

Second Christian-Muslim Summit

Organized by the Community of St. Egidio of Italy

Barcelona, Spain

October 5-7, 2004

**The Christian-Muslim Dialogue Today
The Essence, The Contemporary Experience**

Fathi Osman

The Christian-Muslim Dialogue Today

The Essence, The Contemporary Experience

The Distinctive Human Creature

The human being, whoever he/she may be, bears within his/her own self, a sacred light beam from his/her Lord-Creator in his/her spirit [The Quran 15:29, 32:9, 38:72; Genesis 2:7]. According to the Quran, every human being is a potential believer wherever he/she lives, and whoever he/she maybe: “And when the Lord brings forth from the loins of the children of Adam their offspring, He [thus] calls upon them to bear witness about themselves: ‘Am I not your Lord?’, to which they answer: ‘Yes, indeed, we do bear witness thereto’. [Of this We remind you,] lest you say on the Day of Resurrection: ‘Verily, we were unaware of this’” [The Quran 7:172]. All the children of Adam and his wife who constitute the human family all over the earth and through all generations are granted dignity since their creation by the Lord-Creator, and are distinguished by God’s favors of being universal and moving through the land and sea, and having the physical, psychological-moral, and intellectual abilities to use, preserve, and develop natural resources to secure and develop the human life: “We have conferred dignity on all children of Adam, and have borne them over land and sea, and have provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and have favored them above most of Our creation” [The Quran 17:70], “Are you not aware that God has made survant to you all that is in the heavens and that is on earth, and has abundantly bestowed upon you His favors, both outward and inward” [The Quran 31:20. See about the human privileges Genesis 1:26].

Human Diversity Through The Monotheistic View

All the human beings share the responsibility of using their merits and powers to develop the world while they develop their own selves in their various abilities in a balanced way, without neglecting any of the Lord-Creators granted favors to them all. Their physical, psychological, intellectual, and linguistic diversity ought to bring about mutual knowledge and recognition of individual and group particularities so that they

may complement one another in fulfilling the responsibility of developing the world and themselves, not to turn the differences into barriers between individuals and groups [The Quran 30:22, 49:13]. Dealing with “*the other*” who is different from you, represents the human perception of one’s own self, the humankind and the world through which we all live. The faith in the One God and Creator, adds to this cognitive fact a spiritual depth, looking to the enormous diversity of human individuals and groups – in addition to the magnitude of variety in nature in general – as one marvelous creation in all its unlimited multiplicity, created all and coordinated by the One Lord-Creator, and manifests His All-mightiness and All-wisdom: “And among His wonders is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colors; in this, behold, there are messages for all who have knowledge” [The Quran 30:22], “And had your Lord so willed, He could have made all humankind one single community, be [He willed it otherwise, and so] they continue to have differences, [all of them] save those upon your Lord has bestowed His grace [by letting them know how to deal with and benefit from their differences]. And to this end [of dealing with one another] He has created them [all]” [11:118-9].

The Messages of God to the Human Kind:

One Essence And Various Details

Perceiving this reality of human diversity, and dealing with the one who is different from you, even if he/she may be uncomfortable or probably hostile to you, is considered the essence of civilization, which represents the wide and deep knowledge of what exists and the practice to deal with it. The believer in the One God communicates with the Lord-Creator through dealing with His Creation which unceasingly manifests His glory, and confirms in its variety and order His oneness. The essence of His successive messages to the different human communities in different places is one “And within every community have we raised up a conveyor of Our message, [calling] to worship God and shun the powers of evil” [The Quran 16:36]. While the successive conveyors of God’s messages to different human communities represent the human diversity in addressing their communities in their particular languages and responding to

their particular circumstances and needs [The Quran 14:4], they all call for worshipping the One God so that human beings should not betray their dignity and merits in submitting themselves to a tyrant or a natural force or being trapped in superstitions and delusions.

Addressing the particular needs of a particular community through a particular conveyor of God's message, does not overshadow their common essence represented in the faith in the One God, the accountability of every human individual before Him, and the basic human values which may be summed up in doing "*the good*" and avoiding "the evil", observing "righteousness" which ought to mean "kindness" and "generosity" and "magnanimity" in many times whenever for the true believers, this is possible and preferred: "God enjoins justice, and going to what is beyond it of magnanimity and being generous towards one's kinsfolk, and he forbids all that is shameful, and all that runs counter to reason and common sense, as well as transgression" [The Quran 16:90]. All God's messages and books emphasize this common ground in different ways: "Verily, it is We who sent down the Torah, wherein there is guidance and light", "and We brought to him [Jesus] the Gospel, wherein there is guidance and light", "And unto you [O Muhammad] have We sent down this divine writ, setting forth what is true and right, [...] Unto each of you have We appointed a [particular] law and practice. And if God has so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community, but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you through what He has brought to you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works. Unto God you all must return, and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were used to differ" [The Quran 5:44, 46, 48]. The Quran significantly stresses about 30 times in different places that the Lord, who only knows the intentions and all what is hidden and apparent about every person and his/her knowledge and various circumstances, will judge the human differences on the Day of Judgment when all humans return to him. The followers of the Torah have to carry accurately and honestly the laws of the Torah "containing God's injunctions" [The Quran 5:43], and the same call has been addressed to the followers of the Gospel "And let the followers of the Gospel judge in accordance with what God has revealed therein" [The Quran 5:47].

The merit of religiosity is in feeling sincerely the faith and the commitment to the moral values in dealing with others, not in mere complying with certain formal details of outward practices: “True piety and virtue do not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west, but truly pious and virtuous is the one who believes in God and the Last Day and the angels and the [revealed] writ and the prophets, and spends one’s substance – however much he[/she] himself [/herself] may cherish it, upon the near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy and the wayfarer [the person who is unable to return home], and the orphans, and those who request assistance, and for freeing human beings from bondage, and one who keeps up prayers, and renders the purifying [welfare] dues (zakat); and [truly pious and virtuous are] they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient [and firm] in mishap and hardship and in time of peril: it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they who are indeed conscious of God” [2:177].

No Coercion in Matters of Faith

This is a commodious base for all believers in God: the accountability of the human individual in the eternal life to come, and the moral values human in this life can meet. Furthermore, Islam rejects in principle the imposition of any belief on others by force, since the personal conviction is the only acceptable way for God’s message which manifests His justice and grace, and requires a free and responsible response from the ‘homo sapiens’ created and dignified by the Sender of the message.

Muslims are only allowed to fight in self defense against those who initiate fighting, whoever the initiators of war and aggression may be, and Muslim aggressors are no exception [The Quran 2:190, 4:75, 22:39-40, 60:8-9, 49:9]. Muslims have to enter all and wholly into peace, since going to war is merely following the steps of Satan [The Quran 2:208]. People who are peaceful towards Muslims whatever their faith may be, should never be fought against: “And if they let you be, and do not wage war against you, and offer you peace, God does not allow you in any way to confront them” [The Quran 4:90], and Muslim relations with such people would be conducted through justice and kindness [60:8]. Muslims should strive persistently for peace, even if some doubts may rise about an offer of peace from those who have initiated war against them: “And if they

incline to peace, incline you to peace as well, and place your trust in God [...] And should they seek but to deceive you [by insincerely pretending to want peace], behold, God is sufficient [Supporter] for you [...]” [8:61-2]. Turning to peaceful and friendly relations should be always hoped for from an enemy, whose heart and mind may be changed as a result of a Muslim fair and kind behavior: “It may well be that God will bring about [mutual] affection between you and those from among them [the polytheists] whom you have been [now] facing as enemies, and God is Much-forgiving and Most-gracious” [The Quran 60:7].

In any non-military dispute with others, Muslims are urged by the Quran to self-control and serious search for a peaceful solution. Among the genuinely pious and conscious of God are “those who hold in check their anger and pardon others” [3:134]. Patience is urged in the Quran in more than eighty verses, urging forgiveness and condonation is repeated more than 20 times, and peacefulness is urged even in responding to offences from rude and ignorant persons [e.g. The Quran 25:63, 28:54-55]. Repelling the evil of what is good is exhorted over and over through the Quran [e.g. 13:22, 23:96, 28:54, 41:34-35]. When it was suggested once to Prophet Muhammad to curse his enemies, he responded “I have not been sent to curse, I have been sent from God as a mercy. I pray to God that He may guide my people since they do not know” [brought out by al-Bukhari in “The History (al-Tarikh)” and Muslim]. This reflects the same wisdom and compassion inspired through the well known sermon of the Mount: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you and persecute you” [Matt 5:44].

Discussing with other mutual differences nicely and rationally is what is expected and should be required from the human intellect and civilized behavior. This human being is judged through his/her dealing with those who are different from him/her, not those who are similar, especially in beliefs or opinions. The Quran coins the expression of “arguing in the best way” [16:125] which encompasses the ethics, method, style and content. Representing an impressive example in setting the tone for a constructive discussion, assuring the equality of the different parties participating in it and removing any mistrust or fear of prejudice, the Quran states on behalf of the believing participants

in a dialogue with the non-believers: “And behold, either we or you are on the right path or have clearly gone astray. Say: ‘Neither shall you be called to account for whatever we may have become guilty of, nor shall we be called to account for whatever you are doing.’ Say: ‘Our Lord will bring us all together [on the Day of Judgment], and then He will lay open the truth between us in justice, for he alone is the One who opens all truth, the All-knowing” [The Quran 34:26-96].

Toleration Does Not Mean Indifference

Such an attitude towards human differences, especially in religion, should not mean any hurt, indecisiveness, or indifference with regard to one’s own chosen faith. As Nicholas Rescher indicates in his book: “Against the Demands for Consensus” [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993]: “one can certainly combine a relativistic pluralism of possible alternatives with a monistic position regarding ideal rationality and a firm and reasoned commitment to the standards intrinsic to one’s own position” [p. 109]. It is an understanding of the natural human diversity and the human psycho-sociological realities. The Quran repeatedly emphasized that if the Lord Creator willed to make the entire humankind one single community, He could certainly make it so, but He has willed it otherwise [The Quran 5:48, 11:118]. We comply with God’s natural laws and God’s guidance when we deal with the human diversity as an established reality in this world’s life, recognizing our differences, complementing and cooperating with one another, respecting the human dignity and merits conferred by the Lord Creator on all children of Adam, competing in doing good works and acknowledging that all humans shall return to their Lord who will be their judge about all what they believe and do in this world life, since He only knows everyone’s intentions, abilities, knowledge, and circumstances. As the Quran repeatedly emphasizes, each human individual would be accountable only for what he/she is well able to do [The Quran 2:233, 286, 6:152, 7:42, 23:62].

Overwhelming Violence

Violence has been overwhelming the earth through internal and out of borders military conflicts, state and group terrorism, assaults on life and property, and abuses of

women and children. Horrible crimes have been continuously committed in the name of religion all over the world: in Northern Ireland, Palestine, Israel, Iraq, Algeria, the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Chechnya and the Russian Federation, and most recently in Iraq. Technological advancement has put in the hands of militant rebels tools of extensive destruction, and has aggravated the powers of the state authorities in watching and spying as well as in suppressing an opposition. Escalating numbers of innocent human beings, in addition to the natural environment, are the victims. A British historian, Eric Hobsbawm, calls the twentieth century: “The Age of Extremes”: and describes its wars as “total wars” in which combatants and civilians alike are the victims: “The ‘mega-deaths’ since 1914, by an estimate of Zbigniew Brzezinski have totaled 197 million ‘the equivalent of more than one in ten of the total world population in 1900, or roughly the entire population of the U.S. in 1970. Terrorism in its many manifestations has become an enduring fact on every continent in the past half-century’ “ [Richard Harwood, “Death in the 20th Century”, Washington Post: Washington, 27 April 1995, part A, p. 21].

Fuel of Socio-Economic Injustice

Poverty, connected often with ignorance and lack of education and other kinds of deprivation nurture hatred and generate violence and crime. Hunger and fear are mentioned in the Quran as severe threats to human individuals and societies in this world life [The Quran 2:155, 16:112, 106:4]. The contemporary world circumstances appear as representing the picture presented in the Quran: “Corruption and mischief have appeared over land and sea as a result of what human beings have worked, and so He [God] lets them taste [the evil impact of] some of their doings, so that they might [learn the consequences and] return [to the right path]” [30:41].

God’s messages came to secure peace within the person’s mind and heart, and in his/her relations with nature, living creatures and all human beings [The Quran 2:208, 5:15-16]. Peace has to be established on justice in its various dimensions including the socio-economic and the political-legal aspects. The Quran constitutes in the possessions of the one who has sufficient earnings a determined right for the deprived who may ask

for help or not [The Quran 51:19, 70:25]. Resources and benefits should not be “going round and round only through [certain] hands of the rich” [59:7]. A believer who “thrusts the orphan away and feels no urge [within himself/ herself, or in inviting others] to feed the needy” and does not offer the help which he/she can offer to the one in need of it is characterized in the Quran as contradicting and undermining the essence of the faith [The Quran 107:1-3, 7]. Jesus significantly found in front of him these verses of the Book of Isaiah to quote when he opened the Bible to preach in the synagogue: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach the deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” [Luke 4:17-18; see Isaiah 61:172].

Signals for Hope

It is the responsibility of all believers in human dignity in general, and those who believe in God in particular – the Lord of All-beings who has conferred dignity on all the children of Adam and has entrusted them with cooperating in developing themselves while they are developing the world around them in order to represent the divine grace and compassion in their correlations and to spread this through their communities. The dialogue between those who share the monotheistic message of their father Prophet Abraham “Ibrahim”, mostly in Europe and America, in which I have been participating for decades especially with scholars, has made the participants know better about each other. Constructive statements about Islam have appeared on the Christian side. Pope John Paul II expressed positive feelings about Islam in “Crossing the Threshold of Hope”, edited by Vittorio Messori. In Geneva, a book carrying the imprint of the “World Council of Churches” by Stuart Brown has the title: “The Nearest in Affection: Towards a Christian Understanding of Islam”. The Prince of Wales, the British Crown Prince, gave a lecture at Oxford University on October 27, 1993, which has had significant and impressive observations and views about Islam and the dominant Western idea about it. The Prince said: “Those days of conquest are over. But even now, our common attitude to Islam suffers because the way we understand it has been hijacked by the extreme and

superficial [...] The extremes exists and they must be dealt with. But when used as a basis to judge a society, they lead to distortion and unfairness [...] We should also distinguish Islam from the customs of some Islamic states [...] The rights of Muslim women to property and inheritance, to some protection if divorced, and to the conducting of business, were rights prescribed by the Quran fourteen hundred years ago. We in the West, need also to understand the Islamic world's view of us [...] the extent to which many people in the Islamic world genuinely fear our own Muslim materialism and mass culture as a deadly challenge to their Islamic culture and way of life [...] We fall into the trap of dreadful arrogance if we confuse 'modernity' in other countries with their becoming like us [...] We need to be careful of that emotive label 'fundamentalism', and distinguish as Muslim do, between revivalists who choose to take the practice of their religion most devoutly, and fanatics and extremists. Extremism is no more the monopoly of Islam [...] Islam can teach us today a way of understanding and living in the world. At the heart of Islam is its preservation of an integral view of the universe [...] The Islamic and Western worlds share problems common to us all: how we adapt to change in our societies, how we help young people who feel alienated, how we deal with AIDS, drugs, and the disintegration of the family [...] We have to solve these threats together" [Prince of Wales, Islam and the West, Oxford Center for Islamic Studies: Oxford, U.K., 1993].

Shortcomings:

However, the Christian-Muslim dialogue is coming through several shortcomings.

* First, there is the heavy psychological impact of certain historical memories. The Muslims may not easily forget the Crusades, and the European colonization of Muslim lands connected with missionary activities that sometimes attacked Islam and Prophet Muhammad. Unfortunately, these attacks have been recently renewed following the disastrous event on September 11, 2001, at a wider rage and louder tone benefiting from the great achievement in the mass media. The Christian Europeans may not forget the Muslim conquests in Europe, and may find it suitable to underline the early Prophet's

conflicts with Jews in Arabia, and refer to some grievances of contemporary Christian citizens in Muslim countries. Historical memories, however bitter they might be, should not encompass people for ever and overshadow their relations at present and in the future. It is significant that the Quran reminds Muslims in all times to avoid generalization and perpetuation of judgment about certain people, since human beings are not alike and they even change and can not be all formed in one pattern. In the time of the early Muslim conflicts with the Jews in Arabia in the time of the Prophet, God's guidance in the Quran has taught: "[But] they are not all alike, among the People of the Book there are upright people, who recite God's messages throughout the night, and prostrate themselves [before Him]. They believe in God and the Last Day, and enjoy the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and vie with one another in doing good works, and theses are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall never be denied the reward thereof, and God has full knowledge of those who are conscious of Him" [The Quran 3:113-5]. It is also meaningful that that early Muslim confrontation did not go beyond that time and place, and constructive relations between the two parties existed in the Muslim lands under the caliphs, especially in Muslim Spain "al-Andalus".

In this respect, religious leaders and prominent intellectuals have been carrying out commendable efforts, which have to go wider and deeper. The Vatican, the Azhar and the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt have valuable contributions. In an interfaith conference last year organized by the Institute of Advanced Catholic studies at the University of Southern California and Omar Ibn Al Khattab Foundation in Los Angeles under the theme of "Beyond Violence", all the participants were deeply impressed by listening to Father Michael Lapsley from the "Institute for the Healing of Memories" in South Africa, who lost his hands by a bomb-letter sent by a terrorist who was a fellow white man in reaction to the Father's condemnation of "apartheid" in which all colored people in the country suffered, with Muslims among them. In the same country, the African Anglican Archbishop Reverend Tuto has been always emphasizing the genuine message of Christianity in Equality, justice, peace, and love. Among the Christian intellectuals and scholars who have written objectively and fairly about Islam, we find the Australian member of the "Oxford Group" and "Moral Rearmament" the late Charis

Waddy who wrote “The Muslim Mind” and “Women in the Islamic History”. The American scholar John Esposito, the Director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University in Washington D.C., and the Deputy Director John Voll have written Islam and Democracy and many other books. Positive efforts and constructive words and deeds on any side should not be ignored. The writer of this paper published in Arabic: “Ma‘a al-Masih fi al-Anajil al-‘Arba‘a”, “Going Along with Jesus through the Four Gospels” whose first edition appeared in Cairo in 1961. It is obvious that the contemporary world has been witnessing radical changes. Serious efforts for genuine mutual understanding have been successively coming out from individuals and organizations on Christian and Muslim sides. Bitter memories of the past, and even certain cases of the present, should not overshadow the substantial change in our time, nor restrict us from developing constructively our present and looking forward for a shining future.

* A Second substantial impediment for a productive dialogue between different parties of the human family in general, and between Muslims and Christians in particular is the narrow, literal, and split arbitrarily sometimes of understanding certain texts in the sources of the other. A religious text has to be understood properly within the context of the whole source and the whole message in its full development and in the light of the practice of the conveyor of the message, especially when some difference may appear between texts that exist in different places of the same source. Scriptural texts did not come out in a vacuum, but through a living period of the conveyor of the message and his milieu.

In the Gospels, Jesus once said, “he that is not against us is for us” [Luke 9:50], while he said in another occasion, “He is not with me is against me, and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad” [Matt 12:30]. Each has to be understood within the historical circumstances of the saying and the message, and thus no contradiction can be found between the two texts. In an early time, when the message has not become clear and distinctive it is essential to limit the opponents and to widen the range of expectation about those who are silent and undecided, while in a later stage when the new message and its movement become crystallized, there should be no ambiguity about the supporters

and the opponents in order to know exactly the situation and act accordingly without any miscalculation.

The same can be said about Quranic verses sincerely and sharply urging for peace, and others related to a defensive war that was waged in particular circumstances of time and place in order to respond to initial aggression against helpless men and women and children, and to urge the believers not to be hesitant or negligent in meeting such an inevitable though undesirable task: “And how could you be reluctant to fight in the cause of God and of the utterly helpless oppressed men and women and children who are crying, ‘O our Lord! Lead us forth to freedom out of this land whose people are oppressors, and raise for us out of Your grace a protector, raise for us out of Your grace a supporter” [The Quran 4:75]. “And if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, damage and mischief would surely overwhelm the earth” [The Quran 2:251]. Meanwhile, such a defensive war is anyhow a war which cannot be allowed except within its restricted limits: “And fight in god’s cause against those who initially wage war against you, and do not commit aggression, for, verily, God does not love aggressors” [The Quran 2:190]. “Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being initially and wrongfully waged [...] those have been driven from their homes against all right for no other reason than their saying: ‘Our Lord is God”” [The Quran 22:41].

In Arabic, the meaning of the word “*jihad*” is different from that of “qital” which indicates the use of physical force against others. “Jihad” means striving hard in general, which may exclude in many cases the use of physical force, but requires strong will and great energy to resist peacefully but persistently one’s own egotism and other wrong words or doing through reasoning and convincing: “And for those who strive hard in Our cause, We shall most certainly guide them onto paths that lead to Us, for, behold, God is indeed with the doers of good” [29:69].

* A Third shortcoming in the Christian-Muslim dialogue is presented in its limited range. I have been involved for more than 30 years in scholarly interfaith dialogue whose base is at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pa., and in other interfaith groups which include civil and religious leaders and activists. Many meetings, with the

exception of the scholarly ones, may be passed more in exchanging courteous words and expressing good emotions, rather than dealing with serious problems, although such meetings should not be a forum for polemics. The bulk of masses in churches and mosques may still not be approached, and many of them may be closed in the past and isolated from the positive contemporary developments. An occasional sermon in a church or a mosque here or there cannot rally the Christian and the Muslim masses towards mutual understanding and better correlations. Houses of worship, schools and the mass media are essential for a long term, wide-range and deep-reach change.

* Furthermore, the gap between the religious and political leaders is responsible for serious shortcomings. The separation between the state and the church cannot mean excluding the state from the moral values of peace, tolerance and mutual understanding, which are unanimously agreed upon by all believers and all humans. The state may not dictate, preach, or concede the state power and authority with regard to a particular religion or religious body, but it can act to develop mutual understanding which supports and strengthens the national solidarity. A constructive essential development is to secure the rights of religious freedom in all its dimensions of embracing, practice, education, and associations to all believers through all countries whether the faith of the majority is Muslim or Christian or else.

Advantageous Elements:

In spite of the gloomy picture of the intensifying and expanding human sufferings in the contemporary world, and the shortcomings of the Christian-Muslim dialogue, there are some positive and advantageous elements which should be invested on. We have to benefit from the contemporary global mass-communications in reaching out, spreading the message of mutual understanding, fairness, peace, and tolerance through mass-media: printed, audio-visual or internet websites. Such a voice of inter-religious understanding and co-habitation may contribute a constructive moral element to our complex globalization. We have to widen our audience in churches and mosques, and deepen our discussions in suitable forums. Muslims and Christians ought to exchange regular visits

to churches and mosques during the congregations, and listen to the sermons. Meanwhile, we maintain and develop what we have already accomplished.

Besides, we have to reach the various organizations and bodies of the civil society: professional associations, labor unions, educational institutions, think tanks and intellectual groups, voluntary benevolent groups and even political parties. Talking to politicians about our message of inter-religious understanding would never mean for us or for politicians mixing religion with politics, but addressing the minds of politicians as human beings and citizens which may influence indirectly the political decision-making. We have to approach peace and anti-violence groups and all activists who have objectives with which our message may have common grounds. We have to work hard to reach out as widely and deeply as it is possible, and let our voice be strengthened by all potential related and relevant voices wherever we can perceive them.

Let us pray for the guidance and help of our Lord, the All-mighty, the All-merciful and Mercy-giving and the All-peace. Let us spare no effort for this noble cause, extending the call of Jesus: “Come to me, all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” [Matt 11:28], “Blessed are the peace makers” [Matt 5:9], and returning the angelic and heavenly extolment of God and prayer to Him: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward all human beings” [Luke 2:14].

Let us positively respond to the Quran and grasp the Creator’s wisdom in the human diversity: “O You have attained to faith! Enter all wholly into peace, and follow not Satan’s footsteps” [The Quran 2:208], “And if God has so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community, but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you through what He has given to you [of His guidance]. Vie, then with one another in good works. Unto God you all must return” [The Quran 5:48]. We are then fully sure of the fulfillment of God’s promise: “And for those who strive hard in Our cause, We shall most certainly guide them to the paths that lead to Us, for God is indeed with the doers of good” [The Quran 29:69].