



Call for the People of Qiblah

One Ummah and One Shared Destiny

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Foreword

This Call for the People of Qiblah expresses a sincere hope shared by all components of the Muslim Ummah, represented by its scholars, intellectual leaders, and religious authorities. It reflects a collective aspiration to transcend the existing divisions within the Ummah—despite its diverse schools of thought and doctrinal differences—toward greater mutual understanding and unity in confronting shared challenges.

This hope took shape as a tangible initiative through the historic call for intra-Islamic dialogue by His Eminence Professor Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders, in his speech at the Bahrain Dialogue Forum in November 2022. This landmark appeal marked the beginning of a sustained and far-reaching effort by the Muslim Council of Elders, laying the foundation for a comprehensive conference that would bring together scholars and religious authorities from across the Muslim world. This initiative has since paved the way for an enduring intra-Islamic dialogue.

The General Secretariat of the Muslim Council of Elders engaged in extensive consultations with prominent religious figures and authorities, in addition to conducting multiple visits to various Muslim countries. Among these efforts were two significant visits to Iraq, during which meetings were held with key religious authorities and figures. These included discussions with the son of Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Al-Sistani, as well as Sheikh Abdul-Mahdi Al-Karbala'i, representative of the Supreme Religious Authority, alongside numerous scholars and figures from both Sunni and Shi'a traditions in Najaf, Baghdad, and other regions of Iraq.

Furthermore, this outreach extended to scholars across the Muslim world, representing various Islamic traditions, including distinguished religious authorities and scholars from Iran, Lebanon, and other countries. These efforts culminated in the convening of the Intra-Islamic Dialogue Conference, hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain under the esteemed patronage of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. The conference was attended by His Eminence Grand Imam Professor Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, along with more than 400 scholars, religious authorities, and intellectuals from across the Muslim world. It was jointly organized by Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the Muslim Council of Elders, and took place from 20th to 21st Sha'ban 1446 AH, corresponding to 19th to 20th February 2025.

The conference concluded with the launch of this declaration: "The Call for the People of Qiblah", which embodies the spirit of unity, harmony, and mutual understanding reflected in the conference's outcomes. It stands as the culmination of preceding dialogues, as well as the discussions held during the event, aimed at forging a shared vision for collaboration and fostering closer ties among the members of a united Muslim Ummah.

Judge Mohamed Abdelsalam
Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Elders

PREAMBLE

The foundation and essence of this call lie in the unity of the Muslim Ummah, which its Lord has made one—a justly balanced nation and the best nation ever brought forth for mankind. This unity is the firm and unwavering basis for strengthening kindness and compassion among its members and peoples and for fostering genuine fraternity among all the people of Qiblah (i.e. All Muslims at large).

This fraternity is deeply rooted and well-established, extending far beyond mere proximity or rapprochement, neither in terms of geography, for the people of this Ummah have lived together in harmony for centuries within their societies and nations, nor in terms of doctrine, thought, or consciousness, as they all derive from a single source: the divine revelation of the Glorious Quran and the Prophetic guidance left to them by their final Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These sources have shaped the scholarly endeavors and authoritative references of this Ummah, giving rise to its various theological and jurisprudential schools, elevating its banners across the world, and enriching its social, economic, and intellectual life.

As we reaffirm these established truths and reflect on their implications, we must clarify that this call does not seek to disregard doctrinal differences or the natural and historical factors that have contributed to them. Accordingly, these differences are not among the objectives of today's call. From the outset, we emphasize that theological and jurisprudential diversity is a legitimate reality that must remain untouched. Any attempt to dissolve these schools of thought into a single one or to impose uniformity in a way that erases their distinct characteristics is neither possible nor reasonable—therefore, it is not a goal to be pursued.

What the “Call for the People of Qiblah” proclaims today—with the unanimous agreement of the distinguished scholars and thought leaders gathered at this conference—is the necessity for the members of the Muslim Ummah to recognize the essential pillars that will enable it to reclaim its renaissance and active presence on both the Islamic and global stage.


The unity of the Muslim Ummah is a sacred covenant and a protected charter—it must never be subject to compromise or neglect. It is a certainty that must be consciously upheld, reflected in conduct, and embedded in methodologies and discourse so that it remains a towering edifice that embraces diversity while rising above national, ethnic, and sectarian considerations. Neither fleeting disputes nor external challenges should be allowed to weaken or fracture it.


PREREQUISITES FOR MAINTAINING ISLAMIC FRATERNITY


At the conclusion of the Intra- Islamic Dialogue Conference, held in Bahrain, and following profound discussions, the participants reached a consensus that the prerequisites for maintaining Islamic unity are as follows:





1. Preserving fraternity and maintaining channels for mutual understanding among all Muslims at large—both at the scholarly and media levels—while affirming the legitimacy of doctrinal diversity. This principle is deeply rooted in our rich heritage, encapsulated in the golden rule: “We cooperate on matters we agree upon, and we excuse one another in matters of disagreement.”


 **2.** Fostering intellectual and doctrinal understanding among the scholars of the Ummah and its academic institutions is a strategic necessity. This requires supporting constructive academic dialogue, expanding opportunities for scholarly gatherings, and promoting intellectual freedom and independent reasoning (ijtihad). All available means must be utilized to consolidate shared knowledge. At the same time, constant vigilance is required against schemes of division, voices of discord, and calls for enmity. These threats must be addressed with well-calibrated strategic awareness, recognizing them as latent dangers to the unity of the Ummah and the cohesion of its civilizational fabric.

 **3.** The dangers facing Muslims—as one united Ummah—along with the targeted campaigns against them, including direct aggression on their lands and sacred sites, constitute a shared challenge that threatens all. These relentless threats seek to sow division and obstruct the path to unity and progress. Such overwhelming dangers necessitate—both religiously and rationally—that we unite upon a common word and a unified vision, fostering cooperation and solidarity among the nations and peoples of the Ummah. This is essential to ensuring that Muslim lands remain protected, their territories liberated, and their sacred sites and symbols safeguarded.

 **4.** The scholars of the Ummah gathered here today, in this hospitable nation of the Kingdom of Bahrain, have undertaken a long and arduous journey to reach this moment of agreement on this “Call for the People of Qiblah”. By the grace of Allah, they have arrived at a decisive moment—one we earnestly pray marks the end of discord and strife, which our Lord has warned against, saying, “And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute, lest you lose courage and your strength departs.” (The Quran, 8 :46) Disunity contradicts the message of our noble prophet (PBUH) to all Muslims, as well as the guidance of his noble household (Ahl Al-Bayt, peace be upon them), his righteous companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, and the revered imams and leading jurists of Islam across all its schools of thought.








 **5.** The scholars and religious authorities of the Ummah—represented here by His Eminence Professor Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders, alongside his fellow scholars from all Islamic schools of thought—are acutely aware of the immense trust placed upon their shoulders and the weight of responsibility they bear, especially under these critical circumstances. They recognize their duty to convey the true essence of Islam to the people of the Ummah and to uphold the sacred bonds of fraternity among all Muslims, strictly prohibiting anything that undermines these foundations or severs their ties.

 **6.** Affirming the principle that all Muslims belong to one united Ummah, where allegiance to a sect or denomination should never, and indeed must never, take precedence over allegiance to the Ummah itself. While it is natural and respectful to acknowledge legitimate sentiments of sectarian loyalty, wisdom dictates that such affiliations must never escalate into fanaticism that threatens the unity of the Ummah.

 **7.** A constant reminder to scholars of all Islamic schools of thought regarding their responsibility before Allah, before the Ummah, and before history. They must uphold the obligations set forth in this call and actively join this “Call for the People of Qiblah,” which seeks only one goal: the well-being of all Muslims, the well-being of the entire world—East and West—and the establishment of global peace and righteousness.

PILLARS OF ISLAMIC FRATERNITY

This call is based on and adheres to a number of core principles laid down as follows:

-  The Glorious Quran and the Final Prophet as the Foundation of Religion: The Quran is the eternal guiding scripture of the Ummah, and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the final messenger and seal of the prophets. They are the sources of the religion of Islam, the wellspring of its belief, the guiding light of our vision, the cornerstone of the historical mission of faith, and the foundation of a unified Qiblah and an enduring Shariah. It is essential to emphasize that the era of Prophethood, as documented in the biography and traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) was an exemplary period of Muslim unity.
-  Difference is a Universal Law and a Human Reality: Diversity among human beings is self-evident and requires no proof. It is a divine decree, a natural human condition, and a fundamental historical and social reality—one from which Muslims are no exception.
-  Freedom is a Prerequisite for Obligation: Allah has granted human beings freedom of thought and action, making it the foundation of their accountability and their entrusted responsibility. If the Quran guarantees freedom of choice in faith, as stated: “And say, ‘The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills—let him believe; and whoever wills—let him disbelieve’” (The Quran, 18: 29), then the right to choose one’s school of thought and religious approach is even more fundamental and undeniable.
-  Doctrinal Pluralism is a Historical Reality: It has been an established phenomenon within the Ummah since the first Islamic century, when differences emerged over the legitimacy of caliphate. Over time, these differences persisted due to historical circumstances that were interpreted in varying ways by preceding generations.
-  The Legitimacy of Ijtihad, by Qualified Scholars Who Fulfill Its Conditions and Adhere to Its Regulations, as the Sole Path to Discerning Truth: The diversity of the Islamic schools of thought, at its core, is a reflection of scholarly ijtihad—a sincere intellectual effort to discern the truth. It embodies the diligent pursuit of understanding, imposed by Islamic principles and scholarly traditions. Ijtihad is a vast domain of research and exploration, not a battleground for conflict.
-  The Diversity of Islamic Schools of Thought: An Expression of the Universal Pursuit of Truth: Fundamentally, the diversity among Islamic schools of thought reflects each school’s effort to adhere to evidence and comply with its dictates, as well as to diligently seek the authentic interpretation of religion. This is based on the foundational Islamic principles and the inherited methodologies of jurisprudence and theology specific to each school—as is widely recognized.
-  Differences in Opinions Exist Within Each School: The diversity of viewpoints is not only evident between different Islamic schools but also within each school

itself. In some cases, internal differences within a single school may exceed the variations between distinct schools. This confirms that doctrinal divergence is not a cause for division but rather a well-established intellectual tradition that enriches and strengthens unity rather than undermining it.

- **Respect is Only Maintained Through Mutual Understanding:** It is both natural and justified for followers of each school of thought to embrace their intellectual and jurisprudential heritage, shaped by the unique circumstances of their era, doctrinal influences, and political contexts. Mutual respect for this heritage and its diversity, and engaging with this diversity in a spirit of fairness, respect, and mutual recognition, are fundamental to respecting freedom of thought and opinion. These principles are enshrined in law, agreed upon both rationally and pragmatically, and universally endorsed by scholars and visionaries. This call, God willing, embodies that consensus.
- **Recognized Islamic Schools Are Valid Institutions of Thought:** The differences between them should never be considered contradictions or grounds for discord. Relations among these schools must be based solely on cooperation, mutual advice, goodwill, and fraternity.
- **Intentions Should Be Left to Allah Alone:** As universally affirmed in all Islamic schools of thought, the matter of knowing intentions belongs solely to Allah Almighty. He alone determines reward and punishment in the Hereafter. No scholar, regardless of their knowledge or status, has the right to assume divine authority by judging the fate of those who follow a different school of thought, coercing them, or restricting their freedoms in this world.
- **Muslims Should Focus on the Present and the Future, Not the Past:** Those who lived in past generations have already met their fate before Allah, whether for good or ill. Our responsibility lies in addressing our current realities and shaping our future, rather than dwelling on the deeds of our predecessors. As the Quran states: "That was a nation that had already gone before. For them is what they earned and for you is what you have earned. And you will not be accountable for what they have done." (The Quran, 2: 134).
- **Wisdom and the challenges facing Muslims today demand that past conflicts and divisions be transformed into valuable lessons that inspire unity and advancement.** The Ummah must engage in a renewed and precise analysis of its present reality and future prospects.
- **Dialogue is an Islamic Virtue Established by the Quran:** The Quran lays out the principles of dialogue, guiding it toward wisdom, good counsel, and engagement with others in the best possible manner. Dialogue within the Ummah itself is even more critical, necessary, and obligatory.
- **The Dialogue Envisioned Here Is a Dialogue with Oneself—**one that must be conducted with sincerity and self-examination, involving introspection, self-criticism, and honest reflection. In its historic call for intra-Islamic dialogue in Bahrain in 2022,

Al-Azhar emphasized that “the principles of this dialogue must include putting an end to mutual hate speech, ceasing provocative rhetoric and accusations of disbelief (takfir), and moving beyond both historical and contemporary conflicts in all their forms and negative manifestations.” Furthermore, a landmark statement issued by the supreme Shia authority in Iraq affirmed: “The Sunnis are ourselves.” This declaration, along with similar statements from esteemed religious and scholarly authorities, reflects a commitment to unity, respect, and the collective welfare of the Ummah.

This call also affirms that “all Muslims are ourselves.” As Allah Almighty says: “Then greet one another with peace.” (The Quran, 24: 61). Every Muslim is an integral part of the unified body of the Ummah, a fundamental component of its fabric, encompassing all its schools of thought and Islamic traditions.

- The basis of dialogue lies in the common principles that unite these schools of thought, which acknowledge a margin for interpretive differences and diversity in understanding while adhering to the Glorious Quran, the agreed-upon Sunnah of the Final Messenger, and the guidance of the righteous predecessors—including the Prophet’s household (Ahl Al-Bayt), his companions, and the leading jurists followed by the Ummah. This adherence must remain free from excessive interpretation or deviation from the clear Arabic language of the divine revelation, in accordance with the established principles of religion and its overarching objectives.

Based on these principles, we must transition from a mindset of discord, which often alienates those with differing views, to a culture of diversity that embraces all. This requires adherence to the ethics of plurality and the noble standards of Quranic dialogue.

- It is imperative to put an immediate and definitive end to any form of insult—whether explicit or implicit—against the revered figures of any Islamic school of thought. This aligns with Allah’s warning to believers regarding insulting false deities in this Quranic verse: “[O believers!] Do not insult what they invoke besides Allah or they will insult Allah spitefully out of ignorance.” (The Quran, 6: 108) This ethical principle was consistently upheld in the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) and practiced by his household and companions, including the Commander of Believers Ali ibn Abi Talib—may Allah honor his face—who disapproved of his followers in Iraq insulting the people of the Levant, even during times of war and conflict. He even described the Khawarij, despite their transgressions against him and his companions, saying, “They are our brothers who have transgressed against us.”

- Any act of harm directed at a fellow Muslim—whether due to their sect, ethnicity, language, nationality, opinions, historical positions, or scholarly interpretations—is unequivocally prohibited by unanimous consensus. How much worse, then, are the more severe forms of aggression, such as killing, forced displacement, and other acts of oppression against people’s lives, property, and sacred rights? The Prophet (PBUH), in a rigorously authenticated hadith accepted by all Islamic schools, commands all Muslims, saying, “Do not envy one another, do not artificially inflate prices, do not hate one another, do not turn away from

one another, and do not undercut one another in trade. Be servants of Allah, as brothers. A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim: he does not oppress him, nor does he belittle him. All of a Muslim's being is sacred to another Muslim—his life, his property, and his honor.”

- Efforts to convert members of one Islamic school to another—through financial incentives, missionary activities, or institutional efforts—bring no benefit to the Ummah. On the contrary, they fuel discord and ignite internal conflicts within Muslim societies, ultimately serving only the enemies of Islam.

Those engaged in such activities should pause and reflect—what real benefit or greater good is achieved by changing an individual's or a group's school of thought? What tangible advantage does it bring to the school to which they are converted? What consequences arise from introducing a new sectarian faction within a historically stable Muslim society or within a nation that has long adhered to a particular school of thought as the foundation of its unity and social order?

Such actions, aside from being a cause of discord and renewed tensions among Muslims, serve no practical purpose. They will not alter the Ummah's overall religious landscape or its deep-rooted sectarian structures, nor will they meaningfully transform its faith or societal reality.

- Before engaging in interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding and acquaintance among nations in response to the greater Quranic call, there must first be a sincere effort to foster intra-Islamic understanding among the various Islamic schools of thought. Removing psychological barriers and dismantling mutual misconceptions and stereotypes held by different denominations is only possible through direct engagement and mutual learning—by studying the recognized scholars of each school, examining their intellectual and scholarly contributions, and incorporating their works into the curricula of Islamic studies and religious institutions.

However, this essential endeavor—one that is both religiously and intellectually necessary—is unfortunately hindered by missionary efforts seeking to spread specific doctrines in societies where they have no historical presence. Such actions obstruct the work of sincere scholars striving for mutual understanding and cooperation within the Ummah.

- We believe that misguided behaviors or inappropriate remarks by certain individuals associated with particular sects do not, in any way, constitute an authentic representation of those schools or their scholars. Furthermore, the actions of some preachers, orators, and religious figures—who may lack sufficient knowledge of the Ummah's diverse composition, historical evolution, and contemporary realities—often lead to hasty, unfair judgments and sweeping generalizations. Such misjudgments pose a grave threat to the unity, cohesion, and long-term stability of the Muslim Ummah.

Principles and Values for Achieving Islamic Fraternity

In light of the preceding considerations, and guided by these foundational principles, the “Call of the People of Qiblah” asserts that achieving its objectives and reviving the true spirit of a united Ummah requires adherence to a number of overarching principles and values, necessary actions, which we earnestly and sincerely call upon all Muslims to embrace:



FIRST, Fostering Understanding and Cooperation: Striving for the realization of religious fraternity among all Muslims is a duty that every Muslim—regardless of their school of thought—must actively uphold. This requires an unwavering commitment to the foundational principle of faith-based fraternity, which serves to strengthen the unity of the Muslim Ummah for generations to come.



SECOND, Renewing Islamic Discourse to Eliminate Sectarian Strife: Reforming religious discourse is essential to root out discord and marginalize extremist voices within all schools of Islam—those who insist on propagating excommunication (takfir), hostility, insult, and harm. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, such individuals and groups fracture the unity of the Ummah and fuel internal divisions.

The renewal of religious discourse must be anchored in the unifying principles of the Ummah, particularly pure monotheism (worshipping Allah alone without any associates)—the foundation of Islamic belief and the very principle that necessitates unity of the Ummah. It has been said that Islam is summed up in two core tenets: the unity of God (Tawhid), and the unity of the Ummah (Tawhid Al-Kalimah). Furthermore, Islamic discourse must emphasize: The purification of the human soul to enable it to fulfill its divine trust, the promotion of human flourishing and civilizational development within Muslim societies and nations, and the establishment of justice at all levels—as a comprehensive framework governing relations within the Ummah and with the broader world.



THIRD, One of the most pressing obligations today is for religious, academic, intellectual, and media authorities to work together to eradicate the culture of hatred and resentment among Muslims. This toxic atmosphere has caused disasters and left lasting tragedies in the Ummah, the effects of which still persist in the minds of many.



FOURTH, No Islamic school of thought is immune to interpretive errors or jurisprudential rulings derived from scholarly reasoning that may no longer be suitable for our time and therefore require reassessment and revision. Addressing these issues demands both wisdom and courage—engaging in self-criticism, openly acknowledging mistakes, and identifying their sources, even if it requires re-evaluating opinions held by revered scholars. Ultimately, truth must take precedence over affiliation or loyalty.

Scholars must also abandon the personalization of certain views and opinions, which have been unduly sanctified, hindering critical thinking and intellectual reassessment. This tendency prevents scholars from openly acknowledging the truth and building upon the fruitful exchanges that have already occurred between prominent religious authorities. Many distinguished scholars from various Islamic traditions have engaged in continuous research, broadened opportunities for constructive dialogue, and facilitated scholarly discussions that contribute to the intellectual and spiritual enrichment of Muslim societies.

Genuine openness and sincere dialogue are urgently needed among the leading scholars and religious authorities of different Islamic schools today. Scholars must resume the efforts of their predecessors, including the renowned scholars of various traditions who engaged in cross-sectarian learning and discourse. A prime example is Al-Azhar University, which has historically included all Islamic schools of thought in its curriculum and continues to teach all eight primary schools of jurisprudence to this day. Similarly, seminaries in Qom and Najaf have incorporated Sunni thought into their curricula, while institutions in Oman, Yemen, and other regions have long engaged with multiple Islamic traditions alongside the predominant school of thought in their respective societies.



FIFTH, The willingness of Muslim scholars and intellectual elites to engage in open dialogue and foster mutual understanding is the most efficient way to influence public opinion among Muslims, guiding them toward unity and fraternity. The Muslim Ummah today needs a renewed form of dialogue, one that is adapted to common objectives and prioritizes the well-being of Muslims today and in the future. This dialogue must be grounded in accurate knowledge and honest engagement with different schools of thought, ensuring that opinions attributed to others are conveyed truthfully and judged fairly. A culture of collective *ijtihad* should be cultivated and implemented through Islamic research academies and fatwa institutions to develop consensus-based rulings on emerging public issues.



SIXTH, The dialogue the Ummah needs today is not a sectarian debate that seeks to reshape Muslim identity or to dissolve long-standing theological schools. Rather, it must be a rational and constructive dialogue focused on uncovering the vast common ground between Islamic schools of thought—commonalities that reaffirm the unity of the Ummah and provide practical solutions for confronting contemporary challenges. In this regard, religious institutions play a crucial role, particularly in formulating responsible and unifying religious edicts (fatwas) that address sectarian and doctrinal differences in a manner that strengthens, rather than divides, the Ummah. This also requires maintaining mutual respect among schools of thought, allowing for legitimate theological diversity and variations in legal reasoning and textual interpretations. Every Muslim should observe the ethics of dialogue, which include showing respect for the revered figures and symbols of all Islamic traditions and refraining from offensive remarks about differing scholarly views and opinions.



SEVENTH, Major Islamic academic institutions are encouraged to undertake a comprehensive research initiative to document all areas of doctrinal, legal, and ethical consensus among Muslims. These shared principles, deeply rooted in divine revelation and Islamic intellectual heritage, are vast and foundational to the collective identity of the Ummah. This initiative—envisioned as an “Encyclopedia of Islamic Unity”—should involve leading scholars from all Islamic traditions, including Sunni, Shia, Ibadi, and Zaidi scholars. Such a project would significantly enhance the Ummah’s self-awareness, strengthen mutual understanding, enrich its intellectual and cultural landscape, and foster a unified global Islamic message.



EIGHTH, It is essential for scholars and religious authorities of the Ummah to take a clear and decisive stance against the exploitation of Muslims’ vulnerabilities—whether through financial incentives, coercion, or misinformation—to persuade them to adopt a different sectarian affiliation or a school of thought. Such practices are deeply harmful, leading to division, discord, and sectarian conflict within the Ummah.



NINTH, The Islamic message and discourse must be safeguarded from political manipulation and the pressures of partisan and national interests. Political rivalries and conflicts have led some individuals and groups to distort religious principles for short-term gains, even to the extent of misrepresenting Islamic teachings to serve partisan agendas. Furthermore, inflammatory rhetoric—whether directed at the living or the deceased—must be unequivocally rejected.

In this regard, media outlets, journalists, and digital platforms bear a profound ethical responsibility before Allah, the Ummah, and their wider audiences. They must refrain from fueling divisions, especially those who have played a significant role in exacerbating tensions among Muslims.



TENTH, This call is open to all components of the Ummah—regardless of sect, school of thought, or religious authority—to endorse its principles, adopt its values, and cooperate in their implementation.

A FINAL WORD: Despite the status quo, there is no reason to despair over the current state of the Muslim Ummah. With Allah’s guidance, the Ummah remains fully capable of achieving unity and rising again, just as it has done repeatedly throughout its rich history. By the will of Allah, and through the dedication of its scholars, religious authorities, and sincere intellectual leaders, the Ummah will always have the potential to reclaim its civilizational role in today’s world and fulfill its divine mission to humanity in every era.

May Allah Almighty grant us success and guide us to the straight path. He alone is our source of strength, and in Him, we place our trust. Indeed, He is the best of helpers and the ultimate guardian of this noble endeavor.

