Supporting Information:

Detailed Procedure for Esterification

(i) Esterification of *p*-hydroxybenzaldehyde (**6**) to methyl *p*-hydroxybenzoate

To an ice-cooled and stirred solution of *p*-hydroxybenzaldehyde, 122 mg (1 mmol) in methanol (5 mL) was added 0.05 mL (0.62 mmol) of 70% $HClO_4$ and stirred for about 10 min. Separately, V_2O_5, 7.24 mg (0.04 mmol) was added to 0.45 mL (4 mmol) of 30% H_2O_2, and left stirred in an ice-cooled temperature until all the V_2O_5 dissolves and the solution becomes reddish brown (approx. 10 min). This is then added to the above aldehyde solution over a period of 40 min. The resulting solution was stirred at ~5°C until TLC and GC detected no starting material (2.5 hrs). The solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the residue redissolved in ethylacetate (20 mL). The organic layer was first washed with 5% sodium bicarbonate solution (2 x 5 mL) then with water (2 x 5 mL) and finally dried over anhydrous Na_2SO_4. The solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the residue was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, hexane : ethylacetate = 16:1) to afford the product, methyl p-hydroxybenzoate. The isolated yield was 147 mg (97 %). IR, ^1H NMR and ^{13}C-NMR spectral data are in agreement with the spectral data published.[1,2]

M.P. 129 °C (Lit[3] 130 °C).

IR (KBr) cm^{-1}: 3300, 2918, 2849, 1680, 1605, 1511, 1432, 1285, 775.

^1H NMR ($CDCl_3$) δ: 7.98 (d, 2H, - Ar*H*), 6.85 (d, 2H, - Ar*H*), 5.50 (brs, 1H, -O*H*, D_2O exchangeable), 3.84 (s, 3H, -OCH_3).

^{13}C-NMR, ($CDCl_3$) δ: 50.17, 115.28 (2C), 120.7, 131.4 (2C), 162, 166.

1. *The Aldrich Library of FT-IR Spectra*; Sigma-Aldrich Co.: **1997**; Ed. II, Vol. II, pp. 2844.
2. *The Aldrich Library of ^{13}C and ^1H FT-NMR Spectra*; Aldrich Chemical Company, Inc.: **1993**, Ed. I, Vol. II, pp.1253.
3. Buckingham, J.; Macdonald, F. *Dictionary of Organic Compounds*; Chapman and Hall: London, **1996**; Vol. 4, pp. 3583.

(ii) Esterification of *p*-nitrobenzaldehyde (**11**) to methyl *p*-nitrobenzoate

To an ice-cooled and stirred solution of *p*-nitrobenzaldehyde, 151 mg (1 mmol) in methanol (5 mL) was added 0.05 mL (0.62 mmol) of 70% $HClO_4$ and stirred for about 10 min. Separately, V_2O_5, 7.24 mg (0.04 mmol) was added to 0.45 mL (4 mmol) of 30%H_2O_2, and left stirred in an ice-cooled temperature until all the V_2O_5 dissolves and the solution becomes reddish brown (approx. 10 min). This is then added to the above aldehyde solution over a period of 40 min. The resulting solution was refluxed in a water bath for 0.5 hrs. The solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the residue redissolved in ethylacetate (20 mL). The organic layer was first washed with 5% sodium bicarbonate solution (2 x 5 mL) then with water (2 x 5 mL) and finally dried over anhydrous Na_2SO_4. The solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the residue was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, hexane : ethylacetate = 24:1) to afford the product, methyl *p*-nitrobenzoate. The isolated yield was 0.174 g (96%). IR, ^{1}H NMR and ^{13}C-NMR spectral data are in agreement with the spectral data published.[4,5]

M.P. 95 °C (Lit[6] 96 °C).

IR (KBr) cm^{-1}: 2919, 2850, 1712, 1523, 1443, 1351, 1381, 1102, 727.

^{1}H NMR ($CDCl_3$) δ : 8.25 (dd, 4H, - Ar*H*), 3.98 (s, 3H, -OC*H*$_3$).

^{13}C-NMR ($CDCl_3$) δ : 52.87, 123.95 (2C), 131.31 (2C), 135.93, 152.47, 165.09.

4. *The Aldrich Library of FT-IR Spectra*; Sigma-Aldrich Co.: **1997**; Ed. II, Vol. II, pp. 2862.

5. *The Aldrich Library of ^{13}C and ^{1}H FT-NMR Spectra*; Aldrich Chemical Company, Inc.: **1993**, Ed. I, Vol. II, pp.1266.

6. Buckingham, J.; Macdonald, F. *Dictionary of Organic Compounds*; Chapman and Hall: London, **1996**; Vol. 5, pp. 4758.