

THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE

Journal

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa: Islamic curriculum is important for an Islamic nation

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NY Conference calls for establishing an international center for cultural rapprochement



President of Lebanon receives the SG of the Muslim World League



Letter From the Editor

Significant presence at Rimini conference in Italy

The Meeting of Friendship Among Nations, held in the Italian City of Rimini 21-26 August 2018, aimed to bridge the gap amongst the world's nations, underscore the importance of peaceful coexistence values as well as promote understanding between cultures and peoples.

The participation of many political, religious and thought leaders in this world's largest gathering reflects its significance. Over 5,000 scientists and intellectuals hailing from more than thirty countries attended the event, along with a large number of EU ministers of security and cooperation, and a huge number of innovators and academicians, in addition to over a million followers on social media websites.

Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL) who represented the Islamic World in this event, was present in the meeting together with Italy's President Sergio Mattarella and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Myriad key issues were explored and discussed, with emphasis on the concepts of thought, culture and cultural communication amongst adherents and followers of different religions and cultures.

Selecting Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa as representative of the Islamic World has proved the influential and key role the Muslim World League plays in promoting relationships between the Islamic World and the West. It is a clear proof that Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa's efforts toward promoting understanding amongst peoples of the world with their different ideas, cultures, civilizations and beliefs have borne fruit.

Undoubtedly, the Secretary General's initiatives, dialogues and interviews during his trips around the world have played a pivotal role in dispelling many misconceptions about Islamic culture and civilization. He adopted a clear and convincing method to discuss these issues and relied on well-documented facts. That is why he

won the respect and praise of all the people he met and engaged in dialogue with. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa's constant efforts have also contributed to correcting many of the negative perceptions about Islam and encouraging a large number of organizations to approach and hold religious and intellectual dialogue with the MWL.

In all the international conferences in which he participated, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa focused on one mission: Explain the truth about Islam and that it calls for cooperation, tolerance, peaceful coexistence with the peoples of the world. He cited indisputable historical facts and conclusive evidence which no one can deny. His efforts shed light on the misconceptions used by extremists and showed that these extremists are ignorant, hold deviant thoughts and do not understand the true Islam, its basic features and the Shari'ah objectives.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa pointed out in one of his speeches that a religion which is not in harmony with life would not have survived over 1400 years - the age of Islam. This religion is one of the most widely-spread around the world, with around 1.8 billion adherents. All Muslims recognize the Creator's reasons behind the multiplicity of religions and peoples' different cultures. They believe that peaceful coexistence between Muslims and others and cultural communication among adherents of religions, tolerance toward people with different thoughts, promotion of peace are all but supreme Islamic values. They draw their proof from the texts of the Noble Qur'an and Prophet's Hadiths, counter all attempts that disrespect divine texts, and address all misunderstanding about Islam as well as attempts to employ it for the wrong purposes.

To sum up, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa's speech at the meeting in Rimini has promoted understanding amongst followers of religions and called for sharing a common ground in contemporary society.



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MWL conference in NY calls for establishing an independent international center for cultural rapprochement in USA

New York

The closing statement of the Second Cultural Rapprochement Conference between the United States of America and the Muslim World League (MWL) has stressed the need for establishing an “independent international center for cultural rapprochement “ to promote cultural communication among nations and peoples and launch initiatives and programs that understand and accept others with their different religions and cultures.



The statement called for dispelling misconceptions, wrong accusations, false barriers and theories of hatred and conflict, along with helping everyone achieve their common interests, consolidate the concept of the single human family and respect the privacy of each religion and culture.

The closing statement of the conference, organized by the MWL and attended by more than 450 scientists, intellectuals and politicians, lauded the historic initiative of the 2017 Riyadh Summit between the Islamic countries and the United States. The summit laid emphasis

on the promotion of global cultural communication, which resulted in the establishment of the Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology (Etidal), and the Ideological Warfare Center

in the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Defense, which confronts extremists' ideology.

The statement also stressed that the divine religions agree on the values of love and tolerance and





that nations and peoples must recognize the nature of differences among them and the necessity of forging stable relationships between the Islamic world and the US through cultural communication and positive dialogue.

The statement called on cultural rapprochement-relevant scientific and intellectual institutions in the Islamic world and the US to launch programs and initiatives on dialogue and cooperation in order to achieve common interests and consolidate the principles of trust and harmony in order to confront hatred and hostility campaigns, especially

the theories of cultural clash. Such initiatives should also address all obstacles and launch practical, introductory and discussion programs that respect privacy between Islam and the West.

The statement called

on the MWL to organize a world conference in which Eastern and Western scientists and thinkers will participate to discuss all important dialogue areas, many of which have not been tackled, and clarify the future of the





common inter-relationships. Based on historical narrative and its conscious and unbiased reading, as huge parts of that narrative carry chapters need more documentation and other chapters whose consequences are borne by their holders with their ma-

terial and expansionist goals that have no connection to the absolute spiritual aspect even if claimed so.

The conferees urged individuals and competent institutions to make every effort to employ social media and artistic production

to promote positive rapprochement among cultures and civilizations to serve the common interests and confront the campaigns of hatred and conflict launched for religious, racial, cultural or other reasons.

The conference commended the MWL's initiative in supporting the positive integration of the so-called religious and cultural minorities in their national communities; and the suggestion to call their countries as the countries of religious and cultural diversity and call their lesser number category as the religious and cultural specificity category, as describing them as minorities





is offensive to their entity and national right and passively affects their programs of positive integration.

Participants spoke highly of the extraordinary initiatives of the MWL and urged it to launch more fruitful initiatives and programs that include a comprehensive vision that takes into account the Islamic and the US interests and balance them to achieve peaceful coexistence.

In his speech at the opening of the conference, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa called

for adopting an initiative of “Four NOs” which represent the main pillars of the cultural communication among peoples. He asserted that “NO for imposing cultures, beliefs and convictions; NO for judging the doctrines that God alone will judge on the Day of Resurrection; NO for bidding and trading rights; and NO for speaking and acting in discretion in the name of the Creator, stressing that the infallibility of humans ended with the last of the Prophets.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa explained that the secret of the spread of any civilization is linked to the level of its hu-

man values, noting that extremists have exaggerated in their belief and described whoever opposes them as the enemy of God. He pointed out that extremism has misinterpreted the religious texts and the slogans of Islamophobia have provided Da’esh with a free service that made easy for it to attract its followers.

The MWL Secretary General emphasized that nothing is more dangerous than the conspiracy to deprive humanity of their right to meet around their shared values and that the clash of civilization is borne by the political and material ambitions and

false religiosity. He stressed the need for preventing all methods of incitement and contempt against religions and cultures and emphasized the importance of adopting a curriculum concerned with common human values, cooperation and the development of free thought.

The conference started with a number of important speeches by the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimen; Chairman of General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments in UAE Dr. Muhammad Al-Ka'abi; Grand Mufti of Egypt Sheikh Dr. Shawki Allam; President of UAE Fatwa Council and Chairman of the Forum for the Promotion of Peace in Muslim Societies Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah; Founding Director and President of ISGAP Dr. Charles Asher Small; Cardinal Brian McKinnie, Executive Director of the Office of GRA in the New York Diocese; and Prof. John Duck Anthony President of NCUSAR.

The speakers commended the MWL's efforts in building bridges of relationships with followers of different faiths and promoting the discourse of moderation and coexistence to spread



peace and love among peoples. They also praised the MWL's international presence in all forums, especially those that reinforce awareness about human common values among nations and call for values of dialogue and understanding.

They stressed that the MWL has used effective communication to clarify the facts to the Western world, whose knowledge about Islam has been influenced by the wrong ideas spread by extremists and terrorists. The conference received a

large Western presence and a wide US media coverage.

US Assistant President and Special Advisor Jason Greenblatt also attended the conference. He tweeted; "I was pleased to attend the MWL conference on the cultural rapprochement between the Islamic world and the US. It was a great opportunity to hear Muslim leaders and others calling for enhancement of peace, harmony and cooperation. It is important to have a dialogue on how we can live together with respect and trust."





President of Lebanon receives the Secretary General of the Muslim World League

Lebanese President Michel Aoun received at the Baabda Palace in Beirut the Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL) Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, during his visit to Lebanon. The meeting emphasized the importance of strengthening the spiritual presence to promote the values of peace and harmony among all in the horizon of the concepts of the human family and the need to strengthen its ties and cooperation.

The Speaker of the Lebanese Parlia-

ment, Mr. Nabih Berri, also received the MWL Secretary-General. The two sides discussed a number of issues of mutual interest.

Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri received in Beirut Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Al-Issa. During the two meetings, bilateral cooperation and coordination were discussed. Prime Minister Hariri hosted a dinner banquet in honor of His Excellency the MWL Secretary General and his accompanying delegation.



Iranian extremism 'reinforcing instability'

Muslim World League (MWL) Secretary General Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa said Iran's regional meddling would cause irreparable harm to its reputation. Muslim World League to counter sectarianism with interfaith summit in Beirut.

Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa said the interfaith summit had particular relevance because of the pernicious influence of Iran in the region.

He also announced the MWL will hold an international Muslim-Christian summit in Beirut next year to combat hate speech and promote cultural and religious diversity.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa noted the interfaith summit had particular relevance because of the pernicious influence of Iran in the region.

"The extremist sectarian policy adopted by Iran is causing more trouble and reinforcing instability," he stressed.



The Prime Minister of Lebanon receives the MWL Secretary General

“We have always said that we are not against Shiism; Shiites are our citizens, neighbors, and brothers. We are against sectarian extremism.

“Interfering in the affairs of states and attempting to impose sectarian domination and a political agenda will only make things worse.”

The MWL had chosen Beirut for the summit because of its “religious diversity and great civilization.” Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa added.

“We aim through the summit to achieve cooperation in initiatives that accomplish common goals to serve humanity and promote love.”

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa noted

that Iran’s regional meddling would cause irreparable harm to its reputation.

“Calls for moderation have reached Iran from every advocate of peace and stability, but it refused to lis-

ten,” he said.

“Saudi Arabia and other peace-loving countries are doing their utmost to ensure stability and security, but Iran continues to defy the lessons of history.”



The Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament receives the SG of the MWL



MWL Secretary General meets Lebanese religious leaders

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL), Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa met with a number of Lebanese religious leaders during his official visit to the Lebanese Republic.

Dr. Al-Issa started his visit by meeting with Grand Mufti of the Republic of Lebanon Sheikh Abdullatif Durian at the headquarters of Dar Al-Fatwa in Beirut where fields of coordination and bilateral cooperation were discussed.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa point-

ed out that Lebanon is a dear country with a historical and civilizational dimension. He

appreciated the arduous efforts exerted by Dar Al-Fatwa in Lebanon to establish the





values of Islamic moderation and tolerance and support the Lebanese harmony in addition to confronting all forms of intellectual extremism through which terrorist groups try to reach their target elements.

MWL Secretary General also met with the Cardinal of the Maronite sect Mar Bishara Boutros Al-Ra'i. They exchanged viewpoints on a raft of issues of mutual interest. During the meeting, His Excellency stressed the importance of dialogue and rapprochement in order to promote the common values based on love, respect, mutual cooperation, and confront the voices of hatred and civilizational, religious and cultural clash. He also underscored the concepts of believing in the divine laws of difference and pluralism.



Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa visited Metropolis of Beirut and its Roman Orthodox dependencies. The two sides discussed bilateral cooperation and coordination. Dr. Al-Issa expressed his confidence that active religious participation is in the vanguard of peace, love and cooperation.



Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa met with President of the Supreme Shiite Islamic Council Sheikh Abdulmir Qablan, and exchanged views on a number of issues of mutual interest.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa also met with Mufti, Sheikh Ahmad

Qablan and discussed with him the fields of bilateral cooperation. He stressed that there is no clash between Sunni and Shiite moderation in Lebanon. Both are combined under the umbrella of Islam, sincere citizenship, mutual love and understanding of the Creator's laws of difference and diversity. He pointed out that confrontation is only with sectarian extremism whether by Sunnis or Shiites, stressing that extremist sectarianism has been transformed into a hateful ideology and a destructive tool by politicization agenda.

The Secretary General met with President of the Druze community in Lebanon, Sheikh Naim Hassan, and discussed bilateral cooperation and coordination.

During the visit, the Secretary General met with Archbishop of Beirut Boulos Matar and a number of topics of common interest were discussed.

The Secretary General met with head of the Chaldean Community in Lebanon Bishop Michel Kasarji and discussed bilateral cooperation.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa also met with Patriarch of the Catholic Church of the Catholic Armenians Krikor Bdos the 20th, where a number of topics of common concern were discussed.





Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa: Some organizations adopt only their own logic

Riyadh

The Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL)

Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa stressed the importance of adopting a firm stance against all acts of sovereignty infringement and abuse because turning a blind eye to such acts, carried out by some countries and international organizations, might be misconstrued.

Some international organizations construe the right of legislative and procedural sovereignty in their own way and logic while some are agents that are trying to implement suspicious agenda for the interests of others.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa made the above statements while discussing the PhD dissertation of Zaid bin Muhammad Al-Kathiri, a researcher, at the Dawah Higher Institute, Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University. The PhD, titled “Application of Shari’ah and Discretionary Judgements in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Claims of International Organizations: An Analytical Study”, was supervised by professor Abdullah bin Muhammad Al-Mutawa from the Department of Dawah, Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa and Dr. Yusuf bin Muhammad Al-Saeed from Contemporary Islamic Studies Department.

The dissertation is composed of numerous chapters tackling the issues and topics some international organizations raise with regard to certain punishments in Islam. These organizations reject Shari’ah texts mentioned in the Noble Qur’an and the Sunnah and call for abolishing the application of such texts, upon which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa gave the researcher some notes about the title of the dissertation “Claims of the International Organizations”. “I would like to point out that some, not all, organizations have remarks. More details about this should be included with more explanation. It should be noted that that no one is above criticism; this applies to all of us. A firm and decisive stance must be adopted against any acts of infringement because ignoring such acts may be misconstrued and might invite others to infringe upon a state

sovereignty. Only the pertinent authority has the right to decide whether to take action against or ignore such acts.”

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said: “One of the superpowers that issues international human rights reports has recently threatened the International Criminal Court in explicit language and even described it as an illegal institution because this court has recently published reports condemning the superpower. If the superpower took this position toward a debatable issue, what about countries that have the right and behave based on their beliefs. In this case, these infringements upon constitutional and legal rights of a state sovereignty should be fully rejected.”

He added that these organizations adopt only their vision and principles and do not believe in the right of legislative and procedural sovereignty for the other countries. Worse yet is when some international organizations and countries exceed the limits of international courtesy and diplomatic norms. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa added that what is raised by these international organizations is based on one source. It is not logical to make a judgement about something from one angle.

MWL Secretary General said we should realize that there are political objectives, especially electoral ones, which some international organizations and countries try to achieve by any available attempt and means. He said the Islamophobia campaigns launched by the so-called far-right parties are mistranslated into the extreme right, which is wrong despite its policies are tended to be hardline. What counts is that extremism bet on these Islamophobia campaigns.

Long discussions were held with members of these campaigns, especially with regard to their rejection of the religious privacy of the



Muslim minorities in their countries, a matter which is of great concern to the MWL. It became evident to many of them how their bets were fruitless, to the extent that some of them, after reasoning with them, became a friend of the MWL and even talked about this experience to the media.

Moreover, they were opposed by some political opponents who disclosed their cards and one of them said: “With this escalation, you’re playing with fire” This means that he knew about the true colors of their presentation and that it was completely wrong. What discloses things more is the duality that we see in these voices. There are shameful acute cases in the human right aspect, including forced displacement, ethnic cleansing and human trafficking. However, many of these voices did not intervene to stop such atroci-

ties because they did not serve their interests. Their improvisations only chose the political weight with the most influence and importance, and of course Islam and Muslims’ hearts are the most influential.

In his fourth note, His Excellency said that the absence of relevant dialogue and information exchange may result in some confusion. Based on its statute, the MWL conducted interviews and seminars in that area, in line with the interviews made on these issues forty years ago, and even issued very valuable material, which proved to be helpful to many.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said: “Not only these organizations are criticized, but also all countries in general, even the major ones that issue international human rights reports against these organizations, as we said ear-

lier. Yet, these organizations argue about these reports that some of which should be addressed and others should be ignored sometimes.”

If this criticism is about the legislation of Shari’ah rulings such as Al-Qisas (the law of equality in punishment), prescribed penalties and so on, this is indisputable at all. It can be discussed only if someone asks for clarification and reasons behind such legislation in Islam or if the needs calls for confronting the blasphemous attempts away from the human rights criticism related to certain case.

This criticism could relate to addressing all the discretionary regulations and measures.

Each state is free to take any regulations and measures that it deems the most appropriate and correct. Away from any other considerations, these regulations and measures are upgraded by the civilized states every now and then when required, because they are eventually discretions of humans and not divine legislative texts.

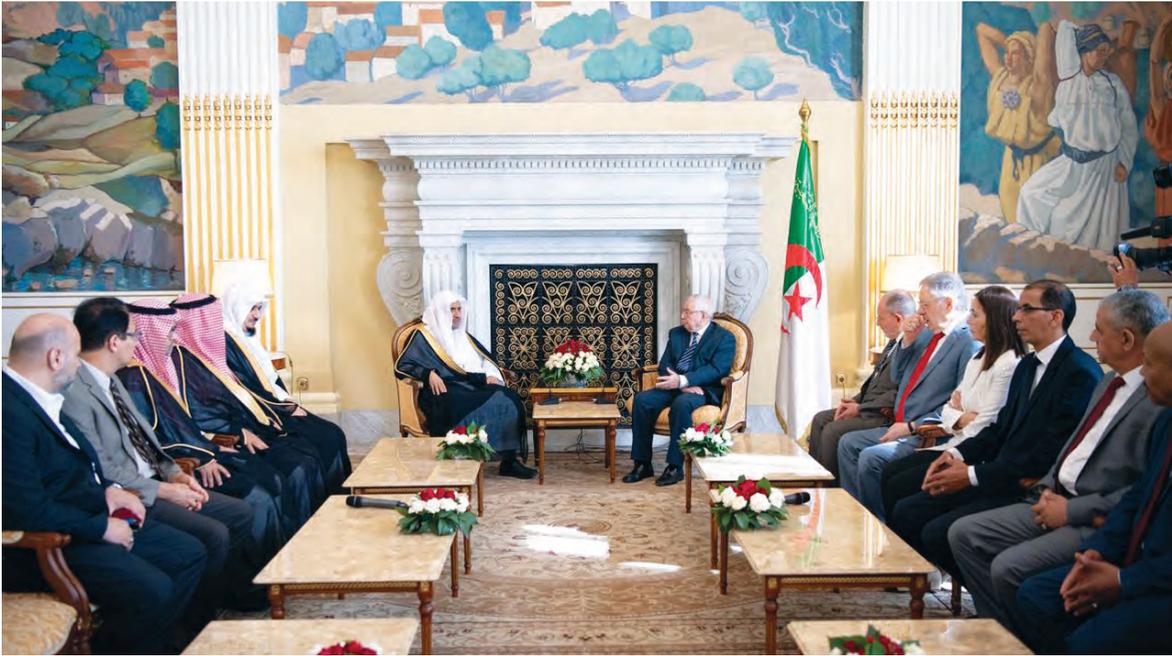
However, it counts for us that they do not breach the Shari’ah, as stipulated by the Basic Law of Governance. Regrettably, most of these criticisms against regulations and measures are found relevant to other goals, but irrelevant to the same subject of the regulation or the measure. Thanks God, regulations and measures in the Kingdom are the best and have no gaps.

The regulating body in the Kingdom constantly proves its broad-mindedness in terms of following up the passing of regulations and measures and the necessary amendments, and disseminates every regulation, measures and amendment. All civilized, confident and flexible states do the same, but the Kingdom maintains and preserves its identity and constitution.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said that the other branch related to regulations and measures is based on criticizing the application. This is criticized frequently unfairly and without any proof as detractors rely only on one-sided sources that cannot issue a report expressing a clear-cut judgment, whether it is fair or unfair. As we all know, most of these reports do not disclose their sources otherwise they will disclose their level of improvisation and eventually mourn the level of trust in them. No state has ever evaded this criticism or other, which may be caused sometimes by other agenda.

MWL Secretary General added: “It is the duty of the Muslim World League, based on its statute, to fight for every Islamic affair. It started a database in this regard, which is based on monitoring and discussion, along with inferring a myriad of testimonies of scholars and thought leaders and even Western politicians that have put things on the right track. Some of them, in recorded video clips, unveiled the maneuvers of their extremist opponents and said such maneuvers are sheer false facts aimed to spread hatred and cause clash of civilizations, and those are described by the MWL’s discourse as the counter-extremism.”

Professor Yusuf Al-Saeed explained the proper approach in addressing the allegations of some international organizations, which should be based on logic. He pointed out that it is not practical to explain legitimate texts for them because they do not believe in these texts; besides, any discussion with them should be based on logic arguments and reasoning as only these methods can refute their allegations and suspicions. He asserted that the scientific research should draw upon information from their original sources during discussions and dialogues.



Abdulkader bin Salih, President of the Council of the Nation, received the SG of MWL and the accompanying delegation

Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa: Islamic curriculum is important for an Islamic nation



The MWL Signs a cooperation agreement with the supreme religious authority in Algeria.

Algiers – MWL

The Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia received the Secretary General of the Muslim World League (MWL) Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa and discussed with him a number of issues of common concern, areas of coordination and bilateral cooperation between the Muslim



MWL Secretary General with the dignitaries of Algeria.

World League and Algerian institutions. H.E. Ouyahia lauded the MWL key role.

Algerian Minister of Religious Affairs and Endowments also received Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa and both discussed issues of mutual concern and fields of cooperation and bilateral coordination.

During the meeting, Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa underscored the important role of thought leaders and scholars in raising young people's awareness about extremist



Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa receiving Bin Salih



Al-Said Bouhadja, SG of People's Council, received the SG of MWL and the accompanying delegation



Dr. Al-Issa speaks with media.

ideologies.

MWL Secretary General stressed the influential role of religious scholars and social platforms and the importance of building the capacity of teachers who can teach curricula that entrench the true concepts of Islam. He highlighted the recommendations of the MWL conference held last year, which proposed curricula focusing on the Islamic values and common human values. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa said only well-prepared teachers can achieve the objectives of such curricula and get information across to students properly.

MWL to conduct 40 open-heart surgeries in Africa

Africa- MWL

The Muslim World League (MWL) is currently initiating a new batch of its ambitious medical program aimed at achieving health security for target groups in Africa. The MWL's medical team is currently implementing an open-heart surgery program to conduct 40 surgeries within a week. The medical team has recently conducted 50 heart catheterizations to children and 90 similar surgeries to adults.

The MWL's spokesperson Adel Al-Harbi made clear that the MWL seeks, through this comprehensive program in the African continent, to achieve health security for the target groups suffering from diseases and poverty.

The MWL also seeks to carry out this program through its International Organization for Relief, Welfare and Development in collaboration with relevant governmental and non-governmental bodies and organizations.

Al-Harbi also stressed the directives issued by MWL Secretary-General Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa to provide support for the health security of the poor who constitute an important element to achieve national balance and security in the countries of the world. Sheikh Dr. Al-Issa stressed the importance achieving the principle of

“Basic Care” in the humanitarian work of the MWL and adopting the Islamic approach calling for helping all human beings without discrimination.

Al-Harbi explained that the program aims to conduct more than 40 open-heart surgeries within a week by a Saudi medical team led by Dr. Othman Al-Othman and with financial support from MWL for the aim of assisting patients who cannot afford soaring costs of surgeries.

Al-Harbi pointed out that this program, which is carried out by the MWL in Africa, is organized within its humanitarian and relief programs in different countries of the world foremost. Some of the programs fight blindness while some offer open-heart surgeries, cardiac catheterization to children and adults together with orphan guardianship programs, development programs and emergency relief campaigns for those affected by disasters and crises.

Al-Harbi said he received respect and appreciation from all citizens and officials in the African continent who extended gratitude to the MWL's humanitarian and emergency programs spread all over the world together with states of Muslim minorities, noting the support provided to the MWL by the competent government bodies in all countries where the MWL programs have been implemented.



Why the West Craves Materialism and Why the East Sticks to Religion

By Imran Khan

(This article was first published in Arab News in 2012. It is republished here on the occasion of the Pakistani Prime Minister's official visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia).

My generation grew up at a time when colonial hang-up was at its peak. Our older generation had been slaves and had a huge inferiority complex of the British. The school I went to was similar to all elite schools in Pakistan. Despite gaining independence, they were, and still are, producing replicas of public schoolboys rather than Pakistanis.

I read Shakespeare, which was fine, but no Allama Iqbal – the national poet of Pakistan. The class on Islamic studies was not taken seriously, and when I left school I was considered among the elite of the country because I could speak English and wore Western clothes.

Despite periodically shouting ‘Pakistan Zindabad’ in school functions, I considered my own culture backward and religion outdated. Among our group if any one talked about religion, prayed or kept a beard he was immediately branded a Mullah.

Because of the power of the Western media, our heroes were Western movie stars or pop stars. When I went to Oxford already burdened with this hang-up, things didn’t get any easier. At Oxford, not just Islam, but all religions were consid-

ered anachronism.

Science had replaced religion and if something couldn’t be logically proved it did not exist. All supernatural stuff was confined to the movies. Philosophers like Darwin, who with his half-baked theory of evolution had supposedly disproved the creation of men and hence religion, were read and revered.

Moreover, European history reflected its awful experience with religion. The horrors committed by the Christian clergy during the Inquisition era had left a powerful impact on the Western mind.

To understand why the West is so keen on secularism, one should go to places like Cordoba in Spain and see the torture apparatus used during the Spanish Inquisition. Also the persecution of scientists as heretics by the clergy had convinced the Europeans that all religions are regressive.

However, the biggest factor that drove people like me away from religion was the selective Islam practiced by most of its preachers. In short, there was a huge difference between what they practiced and what they preached. Also, rather than explaining the philosophy

behind the religion, there was an overemphasis on rituals.

I feel that humans are different to animals. While, the latter can be drilled, humans need to be intellectually convinced. That is why the Qur’an constantly appeals to reason. The worst, of course, was the exploitation of Islam for political gains by various individuals or groups.

Hence, it was a miracle I did not become an atheist. The only reason why I did not was the powerful religious influence my mother wielded on me since my childhood. It was not so much out of conviction but love for her that I stayed a Muslim.

However, my Islam was selective. I accepted only parts of the religion that suited me. Prayers were restricted to Eid days and occasionally on Fridays, when my father insisted on taking me to the mosque with him.

All in all I was smoothly moving to becoming a Pukka Brown Sahib. After all I had the right credentials in terms of school, university and, above all, acceptability in the English aristocracy, something that our brown sahibs would give their lives for. So what led me to do a ‘lota’ on the Brown Sahib culture and instead become a ‘desi’?

Well it did not just happen overnight.

Firstly, the inferiority complex that my generation had inherited gradually went as I developed into a world-class athlete. Secondly, I was in the unique position of living between two cultures. I began to see the advantages and the disadvantages of both societies.

In Western societies, institutions were strong while they were collapsing in our country. However, there was an area where we were and still are superior, and that is our family life. I began to realize that this was the Western society's biggest loss. In trying to free itself from the oppression of the clergy, they had removed both God and religion from their lives.

While science, no matter how much it progresses, can answer a lot of questions – two questions it will never be able to answer: One, what is the purpose of our existence and two, what happens to us when we die?

It is this vacuum that I felt created the materialistic and the hedonistic culture. If this is the only life then one must make hay while the sun shines – and in order to do so one needs money. Such a culture is bound to cause psychological problems in a

human being, as there was going to be an imbalance between the body and the soul.

Consequently, in the US, which has shown the greatest materialistic progress while giving its citizens numerous rights, almost 60 percent of the population consult psychiatrists. Yet, amazingly in modern psy-

is 60 percent, while it is estimated that there are over 35 percent single mothers. The crime rate is rising in almost all Western societies, but the most disturbing fact is the alarming increase in racism. While science always tries to prove the inequality of man it is only religion that preaches the equality of man.



chology, there is no study of the human soul. Sweden and Switzerland, who provide the most welfare to their citizens, also have the highest suicide rates. Hence, man is not necessarily content with material wellbeing and needs something more.

Since all morality has its roots in religion, once religion was removed, immorality has progressively grown since the 70s. Its direct impact has been on family life. In the UK, the divorce rate

Between 1991 and 1997, it was estimated that total immigration into Europe was around 520,000, and there were racially motivated attacks all over, especially in Britain, France and Germany. In Pakistan during the Afghan war, we had over 4 million refugees, and despite the people being so much poorer, there was no racial tension.

There was a sequence of events in the 80s that moved me toward God as

the Qur'an says: "There are signs for people of understanding." One of them was cricket. As I was a student of the game, the more I understood the game, the more I began to realize that what I considered to be chance was, in fact, the will of Allah. A pattern, which became clearer with time. But it was

Islam was inadequate. Hence I started my research and for me a period of my greatest enlightenment. I read scholars like Ali Shariati, Muhammad Asad, Iqbal, Gai Eaton, plus of course, a study of Qur'an.

I will try to explain as concisely as is possible, what 'discovering the truth' meant

not have to bow before other human beings.

Moreover, since this is a transitory world where we prepare for the eternal one, I broke out of the self-imposed prisons, such as growing old (such a curse in the Western world, as a result of which, plastic surgeons are having a field day), materialism, ego, what people say and so on. It is important to note that one does not eliminate earthly desires. But instead of being controlled by them, one controls them.

By following the second part of believing in Islam, I have become a better human being. Rather than being self-centered and living for the self, I feel that because the Almighty gave so much to me, in turn I must use that blessing to help the less privileged. This I did by following the fundamentals of Islam rather than becoming a Kalashnikov-wielding fanatic.

I have become a tolerant and a giving human being who feels compassion for the underprivileged. Instead of attributing success to myself, I know it is because of God's will, hence I learned humility instead of arrogance.

Also, instead of the snobbish Brown Sahib attitude towards our masses, I be-



not until Salman Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses' that my understanding of Islam began to develop.

People like me who were living in the Western world bore the brunt of anti-Islam prejudice that followed the Muslim reaction to the book. We were left with two choices: fight or flight. Since I felt strongly that the attacks on Islam were unfair, I decided to fight. It was then I realized that I was not equipped to do so as my knowledge of

for me. When the believers are addressed in the Qur'an, it always says, 'Those who believe and do good deeds.' In other words, a Muslim has dual function, one towards God and the other towards fellow human beings.

The greatest impact of believing in God for me meant that I lost all fear of human beings. The Qur'an liberates man from man when it says that life and death and respect and humiliation are God's jurisdiction, so we do



lieve in egalitarianism and strongly feel against the injustice done to the weak in our society. According to the Qur'an, 'Oppression is worse than killing.' In fact only now do I understand the true meaning of Islam, if you submit to the will of Allah, you have inner peace.

Through my faith, I have discovered strength within me that I never knew existed and that has released my potential in life. I feel that in Pakistan we have selective Islam. Just believing in God and going through the rituals is not enough. One also has to be a good human being. I feel there are certain

Western countries with far more Islamic traits than us in Pakistan, especially in the way they protect the rights of their citizens, or for that matter their justice system. In fact some of the finest individuals I know live there.

What I dislike about them is their double standards in the way they protect the rights of their citizens but consider citizens of other countries as being somehow inferior to them as human being, e.g. dumping toxic waste in the Third World, advertising cigarettes that are not allowed in the West and selling drugs that are banned in the West.

One of the problems facing Pakistan is the polarization of two reactionary groups. On the one side is the Westernized group that looks upon Islam through Western eyes and has inadequate knowledge about the subject. It reacts strongly to anyone trying to impose Islam in society and wants only a selective part of the religion. On the other extreme is the group that reacts to this Westernized elite and in trying to become a defender of the faith, takes up such intolerant and self-righteous attitudes that are repugnant to the spirit of Islam.

What needs to be done is



to somehow start a dialogue between the two extremes. In order for this to happen, the group on whom the greatest proportion of our educational resources are spent in this country must study Islam properly.

Whether they become practicing Muslims or believe in God is entirely a personal choice. As the Qur'an tells us there is 'no compulsion in religion.' However, they must arm themselves with knowledge as a weapon to fight extremism. Just by turning up their noses at extremism the problem is not going to be solved.

The Qur'an calls Muslims 'the middle nation', not of extremes. The Holy Prophet

(peace be upon him) was told to simply give the message and not worry whether people converted or not, therefore, there is no question in Islam of forcing your opinions on anyone else.

Moreover, we are told to respect other religions, their places of worship and their prophets. It should be noted that no Muslim missionaries or armies ever went to Malaysia or Indonesia. The people converted to Islam due to the high principles and impeccable character of the Muslim traders. In fact, a society that obeys fundamentals of Islam has to be a liberal one.

If Pakistan's Westernized class starts to study Islam,

not only will it be able to help society fight sectarianism and extremism, but it will also make them realize what a progressive religion Islam is. They will also be able to help the Western world by articulating Islamic concepts. Recently, Prince Charles accepted that the Western world can learn from Islam. But how can this happen if the group that is in the best position to project Islam gets its attitudes from the West and considers Islam backward? Islam is a universal religion and that is why our Prophet (peace be upon him) was called a Mercy for all humankind.

Imran Khan is the new prime minister of Pakistan.

All roads lead to Makkah

How Islam Inspired the Life of Kristiane Backer

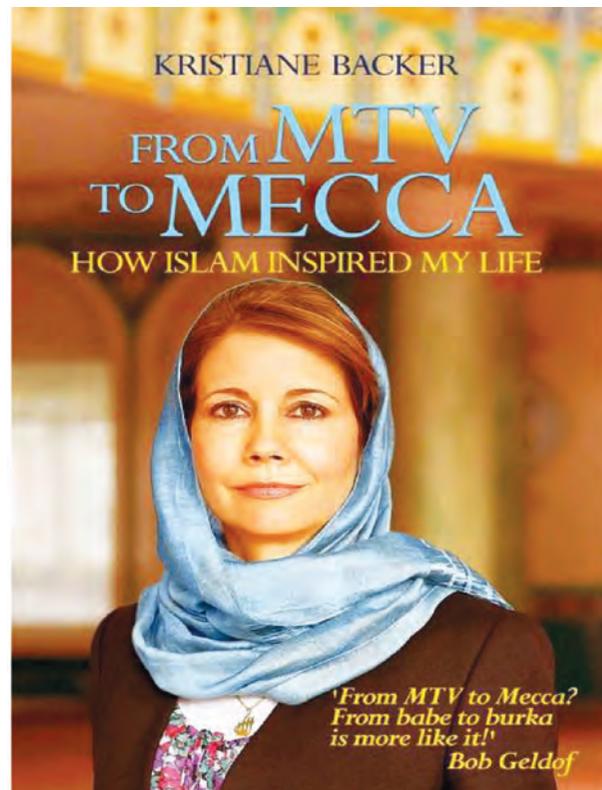
By M. Nasir Jawed

*“And you see the people entering into the religion of Allah in multitudes.”
(Surat Al-Nasr, Verse 2)*

At the height of her career, Kristiane Backer, a very popular MTV presenter, was missing a “something very important” in her life. She probably needed a start to get on the right path of her life. That ignition came her way by way of Pakistan’s retired cricketer Imran Khan (now the country’s prime minister), and she was introduced to a new belief structure of Islam – a new culture, a new way of life and a new spiritual philosophy. Backer converted to Islam soon after. In 2001, the MTV girl came to Makkah for Umrah; five years later, she performed Hajj, the cherished dream of any Muslim.

Backer dominated the headlines this year again when she came to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for Hajj and was speechless to see Ka’aba after 12 years. It was “so impressive,” she remarked and praised the Kingdom’s monumental efforts to safeguard pilgrims.

In 2009, she wrote her spiritual experience in an acclaimed biography “From MTV to Mecca: How Islam Inspired My Life” in German language. The book was later translated into Dutch, Turkish, Ara-



bic, and English.

This, in brief, sums up the story of a woman who in the early 1990s, at the age of 24, became MTV's one of the very leading presenters, leading Europe's pop culture icons; and who by the turn of the century, turned into a humble, simple woman with her head bowing before Allah the Almighty, aptly justifying the title of her book — "From MTV to Mecca."

The narrative, in effect, does not end here; it goes beyond, and prompts many a question: Does Islam offer a dignified space for women that the likes of Backers would like to embrace? Is the World of Islam worth a visit to know the truth, as Backer did it? Is the Message loaded with signs and substances to guide the humankind in this life and the Hereafter?

More importantly, it raises a pertinent question: Is Islam quite different from the highly lopsided and distorted image that the western media and academia have so far portrayed? An image that has consistently been worked up to fill up hatred in the hearts of the millions against everything that is Islamic, giving way to the rising tide of Islamophobia, mainly in Europe and the United States.

In the chaotic clutter of modern civilization, in a disorderly state of global affairs, such narratives/questions might have lost their significance, but many of those who set out to find an answer to the existence of life and this worldly matter, have been seen drifting towards Islam.

How "Islam inspired Backer's life", however, merits attention. Significance of the question is manifest in the two key words that she mentioned in the title cover of her book — "MTV" and "Mecca" (or, Makkah). These two words represented two different cultures, poles apart in their perception of life, a belief

structure and their understanding of the social behavior.

It was therefore not in the narrow sense that Backer referred to "MTV" or "Mecca" in the title cover of her book. She meant a lot. Let's first understand what she did mean by "MTV" here.

MTV Culture

The Music TV, or MTV, is a New York-based pay television channel. Launched in 1975, it aired music videos and tapped into young adults and high school teenagers who looked for a way of life. It soon became the primary source of "American popular culture including music, style, attitude, language, belief structures, behaviors, and so on".

Its global reach drastically changed youth culture around the world, defining popular culture and speaking on behalf of young adults everywhere. It was, however, often criticized for peddling American culture to the rest of the world and drew criticism for having perceptions of negative moral influence advancing "pro-sex, anti-family, pro-choice, drug culture."

For the new generation, MTV proved the most trendy thing to happen, more so in the 21st century. It was a new way of life, a new peace of mind; in fact, a new addiction — to escape from "truth" and "reality."

The pop culture did not fail them in providing an alternative approach to life, however short-lived or fake it might be. It created Michael Jackson, Madonna and the Prince as their new gods. The likes of Backers were the new evangelists or missionaries drawing more addicts to the new faith, which is nothing but a "deceptive dream," according to Rosalind Williams, an American historian.

Backer literally represented that generation. She was on high of her career. She had "ev-

everything a young person could dream of,” she writes in the book while detailing her spiritual journey to Islam. She would interview rock stars, major artists and musicians of her time and enjoy the red carpet. She created her own youth show in Germany and later presented a daily guide to culture and entertainment, ‘The Ticket NBC’ on NBC Europe. She went on to present a monthly travel show for Travel Channel in Germany, and an interfaith show for Ebru TV. Backer won several awards for her TV work, including the prestigious Golden Camera.

Yet, she felt “lonely”. There was probably an urge from within to go beyond oneself and to find peace that is permanent. For Backer, it was not that easy to gather courage to embrace the reality and forsake the dream that has so studiously been created on the plank of falsehood.

“It was a dilemma for me at that time; I was on stage with 70,000 persons cheering, and it was as if I was on a cloud.” Backer did not acknowledge at that period of her life that what she really needed was being reunited by her Creator.

She was “at the pinnacle of my career, presenting every day on MTV either from the studios in London or on location in Europe ... I was surfing on a wave of success bigger than anything I could ever have imagined...”

The quest for truth took her to Pakistan several times. She found that God played an important role in everyone’s life there; and that “He was everywhere: in the beautiful architecture, in the music, and in the hearts of people.”

Muslims, she observed, were looking beyond themselves. It was faith that inspired them to spend time, energy, and even money to fulfill their aspirations and higher goals.

Backer soon found things in pop music world “so fake and superficial.”

In addition to the humanity of the people and the culture, Backer was also captivated intellectually. Imran gave her books on Islam, which they later discussed in depth.

“I missed all this intellectual stimulation, there was so much to discover. Having worked at MTV, where it was a matter of leaving your brain at home and have fun at work.”

The call from within to understand life took Backer to the path that went to “Makkah”, or to Islam.

Makkah

“Mecca”, mentioned in the book title, reflects an ideology, which unlike the short-lived pop culture, is permanent, and which lives in the past, the present and the future – way beyond this temporal life.

It doesn’t dazzle the youngsters with ephemeral ecstasy or excitement, but offers a complete cradle-to-grave manual for living a life in a balanced, purposeful and in a no-nonsense manner. It is the most powerful symbol of Islam, the message of which has been moving millions to revert through the ages.

Makkah is the holy city in the western province of Saudi Arabia. It takes pride in having the world’s most sacred mosque that houses the Ka’aba, the House of Allah, which stands as a mute but solid-rock belief in the Oneness of God; a testimony of Truth, reminding humankind of the true path that led to Islam.

The doctrine of Islam was more logical to her: People worship one God, they are held responsible for their own actions, and that babies are born pure rather than sinners, and that this life is only a bridge to the Afterlife.

Imran Khan told Backer: “As Muslims, we

look beyond ourselves to a higher goal, a greater power, namely God. To worship God and to serve Him in all we do, that is the purpose of life. We humans are God's representatives on earth. We are supposed to fulfill this role responsibly."

"What a liberation it is to worship nothing but God, not money, not fame, not fashion."

To finally "smell the perfume of Islam, and taste its savory fruits," she decided to get down at the prayer mat and ultimately converted. She became Muslim.

The transformation

A Muslim now, Backer believes Islam has changed her life. When she felt that there is so much pressure, the Qur'an encouraged her: "It says that God does not burden anybody more than they can bear. She learned that (Allah) is the Arabic word for God, the Creator of the universe and the Center of our being."

She felt that despite the fact that she has read so many books, she failed to read herself. In the same breath, she has reached the sky but failed to reach what is in her heart. This spiritual dimension was never pursued until her identity crisis culminated and become unbearably overwhelming.

Her career immediately ended, but she never minded it. She regarded it as a test from Allah; and she learned that suffering is purification for the soul, and that those who accept it gladly, win Allah's gratification.

Backer experienced "first-hand how faith in God can give super-human courage and help conquer everyday adversities." She read about Prophets who were familiar. There were so many commonalities between the three religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. After all, they all came from the same Source. "Islam is only a continuation of Christianity."

Now a Muslim, Backer lives in London where she works as a Fine Art consultant based in London. She is engaged in several cultural projects, as well as inter-cultural dialogue and is active in fund raising for charities and hosts galas, conferences and corporate events internationally.

Conclusion

There is nothing exceptional about Backer's embracing Islam. And certainly, it is no way a feat to brag about. The Islamic history is full of such amazing stories. We have history of witnessing nation after nation coming into the fold of Islam; scientists, scholars, sportsmen, leaders, celebrities, media persons, common men and women – all acknowledged Islam as the only way of salvation, a true religion and one-stop center for all queries and questions.

There have been others, who although did not accept Islam, but admitted the veracity of the faith for being a true religion. Just recently, Gary Wills – an American historian, specializing in the history of the Catholic Church – said: "All things talk in the Qur'an. It is abuzz with conversation. For Allah, the real meaning of creating is communicating. The Qur'an is an exercise in semiotics. God speaks a special language, in which mountains and words and springs are the syllables. Everything is a sign."

Yet, it all poses a fundamental question: Are we, the Muslims, ready to reach out to the many Backers in the world, may be in millions, to answer their questions – spoken and unspoken – pertaining to the existence of God, the purpose of life and the life after death?

Embracing Islam in itself is an interesting subject to be studied exclusively in some university or an Islamic educational institution. For, I am sure, it would bring forth a mine of information, eye-opening facts and the first-hand experience of discovering Truth.

MWL makes landmark achievements through dialogue

**Interview By:
Mohammad Zakir Hossain**

Ahmed Kamal El-Din M. H. Izzeddin is a legal expert and consultant in the Kingdom of Bahrain. He has had a stint in journalism in the United Kingdom and in the Sudan, including serving as Editor-in-Chief for Sudanow magazine in Khartoum (1990-1997) before establishing his own legal office. The editor of the Muslim World League Journal Mohammad Zakir Hossain recently interviewed him when he was in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj.



Q. What kind of benefits do you feel that you have received from your Hajj experience?

A. Hajj is an overwhelming all-round experience, which benefits both our worldly as well as spiritual life. First, we replace our normal outfit with two pieces of plain white cloth (for men), wear slippers and leave the head uncovered. It sets the stage for living the life of an ordinary person. It also helps a pilgrim get relieved of all the worries, typical of daily life. I utilized most of my time in Hajj in supplication, prayers and remembrance of God the Almighty. The soul gets cleansed and the body feels its coexistence with the soul. With the kind of spiritual gains in the holy trip, one feels quite relieved of his usual material burdens.

As Hajj ends, the pilgrim feels an ecstatic sensation of spiritual relief, spurred by the promise of Divine forgiveness that makes one feel like having been born again.

Outside my personal communion with God, I interacted with other pilgrims that led to a collective joy and transcendent sensation. We performed together some rituals, such as prayers and talbiyah, a verbal assertion of response to the call for Hajj.

Besides, it gives a sense of traveling in time as one visits sites of Islamic importance. For instance, moving around the Ka'abah reminds one of the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him); Hajer and Sara come to one's vision while walking between Safa and Marwa hills. It is really amazing to drink Zamzam from the same well from which Sara and Hajer drank thousands of years ago! A miraculous link and a spiritual feeling indeed!

Q. In every society there are some distinguished aspects of the Muslim achieve-

ments and successes. What is your experience in the country you come from?

A. The Kingdom of Bahrain, where now I live, is remarkable. The level of civilized behavior is higher than the average level in Muslim and Arab countries. Bahrainis are generally soft-spoken, polite and courteous. If you happen to witness a road accident and see how the people involved behave towards one another despite the calamity, you will certainly get introduced to the Bahraini personality. Another remarkable aspect is the level of charitable activities. In a country of barely one million people, including expatriates, there are dozens of charitable societies, organized by individuals and societies but supervised and supported by the government. This is taken care of by a special "Non-Governmental Societies Directorate" at the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, with the smart current leadership.

Q. What could be the most effective ways to create a global culture of dialogue among civilizations and bridge gap between Muslim and non-Muslim religious leaders?

A. I believe that I have expressed my opinion on this issue in much detail in an article on cultural coexistence, published in November 1, 2017, in this magazine. In that article, I have said that "In the age of information and communication revolution, material barriers tend to fall apart and people communicate and access one another faster and more easily. However, 'material' barriers are not the only obstacle before human communication and interconnection. Among the most significant non-material obstacles in this connection is culture, with all its components and bifurcations." And of course religion is one strong bastion for cultural enrichment and



burgeoning. In a concluding remark, the article goes on to state that, “the most effective means for the removal of intangible obstacles to human coexistence, possibly even paving the way for mutual cooperation, is by extracting an antidote from the very cause of the ailment. Although religion is a significant attribute in the creation of ‘difference’ between individuals and nations, thereby satisfying the condition for disparities, disagreement and conflict, which can at times be violent, it may effectively be used to provide the most influential solution for healthy coexistence.” I believe that this still holds good. Nothing can be more effective than turning the cause of an ailment into a cure of it.

Q. Education is the back-

bone of a nation. Could you please describe and give an example from your country of origin?

A. Education in Sudan has a long and varied history, starting from the earliest traces of writing dating back to the archaic kingdom of Kush, circa 750-590 BC, but an informal system of Qur’anic education was first established under the reign of Sheikh Ajeeb Al-Manjuluk (1570-1611) of the Abdallab Kingdom, in the form of Khalwas, or small form of informal schooling where the Qur’an is inculcated and basic Arabic is taught, which are still found in the country despite the establishment of the formal, modern system of education. Today, there are about 48 universities and colleges in Sudan, crowning the elementary and tertiary

schooling system. There are now about 3.7 million elementary students in over 13,000 schools and 510,000 secondary students studying at some 2,000 schools, in a country of about 40 million inhabitants. Unfortunately, university graduates are increasing by the year without adequate level of employment, leaving dozens of thousands unemployed. Large numbers of Sudanese are also studying abroad, either sponsored by the government or as private students.

Q. You have been a senior journalist. How do you find the MWL website and the content therein? We will also welcome your suggestions to improve the publication?

A. I do frequently visit the MWL website and go through its journal, which I am proud to be one of its writers. The contents as well as the organization of the website are generally good. However, it is still not easy to comfortably locate the MWL Journal articles online. Much work is needed to rearrange the portal to make it easier for a browsing visitor to access the exact content. More professionalism is needed in the IT aspect.

Impact of Modern Media on Family and Society

Azmuddin Ibrahim PhD

The impact of modern media and information technology is far-reaching. It is not only creeping into the family institution but influencing the society at large. For this reason, the public has always been concerned about media effects toward society. Concerns on the effect of media violence toward people, for instance, have prompted studies on media violence for more than five decades. However, media effects on society have both been positive and negative, which is dependent on what variables are involved in any such study. The leaning, however, has generally been more negative than otherwise.





The National Cultural Values Survey commissioned by the Culture and Media Institute (CMI) of the US shows that 64 percent of Americans agree that media are an important factor in shaping moral values. Only seven percent differ. Sixty-eight percent of Americans say media have a negative impact on moral values in the country and only nine percent say it is positive.

The survey shows that the news and entertainment media contribute to the corruption of the nation's moral values. According to the survey, large majorities of every significant demographic category of American adults believe the media are harming the nation's moral values. It was found that 74 percent of Americans believe the nation's moral values have declined over the past twenty years, and the large majority holds the media responsible for contributing to that decline.

The CMI survey found that 73 percent of Americans believe "the entertainment industry is having a negative impact on moral values in this country. Only seven percent say the entertainment industry is

having a positive impact. Fifty-four percent of Americans believe the news media have a negative impact on moral values in this country. Only 11 percent say the news media have a positive impact." Clearly, "the widespread American belief that the news and entertainment media are damaging the nation's moral values is justified by the results," the National Cultural Values survey added.

The nation deserves more edifying entertainment and news and less unseemly and corrupting material from the media. The media can do better. Society needs the appropriate support from the media to promote basic family values and inculcate in our youth the virtues they need to live responsible lives.

We have to accept the fact that there are a wide number of variables that will be involved in trying to determine the effects of media toward society. For example, we don't receive media messages in a social vacuum because we are not exposed to or similarly select media messages without certain values and beliefs behind us.



On top of that, those values and beliefs may themselves have been shaped partly by the media in the first place. Hence, media effects are not so simple to happen, nor are they usually direct. Most media effects are cumulative and subtle, even when they are designed to influence. Anyway, public concerns over the role of media usage in shaping values and attitude continue to increase every year.

Therefore, in trying to respond to such concerns, the intention of this research is to trace the public's media usage of the currently most popular and widespread media phenomenon that is the social networking sites (SNS). The exceptionally popular SNS has become a significant factor in shaping cultural, political, economic and family values of contemporary society.

Although some see SNS as creating new opportunities for business and entertainment, others consider such sites as the risk that will destroy family values, culture, and society. SNS is spreading so fast for example; it took only two years for Facebook to reach a market of 50 million, while it took

38 years for radio to reach a market of the same size.

The exceptional growth in popularity is also experienced in this part of the world (South East Asia). Though far behind the leading user US, Indonesia is currently the second largest home to Facebook users in the world, with over 40.8 million users. The Philippines is at number 8 with 26.7 million users.

The explosive growth in the popularity of SNS has generated concerns among different parties, such as the potential risks posed when personal information is made available in such a public setting. Hence, there is deep concern over how these sites transform society and social relations. SNS is so popular that in the 2011 list of the world top 100 websites, a list based on a combination of Alexa Rank, content richness, users' reviews, and freshness, 3 SNS are listed in the top 10 websites. Top among them is Facebook which is now at number 2, Myspace at number 9 and Twitter at number 10.

According to a new national survey of

teenagers conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, more than half (55%) of all online American youths ages 12-17 use online social networking sites. Almost half of them (48%) visit social networking websites daily or more often; 26% once a day, and 22% several times a day.

The rising amount of academic studies and discussions on SNS indicates that there is a large and growing interest in this area in the global Internet public. However, while there is a huge number of users, concern about its uses and implications seems lacking. Hence, the major research questions addressed in this study include what are the public's attitudes towards new media such as social networking sites.

How do they use these sites and for what reasons? Does the Internet detach people from others? Do the media change consumer behavior? These are some of the questions which this paper tries to answer. However, within the time constraint, this study will only focus on teenagers because of the popularity of SNS among this group. This paper outlines the outcome of a study that analyzed the



usage.

Ethodology

With the main intention of looking at the effect of the new media on its users, it is felt that a longitudinal research would be most relevant for this purpose. While not forgetting the fact that there are so many factors that may influence behavioral changes, as a starting point for this study, a small sample size is deemed relevant for the purpose of close observation on the changes that may take place. Hence, this study is intended to be preliminary, paving the way to further research that

would be carried out periodically in the future.

A study of this nature requires a high level of honesty otherwise the validity of the research is questionable. For the purpose of this study, this particular point has been taken very seriously. Under normal circumstances, for example, not many people would want to admit that they have been wasting valuable time chatting on an unfounded string of events. To promise anonymity, the questionnaire prepared does not require respondents to put their names or ID information other than gender and



ethnicity. Questions that require respondents to hand-write their answers are also reduced to the minimum to avoid the feeling that their handwriting may be recognized.

To increase the level of accuracy, a sample of 71 students was taken from two classes of compulsory courses, in which the researcher is teaching. This was a very practical thing to do because for example, to check the regularity of e-mail usage, the researcher sends messages with a delivery option such as “mail opened”. This allows the researcher to record the frequency in which the respondents check their inbox. Having samples from two regular classes is also helpful, allowing for follow-up

research.

Data were collected through group interviews carried out with the help of a structured questionnaire. A face-to-face interview is purposely avoided to reduce the feeling of uneasiness in admitting weaknesses. To ensure the smooth running of the fieldwork, the researcher was assisted by a field assistant.

Preliminary findings

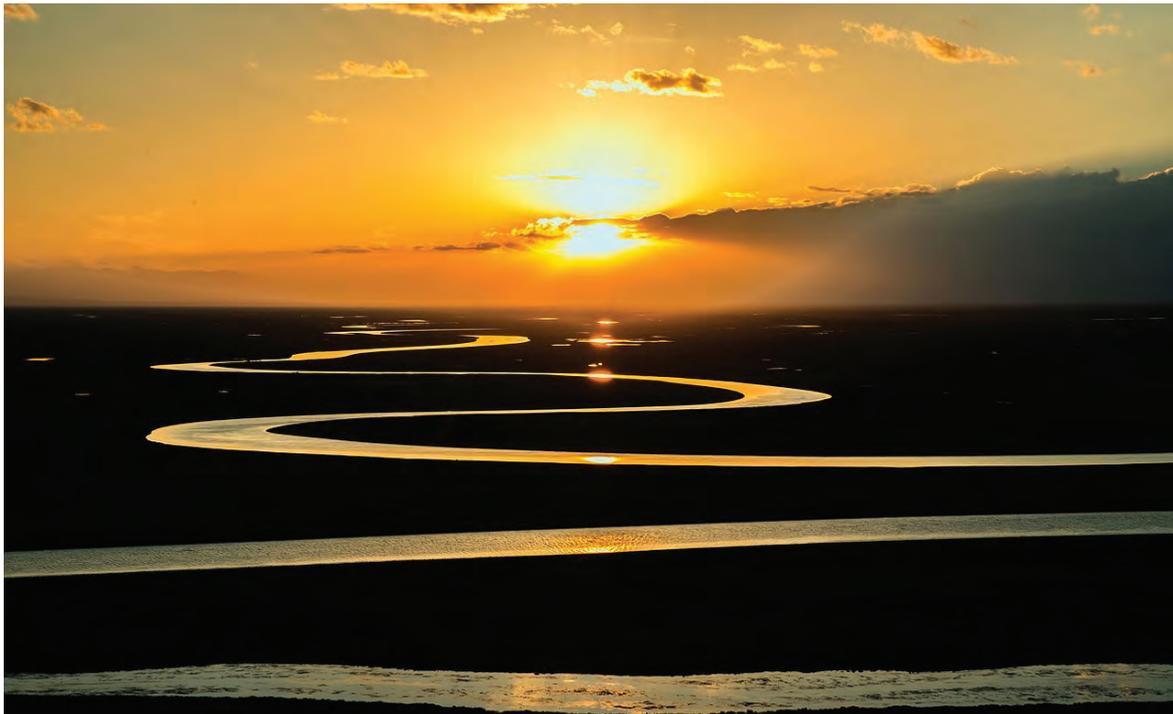
Almost all (95.4%) respondents are engaged in SNS with close to a third (29.6%) logging in to the sites several times a day. Though less frequent, more than a third (36.5%) are hooked on SNS at least several times a week. The large majority (84.8%) of those on SNS are Facebook subscribers and trail-

ing far at the second place is Friendster which managed to attract less than one-tenth (8.2%) of the users. In general, e-mail tops the list of the most popular online activities. The top five are e-mail, general Web surfing, reading news, searching and reading entertainment news, followed by seeking information about hobbies.

Similar to the findings of the Digital Future Project, the Internet has a solid position as the most important source of information for the vast majority of users in this study. The majority (70.4 percent) considers the Internet to be a very important or extremely important source of information for them.

The Internet generally has no influence on the amount of time spent with family, but contact increased among friends. The majority (73.2 percent) of the respondents say that the Internet has no influence on the amount of time they spend with their family.

On the positive side, respondents generally believe that the Internet plays a major role in their schoolwork. More than 70 percent (71.8 percent) say that going online is very important or extremely important.



The Myth of Forced Conversions -between old and modern scholarships-

Jawzi Belkacem Lardjane

Allah said in the Noble Qur'an: "There shall be no compulsion in religion; the right course has become clear from the wrong" (Surat Al-Baqarah, Verse 256), and Allah said: "...whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely."(Surat Al-Maidah, Verse 32)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings, the afternoons, and during the last hours of the nights."

The first Caliph Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq gave his army these ten rules:

“O people, I may give you ten rules for your guidance in the battlefield. Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy’s flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone.”

The aforementioned verses and sayings have been the causes of the fast and peaceful spread of Islam. Tolerance, respect, compassion, goodness, egalitarianism, pacifism, wisdom are among the characteristics of Islam and vital reasons for its miraculous spread. The teachings of Islam anticipated the modern notions of human rights in theory and in practice. A spiritual and intellectual atmosphere was and still is necessary to make people clearly convinced of Islam and become righteous believers. In early Islamic history, Non-Arabs not only accepted Islam, but also contributed to its foundations. Most of early hadeeth collectors, jurists, and many future great dynasties were non-Arabs. There is still work needed to be done, especially in English, about the role of cultural and diplomatic interactions in the spread of Islam. The world was like an Islamic global village that facilitated the fast spread.

In today’s global village, humankind is very constrained with misinformation of mainstream media; media lives with

us like our neighbors and many are predisposed to believe new paradigm about Islam and its association with extremism and terrorism. According to British historian Karen Hanson, Muslim religious extremism and violence were relatively unknown in Islamic history and only appeared in the 1960s and 1970s. Before the advent of Islam, Arabia and the Levant were at the crossroads of fighting civilizations, and warfare was an unavoidable destiny. It was seen as the lesser of the two evils, an embarrassing but necessary option. Peoples of the region could not live in freedom and had to choose between being a servant-state or a slave-state of the giant empires. Even Christians and Jews were being prosecuted by the Great Empires and Muslims began to have the same plight. Their diplomatic envoys were assassinated, and the Byzantine troops had already reached Tabuk in Northern Arabia to prepare for an offensive against the nascent Muslim state. Early Arabs before Islam thought Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was crazy because he promised them the crowns of Khosroe and Heraclus. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) sent letters to the monarchs of the world with an angelic warning “Surrender to God, you will receive salvation”. The warning was only for the rulers, not for the ruled repressed by their rulers. It involved no threats of pre-eminent destruction or an illicit language usually used by conquerors. In fact, it was written with high level of eloquence and diplomatic language in which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), still a shepherd, addressed

the monarchs by their official titles reminding them that God is on his side. It also stated that if they adopted Islam, they will remain heads of their nations. Most of them speculated that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the predicted Prophet in their holy scriptures, and should therefore accept him.



Past and Present Evaluations

The French polymath and historian Gustav leBon, best known for his quasi-encyclopedia on the history of Islam entitled “The Civilization of the Arabs” where upon he said: “The world has not known more merciful conquerors than the Muslims, and a more tolerant religion than their religion. Force was not a cause for spreading Islam. Muslims were not blinded by their victories and did not behave with arrogance like other conquerors. They neither oppressed the conquered nor compelled them to convert to Islam or to give up their belongings.”

In the course of some twenty years, men accustomed to all the hardships of a meagre existence on the fringe of the desert found themselves masters of some of the richest regions of the world,

able to enjoy every luxury and to acquire all the refinements of an ancient civilization...

They had acquired their empire without much severe fighting, there had been little destruction...And the populations, moreover, in order to escape the tribute, very largely abandoned Christianity for Islam.”

Zakat versus Jizya

One of the persever antmyths about Islam which still continues today even among moderate western historians is that early Arab conquerors discouraged non-Arabs from converting to Islam in order to remain the ruling elite and to profit from the incomes generated by the “taxations” on non-Muslims known as the jizya. First, it is proved that Middle Eastern population had mostly converted to Islam during the Rashidun caliphate. Second, if early Arab rulers were looking for worldly gains, they still would have preferred others to convert to Islam because the Zakat rate and incomes were much lucrative than Jizya. Third, if one of great Caliphs like Omar or Othman were really looking for bounties, they would have taken advantage of their powers to lay their hands on such bounties. In fact, they were the most ascetic and the wisest the world has ever known. The power of most dynasties in Islamic history emanated from their adherence to and practice of Islam. Moreover, in human history, the ruling elites always preferred others to imitate their culture. Discrimination between an Arab or a non-Arab and a Muslim or a non-

Muslim, was nearly extinct, otherwise it went against the teachings of the Noble Qur'an and Islam.

The jazzy polemic is still used to embarrass Muslims. In fact, it was a financial reform unprecedented in history. It should be understood within the light of its historical context and economic framework. The American historian Marshall Hodgson noted that "It is not ordinarily legitimate to compare pre-Modern Islamic ate institutions and cultural patterns with those of the Modern West, and to treat that comparison as if it were primarily one between different peoples. Such a comparison is more likely to be one between ages...Pre-Modern Islamic ate ways can be compared with those of the pre-Modern Occident".

The Byzantines used to impose very heavy taxes on the Levantine, Egyptian and North African subjects, and the Persian policies were the same in their Eastern and Southern colonies in Arabia. The poll tax on non-Muslims had political and religious roles, one that was to gain the trust of their subjects by alleviating their sufferings from the previous regimes, and another was to encourage them to adopt Islam as it highlighted impeccable justice and egalitarianism because if compared to Zakat, jizya is less strict and lucrative.

The jizya was a symbolic fee required only for working men while women, children, elders, on-working men, and clerics were exempted. In Islamic jurisprudence, most of scholars agreed that its amount is fixed at 1 golden dinar as in the Prophet's time meanwhile Zakat is

unlimited quota of 2,5 % of the total annual wealth whose value is equivalent to or more than 85 grams of gold. Zapata is an obligatory almsgiving and one of the five pillars of Islam. It can also be given to non-Muslims following the example of Caliph Omar bin Al-Khattab who exempted an unable Jewish old man from paying jizya, and commissioned Bayt Al-Mal (or the Treasury House) in Medina to give him a living allowance till his passing away.

Thanks to these Islamic reforms, the situation of Christians and Jews improved drastically in the Middle East. This was testified by Frankish Bishop named Arculf, who travelled to the Holy Land towards the end of 7th century and described reasonably pleasant living conditions of Christians in Palestine after the Muslim rule. Some centuries later, ironically, the German theologian and historian Stephan Gerlach reported several accounts of how Christians in Italy were longing to escape the Catholic government in order to join European lands ruled by the Muslim Turks. There have even been instances in which non-Muslims participated with Muslims in the self-defensive wars against foreign invasions like Crusades and Mongols.

Recent academics have also acknowledged the peaceful spread of Islam. Marshall Goodwin Hodgson (1922-1968), an Islamic studies scholar and historian whose posthumous three-volume book "the Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization" and "Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History

“earned him the position of the most influential American historian of Islam. He said about the factors leading the fast and peaceful spread of Islam:

“Alongside the governors, they appointed special judges in the camp towns, called qadis, who were to settle disputes among the Muslims on an Islamic basis. They did not encourage, and even discouraged, conversions to Islam from the subject populations; but this was in conformity with the most common view of Islam among Muslims.” *Venture of Islam*, volume 1, page 239.

And he said in another work: “When, then, the Muslims became the dominant elite in a place, further conversion by the adventurous or the ambitious naturally followed. Conversion by violence did occur, mostly contrary to Islamic principles, but it played a very minor part in the expansion of Islam; it was not needed.” *Rethinking World History*, page 139.

Karen Armstrong (1944), perhaps the most distinguished historian of religions in the West, clarified in several works the peaceful teachings of Islam and their impact on humanity. She said in “*Islam: A Short History*”:

“Muhammad had become the head of a collection of tribal groups that were not bound together by blood but by a shared ideology, an astonishing innovation in Arabian society. Nobody was forced to convert to the religion of the Qur’an, but Muslims, pagans and Jews all belonged to one social community, could not attack one another, and vowed to give one another protection. News

of this extraordinary new “super-tribe” spread, and though at the outset nobody thought that it had a chance of survival, it proved to be an inspiration that would bring peace to Arabia before the death of the Prophet in 632, just ten years after the hijrah.”

Ira Lapidus (1937), professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic history at the University of California at Berkeley, pointed out in his work “*A History of Islamic Societies*” that conversions happened because of Islam being a “sophisticated culture and religion” and he said: “The question of why people convert to Islam has always generated intense feeling. Earlier generations of European scholars believed that conversions to Islam were made at the point of the sword, and that conquered peoples were given the choice of conversion or death. It is now apparent that conversion by force, while not unknown in the Muslim countries, was, in fact, rare...and most conversions to Islam were voluntary.”

Yet some historians think that “forced” conversion was not a practical or direct *modus operandi* but it happened for economic and political profits gained after conversion. That’s to say conversions were motivated by economic or political competitiveness rather than a spiritual and intellectual inquiry. For certain, materialist converts cannot withstand such a reason for centuries and would change their minds at the nearest opportunities. The claim of indirect forced conversions seems overstated, unfounded, and a one-sided narrow interpretation of facts. Toward the end of the 19th century, French

foreign minister Gabriel Hanotaux made clear that: “There is not a place on earth where Islam has not crossed its borders and spread. It is the only religion that people tend strongly to embrace more than any other religion.”

There shall be no compulsion in religion

It is interesting to remark that the Indian liberation leader Mohandas Gandhi was deeply inspired by Islam and his contemporary Muslims in launching the non-violent political movement. Gandhi came to know about Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through “On Heroes” by British historian Thomas Carlyle who considered Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) the greatest and most peaceful hero in history in addition to other biographies written by Muslim scholars. He said upon reading the biography of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

“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 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.”

The doctrine of “no compulsion in religion” is the Divine Declaration of the freedom of consciousness. Compulsion

cannot be used to cultivate true believers and may provoke hypocrisy, hatred, and awaited vengeance. It is the love for the religion and it’s Prophet that made non-Arabs convert to Islam en masse and remain Muslims for all the past centuries. If conversion was at gun point, the compelled victims would not miss a future chance to renegade or to escape to other regions. But they preferred Islam for obvious reasons. The perfection, simplicity and pragmatism of its laws make new followers understand it better and adapt to it faster.

Three quarters of the Muslim world embraced Islam without foreign intervention and there are extraordinary stories of how the ark of Islam propagated to different edges of the world as it was in Indonesia, China, sub-Saharan Africa, Mongolia, etc. All those are divine signs about the universality of Islam.



The Illusions of Atheism

By J. Lardjane

There is an ongoing discussion about atheism in modern western society. In today's world, the secular inquisitions against the spirit in the last centuries have developed strong ways to push the world into atheism. Media, globalization, materialism, consumerism, science progress have predisposed individuals to atheism by neglecting God in their daily life. God is not remembered except when there is a debate about His Existence. The disappearance of faith ignored distress, tackled false causes of happiness, and made humans pursue things which are not compatible with human spirit and reason. Virtues and morals have almost disappeared and are deemed as abstract notions because of the absence of faith in the public sphere.



The Age of Unreason:

This age has witnessed an unprecedented technical and scientific progress at the expense of human happiness and peace. It does not answer important questions about life and existence. Logic is hijacked and deprived of its true purpose. Some people think that it is irrational and illogical to believe in God, there is no reason or proof to believe that God exists.

In fact, everything around us, even the atheists themselves are proofs of the existence of God. God invites unbelievers in the Noble Qur'an to observe the wisdom of the winds, night and day. He challenges human reason to imitate the simplest of creatures like ants and flies. The order and perfection of the universe is clear evidence that this has been made by a Superior Power and Superior Wisdom, known as God to believers. In fact, up to this day, scientists have not been able to fully understand or to imitate the mechanism found in the simplest organisms. This is known as the limitations of science, but some of them still hold the idea that science will explain everything in the future. For them, it is just a matter of time, a matter of time before humans pay the cost of uncontrollable ego that destroys the environment and the human dignity in the name of rationalism and scientism.

Therefore, atheists have no choice in the future but to surrender to God in order to save humanity and the planet from discontents of irreligious philosophies and the misuse of science. Despite this or other arguments, it is still complicated to persuade outspoken atheists of the truth of God. The Noble Qur'an mentions repeatedly Aql (intellect), Fitrah (pure reason), and Mantiq (logic). Logic is nowadays exploited to argue a different position than that of the primordial nature of

man.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the definition of logic is the principles and criteria of validity of inference and demonstration; for example: A. This article was written by an author. B. An author wrote this article. C. This article has an author. This same rule applies to everything in the universe, humans also apply it in their daily thinking skills but it is neglected when it comes to the Author of the Universe.

The Soft and Hard Powers of Atheism:

In the past decades, discussion about atheism was always associated with the ideology of communism. As communism collapsed in the turn of the century, the Arab and Muslim world thought atheism had been destroyed by the fall of communism while in reality atheism was gaining more space in western society. Modern culture is the crossbreed of capitalism and communism. Communism combined secularism, atheism, and a primitive theory of economics as its ideology. Historically, it was an offspring of secularism same as was liberalism. It was also a colonial empire like old colonial empires with an economic enterprise like the old East-West Indies companies. The difference between both is that communism pretended to feed people from the starvation caused by its counterparts, and while the West used Christianity as part of its colonial propaganda, the communist East presumed atheism as an anti-dote for Christianity.

The association of atheism with communism serves atheism and "free thought". This makes future generations overestimate godless philosophies and might deduce that communism and atheism were mere coincidences. It also makes some Muslim preachers look like imitating the style and fashion

of Christian evangelists in warning against communism while neglecting other consequences of secular and liberal thoughts.

Communism is intellectually and culturally connected to secular thought and culture. It attempted to explain the gaps that western thought had not understood but provided the unsuitable anti-dote. Social illnesses like nudism, sexual revolutions, materialism, and atheism were reinforced by the communist philosophy, and then they turned out to be capitalism's response to communism in the 20th century. Communist economics and politics were rejected but its views on nature were adopted as a counter-defense.

While communism became a symbol of the utopian face of evil in the past century, new atheism began to spread in more efficient and sophisticated ways through soft powers rather than the hard powers of communism. The soft power of new atheism is much stronger and efficient than the military and political campaigns which often push their victims to grow more religious while new (or hard) atheism uses many soft powers to make its victims preconditioned to accept atheism.

The Deadly Misunderstanding of Science

One of the soft powers of atheism is using science in general and the theory of evolution in particular in manipulating people to reject religion and religious beliefs whereas this theory has been responsible for the largest human loss in history. Eugenics, for example, was a direct consequence of the Darwinist dogma which stated that "the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace the savage races throughout the world". Through this, Darwin provided a scientific basis for the survival of the fittest or scientific theory of the clash of civiliza-



tions.

A noted scientist described the acceptance of evolution in the scientific community: "The only basis (for evolution) to be accepted, is that it is the only theory that has lesser or more extent tried to explain the origins of humans". After all, it is just a theory, and unfolding scientific findings in other fields are undermining the pretensions of evolution. In scientific methodology and empiricism, a scientific fact is the one which can be observed and/or examined. The Big Bang theory in physics, for instance, has more credit as a scientific theory than evolution as it provides scientific and rational undermining of evolution. The great physicist Albert Einstein neither accepted nor rejected the theory of evolution as there is no scientific proof and consensus pertaining to its validity. Dr Zakir

Naik points out that evolution received support from the scientific community “because it went against the Bible – not because it was true”. When the Big Bang was gaining wider support from the scientific community, John Maddox, a scientist and editor of the *Nature* journal for years, rejected the big bang theory on anti-creationist grounds rather than on scientific principles speculating that the Big Bang is “philosophically unacceptable... creationists and those of similar persuasions have ample justification in the doctrine of the Big Bang.”

Dr. Maurice Bucaille, French medical doctor and convert to Islam, who received in 1988 a prestigious award by l’Academie Française for his studies on Egyptology, published a prominent book in 1976 entitled “The Bible, Qur’an, and Science” examining scientific facts in the Noble Qur’an, and later another work entitled “On the Origins of Humans” which undermined the scientific basis of evolution and the pretensions of Darwinism. A mainstream media commented on his efforts: “while (Christian) creationism rejects much of modern science, Bucaillism embraces it.” In his book critical of evolution, he stresses that many findings in other fields of science prove the incoherencies of evolution and make it impossible. For example, when faced with the question why humans haven’t evolved ever since, evolutionist’s answer that this could happen only once, but this contradicts the laws of probability in mathematics. This has compelled many scientists like the director of the National Institutes of Health in the United States; Francis Collins (biologist and ex-atheist turned catholic) to speculate that evolution is a “guided process” by a Supreme Being. Contrary to a general perception propounded by atheists, according to the Pew Research Center, religious de-

nomination of Nobel science prize winners account for more than 60 % self-proclaimed Christians, and 25 % being Jewish, and the remaining from different backgrounds.

Atheism calls its followers to use science to deny God. Science does not answer important questions about existence and the meaning of life although its branch of physics tried to. Science neither proves nor disproves the existence of God; the existence of God does not need science to be proven, it is an established fact. Once, Francis Bacon, the father of the scientific method said “A little philosophy inclineth man’s mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men’s minds about to religion.” The same thing for science, some science incline man’s mind to atheism but a full commitment to science bring man’s mind to God and religion. God is evident, the universe and its miracles are all infinite proofs of God, and everything around us is evidence of the creation. Science is just one way to increase faith in God. It does not need to dig into an electron or a molecule to believe that God exists. For example, it has been discovered that the golden ratio, which is a mathematical value of 1.61, also known as the “irrational number”, exists in all patterns of nature from simple geometry to human DNA.

A Survey showed that 76% of atheists believe in the existence of extra-terrestrials. Some of them even believe aliens have something to do with the creation of the universe while they deny the existence of God and angels. They have an agnostic stance towards extraterrestrials but an atheist stance towards God. Their logic is not faithful. Extra-terrestrials have no proof but God has left us revelations, miracles and clear signs in the universe. The aliens’ theory looks similar to the Aristotelian claim that the universe was



created then abandoned by its Creator.

Science is a double-edged sword with double functions. One that's destructive and another is enlightening. It does not answer key questions about life and can be detrimental to ontological and teleological reasoning about the existence of God.

Criticism of Religion: Raison d'être of Atheism

The religious experience of Europe with the Catholic Church was unique and one of the most disastrous events in history. But it is not a sufficient argument to judge all other cultures. Most of Europeans have been preconditioned to accept the bias towards religion. Although the disbelief in the existence of God is still a minority case, theists and non-theists share the secular mindset and method.

During the supposed dark ages, Al-Andalus or Islamic Spain, and many other places in the Muslim world were relatively

the most developed in the globe. This was as a direct consequence of the tolerance and justice practiced by Islam. The French polymath and historian Gustav Le bon asserts in his book the 'Civilization of the Arabs': The world has not known more merciful conquerors than the Muslims, and a more tolerant religion than their religion. Force was not a cause for spreading Islam...Muslims were not blinded by their victories and did not behave with arrogance like conquerors in usual. They neither oppressed the conquered nor forced them to convert to their religion or to give up their belongings"

Nowadays, most of people dislike the subject of history because of the wrong images conveyed to them. In fact, most classical thinkers and scientists of Europe were devout Christians or God-believers in the Aristotelian definition. The deadly misunderstanding between science and religion in the West led the masses to involuntarily turn their backs against the intellectual and scien-

tific heritage of Islam.

Atheist philosophies gave birth to militant godless ideologies that sought to erase all religions through soft and hard powers. A long series of Black Books have been produced in recent years documenting the unprecedented massacres perpetrated in the name of atheism and godless thoughts.

Some western historians attempted to challenge the secular academic consensus against religion, for example, Historian Jeffrey Burton Russell pointed out in his book "Myths about Christianity" that "atheist rulers such as Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong and Pol Pot tortured, starved and murdered more people in the twentieth century than all the combined religious regimes of the world during the previous nineteen centuries." He also noted that "numerous cases of supposed acts of religious wars in the past and now all primarily motivated by social, political, and economic issues rather than religion". In another monumental work "The Myth of Religious Violence", historian William Cavanaugh dismantled the perceived links between violence and religion.

Despite all the misfortunes caused by secular and irreligious thoughts in the 20th century, the world has not yet awakened at the risks of losing faith at the expense of secular dogmas of atheism and scientism. We usually hear: "Religion is the main cause of violence, it is not compatible with science and progress, and it is regressive and oppressive to human rights and liberties." In fact, dichotomies like science-religion, reason-faith, and body-mind never conflicted within the Islamic worldview and history. The golden age of science in Islam came straight some decades after the Revelation and most of Islamic philosophy prospered as an independent approach to refute secular ideas.

Crimes perpetrated in the early third millennium awoke a long sleeping hatred against religion in general and against Islam in particular. As Muslims, we are partially responsible for the anti-religious sentiment in the West after 9/11, not because a handful of terrorists pretended to be Muslims, but because we are passive and silent in defending Islam against those terrorists. American philosopher David Berlin ski noted that "The advent of militant atheism marks a reaction, a lurid but natural reaction, to the violence in the Islamic world." Our silence and absence in Dawah encourages others to suspect us as accomplices. If we, for example, just focus on the scientific and intellectual heritage of Islamic civilization, that would save a lot of people from the darkness of atheism.

On the turn of 2001, new atheism exploited the historical hatred of the Christian right towards Muslims to transmute them into atheists, and put more pressures on both fronts. Despite that the world has far many issues than religious conflicts tanned with Islam, the UN listed many issues: climate change, smoking, crimes, drugs, starvation, drought, poverty...etc.

When atheism is faced with all those kinds of arguments, they say atheism is just about unbelief in the existence of God whilst religion is still fought like a public enemy and threat. Instead of dealing with each issue appropriately with wisdom and diplomacy, it aims to erase all cultures and propound atheism as the solution. Classical atheism cost humanity the darkest episodes in history, and new atheism can do worse if things don't change.

The Atheist View of God

There is no coherent definition of "atheism" as atheism is itself a self-contradiction. An

atheist can be an agnostic, pantheistic, non-theist, or physicalist with light technical differences between the terms, but all agree with the denial of God. Some scientists claim to believe in Deity which is not the same Deity perceived by others. The new atheists are identified by Professor Richard S. Muller, a prominent physicist and tolerant reader of Islam, as 'physicalists' rather than atheists.

The following statements are clear examples of scientific arrogance and egoscientism. Albert Einstein said: "I want to know how God created this world...I want to know his thoughts; the rest are details." Some thirty years later, Stephen Hawking, a renowned physicist like Einstein retorted the same view: "would be the ultimate triumph of human reason - for then we should know the mind of God." In Islamic cosmology, some laws of the universe are Al-Qadar or measure (Surat Al-Qamar, 54, verse 49) and Al-Mizaan or balance (Surat Al-Rahman, 55, verse 7). Physical theories try to explain the universe with philosophical endeavors but do not grasp the signs of God in their study. A scientist is like a detective who ought to tell

signs of Outside Cause, but unfaithful to his job, denies that everything has a cause. Professor Richard Muller attested: "God is obvious, but not seen by people who are distracted (e.g by physics) or who close their eyes."

All theories which study the universe still can't perfectly describe the Creation by the Perfect Creator. Physics, mathematics, and biology are laws and interpretations put up by men who have limitations. A science is an instrument for discovering and explaining the signs in nature or for inventing useful things for men. It is like a pen that can be used to write anything on a paper. The blind-heartedness towards God reminds us of perished ancient civilizations that tried to challenge God given nature, and then subsequently vanished.

The "God-denial" is just a psychological attitude and syndrome confirmed by atheist scientists and writers like Isaac Asimov and Carl Sagan. The former said about himself "Emotionally I am an atheist, I don't have the evidence to prove that God doesn't exist, but I so strongly suspect he doesn't that I don't want to waste my time." And the latter pointed out to the same situation "I

am not an atheist. An atheist is someone who has compelling evidence that there is no Judeo-Christian-Islamic God. I am not that wise... Why are you in such a hurry to make up your mind?" The American philosopher Michael Ruse often says that he feels ashamed and embarrassed to be an atheist whenever atheism is under criticism.

The universe testifies that there is no God but Allah. The greatness of the universe is an affirmation of the Creator who should not be described as or assimilated with his creations. In the Noble Qur'an, the story of Prophet Mussa (peace be upon him) tells us how the mountain at Sinai could not withstand the majesty of Allah: "And when Musa (Moses) came at the time and place appointed by Us, and his Lord spoke to him, he said: "O my Lord! Show me Yourself, that I may look upon You." Allah said: "You cannot see Me, but look upon the mountain if it stands still in its place then you shall see Me." So when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He made it collapse to dust, and Musa (Moses) fell down unconscious. Then when he recovered his senses he said: "Glory be to You, I turn to You in repen-



tance and I am the first of the believers.”(Surat Al-Araf, Verse 143)

Towards an Islamic Philosophy of Science

Islam is a perfect system of beliefs, principles, and values. It takes all of the religious, political, economic, psychological, and racial ingredients, or characteristics, to make human family and society complete. These words were uttered by Malcolm X during his journey to Hajj. Science is not able to unite people socially and to reform them spiritually. Hajj is one of the best examples which prove that science and

rationalism cannot overcome or achieve the wisdom of pure religion.

Professor Richard S. Muller of Berkley University said about Islam: It is a great religion. I was raised Catholic, and now I am “lapsed”, although I still see truth and beauty in it. But I prefer Islam, I am not a practicing Muslim, but I find that the concepts of Islam are closer to my sense of God than are the concepts of Christianity or Judaism or any of the many other religions I’ve looked at.

Bertrand Russell wrote in “the History of Western

Philosophy”: “Our use of the phrase the “Dark Ages” to cover the period from 600 to 1000 marks our undue concentration on Western Europe... From India to Spain, the brilliant civilization of Islam flourished. What was lost to Christendom at this time was not lost to civilization, but quite the contrary... To us, it seems that West-European civilization is civilization, but this is a narrow view. Most of the cultural content of our civilization comes to us from the Eastern Mediterranean.”

The American chemist and historian George Sar-



ton, regarded as the founder of the discipline of history of science, views that the main task of humankind towards science was accomplished by Muslims, and that modern sciences have been founded by Muslims. This was endorsed by historian Franz Rosenthal in his book "Knowledge Triumphant" which coined the phrase: Islam is science.

Such a religion has certainly the potential to guide humanity to create balances that solve issues of science-religion and reason-faith, etc. When Islam was revealed by Allah in the 7th century, it was a light upon light, and one of those lights is the scientific dimension of the Noble Qur'an.

The Noble Qur'an ac-

curately describes scientific facts. There are 6,236 verses including 750 verses having explicit references to intellect and critical thinking, and more than 1,200 verses with facts compatible with modern scientific findings such as human embryology in Surat Al-Mouminun (verses 12 to 14) and the golden ratio of Al-Ka'aba in Surat Al-Imran (verse 3). The Divine Revelation provided scientific and ethical guidance for Muslims in their golden age of science. If the Noble Qur'an said the earth was flat, early and medieval Muslims would have found no excuse to denounce this mistake as there was no clerical institution surveying and prosecuting scientists and thinkers. Islam served as the basis for modern scienc-

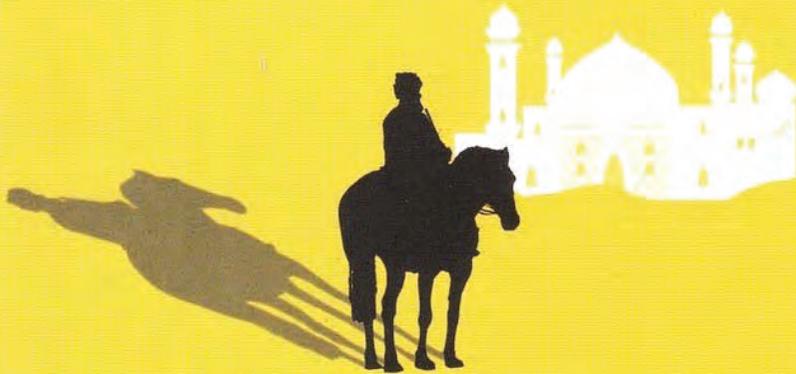
es, and it has no issues with modern science and technology. It rather disagrees with the premises and assumptions of the philosophy of science.

In the secular world, the philosophy of science is promulgated under the banner of "the public understanding of science" or "the public awareness of science" which in many developed countries are –unfortunately– often headed by atheists. In the Muslim world, Malaysia and Pakistan have partially won the battle against the "atheist understanding of science" by Islamization of secular knowledge and promulgation of Islamic values into science. Malaysia is a leading country in scientific innovation and is one of the world's fastest developing countries. Pakistan is the single Muslim country that has produced the largest number of eminent scientists and has related Qur'anic verses to its science textbooks entries.

Science cannot solve world issues without a spiritual insight and guidance. Science without faith is like a body without a soul. Islam and science can work together to make the world a better place. A future scientific renaissance should be based on environmentalism and egalitarianism guided by Islamic Principles.

ROSS E. DUNN

Retracing Ibn Battuta's journey



Aftap Husain Kola

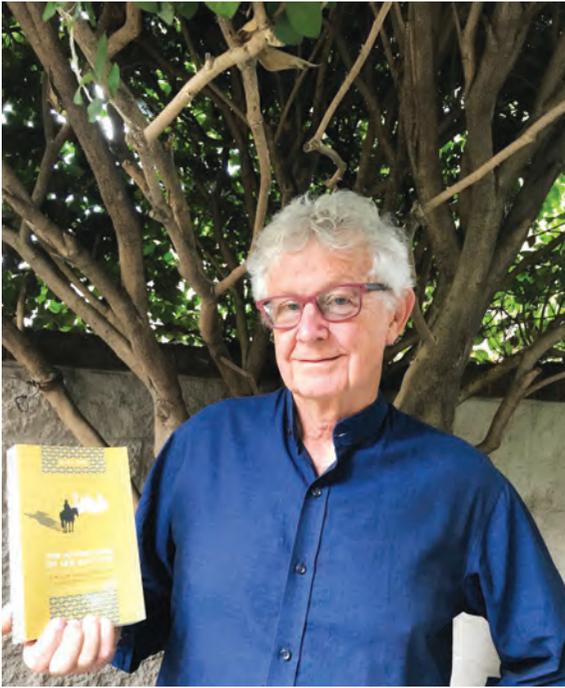
Ibn Battuta's 'Tuhfat Al-Nuzzar fi Ghara'ib Al-Amsar wa-'Aja'ib Al-Asfar', or A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travelling, or simply referred to as 'The Rihla' is the account of the travels of the celebrity traveler whose wanderlust took him to Spain, Russia, Turkey, Persia, India, China, West Africa and all the Arab lands.

THE ADVENTURES OF IBN BATTUTA

A MUSLIM TRAVELER OF THE
FOURTEENTH CENTURY

WITH A NEW PREFACE

Born in 1304 into a family of legal specialists and well-to-do family of Tangier, Morocco, Ibn Battuta as a young man received a future qadi's (or Shariah local judge's) customary education, essentially a thorough study of religious literature and poetry.



American historian Ross Dunn, armed with a PhD degree in African and Islamic history at the University of Wisconsin, takes an insight on the lives and times of this celebrity traveler through his book, <The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, a Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century> (University of California Press), which is into its third edition. The Professor Emeritus of History, San Diego State University, United States, who is engaged in retracing few pockets of Ibn Battuta's journey speaks to MWL correspondent, AFTAB HUSAIN KOLA.

What inspired you to write about Ibn Battuta?

Anyone who studies African and Islamic

history, as I did in graduate school many years ago, learns about Ibn Battuta. My classmates and I spent our entire second year of Arabic study reading selections from Ibn Battuta's Rihla, or Book of Travels, especially the section on his journey to the Mali empire in West Africa (1351-1354-). In my third year of teaching world history to undergraduate students, it occurred to me that Ibn Battuta wonderfully illustrates the grand sweep of the Muslim world in the fourteenth century. I was not an academic specialist on the fourteenth century Muslim world. Rather at that time I wrote about the modern history of North Africa. I decided, therefore, to write a book about Ibn Battuta, not as a specialist well-versed in fourteenth century texts but as a teacher of world history. Public understanding of Islam and Muslim history in the United States was very limited back in the 1970s and, I regret to say, that understanding has only improved modestly since then. Nevertheless, I hoped to help in some small way to rectify ignorance and misconception by writing about a past era of world history when Muslims participated in networks of commercial and cultural exchange that extended across Afroeurasia. Ibn Battuta, a man of intriguing personality who experienced all sorts of thrilling adventures, served as my archetype of the travelling Muslim scholar. Owing to numerous other professional duties, it took me about ten years to complete the book, years that included travels to some of the lands he visited.

Give us a short summary of your book, <The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, a Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century>.

My aim in writing The Adventures was not to produce a new translation of Ibn Battuta's Rihla. A complete English translation is

available, as well as translations in French, German, Spanish, Farsi, and a few other languages. Nor did I wish to write a critical commentary on the Rihla as a literary and historical achievement. I intended, rather, to tell the story of the Moroccan's life and journeys in narrative form. The research base of my project could only be the Rihla itself, because we have very limited knowledge of Ibn Battuta's life from other historical sources.

My narrative starts with Ibn Battuta's birth in Tangier in 1304, when the Marinid Dynasty ruled Morocco. Ibn Battuta grew up in a family known for careers in legal scholarship. He received an education in the religious sciences, literature, and law befitting a young Arab gentleman. In 1324, he left Morocco to perform the Hajj. Initially, he may have intended to study Islamic law in Cairo, Damascus, or one of the other Muslim university centers, then return home to a respectable career in jurisprudence. Instead, he set forth on a remarkable twenty-nine year odyssey that took him from Tanzania to Kazakhstan and from the South China Sea to tropical West Africa. He traveled by donkey, horse, camel, wagon, and ship, covering in all 73,000/75,000- miles. I included in my book his accounts of numerous tribulations, delights, and brushes with death. He was shipwrecked off the coast of Sri Lanka, lost in a mountain blizzard, captured by Indian bandits, attacked by pirates, nearly executed by the Sultan of Delhi, infected with disease, etc.

In my book I identify several interrelated motives for his travels. First, he journeyed as a religious pilgrim. He performed the Hajj in Makkah six or seven times during his career, and indeed the Holy City became the central hub of his journeys. Second, he traveled

to pursue advanced studies in Islamic law, though he attended lectures, as far as we know, only in Damascus and Makkah. Also, he journeyed to seek employment. In Delhi, he received generous salaries and honors for serving the Muslim Turkic government as both a judge and a royal administrator. For several months he held a judgeship in the Maldives Islands.

Which places have you been where Ibn Battuta visited? What are your observations of these places?

Tangier, which has a population of about 700,000 today but which was a small city in the fourteenth century, was, because of Ibn Battuta's birth there, one of the first cities in Morocco that I visited. Tangier was a busy seaport, and Ibn Battuta would no doubt have seen a variety of visitors, especially Genoese, Catalan, and Venetian merchants and sailors. His home was in the old city, which looms above the Strait of Gibraltar. We have no idea where his house was.

Ibn Battuta when he arrived in Cairo in 1326, described it thus: «I arrived at length at Cairo, mother of cities and seat of Pharaoh the tyrant, mistress of broad regions and fruitful lands, boundless in multitude of buildings, peerless in beauty and splendor, the meeting place of comer and goer, the halting place of feeble and mighty, whose throngs surge as the waves of the sea, and can scarce be contained in her for all her size and capacity.» Did you cover Cairo?

Yes. Ibn Battuta passed through Cairo several times during his travels, years when the Mamluk Dynasty ruled Egypt and Greater Syria. It was in the Mamluk age that the city blossomed into maturity as the world capital of Arab arts and letters. Mamluk architects chose to build grand structures in stone



rather than the brick and plaster of earlier generations, and so their monuments have endured. The skyline of domes and minarets of the old walled city, which I saw some years ago, is not radically different from the view that Ibn Battuta beheld.

After Ibn Battuta's first visit to Cairo, he tried to continue to Makkah by traveling up the Nile to the Red Sea port of 'Aydhhab, then by ship to Jeddah in Arabia. Unfortunately, a local rebellion around 'Aydhhab forced the journeyer to return to Cairo and approach Makkah by way of Palestine and Syria. On his way to Damascus in the summer of 1326, he stopped for a time in Jerusalem. We might assume that that city was one of the great urban centers of the fourteenth-century Middle East. Jerusalem's population was only about 10,000 in contrast to the estimated 500,000 people who inhabited Cairo. What sustained Jerusalem's economy was the stream of pilgrims that passed through its gates to view and venerate countless shrines and sanctuaries — for Muslims, Christian and Jews alike. When I visited the city, I spent much of my time in the Haram, an expansive area bounded by buildings and city walls. Ibn Battuta describes the two most important structures in the Haram, the

Al-Aqsa congregational mosque and the wondrously beautiful Kubbat Al-Skhra, or Dome of the Rock, a structure dating to the seventh century CE.

During his travels, Ibn Battuta spent most of his time in regions where the majority population or at least the ruling elite were Muslims. The main exceptions were southern China and the Byzantine Empire. When he was traversing the Mongol Khanate of Kipchak in Inner Eurasia in the early 1330s, one of the Muslim Khan's wives, a daughter of the ruler of Byzantium and a Christian, was about to return to Constantinople to visit her father. She invited Ibn Battuta to go with her as a member of her huge entourage. Because he had the princess's protection, he was able to explore the Greek Christian city freely and to describe it in his *Rihla* more than twenty years later.

Ibn Battuta returned to Morocco in 1349, but he still had the energy for one more big trip. This was his harrowing journey across the Sahara Desert to the Sudanic Empire of Mali. The most common route from Fez, Morocco's dynastic capital, ran across the High Atlas Mountains to the oasis of Tafilalt at the northern edge of the Saharan void. There, the city of Sijilmasa served as the

major trans-Saharan caravan staging center. He spent about four months in the town preparing for the dangerous desert journey. An amazing illustration of the Muslim world's cosmopolitanism is that Ibn Battuta stayed in Sijilmasa with one Muhammad Al-Bushri, a brother of another Al-Bushri whom our voyager had met years before in both India and southern China! Today, Sijilmasa is a cluster of ruins, and when I asked the local chief archeologist to show me material evidence of the city from the fourteenth century, he took me one fragment of a stone wall. Nevertheless, Tafilalt has risen again as a cosmopolitan place owing to the desert-loving tourists who flock there from all over the world.

What about your trip to India where Ibn Battuta spent quite a long time?

This year in February my wife and I visited New Delhi briefly, though not long enough for me to spend substantial time to explore the ruins of Tughlaqabad, the area in southern Greater Delhi where Ibn Battuta served for several years as a judge and administrator in the government of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Sultan of Delhi.

Among the richest cities in India were the busy ports along the Malabar Coast (Part of Kerala), the main source of the black pepper, the spice that commanded high prices from China to Europe. In the port of Kozhikode (Calicut) I visited the famous Miskhal and Muchundi mosques. The Miskhal masjid intrigued me because Nakhuda Miskhal, the mosque's benefactor, is mentioned in the Rihla. Miskhal, whom Ibn Battuta calls Mithqal, was one of the great merchant entrepreneurs of the long-distance Indian Ocean sea trade. «In this town too» Ibn Battuta writes, «lives the famous ship-owner

Mithqal, who possesses vast wealth and many ships for his trade with India, China, Yemen, and Fars.» Ibn Battuta, who probably visited Kozhikode in 1342, does not mention the mosque, and I have not determined whether it was built before or after his arrival.

I plan to revisit Kozhikode soon to participate in a conference titled, «Travel, Trade, Tradition, and Trajectories,» which will focus mainly on Indian Ocean history. The venue is the Ibn Battuta International Center for Intercultural and Civilizational Studies.

Do you think Ibn Battuta's accounts help us recreate our past?

They certainly do. The Rihla whose formal title is «A Gift to the Observers Concerning the Curiosities of the Cities and the Marvels Encountered in Travels,» is of huge documentary value, partly because it illuminates the values, customs, and cosmopolitanism of educated Muslims in the late Mongol era and partly because it records observations of nearly every conceivable facet of life in Muslim and in some measure non-Muslim societies. The subjects of his lively commentary include religion, education, state politics, royal ceremony, law, warfare, gender relations, slavery, trade, agriculture, cuisine, manufacturing, geography, transport, and the achievements and failings of numerous jurists, theologians, monarchs, and governors. The Rihla is the only surviving eye-witness account of the Maldives Islands, Sudanic West Africa, and several other regions as they were in the fourteenth century.

We should keep in mind that the Rihla is not a diary or journal that Ibn Battuta composed while he traveled. In fact, we have indirect evidence that when he returned to

Morocco for good and composed his book with the help of a young literary scholar he had no notes of his adventures whatsoever. The book belongs to the genre of literature known as *Rihla*, that is, an account of journeys usually centered on a pilgrimage to Makkah. His genre flowered in North Africa and Muslim Spain between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, and Ibn Battuta's lengthy text is the most ambitious representation of it. Scholars generally agree on the authenticity and reliability of the text. We also know from a few independent sources, including some remarks by Ibn Khaldun in his famous *Muqaddima* or *Prolegomena*, that Ibn Battuta was known as an energetic traveler but no more than a middling legal scholar.

Do you consider Ibn Battuta in a different league from other celebrated travelers? Why?

This is a relative matter of course. Among the known *Rihla* accounts by Muslims written before the modern era, Ibn Battuta's book is the longest and the richest in detail of all sorts. The author also gives us considerable information of a personal nature, a quality that is rarely found in the travel literature of any society before the sixteenth century. Comparing the Moroccan with his near contemporary Marco Polo illustrates this remarkable feature. Both men collaborated with literary scholars to write their memoirs, and Polo's book offers much practical information of particular interest to merchants and diplomats. He remains, however, something of a "stick man," a two-dimensional figure who has very little to say about himself as a human being. Ibn Battuta, by contrast, is the more "modern" travel writer. He has sharp personal opinions about many things, and he regales us with much more commentary about his likes, dislikes,

foibles, and prejudices than Polo does. For example, the Moroccan tells us he likes the way one ruler treats him but then disparages another for not receiving him with sufficient respect.

Polo's book became something of a "best seller" in Europe shortly after it was printed. The *Rihla* circulated among educated elites in North Africa — the audience for whom it was written, and it appears to have been known in Sudanic West Africa, Egypt, and possibly Syria within a few centuries. It became widely known to modern readers only in the mid-nineteenth century, when two French scholars discovered complete manuscripts in Algeria. Subsequently, they prepared a printed text in the original Arabic and translated the book into French.

What needs to be done to retrace the journey of Ibn Battuta for the modern world to know about his travel experiences?

In the preface to the third edition of *The Adventures*, I describe some of the ways in which the great voyager has become better known in recent years. I am aware that millions of American school children learn about him because he is included in probably all the leading world history textbooks. There are a number of scholarly works about him, also children's books and a few films. Tim Mackintosh-Smith, the English travel writer and Arabist, has written a brilliant three-volume account of his own expeditions to trace Ibn Battuta's footsteps. About a decade ago I participated as a consultant in a Franco-Moroccan project to produce a feature-length movie about the traveler. I made three trips to Morocco in connection with this endeavor, but it has yet to come to fruition owing mainly to the large financing that would be required.



Sharing Lives Overcoming our fear of Islam

By Bert de Ruiter

Reviewed by: Muhammad Salim

This is a dissertation or thesis prepared by Bert de Ruiter, a German researcher in an attempt to explain the fear shown by Christians of Islam and Muslims and how to overcome such a fear.

This book argues that the single greatest

hindrance to Christian witness amongst Muslims in Europe is fear. Many European Christians fear that Europe will gradually turn into Eurabia, or Islamic domination of Europe, and they ignore the efforts of Muslims to adapt to the European context,

a situation pointing to a future scenario of Euro-Islam, or Islam being Europeanized. The author argues that instead of an attitude of fear, which leads to exclusion, Christians should develop an attitude of grace, which leads to embrace. After analyzing books and courses developed to help Christians relate to Muslims, he concludes that these mostly concentrate on providing information and skills, instead of dealing with one's attitude. Because of this the author developed a short course to help Christians overcome their fear of Islam and Muslims and to encourage Christians to share their lives with Muslims and to share the truth of the Gospel.

He has developed the course *Sharing Lives* because of the growing "Islamophobia" (fear of Islam and Muslims) among Christians in Europe. Such fear, based upon statements or activities of Muslim extremists, the way Islam is portrayed in the media, what Christians believe about the Qur'an, the persecution of Christians in Islamic countries etc. make Christians blind for the diversity of Islam and for the attempts of Muslims in Europe to bring their faith and interpretation of the Qur'an in line with life in the secularized western society.

Many Christians are afraid that in the near future Europe will become Eurabia, in which Islamic norms and laws will predominate with many negative consequences for Christians. Eurabia is a term coined by a British-Swiss Jewish historian, Bat Ye'or and describes the expectation that Europe will be Islamized. In contrast, Euro-Islam is a concept introduced by Bassam Tibi, a Syrian born Muslim and German citizen, which sees Islam becoming Europeanized. Therefore the goal of the course is to help students of the study deal with their attitude of fear, suspicion, prejudice towards Islam

and Muslims in God's presence and learn from Him to develop an attitude of grace, without becoming naive.

The author emphasizes the idea of dialogue amongst Muslims and Christians. He puts further assertion on the concept of inclusivism as versus to exclusivism, trying to say that Christian should not only share Gospel with Muslims but rather, they should embrace them and not exclude them. Hence come the importance of the initiative of King Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz Center for interreligious and intercultural dialogue (KACID). Christians need to express an attitude of grace that can be interpreted into embrace, tolerance, love and friendship making. In other words, we should accept the other as humankind regardless of their faith, doctrines and races.

Chapter one of this book discusses the two possible future scenarios of Eurabia and Euro-Islam and determines which one is most likely to take place and why. In chapter two, the author comes to discover that many Christians, instead of being agents of social change, reflect the Islamophobia of the wider European society. In chapter three, the researcher or the author analyzes nine books and seven courses and looks at whether these materials deal with the issue of eliminating or decreasing fear or even heighten the level of fear of Islam and Muslims. Chapter four, describes the background, objectives and content of such a course entitled: *Sharing Lives* that is developed as a tool to help Christian to overcome their fear of Islam and Muslim. Chapter five evaluates the pilots of the study, analyzes the outcomes and the responses of the participants. Chapter six summarizes the findings in the previous chapters and draws out some conclusions and recommendations for the future.

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