial*, Oxford University Press (New York, 1948), p. 205

²⁰ Malcolm X, Letter from Mecca, [http://www.malcolm-x.org/docs/let_mecca.htm]

world powers operates with the ethical consistency of Muhammad ﷺ at the height of his power? He did not celebrate the universalism of humanity while upholding the interests of the rising bourgeois, nor was he a mobilizer of mobs disgruntled by economic woes. Rather, there was a pristine equity in his call, one that validated the wealth of the wealthy and the power of the powerful, whenever this wealth was not the fruit of exploitation or hoarding, and whenever this power did not translate into domination or authoritarianism. He uplifted the downtrodden and humbled the affluent, joining them at a beautiful middle called brotherhood. And for generations after the Final Prophet ﷺ returned to God, you could find a civilization replete with justice and security for the rich, poor, Muslim, and non-Muslim alike—completely unlike the selective human rights that ruthless corporations and abusive policing practice today. With dictates like, “Pay the worker his due wages before his sweat dries,”²¹ and “Allah will surely torment those who torment people in this worldly life,”²² the Prophet ﷺ eradicated the widely condoned inequities of his time.

Abu Dharr (ra), a senior Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, could not be differentiated from his laborers as they wore identical clothing. When asked about this, he explained that the Prophet ﷺ had said, “Your servants are your brothers whom Allah has placed under your authority. Whoever’s brother is under his authority should feed him with the same food he eats, clothe him with the same clothes he wears, and not burden him beyond his ability. And if you burden him, then help him.”²³ In fact, biographers report that another senior companion Abu ad-Dardā’ (ra) said to his riding mount as it died, “O camel, do not prosecute me before your Lord, for I never made you carry more than you could bear!” ‘Urwa b. Muhammad (ra), the grandson of another great Companion, declared upon assuming the governorship of Yemen, “O Yemenites! This here is my camel. If I exit [your lands] with anything more than it, then I am a thief.”²⁴

²¹ Collected in *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (2443)

²² Collected in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2613)

²³ Collected in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (30) and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1661)

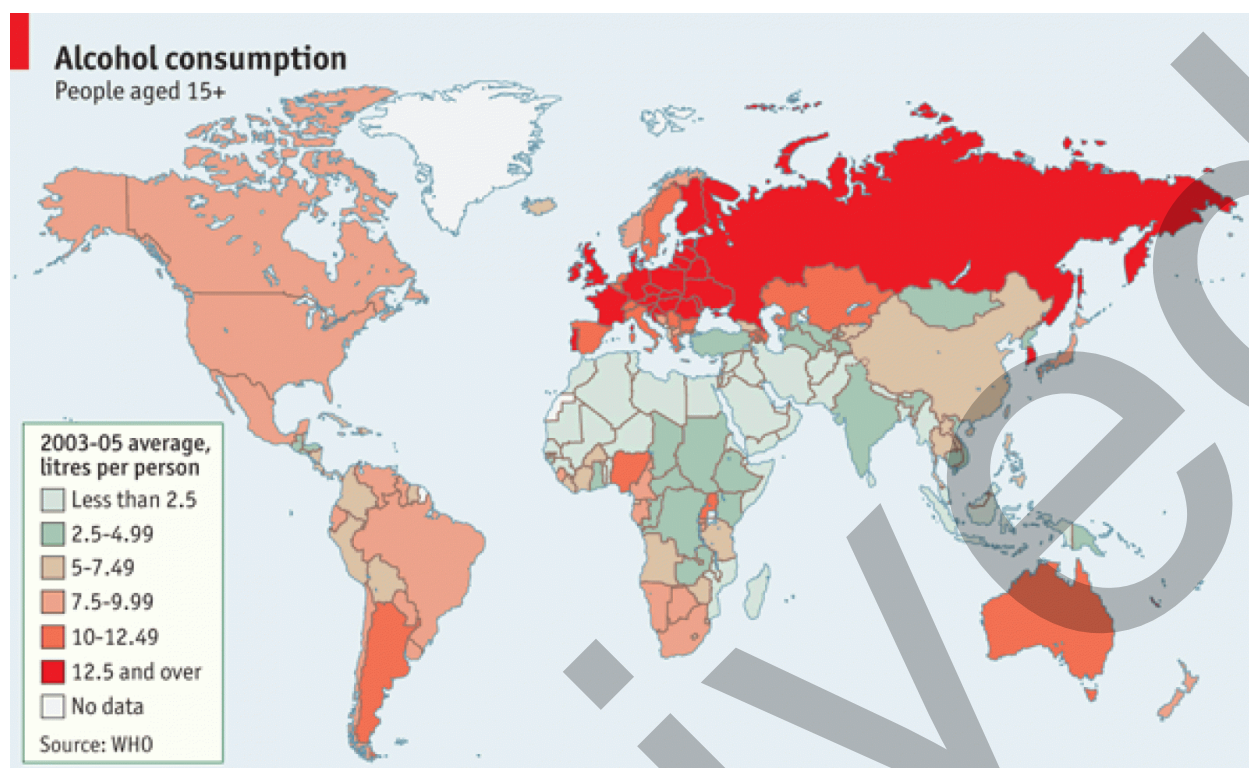
²⁴ See: *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl* (20/34)

It is well beyond the scope of this paper to even begin to outline the various human rights the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ established and the atrocious conditions he uprooted during his lifetime. Dignity and respect for women and justice for non-Muslims, not to mention rights for even animals and the environment, must all be deferred to discussions elsewhere. But to marvel at these accomplishments, even when contrasting them with today's standards which enjoy over a century of refining "human rights theories," a good primer I would suggest is *Civilization of Faith: A Journey Through Islamic History*, by Dr. Mustāfa as-Sibā'ee.

Producing a Model Generation

Over the span of just twenty-three years, the Prophet ﷺ successfully designed a model generation whose likes humanity had never seen and will never again see. This was a group isolated from the world by oceans of desert, weak and largely illiterate, and hardly more than shepherders. Within two decades, they somehow transformed the world forever. But how? They had become the purest servants of God in human history after the prophets, the most dutiful observers of monotheism on the planet. This not only made them the most devout worshippers but also at the forefront of contributing to humanity. At night, they would stand in prayer longing for the Divine, tears streaming down their cheeks in reflection over His revealed Word. By day, they would live for purposes greater than themselves, exhausting themselves in philanthropy, education, or as knights who rode to liberate humanity from tyrannical regimes. They brought justice to the nations, as Isaiah foretold they would,²⁵ and unleashed the potential of hundreds of thousands of ascetics, reformers, and great thinkers for centuries. In the global Muslim community, there emerged a civilization in which virtue and chastity were the norm, and in which alcohol was never widespread. Until this very day, as the World Health Organization estimates that alcohol results in 2.5 million deaths a year, the impact of Islam on preventing alcohol abuse in Muslim-majority nations is [glaring](#).

²⁵ See: Matthew 12:18, KJV



The hallmarks of Islamic civilization were justice and equality, balance and moderation, diversity, progress, and the pursuit of beauty. People traveled across the seas seeking to export these virtues to their homelands, and multitudes of honest experts testify that the world has never been the same since.

Adam Smith (d. 1790), the 18th century English economist that pioneered the West's free market system, admits,

*The Empire of the Caliphs seems to have been the first state under which the world enjoyed that degree of tranquility which the cultivation of the sciences requires. It was under the protection of those generous and magnificent princes, that the ancient philosophy and astronomy of the Greeks were restored and established in the East; that tranquility, which their mild, just and religious government diffused over their vast empire, revived the curiosity of mankind, to inquire into the connecting principles of nature.*²⁶

William Draper, whose praise of Muhammad was earlier cited, says in apology,

²⁶ See: *History of Astronomy; The Essays of Adam Smith*, (London, 1869), p. 353

I have to deplore the systematic manner in which the literature of Europe has contrived to put out of sight our scientific obligations to the Mohammedans. Surely they cannot be much longer hidden. Injustice founded on religious rancor and national conceit cannot be perpetuated forever.²⁷

But even putting civilizational merits aside, focusing solely on the Prophet's lifetime demands a sober pause. Has history ever known anyone else with the ability to wean a nation from alcoholism? The Prophet ﷺ achieved that within his lifetime in a people whose glory and income was interlocked with wine. Has anyone else ever been able to ban the age-old customs of unrestricted polygyny, male-only inheritance laws, and female infanticide in less than one decade? All the laws in today's India combating female infanticide have not eradicated the practice after more than a century of strict enforcement.²⁸ Has there ever been another era where systemic racism was eradicated in both theory and practice? Many of the Prophet's contemporaries who were vehement Arab supremacists ultimately became people who accepted being subordinates of non-Arabs and former slaves. Impartial readers of history would attest that each one of these is an astonishing accomplishment on its own, and yet these and more were actualized by the generation carved under his ﷺ care.

Conclusion

Captured here are some of the unique successes granted by God to the Final Prophet ﷺ. He began by transforming those under his tutelage from one of the most savage and lawless communities imaginable to the best community possible. Then, for nearly a millennium and especially during the earlier era, the Islamic civilization espoused a perfect balance between spirituality and morals and scientific vibrancy and progressive thought.

Finally, it is understandable that the current incompetence—in certain respects—of Muslim nation-states today detracts from our ability to appreciate the greatness of Islamic civilization. It helps to remember that it was only in the past 400 to 500

²⁷ See: *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, John William Draper, 1863

²⁸ See: Plan India, "BAIG Report: The State of the Girl Child in India 2009", p. 21

years that the Muslim world suffered these great setbacks, and only when the Muslims strayed away from the proper understanding and practice of Islam. But for as long as Muslims gave due respect to their religion, observed it correctly and religiously, downfalls of this magnitude were non-existent. It is a demonstrable reality that Muslims continued doing well when adhering to Islam and the guidance of their Prophet ﷺ, as opposed to other nations who only thrived once they quit practicing their faith. For this same reason, much of the modern world resists the notion of merging between “church and state,” because they feel religion is what kept them from progress. Many see the revival of religion as necessitating a return to backwardness and savagery. But in our experience, religion and spiritual strength were the driving force which motivated the early Muslims to excel in all fields. The discerning observer of history, and especially the Muslim, must make that distinction. This will not only shed many of the suspicions our modern culture caused us to inherit about religion at large but will also help one understand why discussing Islam’s contributions is impossible with some people regardless of how many hard facts are presented—because they begin the conversation with a completely different paradigm. But for someone starting with a firm conviction that Muhammad was, in fact, the Messenger of God, it is clearly the case that these were some of his successes.