

# The Meaning of Peace and Justice in Islam

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## Abstract

The author will address the reason why there has been so much conflict between Islam and Christianity. Hassan claims that Christianity has always concerned itself with what is true and what is false, whereas Islam has always concerned itself with what is right and what is wrong.<sup>2</sup> However, today Islam is 'on the move,' and Muslims now hold a very different worldview. Many Muslims see themselves as the afflicted and are desperately on the defensive. They consider themselves the objects of violence, victims under attack from essentially secular leadership. In support of their position, the present article explains the Muslim response to modernity and their way of thinking on peace. Definitions of justice and peace are presented from the various perspectives within Islam. Important figures within radical movements in Islam are discussed, with a special focus on Sayyid Qub (d. 1966), historically one of the most radical Islamists. His views on justice with regard to *jihad*, and the role he played in the liberation struggle in his country, Egypt, are examined.

The author emphasizes that it is vital to promote interfaith dialogue as part of the peace-building process. The particular focus

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2 Riffat Hassan, "What Islam teaches about Ethics and Justice," *U.S. Catholic*. Chicago: May 1996. Vol. 61, Iss. 5; 17.

of this paper is on Christianity's response to Islam and militant Islamism. The final section identifies some of the root causes of the conflict between Islam and Christianity and how these causes have impacted religious dialogue, and also offers suggestions for strengthening interfaith efforts.

### Key Words

Peace, Justice, Social Justice, *Shariah* (Islamic Law), *Ijtihad* (Exertion), *Shura* (Consultation), *Ummah* (Muslim community), *Jahilliyyah* (Ignorance), *Jihad* (Struggle), *Qub* (Sayyid Qub)

## I. Introduction

In the current crisis of Islam, the conflicts are not just between Muslims and non-Muslims but also between Muslims themselves.<sup>3</sup> The Muslim community acknowledges that the "silent majority" syndrome has tacitly approved and encouraged an extremist expression of Islam. As a result, it is the extremists who have spoken on behalf of Islam, simply because their acts of violence have silenced the voices of the Muslim majority.<sup>4</sup> However, some Muslim leaders have in fact promoted anti-Western terrorism. These leaders claim that there are historical reasons for this anti-Western attitude. They feel that the colonization of the Islamic world was a very harsh experience, e.g. US pro-Israeli stance. However, the reality is that when most of the Muslim world became free of colonialism, its colonial collaborators also left.<sup>5</sup>

Do the majority of Muslims or their governments protest against the injustice, oppression and brutality displayed by violent Muslims? Why are

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3 Carolyn M. Warner, "The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West," *Ethics & International Affairs*. New York: 2005. Vol. 19, Iss. 1; 131

4 Liyakatali Takim, "From Conversion to Conversation: Interfaith Dialogue in Post 9-11 America," *Muslim World*. Hartford: Jul 2004. Vol. 94, Iss. 3; 343.

5 Riffat Hassan, "What Islam teaches about Ethics and Justice," 17.

their voices generally silent over the bloodshed in Tajikistan, Algeria and Afghanistan, the treatment of Albanians in Kosovo, and the destruction of mosques in Chinese Turkistan? These questions were addressed during a symposium on "Islam and Peace in the 21st Century," which was held at the American University in Washington, D.C. in February 1998. At this symposium twenty-five Muslim scholars and activists from all parts of the Islamic world focused on the issues of force, violence, social change, rethinking of tradition and the need for a global Islamic peace presence.

Muslims are convinced that Islam as a faith and practice, and in terms of its values and teachings remains relevant for their problems today. And yet their discourse on peace often takes the form of a lament for an idealized past greatness. It is rare that Muslims meet together to address key problems regarding peaceful change in Islamic societies today. The noted Sudanese scholar Dr. Abdullahi Ahmed an-Na'im challenged those present at the symposium: "Stop lamenting! Stop exalting an idealized Islam! Look for the concrete logistics and mechanics for peace."<sup>6</sup> He called for Muslims to speak with a unified voice on issues directly affecting the future well-being of Islamic societies. In the words of another participant, Dr. Sohail Hashmi, "Muslims have abrogated their responsibility to act for the common interests of the Islamic community or *ummah*."<sup>7</sup>

Some contemporary Muslim discourse does indeed exalt an idealized Islam which is being victimized by enemy conspiracies; thus, pinning the blame and exacting revenge become the main concerns of radicalized individuals. These radicals evade the social and political responsibility necessary for maintaining civil liberties, social and economic justice, and creating a common purpose and conscious collective human order under the guidance of law. Ironically, all of these goals are in harmony with essential Islamic values as embodied in the *ummah*.<sup>8</sup>

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6 Karim Douglas Crow, "A Moral Mission," *Sojourners*. Washington: May/June 1998. Vol. 27, Iss. 3; 11.

7 Ibid. The *ummah* is defined here as a global community engaged in a moral mission based on the qur'anic revelation and prophetic example.

8 Ibid., 12.

## 2. Muslims and their Way of Peace

The most visible sign of the vitality of contemporary Islam is Islamic resurgence also known as Islamic revival. In recent years throughout many parts of the world, Muslims have become more conscious of their Islamic faith and identity, and this religious reawakening has expressed itself in a variety of ways, both in personal and in public life. Many Muslims have become more religiously observant, expressing their faith through prayer, fasting, Islamic dress, and values. The belief that Islam is a total way of life has led some to want to create and live in a more Islamic oriented society and state.

However, there is a great diversity of opinion and activity among the world's Muslims. While some leaders and movements have turned to violence to achieve their goals, the majority of Islamic activists wish to live peacefully within societies that are more firmly grounded in their faith and that are socially just. They emphasize education as a way of producing a sector of society that is well educated, but is oriented toward Islamic values rather than secular values. The social dimension of this movement can be seen in the growth of Islamic schools, banks, student groups, media outlets, and social welfare agencies. In this way, Islam today is a vibrant faith in which Muslims seek diverse and sometimes conflicting ways to adapt their lives and religious tradition to the changing realities of modern life.<sup>9</sup>

Edward Said poses several important questions:

Is there such a thing as a codified Islamic behavior? What connects Islam at the level of everyday life to Islam of doctrine in the various Islamic societies? Is using Islam as a concept helpful for understanding Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Indonesia? If we come to realize that Islamic doctrine

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9 Jacob Neusner, *World Religions in America: an Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 252-53.

10 Nubar Hovsepian, "Competing Identities in the Arab World," *Journal of International Affairs*. New York: Summer 1995. Vol. 49, Iss. 1; 3; cited from Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xv.

can be seen to justify capitalism as well as socialism, militancy as well as fatalism, ecumenism as well as exclusivism, we begin to sense the tremendous lag between academic descriptions of Islam and the particular realities within the Islamic world.<sup>10</sup>

The reality is that Muslims and Islam have existed within different historical periods and different ideological movements. The concept of Islam does not explain what happens; rather, it is and has been appropriated in different ways by different social classes and sectors at different historical times.<sup>11</sup>

### **3. The Concept of Peace and Justice in Islam**

Islam contends that without surrender to *Allah* (God)<sup>12</sup> Muslims cannot attain peace. And without individual inner peace, there can be no external peace either. From the Islamic point of view, Peace (*al-Salam*) is a Name of *Allah*, and all peace is a reflection of that Divine Name; there can be no peace on earth without *Allah*.<sup>13</sup> This idea is supported in the *Qur'an*: "He it is Who sent down *al-Sakinah* (the Divine Peace) into the hearts of the believers" (48:4). The *Qur'an* also refers to "ways of peace" (5:16) and describes reconciliation as a good policy (4:128).

However, justice is considered an indispensable prerequisite of peace. When the needs of peace and justice are in conflict, the Islamic rule is that justice must prevail, even at the expense of peace; once justice is restored, so immediately should peace be.<sup>14</sup> Justice and peace are thus quite inseparable in Islam, and peace cannot be established by using mere rhetoric, but rather by first establishing justice.

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11 Ibid.

12 This surrender is called *taslim*, which has the same root as *salam*, the word for "peace."

13 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 220-21.

14 Abdelwahab El-Affendi, "Knowledge, Justice and Conflict Resolution: the Relevance of Islamic Perspectives and Traditions," *Nordic Journal of African Studies*. 1993. Vol. 2, Iss. 2; 45.

The contemporary Maulana Wahiduddin Khan<sup>15</sup> argues that humankind must adopt the path of peace through free will, as indicated in the *Qur'an*, 3:83 ("willingly or unwillingly"), and must strive to establish peace in the world.<sup>16</sup>

Khan says,

"Peace is no external factor to be artificially imposed upon man because it is inherent in nature itself. The system of nature set up by *Allah* already rests on the basis of peace. In order to preserve the peace, established by nature, from disruption, two important injunctions have been laid down by Islam: One, at the individual level, stresses the exercise of patience; and the other, at the social level, forbids taking the offensive."<sup>17</sup>

Khan points out that peace does not guarantee Muslims justice, which has resulted in a "state of physical and mental unrest" for them.<sup>18</sup> This has led some modern Muslims to become violent in their quest for justice. Thus, peace does not automatically produce justice, but it simply opens up opportunities for the achievement of justice.<sup>19</sup> Islam is a religion of peace which lies in submission to the law of *Allah*, where real justice comprises *Sharicah* alone - which is based on revelation.<sup>20</sup> Islamic justice is regarded by Muslims as the only perfect justice, for it is *Allah* alone who knows what is absolutely just and unjust for His human creation.

#### Western and Muslim Concepts of Justice

Greek philosophers saw justice as an individual virtue and duty.

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15 Maulana Khan was awarded the 'Demiurgus Peace International Award' by the Nuclear Disarmament Forum AG in 2002.

16 Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *Islam and Peace* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 1999), 88.

17 Ibid., 86-87.

18 Ibid., 195.

19 Ibid.

20 Mohammad Muslehuddin, *Judicial System of Islam: its Origin and Development* (New Delhi: International Islamic Publishers, 1993), 13, 17. This means that justice is a key role in Islamic law.

According to Plato, justice is the supreme virtue which is inexplicable by rational argument, yet consists of the performance of duties by each individual. Aristotle viewed justice as a pure ideal regarding what law should be, so as to render to each of his own. Thus Plato stressed morality which ultimately crushed the individual, while Aristotle's "liberty" emphasized the importance of the law. Modern Western legal thought owes its inspiration to these diverse Greek philosophies, with the result that there are no absolute standards of justice in the West.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast, the Islamic understanding of justice is unified, and is religiously based. As Nasr states, "Justice is a Divine Name."<sup>22</sup> Justice is seen as being related to balance, to giving each thing its due (haqq), to everything being in its place according to its nature.<sup>23</sup> The *Qur'an* confirms the central importance of the role of *Allah* as the supreme judge (3:18; 6:115; 39:46; 12:80; 95:8; 13:41; 6:57).<sup>24</sup> In this regard, humans become more just by drawing closer to *Allah*, the Source of all justice.<sup>25</sup> The Prophet defines justice as "giving everybody his due," which means natural rights; the *Qur'an* further advocates judging between men with justice (4:58; 53:39-41). The Prophet announced that land belongs to *Allah* and to whoever cultivates it.<sup>26</sup>

For Muslims, the *Qur'an* and Prophetic tradition provide the most comprehensive religious and moral system, centering round *taqwa*, the fear of *Allah*. They also provide the most complete code for practical life, encompassing *cadla* concept which includes righteousness, justice, or equity, and which covers social, economic and political affairs.<sup>27</sup> The *Qur'an* also allows for a militant force for the protection of social, economic and

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21 Ibid., 2-4.

22 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, 240-41.

23 Ibid., 241.

24 Ibid., 242.

25 Ibid., 249.

26 Muin-ud-din Ahmad Khan, "The Concept of Knowledge in the Quran," *Humanomics*. Patrington: 2002. Vol. 18, Iss. 3/4; 34.

27 Ibid., 35, 38.

political life.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, in Islam, justice (zulm) includes an obligation which is to be fulfilled in an objective manner.<sup>29</sup> Fighting injustice is itself just. The *Qur'an* states: "*Allah* wills no injustice to the *calamin* (mankind, jinn and all that exists)" (3:108).<sup>30</sup>

There is also an emphasis on justice as something which begins and ends with the human self, in the sense that just actions lead to happiness and knowledge.<sup>31</sup> However, knowledge is also a precursor of justice. A contemporary Islamic scholar Al-Attas<sup>32</sup> emphasizes the increase of knowledge through education in order for the individual to direct their mind and soul towards justice.<sup>33</sup> He explains that "the man of Islam, the true Muslim, the *khalifatul' llah*, is not bound by the social contract. Instead, his share is an individual contract reflecting the Covenant his soul has sealed with *Allah*; for the Covenant is in reality made for each and every individual soul." <sup>34</sup>

Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of *Islam*: an Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of *Islam*.<sup>35</sup>

Al-Attas concludes that the purpose of ethics in Islam is ultimately for the individual. Thus justice, in Islam, is a synthesis of law and morality. It seeks not to crush the liberty of the individual, but to control it in favor of the society which includes the individual himself, thus protecting his interests also. The individual develops his personality on condition that he does not come into conflict with the interests of society.<sup>36</sup> Islam lays great stress upon

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28 Ibid., 39.

29 Mohammad Muslehuddin, *Judicial System of Islam*, 7.

30 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, 254.

31 *Qur'an* (4:123; 10:44); Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993), 74-78; 142.

32 Founder-Director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) and Distinguished *al-Ghazali* Chair of Islamic Thought in Kuala Lumpur.

33 Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 149-50.

34 Ibid., 141; also, refer to Al-Attas,

35 Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995, 65-66.

36 Mohammad Muslehuddin, *Judicial System of Islam*, 13.



human improvement and training.<sup>37</sup> If individuals are educated, civilized, God-fearing, sympathetic, and kind, then it inevitably follows that piety, goodness and sympathy will flourish in society, and that international relations will also be based on righteousness and sympathy.

From the Islamic perspective, the important point is that the systems of life created by the West (e.g. Socialism, Communism, Fascism) have all emphasize society and collectivism rather than the individual. These systems completely overlook the individual. Quraishi states that "when an individual is not properly trained, is not educated, is not civilized, is of bad character and bad morals, is selfish, is envious, and is full of bad intentions, then however much one may try, a pious society cannot be formed out of such individuals."<sup>38</sup>

Under Islamic law, justice does not mean applying a uniform rule or treating cases similarly. Since each case is deemed to be unique, the application of a uniform rule is seen as a source of injustice. Justice is served in that all cases are subjected to the same holistic mode of analysis, the individuality of circumstances are taken into account, and a decision is impartially reached in the light of generally accepted notions of human well-being and harm. Thus, justice is not an abstract, formal notion, but a concrete and substantive one. It deals with an individual not in terms of how others are treated but how he or she deserves to be treated, and is non-comparative in orientation.<sup>39</sup>

#### Moderate Muslims and *Ijtihad*

Today moderate Muslims can best be understood as Muslim intellectuals who have achieved a negotiated peace with modernity. They recognize that modernity is the existential condition of their time, and understand the

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37 M. Musleh-uddin, *Islam and its Political System* (Delhi: International Islamic Publishers, 1999), 76-77.

38 M. Tariq Quraishi, *A Manual of Dacwab* (Durban: Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa, 1980), 13.

39 Bhikhu Parekh, "The West and the Rest," *New Statesman & Society*. Mossley: Aug 11, 1989. Vol. 2, Iss. 62; 26.

distinction between historical Islam and Islamic principles. They advocate *ijtihad*, a juristic tool that enables the rational reinterpretation of religious texts on a specific issue, using independent reasoning when traditional Islamic sources are silent on it.<sup>40</sup> This is similar to the Jewish midrash, in which the scriptures are imaginatively interpreted by different rabbis.<sup>41</sup> Moderate Muslims advocate *ijtihad* to bridge the gap between Islamic texts and our contemporary context.

Moderate Muslims advocate democracy, religious tolerance, interfaith relations, peaceful co-existence and education. They have an idealistic view of the Islamic duty of *jihad* as essentially a struggle to purify the self and to establish social justice. The highest form of *jihad*, *jihad-e-Akbar*, means the struggle against the lower self so as to improve or excel morally and spiritually. The lowest form of *jihad* is the military *jihad*, which is essentially defensive and constrained by strict ethics of engagement. Moderate Muslims correctly point out that terrorism or hirabah (war against society) is strictly forbidden by Islamic scholars. They are also engaged in what is now referred to as the "battle for the soul of Islam."<sup>42</sup> Moderate Muslims thus claim that Islam is a message of compassion and peace sent by *Allah* in order to civilize humanity and give human existence a divine purpose.

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40 *Ijtihad* ("exertion") is the most important tool for intellectual revival and social reform within Islam. See Al-Haj Moinuddin Ahmed, *The Urgency of Ijtihad* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1992); and also, Imran A. K. Nyazee, *Theories of Islamic Law: Methodology of Ijtihad* (Kuala Lumpur: Other Press, 1994).

41 During the first six centuries C.E., Jewish scholarship produced a rich, diverse commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures, known as rabbinic midrash (Hebrew for "interpreting"). Midrash also refers to a compilation of Midrashic teachings in the form of legal, exegetical, or homiletical commentaries on the Tanakh (Jewish Bible; also called Tanach or Tenak, or Mikra or Miqra). For a further account of midrash, refer to Judith Bromberg, "Midrash through Christian eyes," *National Catholic Reporter*. Kansas: May 26, 2006. Vol. 42, Iss. 30; 5; see also, Daniel C. Olson, "Matthew 22:1-14 as Midrash," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. Washington: Jul 2005. Vol. 67, Iss. 3; 435-53.

42 M.A. Muqtedar Khan, "Radical Islam, Liberal Islam," *Current History*. Philadelphia: Dec 2003. Vol. 102, Iss. 668; 418

In contrast, Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) recontextualized the meaning of *jihad* in a more military sense. He was a *Wahhabi* cleric. Those Muslims who have engaged in acts of terrorism in the United States, Algeria, Egypt, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Pakistan, India, the Philippines and Indonesia are predominantly adherents of *Wahhabi Islam*.

#### **4. The Meaning of Making Justice and Peace in Islam**

The United States Institute of Peace and the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy cosponsored a workshop on the topic of *ijtihad* on March 19, 2004. This discussion focused on how the sacred texts of the *Qur'an* and the Sunnah could be reinterpreted to take account of contemporary realities and to promote greater peace, justice, and progress within the Muslim world and in its relations with the non-Muslim world. In this workshop, Radwan Masmoudi, president of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, stated: Many Muslims believe that they must choose between Islam and modernity, or Islam and democracy, but these are false choices. When faced with this decision, most Muslims would choose Islam and reject anything that they regarded as alien or contrary to the principles of their faith. For this reason there is a crisis in the Muslim world today. There is no way out of this predicament without renewing the concept of *ijtihad* and using the process to develop modern interpretations of Islamic principles compatible with both the word of God and the situations, ideas, and values that have emerged over the past several centuries.<sup>43</sup>

Muzammil H. Siddiqi, a member of the Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) Council of North America, pointed out that reforming Muslim educational systems is also essential.<sup>44</sup>

The demand for *Shariah* and its implementation has preoccupied Islamic groups throughout the world. But in actuality, *Shariah* only outlines certain basic principles of the norms and values that have been interpreted

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43 "Ijtihad: Reinterpreting Islamic Principles for the Twenty-First Century," Special Report 125. Washington: United States Institute of Peace, Aug 2004, 3.

44 Ibid., 5.

throughout the centuries.<sup>45</sup> The old formulations of Islamic governance have run their course and Muslims now find themselves in a situation where they are either in a minority or where they form part of a large number of Muslim minorities. Furthermore, a new identity has emerged, an identity that is distinct from the faith identity. In addition to all this, conventions regarding new international relations have emerged via the United Nations. The world that Muslims have left behind has gone forever, to be replaced by a world that demands a re-examination of the Muslim worldview. This new world raises more questions about governance than it answers. *Shariah* cannot be forced upon a people. In order to implement *Shariah*, one must take note of the opposing views of minorities and of international obligations and international politics. If a Muslim politician stands up and announces that from henceforth he and his team will implement *Shariah* in his country, such a proposal will provoke a good deal of debate.<sup>46</sup>

## 5. The Christian Challenge

Why do we study each other's religions? Bill Musk says: I study Islam to learn about God, to learn about the same God to whom I am related by virtue of his revelation in Christ. From Muslims I learn a bit more of the infinite richness and the infinite beauty of God... It is possible for Christians and Muslims to cooperate on the ethical plane. But I am also sure it is possible to cooperate with secularists on the ethical plane, for I believe the very world from which they seek to derive their values bespeaks its creator. Listening to the Islamic critique of Christianity helps to keep me more honest to the biblical witness to God. I would hope and pray that in dialogue Christian witness will also serve to keep Muslims faithful and honest to the *qur'anic* witness to God.<sup>47</sup>

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45 M.U. Chapra, *Islam and the Economic challenge* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation/International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992), 1; cited from *Al-Ghazali, Al-Mustafa*. Vol. 1 139-40.

46 Ataullah Siddiqui, "Education, Art and Governance: a Muslim Perspective," Occasional Papers. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Oct 2000. No. 7; 22.

47 Bert Breiner, "Christian-Muslim Relations: Some Current Themes," Islam and Christian-

If we wish to understand Islam and its resurgence from a Muslim point of view, we should read books which Muslims write for other Muslims. Just as a Christian using religious vocabulary may be misunderstood when speaking to a Muslim, so a Muslim using English when speaking to a Westerner may be misunderstood. For example, there is nothing in Islamic terminology or in the Arabic language that means what the Western media generally describe as "fundamentalism." Westerners take this to mean a literalist belief in the scriptures as the word of God, but that would make every Muslim a fundamentalist - because all Muslims believe in the *Qur'an* as the literal word of *Allah*. The Western media thought the term "fundamentalism" would not be too offensive to the advocates of Islam, while not leaving any positive impressions about Islam in the minds of Westerners. Many media channels in Muslim countries tend to echo this attitude of Western media.

Islamism is concerned with the ideology that will shape the calling and destiny of Islam in the world. Not all Muslims are Islamists, although most Islamists claim that every Muslim should be one.<sup>48</sup> Earlier it was shown that in Islam justice is seen as a prerequisite for peace, and that for peace to prevail one must first establish justice. For the Islamists, this is a key motive for Islamist *jihad*.

Christians need to approach Muslims in love and influence them with the help of the Gospels. If this does not happen, the ongoing cycle of violence and revenge will force Islamists to take hard-line, extremist positions. Muslims are not a vast, faceless ethnic group to project one's hatred upon, nor a new enemy to replace the Communists, but children of Abraham, people created in the image of God.<sup>49</sup> In dialogue with Muslims, Christians as

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Muslim Relations. 1991. Vol. 2, No. 1; 93-94.

48 Duncan Roper, "The Islamist Challenge to the Western View of the Human Social Order: Contemporary Islamism, with reference to Sayyed Quth," *Stimulus*. May 2007. Vol. 15, No. 2; 12

49 Brother Andrew & Verne Becker, "The Muslim Challenge," *Christianity Today*. Carol Stream: Oct 5, 1998. Vol. 42, Iss. 11; 57. See also, Peter Lodberg, "Ministries in Post-Enlightenment Europe," *International Review of Mission*. Geneva: Jul-Oct 2006. Vol. 95, Iss. 378/379; 362-63.

agents of Christian faith, trained to cope with the tension between evangelism and dialogue, must try to understand Islam in the ways in which this faith wants to be understood.

Christian education is a vital response to this situation and has a twofold challenge: to educate people about Christianity, and to promote empathetic understanding of other religions in order to improve openness to, and trust for, the "other." This is not an impossible task; often it happens that thorough knowledge of one's own religion is important when meeting people of other religious backgrounds. Christians need to promote such interfaith knowledge. Alongside education about Christianity itself, the following areas should be covered:

- The shared values of the world's religions (e.g. the dignity of human beings, non-violent resolution of conflict)
- The re-examination and rejection of prejudices against other religions (e.g. Christian-Jewish relations, the Crusades and the Holocaust);
- The shared responsibilities of all religions (e.g. development, social justice and peace education).

The Christian church has a public responsibility to meet the challenges of modernism versus religious fundamentalism. In doing so, they will require solid theological knowledge, personal faith, training in interfaith dialogue, and skills in cross-cultural work.<sup>50</sup> Peace is God's gift to humanity; it is also a God-given mission. Peace means doing justice, promoting creative interaction, and developing good relationships. Peace means right relationship with God and with one's neighbors. Peace prevails wherever there is freedom in truth (John 14:16), equality in justice (Colossians 4:1), and harmony in life (1 John 4:8). With the above in mind there is no reason why Christians, Jews and Muslims cannot live together in harmony and mutual respect of their different, and yet in many ways similar, faiths. The author of this paper hopes that the model of international teamwork, and the interfaith approach outlined here, will shape the Christian response to the threat of Islamist terrorism in the world today.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 364.

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