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National

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Editorial

The international gathering of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) on climate change organized by the United Nations in Glasgow, United Kingdom, is over. Some agreements were made but many climate justice campaigners, NGOs, civil society groups and 'green activists' remain dissatisfied with the outcome. Some of the big players on the world stage, such as China and Russia, both part of the UN's Security Council with veto powers did not even attend the conference. The young climate activists led by the Swedish woman, Greta Thunberg, were of the view that the Glasgow COP26 had brought them closer together and in greater solidarity to press their views on the climate emergency. The energy of these young people was a clear sign that the aging global leadership and their 'out of touch' reading would be made redundant unless they were ready for change. These young people asserted that theirs was the future and hence, that decisive policy measures should be in place without delay.

However, this international meeting has made it clear that there is an urgent need for a collaborative effort to counter any major crisis such as climate change. Other crises – such as the continuing situation of instability caused by Afghanistan's political situation and the spillover effects into neighboring states particularly Pakistan and Tajikistan, display other manifestations of how a society may be violent with no space for dialogue. Another crisis the increasing migration of people seeking safety and security, are major causes of concern. Also, the Caribbean Island of Haiti is back in crisis while Myanmar in Asia has again lost its regained democratic breathing space. These situations of instability and the threat of terror-related activity in many countries have resulted in a sense of despair. However, none of these issues can be resolved any longer without international cooperation and institutional support in the areas of economic and trade justice, non-discriminatory fiscal policies, the sharing of intelligence, mutually agreed border controls and without scrutiny of the live nexus between the thriving narcotic industry and terror networks with their affiliations to internationally linked underworld operations.

It is beyond the capacity of anyone to analyze and to classify any of these issues for the sake of the regional or national security of a country. However, national governments, states and institutions cannot turn a blind eye to any of these causes of concern. Moreover, the religious traditions of the world have a responsibility to

bring the fundamentals of faith, belief and practice to bear on these issues as well. Indeed, world religions must be ready for more dialogue and cooperation among all religious traditions and for any changes to their world view that such dialogue may demand.

In the first article, Paul Rohan focuses on religious pluralism in the context of Sri Lanka. In his view, a true believer of any religion should accept and respect the God-experience and the religious practices of other religions. Religions have the capacity to bring about mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation among diverse ethnic groups and traditions**.** He quotes Pope Francis who describes the role of the religions in the world as "wombs of life, bearing the merciful love of God to a wounded and needy humanity; may they be doors of hope helping to penetrate the walls erected by pride and fear." Rohan emphasizes that extremist interpretations of religion do not necessarily emanate from their core-teachings but from the deviant perspectives and culturally rooted customs of their practitioners.

Rohan argues that all religious traditions should embrace a spirituality of dialogue, which could transform the traditional understanding of a religion from being just a link between God and human beings to becoming an interlocutor among various religious traditions. The word *dialogue* derives from the Latin word *dia+logos* **=** *to discuss* or *to reason through*. Hence, the *dialogue of religions* has the capacity to make a contribution to dealing with the issues faced by the modern world. While interfaith dialogue will not produce miracles nor generate quick results, such dialogue provides a practical response to the issues facing the modern world.

The second article, by Muhammad Akram Rana, also finds a role for religion in the face of social issues. The writer argues that there is an affinity between religion and the sustainability of the environment. In his view, Islam possesses strong environmental principles and teaches that human beings have been appointed to act as 'trustees of the earth,' which demands that they seek social order and economic wellbeing in society. Moreover, the environment, society and the economy should not be seen as separate entities in relation to the concept of sustainability but rather as interconnected entities. In fact, environmental sustainability can be understood only in terms of the relationship between nature

and human beings, who must not exploit the environment but develop mutually enriching relations with it. In short, the idea that human beings are, in some sense, superior to nature is no longer tenable. The writer takes Pakistan as a case study for his detailed analysis of the sustainability of the environment.

In the third article, Victor Edwin discusses the role of religion in society by examining the thought of two Muslim scholars, who both invite people to live as co-citizens and co-humans in the modern world, namely, Mohammed Talbi (Tunisia) and Abul Kalam Azad (India). This article was first delivered as a paper at the international conference on *Religious Pluralism and World Peace* (Minhaj University Lahore, 2017). The writer argues that these two Muslim scholars are particularly significant in the world context that has developed since 9/11 because people have begun to question whether Muslims can coexist with people of other faiths and from different cultural traditions. In contrast to *Salafism* and *Wahhabism,* which have reduced the secular space that Muslims had developed over the centuries, Abul Kalam Azad and Mohammed Talbi stress the positive value of plurality, which they find in the Qur'an. The two scholars assert, says Edwin, that acceptance of religious pluralism is necessary to promote good relations between Muslims and people of other faith traditions in democratic societies. The heritage of Islam and the textual dynamism that the two scholars find in the Qur'an makes it possible for Muslims to engage with diverse traditions and religions in the struggle for peace and justice in society.

Moreover, in the fourth article Qasim Khan also highlights the need for interaction and dialogue among different groups in society. This article, however, presents a new perspective on the theme of dialogue by insisting on the need to interact with those who do not share a theistic perspective on religion. Atheism, which is either a denial of the existence of God or the complete abandonment of the construct of theism, has gradually evolved into a sociopolitical force championed by atheist intellectuals such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Daniel Dennett. These atheists deserve our serious attention because they present rational arguments for the absurdity of God-talk. The writer discusses their views in a critical but respectful way.

Qasim Khan argues that reason and intellectual discourse can present some common ground between religious traditions and modern atheists and says that

atheism is the outcome of a superficial comprehension of religion. Whereas theism places a greater emphasis on scripture or revealed knowledge, atheism emphasizes learned knowledge. Interestingly, the writer concludes that it is possible to live a life of religious devotion by combining learned knowledge with the practice of religion.

In the final article, Ajith Wellington develops what all the earlier articles have said about the contribution of the religions to the welfare of society by stating clearly that society should be governed by those who love virtue, those who love humanity and by those whose sole concern is the welfare of the entire people. As Plato states in his *Republic,* true justice is concerned with the common good of the whole political community. True justice fosters respect, fraternity, liberty and equality. In contrast, injustice, which is not concerned with the common good of the whole community, causes war, hatred and anger. The writer argues that social democracy fosters true justice, which recognizes the right and duty of every human being to participate in the life of the community. Hence, social democracy is arguably the best political system for any society. Despite its shortcomings and limitations, social democracy is better than government by a bureaucratic caste system in which the dictatorship of a hereditary aristocracy and military elite exercises complete control.

The final article further highlights the importance of honesty in every form of dialogue and political activity. The truth must be spoken and should never be betrayed. Socrates was ready to give his life rather than to take part in dishonesty and political corruption. In the writer's view, politicians today spend their energy and time not on what they can do to enhance the quality of life of their people but on how to outdo their political rivals. Unlike Socrates, who said that he was not going to change his behavior, not even if he had to die a hundred deaths, our politicians change their conduct and their opinions to suit their own advantage. Socrates said that politicians should go about trying to persuade the young and the old to make their first concern neither their bodies nor their possessions but the greater welfare of the entire human community.

All the articles in this edition invite our readers to discuss the role of religion in society from varying perspectives. The articles all stress the need for the kind of dialogue and cooperation that was missing at the COP26 in Glasgow this autumn

on climate change. The agonizing stories of loss and despair from Myanmar and Haiti and from the people in Afghanistan must also be heard. Harmonious relations between different societies and religions will come about only when men and women from different religious beliefs and those with no religious beliefs at all (the so-called atheists and humanists) learn to sit together and listen to one another, failing which religion and its strong appeal for the public good will be destroyed by mindless religious extremism and the cruel treatment of fellow human beings. The notion of religious literacy demands such intelligent listening and cooperation for the benefit of the whole society. ∎

Vision
Respectful and critical discussion of issues related to religion and philosophy will lead to a deeper appreciation and understanding of different religions in the world and promote peace among people.

Mission
To provide a forum for discussion of critical issues related to religion and philosophy with a special focus on South Asia.

Aims and Objectives
To encourage a profound and more regular exchange of ideas on the subject of religion and philosophy, particularly on South Asia and to publish original articles, selected through a peer review process.

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Articles

Book Reviews

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CO-EXISTENCE:
A Sri Lankan Christian Perspective

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Paul Rohan

ABSTRACT

God has revealed himself in many different ways and this has given rise to various religious traditions. The principal function of religion is to be a link (*re+ligare*) with God. However, in the history of the world, the religions have deviated from this noble purpose. The present world order with its conflicts, violence, injustice, discrimination, anti-life concepts and unjust practices raises the fundamental question: "Are the religions contributing to human wellbeing and harmony or have they given rise to various forms of extremism and violence that will eventually destroy the world?"

Sri Lanka, a small island-nation, contains four religious traditions existing side by side and, therefore, provides an opportunity to explore how interfaith dialogue and collaboration can contribute to the harmonious coexistence of a multi-religious society. This article discusses the ground reality of religious plurality in Sri Lanka and concludes that religious plurality can provide an opportunity for coexistence among religious traditions.

KEY WORDS**:** Plurality, diversity, interreligious dialogue, coexistence

INTRODUCTION

"He is not a member of our religion"; "She belongs to that sect"; "They are from the majority religion". These expressions represent the tendency today, especially in South Asia, to label people according to their religious beliefs or their membership of a particular sect. This divisive mentality is the principal cause of the growth of separatist forces, religious riots and violence in the world today. For this reason, a serious inquiry should be

made into the nature of religion, which is a basic ingredient of every society that has taken shape in human history.

Since God cannot be limited to the confines of a single religion and has revealed Godself in many ways and through many persons and events, religious pluralism is a reasonable theological position. In fact, religious plurality has become a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) and an obvious reality in the contemporary world in which there is a great need for tolerance and coexistence. Religious pluralism, though not a recent trend in theology, has surfaced in modern times together with other trends in the theology of religion. The medieval Christian theological prototype, which emphasized the 'theology of religion' has been transformed into the 'theology of religions'. In other words, the ancient Christian approach has shifted and now recognizes the presence of other religious traditions and theologies in a more positive way. This new Christian approach is the fruit of the Second Vatican Council (hereafter Vat II), which gave expression to a new willingness to accept other religions as legitimate paths to the sacred.

This article begins by describing the multi-religious context of Sri Lanka and proceeds to analyze relevant concepts and theories proposed by the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (hereafter FABC).

THE CONTEXT OF SRI LANKA

According to the ancient history of Sri Lanka up to the first millennium CE, there were two ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, namely, Sinhalese and Tamil and two religions, namely, Buddhism and Hinduism. Muslims arrived on the island as traders and with them Islam became part of the indigenous context. The Portuguese introduced Catholicism in the early 16th century while other Europeans later brought Protestant traditions to the island. Even though some historians point to the lack of evidence of an established Christian community during this specific period, Nestorian Christians

were present in Sri Lanka during the 6th century CE[1] but were not established formally as a church. The historical records of Christianity in Sri Lanka began formally with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505 when Lourenço de Almeida, a Portuguese captain, landed in Colombo.[2] Hence, for the last five centuries, the followers of these four major religious traditions have lived together on this small island.

Aloysius Pieris is one of Sri Lanka's eminent theologians who has done extensive work on the encounter between Buddhists and Christians. In his view, Christianity is only a 'little flock' in the context of the religious plurality of Asia.[3] This 'little flock' becomes a negligible minority when considered numerically in the multi-religious context of Sri Lanka. However, this numerically negligible 'little flock' arguably has been able to exert considerable impact on many areas of society in this country.

SRI LANKA'S PLURALITY

Sri Lanka was referred to as Ceylon from colonial times right up to 1972[4] and is an island situated at the southern tip of India and separated from India by the narrow *Palk's* strait in the Indian Ocean. The country contains three main ethnic groups: Sinhalese 73.8%, Tamils 18.2%, Muslims 7.5% and four world religions: Buddhists 70.19%, Hindus 12.6%, Muslims 9.7% Christians 7.4% as well as three languages: Sinhala, Tamil and English (as the link language). This is the reason why this small island has an attraction

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[1]. Gnanaprakasar, S. (1924), *A History of the Catholic Church in Ceylon - Vol. 1.* Colombo: Messenger Press, pp. 10-12.

[2]. Perniola, V. (1989), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period*, *1505 - 1565*, vol. 1, Dehiwala: Tisara Prakasakayo Ltd., p. 23. There are other legends that prevail, that they first landed at a Southern location of the island now called Galle adrift a sea storm, but a year later anchored his fleet in Colombo which indeed was a long haul until ousted by the Dutch East India Company (1658).

[3]. Pieris, A. (1988), *Love Meets Wisdom*: *A Christian Experience of Buddhism,* New York: Orbis Books, p. 34.

[4]. With the adoption of a new Constitution in 1972, Ceylon officially became the Republic of Sri Lanka. "Lanka" is the *Pali* and Sanskrit name for island and "Sri" is an honorific prefix. Russell R. Ross - Andrea Matles Savada, (1988). *Sri Lanka: A Country Study.* Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 6.

for tourists and has been the subject of much study and research on the Eastern heritage, ethnography and religious traditions. Visitors and researchers can easily move from one environment to another, meet different people, hear different languages, witness different faiths being celebrated and experience a variety of cultures and traditions.

Sri Lanka was ruled by various Western colonizers since 1505. Firstly, by the Portuguese and subsequently by the Dutch and finally by the British who left the country in 1948 after Sri Lanka became an independent country. In the three decades up to 2009 a civil war has raged between the government apparatus representing the majority Sinhalese and the militant groups that were agitating for a separate State for the minority Tamil community. This conflict turned into a full blown war between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, the two main ethnic groups each having its own distinct language, culture and its own separate region. Both also claim to have roots in the ancient civilizations of Asia but Sinhala and Tamil historians are sharply divided as to their heritage in Sri Lanka.

Three centuries after its birth in India, Buddhism came to Sri Lanka through *Mahinda* and *Sanghamitta*, the children of King *Ashoka* who was the patron of Buddhism and promoted its expansion in the Asian region. The *Mahāvaṃsa*, 'the Great Chronicle' written in *Pali* during the 5th or 6th century AD, eleven centuries after the Buddha, probably by a Buddhist monk named *Mahānāma*, is a meticulous and sentimental historical chronicle of Sri Lanka composed in the style of an epic poem and is continuously being updated. According to this chronicle, the Buddha on his death-bed told his followers that Buddhism must be the religion of Sri Lanka. This is the firm conviction that binds the Sinhalese with Buddhism. Sri Lankan Buddhism differs from other forms of Buddhist in Asia because of its unique characteristics derived from *Mahāvaṃsa* and *Theravada Buddhism,* which divinized the Buddha and elevated Buddhahood into a

religion.[5] *Mahayana* Buddhism is not so popular in Sri Lanka even though certain *Mahayana* traits[6] can be found among Buddhist practices in the country.

When the colonial masters left Sri Lanka in 1948, a long struggle began between the Sinhalese who wanted to establish their identity as the majority and the Tamils who sought to preserve their own separate identity. The Sinhala-only bill, the so-called 'one language policy', which was brought into effect in 1956, legalized the Sinhala language as the official language of the country (Act No. 33, of 1956). A further step was the amendment made to the Constitution of the country in 1978 stipulating that Sri Lanka was a Sinhala-Buddhist country without any recognition of the other minority ethnic groups and religions. In spite of the political shortsightedness that imposed a uniform system on the country, this island nation clearly remains a plural society.

THE SPECIAL STATUS OF BUDDHISM

It has been observed that any numerically large group tends to become dominant and powerful in pluralist societies because it enjoys key socio-political status and privileges. The majority religion in a multi-religious society becomes powerful and can even become oppressive.[7]. Buddhists form 70% of the population of Sri Lanka and Article 9 of the Sri Lanka's Constitution gives Buddhism a special place as the State religion. Articles 10 and 14 affirm that the State of Sri Lanka should act as the guardian of Buddhism in order to protect it. Such a privileged status for one religious

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[5]. Tresidder, A. J. (1960), *Ceylon: An Introduction to the 'Resplendent Land'*. New York: D. Van Nostrand, p. 173.

[6]. Also was known as *Vaithulyavada*, especially during the time of the king *Voharikatissa* (215-237 CE), and the famous *Abhayagiri* monastery was the centre of these 'traits' more affiliated to the *Dharmaruci* school of thought.

[7]. Even within a religion, a numerically large sect becomes dominant and enjoys a higher status. For example, within Christianity in Sri Lanka, Roman Catholicism makes up the majority, which enjoys more socio-political power than other Christian communities or groups.

tradition in a plural setting has resulted in the impression that other religious traditions are on a lower level of importance.

As indicated earlier, the *Bodu Bala Sena*, *Ravana Balaya* and *Sinha Le* groups have been identified by the minority traditions as conflict prone factors in the post-war context of Sri Lanka. These groups have been involved in conflicts with Muslims and Christians. The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL) notes that they are a minority among other minorities and that they have become the victims of attacks. There has also been an alarming increase in the number of incidents against Muslims. Elevating Buddhism as the State religion has made Sri Lanka into a form of theocracy (*Buddhocracy*) and weakened democracy.

The end of the war in Sri Lanka (2009) marked the end of the ethnic war in the country but incidents of religious unrest and violence have been on the increase ever since that time. There are symptomatic rivalries emerging, which can be described as the manifestation of political Buddhism. Movements like the *Siva Poomi* (Land of the Lord *Siva*), a concept that has been fostered by the *Siva Senai* Party (Army of the Lord *Siva*) in order to declare the North of Sri Lanka the land of the Hindus, are further evidence of the rise of religious extremist thinking and influence. Some are of the view that these various extremist views and violence-pronged activities expose the failure of orthodox religious traditions and certain internal conflicts of identity. But the selfish motives of individuals and their institutions have also led to this dysfunctional situation. There are alarming inter-ethnic as well as intra-ethnic tensions among communities and, as a result, minorities among the minorities become more vulnerable.

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

The majority Sinhala ethnic groups since independence have struggled to reclaim their lost identity. However, the majority of Buddhist clergymen feel that they are the custodians of the nation and are reluctant to accept the plurality that is evident in Sri Lanka. This mind-set has paved the way

for a conflict between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils, who felt that they were being treated as second class citizens. Calcification of the grievances of both the majority and the minority sections of society resulted in a separatist war by Tamil groups to which successive governments unleashed a counter-offensive. The three decades of devastating war that followed resulted in untold destruction. This war ended in 2009 with vast numbers of people being killed and with both sides 'still counting the dead'.[8] Since the end of the war, religious conflicts seem to have replaced the earlier conflict, which has caused new fears to emerge among the civilian population.

When Sri Lanka gained independence from the British, local identity politics resuscitated on the basis of the ethno-religious assertiveness of both the Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Hindus. Sinhala Buddhists were inclined to consider Sri Lanka their distinctive homeland.[9] However, the Tamil community, as an ethnic minority, felt insecure especially after political power shifted to the majority ethnic community who mobilized their political power to establish hegemonic control over the whole country by eliminating what they considered were unfair advantages enjoyed by the Tamil ethnic minority in the field of education, professions, trade and politics.[10]

Viewing the social dynamics of the post-war politics of Sri Lanka, observers have noticed a shift in the pattern of conflict from ethno-oriented

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[8]. *Still Counting the Dead: Survivors of Sri Lanka's Hidden War* is a book written by a British journalist Francis Harrison. The book contains her account of the devastating sufferings of Sri Lanka's civilian Tamil population during the war's final chapter. She describes the situation of hundreds of thousands of children, health officers, farmers, fishermen, clergymen and other civilians in early 2009, caught in between the crossfire the Tamil Tigers and the Army offensive. She invites the UN and other rights groups with her account on war-crimes committed.

[9]. Obeyesekere, G. O. (2006), "Buddhism, Ethnicity and Identity: A Problem in Buddhist History," *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Modern Sri* Lanka, Deegalle, M., (ed.), London: Routledge, p. 134.

[10]. Kailasapathy, K. (1984), "Cultural and Linguistic Consciousness of the Tamil Community," *Ethnicity and Social Change in Sri Lanka*, p. 108.

to religiously motivated hostility.[11] The rise of *Bodu Bala Sena* (Strong Army of the Buddhists), *Ravana Balaya* (Power of Ravana) and *Sinha Le* (Lion's Blood) movements and their ideologically-led campaigns have been disturbing and have aroused interreligious as well as intra-religious tensions among the communities.[12]

WHAT IS PLURALISM?

Etymologically, the term *pluralism* comes from the Latin *pluralis*, a word with the meaning of 'more than one' and thereby affirming diversity. The concept of pluralism is closely associated with the Enlightenment in the West and has led to various forms of social reform. German philosophers like Christian Wolff and Immanuel Kant began to adopt universal view-points that differed from those that were commonly accepted.

The term *pluralism* has subsequently been used in various academic disciplines. For instance, in politics, pluralism may refer to the existence and acceptance of multiple political parties. In economics, pluralism is associated with free and open market systems. In sociology, pluralism refers to a society consisting of various ethnic groups, cultures and languages.[13] In religious discourse, pluralism expresses the idea that religious differences can be overcome by respecting religious otherness.[14] Pluralism is an attitude that avoids stressing the differences between religions but emphasizes their core beliefs and values. Just as pluralism is

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[11]. Wickramasinghe, N. (2015), *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: History of Contested Identities*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, p. 37.

[12]. *Bodu Bala Sena* (BBS) is a Sinhala nationalist Buddhist group. The *Ravana Balaya* is a group led by some Buddhist monks in the name of '*Ravana*', a mythological king of ancient Sri Lanka. The organization alleges that it is protecting the national heritage. *Sinha Le* is also an extreme movement of the ultra-nationalists. The word *Sinha Le* is a conjunction of the two words 'Lion' and 'Blood' obviously trying to vindicate that the Sinhala race was born of Lion's Blood.

[13]. Ole, R. (1999), "Modes of Religious Pluralism under Conditions of Globalization". *International Journal on Multicultural Societies (IJMS)*, 1 (1), p. 21.

[14]. Race, A. (2015), *Thinking about Religious Pluralism: Shaping Theology of Religions for Our Times*, New York: Fortress Press, p. 44.

a general phenomenon that is vital for the secular, globalized world, religious pluralism has significance for the coexistence of religions in the modern world.

PLURALISM AND PLURALITY

In order to understand the deeper meaning of religious pluralism and religious plurality, we need to clarify the terms 'pluralism' and 'plurality' and to establish the conceptual difference between them.

Pluralism is a concept that affirms the possibility of the existence of diversity and miscellany with regard to things that are similar in nature. Pluralism is a concept referring to the fact that many things, types, ideas, events, institutions and parties can have a similar character or nature at any one time and place. In other words, pluralism accepts the existence of different realities and events of the same kind. Several but different realities can have the same goal. For example, there can be many political parties in a democratic setting that all work with the same motive of attaining power and ruling the country. Theoretical acceptance of this phenomenon is called pluralism. In short, as a concept, pluralism affirms the potential diversity of similar realities and points out the shortsightedness of affirming their uniformity.

Plurality is the actualization of pluralism. It manifests the diverse and miscellaneous nature of realities with the same nature and with the same goal existing in one place at the same time. Hence, pluralism is ideological and theoretical whereas plurality is concrete and practical. The former can ideologically accept and enjoy the existence of many types and ideas of the same nature and the latter is the ability to live with miscellany and to exercise the policy of 'unity in diversity'. The result of dichotomizing theory and praxis results in accepting pluralism but not tolerating plurality.

In the light of the understanding of these two terms, religious pluralism can be taken to refer to the conceptual and theoretical acceptance of many

religions in one place at the same time, thereby affirming the plurality of human efforts in the search for transcendence. In fact, the very multiplicity of religious traditions demonstrates the transcendence and all-encompassing nature of God. Religious plurality enables a person to accept the existence of many religious traditions and to accommodate them all without making a judgment as to the superiority or inferiority of any one of them. Hence, religious plurality involves a new understanding of the religions in the globalized world of today and leads to a sense of tolerance and harmonious coexistence.

OPENNESS TO GOD

The affirmation of religious pluralism leads to freedom of religion, which aims to provide the same rights of worship and public expression for each religion that exists in any region (Vat II, *Religious Freedom*, No. 4) and entails not competition but mutual cooperation.[15] Appreciation of religious pluralism will make it possible to treat other religions with respect and open mindedness instead of labeling them as evil.[16] In ordinary terms, this means being open to God and his revelation and leads to genuine spirituality.

Those who accept religious pluralism affirm that the profound differences in the great religious traditions are largely due to the different ways in which transcendental reality is experienced by the believers.[17] John Hick affirms this by saying:

> In this sense the absoluteness of Christianity is compatible with the absoluteness of Islam, or again of Hinduism, or Buddhism or Judaism, salvifically sufficient as these different messages and ways are for those who have been spiritually formed by them. But,

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[15]. Nah, D. S. (2012), *Christian Theology and Religious Pluralism: A Critical Evaluation of John Hick*, Minnesota: St. Paul, p. 2.

[16]. Dilipkumar, M. (2010), "The Logic of Religious Pluralism in India," *Globalization and Religious Pluralism*, Changang Guo, (ed.), China: Shanghai University, p. 154.

[17]. Rowe, W. L. (1999), "Religious Pluralism," *Religious Studies*, 35 (2), p. 140.

since 'absolute' so strongly suggests uniqueness and the impossibility of being surpassed or even equaled, it seems inappropriate to apply it to this pluralistic conception. And in fact, this plural sense is the polar opposite of the religious absolutism that I want to discuss here. Let me approach it, however, through this opposite, namely religious pluralism.[18]

Religious pluralism, therefore, rejects religious absolutism and creates a new openness to God. In fact, religious plurality, which is considered as an intrinsic condition or natural phenomenon, can be found everywhere in the world.[19] In general, pluralism becomes a rational concept by use of the phrase: "agree to disagree."[20] That is to say, in a multi-religious context, though one does not believe in the doctrine and practices of another religion, there is an inner acceptance that the other's religion is inherently equal at least at the philosophical or conceptual level.[21]

There is a generally accepted assumption that diverse beliefs and religious traditions emerged as result of the diversity of human responses to divine revelation.[22] In line with this thinking is the suggestion that divine or ultimate reality reveals itself to human beings but social and cultural contexts have a profound influence on the way human beings understand revelation. Since cultural and social contexts influence our understanding of divine reality, the diverse religions of the world are the direct result of these different cultural and social contexts.[23] Moreover, one aspect of divine revelation may be understood in different ways by different

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[18]. Hick, J. (1985), *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, p. 194.

[19]. Stark, R. *et al.*, (1995), "Pluralism and Piety: England and Wales, 1851," see. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 34 (4), p. 432.

[20]. John Wesley was the first to put the phrase "agree to disagree" in print. See. *The United Methodist Church*, "On the Death of the Rev. George Whitefield," Global Ministries, p. 2.

[21]. Panikkar, R. (1984), "Religious Pluralism: The Metaphysical Challenge," *Religious Pluralism*, (ed. Leroy S. Rouner), Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, p. 111.

[22]. op. cit., Hick, J. (1985), p. 56.

[23]. op. cit., Race, (2015), p. 65.

people.[24] Hence, divine reality remains the same but it is understood differently by people according to their different capacities and their different social and cultural contexts. Thus, acceptance of religious pluralism and tolerance of religious plurality becomes a new way to allow God to be active in the world and to submit to the diverse manifestations of his will.

THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

The way that each religion assists its followers to reach the divine is the contemporary manifestation of openness to God and his divine will and of willingness to accept all human beings as children of God. However, acceptance of religious pluralism can also lead to either exclusivism, inclusivism or syncretism. Exclusivism in religion teaches that their religion is the only way to salvation and rejects other religions categorically or suppresses them as false. Exclusivist attitudes result in religious fanaticism and religious fundamentalism, both of which can lead to violence in the name of religion. John Hick sees exclusivism as a form of religious absolutism and presents religious pluralism as the remedy for the wounds that such absolutism can cause.[25]

Another understanding of the relationship between religions is known as inclusivism, which accepts the truth of many beliefs and practices of another religion. According to the inclusivist approach to other religions, people of different religions can engage in dialogue and cooperation. Syncretism, however, is the attempt to adopt the creeds and practices of other religions and to blend various religious practices together in a new way. This is another way of saying that all the religions are one and the same and can lead to compromise between the values of different religious traditions.

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[24]. Nah, D. S. (2012), *Christian Theology and Religious Pluralism*, p. 12.
[25]. op. cit., Hick, J. (1985), p. 194.

NEED FOR DIALOGUE

Many researchers and analysts of Sri Lankan politics and social dynamics emphasize that the task of national reconciliation is to create harmony not only among ethnic communities but also among the religions. Ethnic and religious issues share many similar characteristics. Considering the rise of recent attacks on minority places of worship (mosques and churches of small Christian communities), there is an evident need for interreligious dialogue.[26] But the purpose of interreligious dialogue is understood differently by different groups. Sri Lanka needs to promote dialogue between religious groups that will develop a 'culture of peace' since the country is still in a post-war situation. S. J. Emmanuel, who is another eminent theologian in Sri Lanka, argues that, in the context of Asia, dialogue becomes an accepted methodology to develop knowledge and understanding of each other in a multi-religious society.[27]

PARAMETERS OF DIALOGUE

Socio-political and religious conflicts hinder inter-religious dialogue and derail peace among the religions. Lethargy or reluctance for dialogue among religions causes suspicion, which in turn contributes to political and religious conflicts. Religions have the social clout to interact with socio-political structures, which means that conflicts can be resolved by religiously motivated interventions.[28] But interreligious dialogue is not something that can be carried out from above by representatives and theologians coming from various faiths and religions. Rather, interreligious dialogue should emerge from below and from the grassroots. In most cases, interreligious dialogue is limited to ecumenical dialogues between Christian communities and theologians in the form of fellowship-

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[26]. De Chickera, D. (2017), "Bias in the Dias Affair," *The Ceylon Churchman*, 116 (20), p. 3.

[27]. Emmanuel, S. J. (1999), "Asian Mission for the next Millennium? Chances and Challenges," *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 36 (3), p. 37.

[28]. The role played by Christians during the post-apartheid era of South Africa is an example of how socio-political issues can be resolved by the religions.

meetings and a few common efforts related to socio-political concerns. Such meetings are largely of symbolic value only. As far as the European churches were concerned, dialogue is conceived more in view of the need for unity among the Christian denominations and in order to improve relationships with the Jews and the Arabs so as to bury the past and begin a new era. But in the Asian context, such dialogue must include the dialogue of life, which requires a willingness to recognize the salvific elements of other religions.

As personal expressions of faith, the religions are not in great danger of coming into direct conflict with each other but as organised religions, they can develop conflicts because their activities, privileges and areas of concern can lead to suspicion, jealousy and competition. For example, Buddhism has shaped the history and the culture of the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka.[29] Moreover, as a philosophy of life, Buddhism can be very attractive to seekers of peace and harmony. However, as a political expression, *Theravada* Buddhist is dominated by the clergy (the *Sangha*), which is an island-wide solidarity of Buddhist monks who demand certain privileges from the State.

A TRIPLE DIALOGUE

Aware of the multi-religious context and the innovative paradigms that were needed for inter-religious dialogue in Asia, the FABC proposed a triple-dialogue among the religions. During the FABC's 1st Plenary Assembly in 1974, a nascent perspective on such a triple-dialogue was developed, which comprised mutually respectful and critical encounters between Christianity and diverse, pluralistic cultures, as well as between Christianity and the rich religious traditions of Asia and between

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[29]. De Silva, L. (1976), "Theological Construction in a Buddhist Context," *Asian Voices in Christian Theology*, (ed. Gerald H. Anderson), Maryknoll: Orbis, p. 37, Gombrich, R. F. & Obeyesekere, O. (1988), *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 21.

Christianity and the multitudes of the poor in Asian countries.[30] This call for a triple-dialogue has been repeatedly emphasized in both the 5th FABC Plenary Assembly held in 1990 and the 6th FABC Plenary Assembly held in 1995. In fact, the 5th FABC Plenary Assembly equated the triple-dialogue with the Christian missionary imperative: "Mission includes: being with the people, responding to their needs, with sensitiveness to the presence of God in culture and other religious traditions, and witnessing to the values of God's Kingdom through presence, solidarity and sharing."[31] The 6th FABC Plenary Assembly reiterated that Christianity in Asia must foster a three-fold dialogue: with the many different faiths of Asia, with the cultures of Asia, and with the poor multitude of Asia.

Such a triple model is well suited to Sri Lanka where the traditional Sinhala, Tamil and Moor cultures meet and cohabit and where four major religious traditions are practiced and celebrated. Moreover, Sri Lanka is a developing country with 70% of its population under the poverty line. For these reasons, Christians are encouraged to get involved in the triple dialogue that could result in enculturation, interreligious collaboration, the eradication of poverty and the well-being of its citizens. Such dialogue with cultures, religions and socio-political realities, even though demanding and challenging, would result in enabling Christians, who form a numerically small group, to bear emphatic witness to their mission to establish the kingdom of God.[32]

CONCLUSION

A common pilgrimage in the multi-religious context of Sri Lanka will become possible when the reign of God is placed at the center of Christian life. Becoming 'salt' and 'light' among the native population means to assist the adherents of other religions to articulate their own aspirations. In pursuing the goal of building up the reign of God, Christians must see the

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[30]. FABC, (1992), *Documents from 1970 to 1991*, Manila: Claretian Publications, Nos. 12 - 19.

[31]. FABC, (1997), *Documents from 1992 to 1996*, Manila: Claretian Publications, No. 3.

[32]. op. cit., Emmanuel, S. J., (1999), p. 45.

followers of other religions as their collaborators and allies in a common struggle against the enemies of the reign of God. The issue is not how other religious traditions can relate with Christianity but how God's reign can become present in society. The recognition of the presence of God's reign in other religions is not a denial of the Christian mission of evangelization but rather views it in the contemporary context.[33]

A true believer of any religion will accept and respect the God-experience and religious practices of other religions. The purpose of interfaith dialogue, which is based on mutual respect, toleration and cooperation among the religions, is to build an organic unity among diverse ethnic and religious groups. Pope Francis calls upon the religions to be "wombs of life, bearing the merciful love of God to a wounded and needy humanity; may they be doors of hope helping to penetrate the walls erected by pride and fear."[34]

All religions seek truth and encourage charitable deeds. Extremism within religion comes not from the core-teachings of any religion but from certain religious practitioners and their obsessive allegiance to particular traditions and historical interpretations. Religions are neither inherently violent nor inherently non-violent but they can promote either peace or violence. Religions need to abandon their preoccupation with ritual observations and return to the truth and significance of their message.

In the multi-religious context of Sri Lanka, Christians and other religious followers face a new challenge, which is to engage in interreligious dialogue. Such dialogue calls for a spirituality that arises from within each religion. Hence, each religious tradition needs to embrace the 'spirituality of dialogue', which will change the accepted understanding and function of religion. Instead of focussing on connecting and bonding (*re+ligare*) humanity *with* God, each religion can act as an interlocutor (*dia+logum*) *between* world religions. Such a new emphasis on dialogue may not bring

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[33]. Pieris, A. (1988), *Love Meets Wisdom*, p. 33.
[34]. Address of Pope Francis to the representatives of different religions, Rome, 3rd Nov. 2016.

quick and concrete results but is a realistic way to meet the challenges facing the modern world. ∎

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AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
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Muhammad Akram Rana

ABSTRACT

S ustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of further generations to meet their own needs. According to Islamic teachings, everything on earth was created for the service of human beings. Hence, Islam allows the consumption of the natural environment but forbids unnecessary destruction and endeavors to balance environmental protection with social and economic development. This paper will discuss sustainable development in the light of Islam with special reference to the challenges facing Pakistan.

Key words: Sustainable, Social, Economic, Environment, Development, Ecology.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

On 25th September 2015, the 193 countries of the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Development Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda has 92 paragraphs, 51 outlines, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated to it 169 targets and 232 indicators.[1]

Sustainable development is a way for people to use resources without the resources running out. Further, Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This requires meeting the basic needs of all peoples and extending to them the opportunity to fulfil their

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[1]. See the UNO website under 'sustainable development'.

aspirations for a better future. Sustainable Development can be measured in social, economic and environmental terms.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS

Environmental progress relies on efforts to counteract global warming. We should use the sun and minerals such as coal for energy, that is, solar and wind energy. Green parks should be established for recreation and for better environment and the forests should not be lost.

SOCIAL PROGRESS

Social progress means to treat the community with kindness by encouraging them to think because thinking is essential for their wellbeing. People should become aware of their resources and the importance of not cutting down the trees. Poverty must be eradicated from the face of the earth and better living standards must achieved.

ECONOMIC PROGRESS

Economic progress means to benefit from trade. People should be encouraged to make efforts in order to improve the quality of their life.

List of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
1. Poverty eradication
2. Extermination of hunger
3. Care of health
4. Education for all
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Clean energy
8. Decent work and living standards
9. Industry leading to innovative infrastructure

10. Reduction of social and economic inequality
11. Sustainable cities and community welfare
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Action against global warming
14. Life in the rivers and oceans
15. Care of the earth
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Partnership to achieve common goals

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ISLAM

The environment encompasses natural resources like soil, flora, fauna, water, air, light that are necessary for living organisms. Islam teaches that these resources have been created by Allah with a purpose.[2]

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَوَيْلٌ لِّـلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنَ النَّار

The purpose is to provide sustenance for human life on earth.[3] Human interaction with the environment could take the shape of social and economic activities for the development of a better environment, which, in turn, could provide the opportunity for improved social and economic activities such as housing, commerce, industry, tourism, transportation and recreation. Obviously, this approach will differ from the conventional approach to sustainability where the environment is only considered to be an aspect of sustainability and is not regarded as the key issue.

Islam gives human beings the responsibility to preserve and protect the environment. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) left a noble example of being eco-friendly and going green in his life. He spent time in eco-friendly efforts to help humanity, caring for other creatures of God and preserving the earth by planting trees and protecting the environment. The Prophet

[2]. Qur'an, 38:27
[3]. Qur'an, 2:60

(PBUH) exhorted his companion to plant trees saying, "Whosoever plants a tree and diligently looks after it until it matures and bears fruits is rewarded". Planting a tree is a *sadaqa jariya* in Islam for the poor and a rich alike.

انس بن مالک قال : قا ل رسول الله ﷺ ان قامت على احدكم القيامة و في يد ه فسيلة فليغرسها4

> If the hour (the Day of Judgment) is about to happen and one of you is holding a plant, let him take an advantage of even one second before the final hour to plant it.

He further said:

قال رسول الله ﷺ :لا يغرس مسلم غرساً فيا كل منہ انسان اودابة اوطائرالاكان لہ صدقة5

> If a Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, this will be regarded as a gift from him.

In another Hadith, the Prophet said:

ان رسول الله ﷺ مرّ لعبد و هو يتوضا: فقال: ماهذا السرف، فقال : افى الوضو اسراف ، قال: نعم ،
"وان كنت على نهرجار "6

> One day the Prophet (PBUH) passed by Saad b.abi Waqas, while he was performing *wudu* and the Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Saad what is this wastage?' Saad said, 'Is there wastage in *wudu* as well?' The Prophet said, 'Yes, even if you are at a flowing river.'

It is very important for a Muslim to respect the sacredness of the environment. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Beware of the three acts that

4. ابن حنبل، احمد بن محمد، ابو عبدالله، مسند، مؤستہ الرسالۃ، 1421 ھ (رقم الحديث:12999)

5. ايضاً (رقم الحديث: 12999   )

6. ابن ماجہ ، محمد بن يزيد القزوينى ، سنن ، باب ماجا ء فى القصد فى الوضوء ، داراحياء الكتب العربيۃ، س ن ، (رقم الحديث:425)

cause you to be cursed. First, relieving yourself in shaded places; second, in a walkway and thirdly, in a watering place."[7]

Similarly, the prophet (PBUH) gave paramount importance to street clean-ups when he said, "Removing harmful things from the road is an act of charity."[8]

RIGHTS OF ANIMALS IN ISLAM

The Prophet (PBUH) and his companions taught us how to protect the rights of animals. Islam teaches that we should treat animals with kindness and love because these can be considered as similar to human community. "There is not a moving creature on earth, not a bird that flies with its two wings but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Quran; then unto your Lord they all shall be gathered."[9]

رأَ رسول الله ﷺ حماراً هوا سوم الوجهِ فانكرَ ذالک[10]

Once the Prophet (PBUH) saw a donkey hot-branded on the muzzle and said, "May Allah curse the person who marked this animal."

Abu Masood said, "The Prophet (PBUH) saw a colony of ants which we have burned. He asked, "Who is responsible for this act?" We answered, "We are." The Prophet (PBUH) replied, "No one is allowed to punish with fire except Allah who made it."[11]

In another hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

عن نافع عن عبد الله ان رسول الله ﷺ قال: عذبت امراة فى هراة سجنتها حتى ماتت فدخلت فيها النار----[12]

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7. بخارى ، محمد بن اسماعيل، الجامع ، الصحيح ، باب اماطة الاذى، دار بروت، 1422 ه ، ج 3 ، ص 133.

8. ibid.

9. Qur'an, 6:38

10. (مسلم بن حجاج ، صحيح مسلم ، دار احياء التراث العربى ، بيروت،(رقم الحديث:2118)

11. (ابو داؤد ، سليمان بن اشعث، سنن ، امكتب العصريم ، بيروت ، س ن (رقم الحديث:5266)

12. (مسلم بن حجاج، صحيح مسلم ، باب تحريم قتل الهرة ، دار احياء التراث العربى (رقم الحديث: 2242

A woman was chastised and thrown into hell because she starved a cat to death. The woman had given neither the cat neither water nor food. Moreover, the cat was not given the freedom to feed herself with little animals like mice.

In another hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

ان رجلاً رائ كلبا يا كل الثرى، من العطش فاخذ الرجل خفه، فجعل يعرف له به حتى ارواه فشكر الله، فادخله الجنه[13]

A man was thirsty and he came across a well so he went down to quench his thirst. When he came up from the well, he saw a dog licking the mud. He thought that the dog must be suffering from thirst as he had so he went down again into the well and brought back some water in his shoe. Allah accepted this act and forgave him his sins.

Islam shares the religious heritage of Judaism and Christianity but early Islam existed in a specific environmental context because Islam arose amongst the Arab Bedouin. These people were nomads and herders from ancient times and they showed great awareness of their environment by respecting the forces of nature. The stark environment of the Arabian desert fostered an attitude of submission to God among the Arab Bedouin.

In Islam, the Qur'an and the Hadith, which are the main sources of environmental ethos, have found expression in Islamic law. The importance of ecology in Islam is evident from the fact that one-eighth of the Qur'an exhorts Muslims to meditate on nature.
Khalid (1996:20) notes that humans are the friends of the earth, not its masters.[14]

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[13]. بخارى ، محمد بن اسماعيل ، الجامع الصحيح ، باب الماء ، دار طوق النجاة ، بيروت، 1422 ه (رقم الحديث: 173)
[14]. Khalid, F. (1996), "Guardians of the Natural Order," *Our Planet*, 8 (2), pp. 18-25.

Some hadith note that cruelty to animals and wanton defacement of nature is forbidden and warrants divine punishment. Kindness shown to animals, however, bestows God's reward. The matter explained in a hadith of the Prophet (PBUH)

من قتل عصفوراً عبثا[15]

Al-Sharid, one of the first companions, provides the following narration from the Prophet (PBUH): "If you kill a sparrow knowingly, it will hasten to God on the Day of Judgment and say: O Lord! So and so killed me for play and not for use!"

Muslim jurists derived a series of injunctions dealing with management and ownership of pastures, land, fuel, wood and water.[16] This includes establishment of conservation zones (*Hima*) and wildlife sanctuaries (*Haram*). *Hima* and *Haram* are considered protected zones for the maintenance of biodiversity and were sanctuaries with its flora and fauna receiving special protection.[17] In such places industrial development, habitation and extensive grazing are not allowed. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established such zones as public property or common lands managed and protected by public authority for the conservation of natural resources.

WATER WASTAGE

Based on the Prophet`s ruling, water wastage was disapproved of and a limited amount of water was allocated to each person in order to ensure the preservation of moisture in the soil needed by crops in the Arabian

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[15]. احمد بن حنبل ، مسند ، حديث الثريد ب ن سويد الثقفى ، مؤسسة الرسالة،1421 ه (رقم الحديث: 19470)
[16]. Hameed, S. E. (1993), "Seeing the Environment through Islamic Eyes: Application of Shariah to Natural Resources," JOAEA, 6 (2), pp. 145-164.
[17]. Chelhold, J. (1971), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (3rd Edition), Leiden: Brill.

Peninsula.[18] The beliefs, traditions and values of Islam provide an effective and comprehensive solution to the current environmental challenges faced by the human race. Islam has a tradition of highlighting the importance of environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources. According to Islamic law, the basic elements of nature, namely, land, water, fire, forest and light belong to all living things not just to human beings. The holy Qur'an and the Sunnah are a guiding light to promote sustainable development in every country throughout the world. Allah commands human beings to avoid doing mischief and waiting resources as these acts cause the degradation of the environment. Human beings may exploit natural resources on the condition that their actions will not destroy the environment. The Holy Qur'an makes many references to ecology and contains some important principles for environmental conservation.

CONCEPT OF TRUSTEESHIP

Caliphs or vicegerents should take every necessary step to ensure that property entrusted to them is passed on to the next generation in as pure a form as possible. According to Islam, each person is a custodian of nature and must live in harmony with other creatures. Allah dislikes corruption of all kinds including environmental corruption that includes industrial pollution, environmental damage and reckless exploitation and mismanagement of natural resources. The Qur'an says that:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِى الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَاذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ[19]

Allah loves not those who do mischief. Moreover, do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. This will be best for you, if you have faith.

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[18]. Wilkinson, J.C. (1990), "Muslim Land and Water Law," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1, pp. 54-72.

[19]. Qur'an, 7:85

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Whosoever brings dead land to life, for him is a reward in it, and whatever creature seeking food eats of it shall be reckoned as charity from him."[20] In the Sharia law, there is responsibility placed on upstream farms to be considerate of downstream users. The farmer who utilizes water upstream must release some of it for the benefit of those downstream. The Qur'an says:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُواوَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ [21]

Eat and drink but waste not by excess; he loves not the excessive.

Water plays an important socio-religious function by cleaning the body and clothes of impurities so that human beings can be purified. Muslims are allowed to pray only after cleaning themselves with pure water. Furthermore, worship must take place in a clean area. No one is allowed to bathe in unmoving water. The Prophet (PBUH) said. "Don`t waste water, even by a flowing stream."[22] Trees should not be cut down, even at a time of war. The plantation of trees is encouraged even when one is close to death, as mentioned above.

MUSLIMS AND ECOLOGY

The protection, conservation and development of the environment and natural resources is a religious duty to which every Muslim should be committed. Do good even as God has done good to you and do not go after corruption in any form on earth for God does not like corruptors. Islam provides detailed ethical principles on the environment. We also need to explore what western and eastern Muslim thinkers have written on Islam and the environment. The three founding ideas of Islam's ecological ethics are *Tawhid, Khilafah* and *Akhirah.* The cornerstone of *Tawhid* is that

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[20]. ابن حنبل، احمد بن محمد ، مسند ، مؤسسة الرسالة ، 1421 ﻫ (رقم الحديث:12999)
[21]. Qur'an, 7:31
[22]. See above note 7

Allah created the universe and that all that exists reflects unity in diversity.[23] According to Muslim scholars, the universe is governed and regulated by the principles of unity, balance and harmony that characterize the interactive and unifying principle of *Tawhid*. The Quran (14: 19-20; 46: 3; 15: 85-86) repeatedly mentions that the universe is characterized by proportion, harmony and beauty. According to Islam, God intended the universe to remain in balance. Nature provides a source of inspiration and guidance for understanding the divine action in creation.[24]

The second concept is *Khilafah*. The Qur'an declares that human beings are the vicegerents of the earth. Furthermore, human beings should refrain from harming the environment.[25] The importance of ecology in Islam is affirmed by the fact that one-eighth of the Qur'an exhorts Muslims to reflect on nature. Sociologists like Ali Shariati contend that the notion of stewardship should include its spiritual dimension.[26] Similarly, Khalid notes that human beings are the friends of the Earth, not its masters.[27]

The third concept of Islamic environmental ethics is *Akhirah*, which means human beings are accountable in the hereafter for their actions. Zaide notes that no generation has the right to pollute the earth in a way that depletes its resources and degrades its biological systems.[28] Some scholars are of the view that human beings enjoy special privileges on earth while others maintain that all creatures have equal rights on earth.[29]

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[23]. Chittick, W. (1986), "God surrounds all things: an Islamic perspective on the environment" *The World and Islam*, 1 (6), pp. 671 – 678.

[24]. Faruqi, I. R. (1980), *Islam and culture,* Kuala Lumpur: Angkatan Bela Islam, Malaysia

[25]. Qur'an, 2: 30; Q, 7: 56.

[26]. Shariati, A. (1979), *On the Sociology of Islam*, Hamid Algar (trans.), Berkeley: Mizan.

[27]. See footnote 14.

[28]. Weeramantry, C. G. (1998), *Islamic Jurisprudence: and International Perspective*, New York: St. Martin.

[29]. Timm, R. E. (1993), "The Ecological Fallout of Islamic Creation Theology" in M.E. Tuker and J. A. Grim (eds.), *Worldview and Ecology*, pp. 83-95.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ISLAM

Human beings consist of males and females, tribes and nations and were created to get to know each other. However, Islam recognizes that the best among them are those who recognize and acknowledge their Creator.[30] This is the underlying principle of the Islamic social construct that also connects human being with the environment. According to the Caliph Umar, by bestowing upon them such benefits and authority, the Lord honored human beings above all other creatures. Beginning with the principles of *fiqh al-ibadah*, a Muslim obeys family institutions according to the regulations of *fiqh al-munakihat* and is eventually subject to the human economic interactions according to *fiqh al-muamlat*.

Pursuant to these individual, family and communal aspects, Islam prescribes punishment for wrongdoings according to *fiqh al-janayat*.[31] In essence, this is how Islam educates its followers spiritually and in practice. In Islam, Muslims are guided by five pillars. The relationship between man and God as well as between man and nature can be illustrated by the two different modes, that is, the nurturing mode and the interventionist mode. Instead of performing his role as the steward of nature, human beings have manipulated the world and consumed nature without considering religious values. For this reason, they will be held responsible and accountable to God.[32]

Nurturing	Interventionist
God	God
Nature	Humans
Human	Nature

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[30]. Qur'an, 49:13

[31]. Saniotis, A., "Muslims and Ecology," *Contemporary Islam*, 6 (2) July 2012, University of Adelaide, Australia.

[32]. ibid.

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY IN ISLAM

Islam promotes development and growth both socially and economically and considers poverty close to disbelief. Islam provides effective means of socio-economic improvement via endowment and alms-giving. Islam is concerned about wealth distribution. All economic dealings and transactions among people happen in the environment called "city", which is created by human planning and building. The city environment does not only provide raw materials but also facilitates economic activities, such as shelters, parks, factories, managers and laborers. Excessive use of natural resources may cause ozone depletion and the melting of ice caps, global warming, the rising of sea level and deforestation. Meanwhile, the social impact can be seen in terms of reduction of the quality of life and social inequality. Now, the intricacy and the significance of these three elements namely the environment, the society and the economy is undeniable. Viewed from the angle of sustainability, economic development is the process of utilizing natural resources for human well-being. Man is responsible to manage the earth.[33]

FORMULATION OF GOALS FOR ACTION

Despite the fact that currently around 1 billion people still live on less than $ 1.25 a day, significant progress has made in tackling poverty. More than 800 million people do not have enough food to eat. Extreme events and climate change is causing widespread damage to natural systems. In several countries, women's rights are still not fully respected. Many women still die in childbirth. To solve these issues, we need to achieve environmental sustainability and human well-being. Economic growth based on fossil fuel, unsustainable consumption, income inequality, unchecked urbanization, deforestation and climate change remain barriers to ensuring sustainable development for all.

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[33]. Qur'an, 33:72

Sustainable development goals (SDGs) provide a coherent, holistic, comprehensive and balanced framework to incorporate the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development with recognition of the direct linkages between human well-being, economic development and care for the environment.

CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN

Since the Government of Pakistan has signed up to SDGs, it can be asked to provide the equivalent of US $ 1.25 per person a day. SDGs can also be used to push for a consensus on ways to measure "poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions." Pakistan is expected to put an end to hunger and to ensure access for all, especially for the poor and vulnerable, to nutritious and sufficient food. By signing the SDGs, the government has committed itself to ending all forms of malnutrition.

Goal 8 empowers governments to break free from the shackles of aid and propels nation states to make greater progress in trade, growth, jobs and in safe guarding the dignity of individuals, communities and nations. It also encourages the private sector and businesses to join hands with governments and the international community to promote sustainable development.

Goal 9 aims to build resilient infrastructure to promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and to foster innovation. This goal recognizes that sustainable human development cannot take place without economic growth particularly in manufacturing.

The aim to reduce socio-economic equality by 2030 underscores the need for policies to achieve and sustain income growth for the bottom half of the population at a rate higher than the national average. In the country as a whole, 48% of rural households are landless and the highest incident of landlessness is in Sindh with 62%.

Goal 13 specifically calls for urgent action to combat the impact of climate change. About 45 of the 169 targets related to this goal highlight the need to tackle climate change and its impact on food production, water, energy and economic development. Climate change and its adverse impact undermines the ability to achieve vision 2025-Pakistan. The adverse impact of climate occurs through increased floods, prolonged droughts, changing temperatures and extreme weather events, heat waves, glacial melting and changing monsoon patterns.

In Pakistan, SDGs have received mixed reviews. Skeptics argue that if the country could not achieve the MDGs with their 40 indicators, realizing the Sustainable Development Goals with their 169 indicators is not realistic. Furthermore, financing these 17 goals is a major issue for a developing country like Pakistan. Lack of coordination, disjunction between different departments and the lack of capacity of state institutions are all serious issues.

However, there are those who are optimistic that the SDGs are achievable. The Government has taken many measures to advance the process such as the Pakistan poverty alleviation fund (PPAF), Prime Minister's Youth Program, Business Loan Scheme, interest free loan scheme, skilled development program, free lap top scheme, an agriculture package, soft loans, new technology, Private Public Partnership in education, enrollment of school children, and more recently, the *Ihsas* Program.

Scholars and academics need to sit together with the Government. Civil society think tanks and development partners must join hands to make the program work. Ordinary people as well as farmers and youth need greater awareness of the important issues. The growth of the economy must become more inclusive. The vision to achieve these goals must be shared

with all concerned so that sustainable development can become a reality for the people of Pakistan.[34]

PAKISTAN'S COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

There has been sufficient political ownership of SDGs in Pakistan. This was clearly reflected in October 2015, when the country became one of the first in the world to incorporate the SDGs as part of its own "National Development Goals". In February 2016, the National Assembly unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The speaker of the National Assembly established a parliamentary task force at the federal level to oversee and facilitate legislation related to SDGs together with a SDGs Secretariat.

While vision 2025 lists some SDGs as especially relevant to Pakistan, the process of prioritizing SDGs is on-going, particularly at the provincial level where much of the Pakistan's development funding is allocated and spent. With the support of the UN, Pakistan is now taking steps to localize SDGs. To date, this has included commitments to impressive cost sharing. The Government's resolve to achieve SDGs is also apparent in its growing emphasis on strengthen data systems in line with the data imperatives highlighted in Agenda 2030 and in the goals themselves. This recognition of the centrality of data is important as Pakistan requires concerted efforts and investment to establish credible guidelines for SDGs while enacting evidence based polices to achieve their targets.

CONCLUSION

Islam possesses strong environmental principles. The environment, society and the economy should not be seen as separate entities in relation to the

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[34]. Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (website: www.issi.org.pk).

concept of sustainability but rather as interconnected. Human beings are part of the beauty and order of nature. Hence, there is naturally a strong relationship between human beings and the environment. According to Islam, human beings have been appointed as trustees of the earth and of the social and economic relations established within society. Hence, human beings will be held responsible for this trust on the Day of Judgment. It is clear that there is a close relationship between religion and the sustainability of the environment. In fact, environmental sustainability can be understood only in terms of the relationship between nature and human beings, who must not exploit the environment but develop friendly relations with it. The idea that human beings are, in some sense, superior to nature is no longer acceptable. ■

READING MOHAMMED TALBI AND
ABUL KALAM AZAD IN A PLURAL WORLD

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Joseph Victor Edwin

ABSTRACT

I will discuss the views of two Muslim scholars: Mohammed Talbi (Tunisia) and Abul Kalam Azad (India), who both lived in plural contexts. I will show that their political and intellectual views invited people to live as co-citizens and co-humans in the modern world. Both scholars upheld pluralism as the design of God for this world. Talbi maintains that pluralism and dialogue are two sides of the corner stone that holds a plural society together. Pluralism demands respect for all parties and for the views of others in the context of intellectual and religious freedom. Mutual respect is the basis for true dialogue and the corner stone of religious and intellectual freedom. Interreligious dialogue is essential for pluralism to become vibrant. Kalam Azad maintains that truth is the essence of all religions as it is founded on the oneness of God. Every human person can intuitively apprehend the truth. Faith and good works are universal values. These universal values call upon people to recognize one another's 'co-humanity' and live together as citizens in a plural world.

Keywords**:** Pluralism, co-citizens, interpretation, intentional reading

INTRODUCTION

This essay explores the views of two Muslim thinkers: the Tunisian Mohamed Talbi and the Indian Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on the theme of the co-existence of Muslims with people of other faiths and cultural traditions. They both present a case for Muslims to live as co-citizens and co-human beings along with people of diverse traditions from diverse

contexts. Both find a firm foundation for their views in the teachings of the Qur'an.

The views of these two Muslim scholars are particularly significant in the present context. Especially since 9/11, many people seem to question whether Muslims can coexist with people of other faiths and persuasions as well as people from different cultural traditions. Are Muslims really comfortable in a democratic setup? Are they happy to be co-citizens and co-humans among many 'others' in multicultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic contexts? Besides, many people have the impression that Islam is intrinsically intolerant towards people who think, live and worship differently. Al Qaeda, Taliban Boko Haram, ISIS further strengthen such impressions. The media often appears to be biased against Muslims.

In such a context it is necessary to highlight the convictions and affirmations of Muslim scholars who assert their commitment to plural societies, drawing from the Qur'an. This essay is essentially written for Christian readers. When he presented this paper at the conference on Religious Pluralism and World Peace in Lahore, Pakistan, the present writer knew that most of his listeners probably would be Muslims. However, I now write in the hope that at least some Christian readers who read this article will begin to explore the faith and life of Muslims and develop friendly relations with Muslims by going beyond prejudices and stereotypes. In the first section of this essay, I present the views of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and in the second section, the views of Mohamed Talbi.

ABDUL KALAM AZAD: RELIGION AND NATION

Azad (d. 1958) was named Firoz Bakht. He was born in Mecca and brought up in Calcutta. His father, Maulana Khairuddin, had migrated to

Mecca during the uprising of 1857 and returned to India in 1890.[1] Azad completed his traditional education at the age of 16.

Reared in an Islamic milieu that emphasized strict codes in the form of 'dos and don'ts', Azad began to rebel against such a way of life by rejecting *taqlid* (imitation). He questioned everything as he passed through a difficult time of spiritual crisis. He briefly abandoned religion and even the mandatory prayers. Although he was listless spiritually, he never neglected his search for meaning. Eventually, his crisis led him to the conviction that faith is part and parcel of human existence and realized that the religions were a source of morality for human beings. Reflecting on his spiritual crisis at a later date, he wrote:

> From the beginning I have refused to be content with the legacy bequeathed to me through family, society, and education. The bonds of *taqlid* [blind following of classical legal and theological leanings] have never fettered me and the thirst for knowledge has never forsaken me ... Never have I been possessed with an assurance of heart which the thorns of doubt would not have pricked nor with a confidence of spirit which all denial's temptations would not have penetrated. I have drunk the drop of poison also from every cup. When thirsty, my thirst was not the thirst of others. When my thirst was satisfied, it derived its satisfaction from one common source.[2]

As a young journalist and activist, Azad was very impressed by the work of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Following Sir Syed, he emphasized the importance of modern education.[3] However, he chose to move away from

1. Azad, A. K. (1959), *India Wins Freedom*, Bombay: Orient Longmans, pp. 1-2.
2. Azad A. K. (1964), *Tarjuman al-Quran*, vol. 1, New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, pp. 51-53.
3. Ashraf, M. (1990), "Maulana Azad's Vision of a United India," *Islam and Modern Age,* vol. 21, no. 2, p. 119.

Sir Syed, who was pro-British and insisted that Muslims should focus on education and leave politics alone.

Azad considered that the Muslims of India could not afford to neglect their responsibility towards India's freedom struggle. It was his firm conviction that the cause of Muslim education must coexist with the movement for India's freedom from British rule. In 1912, he started a journal called *Al-Hilal* to encourage Muslims to collaborate with Hindus in a joint struggle for the freedom of the country from the British. He joined forces with the *Khilafat* Movement, which had the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi. Through *Al-Hilal* and his political activism with the *Khilafat* Movement, Azad exerted a great influence on India's Muslims. The British did not take kindly to this as his political and literary activities went against them. *Al-Hilal* was confiscated in 1915, but Azad was resilient and started *Al-Balagh*, another journal with the same objectives. He was arrested and sent to Ranchi and was kept in confinement till the end of 1918.

Azad knew that he was called to play a leading role in summoning Muslims to active participation together with their co-citizens from other communities in the struggle for freedom from British rule and for the building of a modern, culturally-pluralistic India. He was convinced the pristine message that the Quran had proclaimed for centuries summoned believers to live with other co-citizens in harmony.

STRIVING FOR FREEDOM TOGETHER

On the 1 January 1920, on his release from incarceration, Azad met Mahatma Gandhi.[4] Azad drafted a resolution in favor of the Non-Cooperation Movement inspired by Gandhi.[5] At this juncture, Azad clearly affirmed the concept of nationalism on secular foundations and eloquently argued that Muslims should join the Congress and work with

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[4]. Azad, A. K. (1959), *India Wins Freedom*, op. cit., p. 2.
[5]. Rajput, A. B. (1946), *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, Lahore, pp. 68-69.

Hindus for India's independence.[6] He further stated that, for Muslims, striving for India's independence from the British was not only an act of patriotism but was also considered necessary because Islam required Muslims to break fetters, fight tyranny and establish a system of governance based on justice.[7] Azad had discovered the harmony between his faith and his commitment to India, his nation. In his own words:

> I am a Muslim, and this thought fills me with pride. The traditions of Islam during its career of thirteen centuries go to form my heritage. I am not willing to give up an iota of this portion. Islamic education, Islamic history, Islamic art, Islamic sciences, and Islamic culture constitute the elements of my wealth; and as a Muslim it is my duty to preserve it. Being a Muslim, I have a special position in cultural and religious circles, and I cannot bear that any one should interfere in this inner sanctum of my soul. But, in addition to these feelings, I am also the possessor of another feeling, which has been created by the stark realities of my external life. The soul of Islam is not a barrier to this belief; in fact, its guides me in this path. I am proud to be an Indian. I am an integral part of this unified and indivisible nation. The glory of this nation is incomplete without this valuable component. I am an essential factor in its composition and I shall never give up this claim ... We brought with us a great treasure and this land was also over laden with its own untold wealth. We entrusted our wealth to this country; and India opened the floodgates of its treasures to us. We gave this country the most precious of our possessions and one which was

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[6]. ibid, pp. 34-35.
[7]. Ashraf, M., "Maulana Azad's Vision of a United India," *Islam and Modern Age*, p. 122.

greatly needed by it. We gave it the message of democracy
and equality.[8]

HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

One of the important features of Indian secular nationalism is Hindu-Muslim unity. Azad desired that the multi-cultural mosaic of India should remain intact. He maintained that Hindu-Muslim unity was more important than freedom itself. To emphasize the unity of Hindus and Muslims he referred to Prophet Mohammad's Medina Manifesto, where the inhabitants of Mecca, both Jews and Muslims, agreed to live together peacefully, protecting the interests of all the inhabitants of Medina. It is important to notice that Azad drew on Islamic sources for his secular national politics, which included the peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Hindus.

CONFIDENT PARTNERSHIP WITH ALL

Partition was a critical moment for Muslims in the sub-continent. When large numbers from among the Muslim elite left India for Pakistan, Muslims lost their prominence within Indian society. The Islamic religious leadership that emerged at this point of history was largely inward-looking and was unable to give a clear direction to deal with the urgent issues that required attention. In these circumstances, Azad recognised the importance and centrality of citizenship in a multi-religious and multi-cultural secular country. On the religious level, Indian Muslims were called upon to reconcile their faith with modernity in a multi-religious and multi-cultural India. The deepest issue at stake was about the way they were to correlate the new challenges of modernity with the revelation contained in the Qur'an.

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[8]. *Speeches of Maulana Azad, 1947-1955*, Delhi: 1956, p. 182.

Azad recognised that it was an unrealistic dream for Muslims to seek to re-establish their own political order on Indian soil. He held that once political independence was obtained, Indian Muslims would have to live as equal citizens within a non-Muslim majority. In other words, they would not be able to enjoy complete autonomy nor the possibility of implementing a comprehensive political, social, cultural and religious Islamic order. On the basis of his reading of the Qur'an, Azad came to the conviction that Islam did not, in fact, necessarily demand expression in such a comprehensive and autonomous way. Azad's theological opinions were rooted in the Qur'an and he challenged the attitude of Islamists about cultural and religious diversity.

QUR'AN INTERPRETATION

It was noted in the last section that Azad was a political activist who affirmed political democracy based on secular foundations. His political views were in tandem with his theological views based on the Qur'an. The oneness of God and the unanimity of all religions are two central values for him and formed the basis for his vision of harmonious relations between Muslims and other communities living together in India as co-citizens.

Azad believed that *deen* or the divinely-ordained way of human life was one and that it was common to all religions. *Deen* is fundamental and unchangeable. Central to *deen* is faith in the One God and the living of a righteous life. Azad was of the view that the way of expressing *deen* could differ according to context and cultural conditions. He believed that the search for unanimity among the religions would bring mutual confrontations to an end.[9] These two important truths, namely, the oneness of God and the unanimity of all religions were the keys to Azad's interpretation of the Qur'an in the pluralist context of India.

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[9]. Ashraf, M., "Maulana Azad's Vision of a United India", *Islam and Modern Age*, p. 123.

INTERPRETING REVELATION

Azad emphasized that the profound ideas of the Qur'an were revealed in utmost simplicity. He invited readers to discover the reality of the Qur'an by reading it themselves. He emphasized that the focus of the Qur'an was the ethical and religious summoning of those who were willing to listen. He placed great importance on the state of *wajdan*, which is an intuitive apprehension of truth. Truth is based on mystical assurance.[10]   Azad recognized the human potential of every person and was convinced that truth existed in the heart of every human being.

Azad wanted to remove the cobweb of past philosophical and mystical understandings of the Qur'an. He maintained that a thick veil of interpretation prevented the Qur'an's central message from being heard. He suggested the path of contemplative reading of the Qur'an. According to Azad, the core message of the Qur'an was a truth that existed in an essential way in all religions. In other words, the essence of all religions was one and the same. Oneness of God is the basis of all religion and human beings are called to obey the one God and worship God alone.

For Azad, a most significant text of the Qur'an text was the following:

> Virtue does not consist in whether you face towards the East or the West; virtue means believing in God, the Last Day, the angels, the book and the prophets; the virtuous are those who, despite their love for it, give away their wealth to their relatives and to orphans and the very poor, and to travelers and those who ask [for charity], and to set slaves free, and who attend to their prayers and pay the alms, and who keep their pledges when they make them, and show patience in hardship and adversity, and in times of distress. Such are the true believers; and such are the God-fearing. (Qur'an 2:177)

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10. Troll, C. W., "Islam in a Pluralistic Society: The Case of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad," *Salaam,* vol. 9, no. 1 (January 1988), p. 8.

For Azad, the proper human response to God's revelation is the righteousness and the piety that the aforementioned verse presents. Although faith and good works are universal values that are to be found in all religions, Azad had to account for the differences between religions. In this regard, he opined:

> For every age and country God has ordained a special form (of worship) which suitably conformed to man's situation and need … Had God willed, he would have made a unified nation and community of all mankind, and no variation of thought or practice would have appeared; but we know that God did not so wish. His wisdom demanded that various states of thought and practice be created.[11]

Azad maintained that variations among the religions do not affect the essentials of these religions since the truth underpins all religions and the same spirit pervades all religions. The basis of *deen* is the oneness of God, which calls for the worship of the one God. The Qur'an enjoins tolerance towards the followers of other faiths. All religious followers can sustain the true spirit of their religion by their firm faith and righteous deeds. Since God is one, the Qur'an invites all men and women to be united as the one family of God. Azad affirmed that in this unity, humans could discover the corrective for their divisiveness and their true source of salvation. This was the theological foundation for Azad to build solidarity among all Indians and for Muslims to live as co-citizens along with others, respecting their differences and at the same being united with others as citizens of one country.

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[11]. Quoted in Hahn E. (1965), "Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's Concept of Religion and Religions According to His Tarjuman al-Qur'an: A Critique," MTh thesis, McGill University, Montreal, p. 19.

MOHAMMED TALBI

Mohamed Talbi (d. 2017) was a Tunisian historian and an intellectual. His book *Universalite du Coran* ('The Universality of the Qur'an') is a lucid analysis of the Qur'an. In this book, Talbi called for a re-reading of the Qur'an and stressed that the Qur'an affirms the equality of men and women as well as their rights and dignity. Moreover, the Qur'an guarantees that all men and women are free to follow different paths and destinies. This is an important affirmation of the freedom of religion: the freedom to choose and follow a religion of one's own choice according to one's conscience.

In another book of his entitled *Afin que mon coeur se rassure* ('To Put My Heart at Ease'), Talbi describes himself as a seeker of truth and proclaims that his loyalty to the Muslim faith is compatible with a belief in democracy and freedom. In his view, faith is first and foremost a freedom and an obligation. For this reason, to describe Islam as an institution dependent on a history, a place, and a culture constitutes a blameworthy act of diminishing the sacredness of the Qur'an and of Islam. [12]Talbi drew a clear line between recognizing the Qur'an as a litmus test of faith and asserting that Sharia was relative and time-bound.

SUSTAINING PLURALISM AND DEMOCRACY

Talbi categorically rejected any political expressions of Islam that involved coercion in religion because coercion goes against the fundamental principles of pluralism and has no place in a democratic society. He insisted that Islam had no intrinsic political principle or organization. He maintained that all Islamic political claims made on behalf of certain ideologies were wrong and misguided. He stressed that

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[12]. *Dictionary of African Biography,* s.v. "Mohamed Talbi," accessed June 15, 2017, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195382075.001.0001/acref-9780195382075.

Islam was a revealed system of piety and worship, not a polity. Thus, Muslims could not make claims for an Islamic form of government. Talbi was of the view that Muslims were called to accept, together with others in society, a form of government that served the common good.

Talbi had to answer the question: As a revealed religion, does Islam not distinguish between better and worse forms of government? Talbi maintained that in the light of Islam's liberal values and practices such as freedom, love, tolerance, and pluralism, Islam preferred a form of government that exemplified the aforementioned values. In the period in which he lived, Talbi stated that the democratic form of government was the form that allowed for the best expression of Islamic values.

Talbi maintained that pluralism was a central feature of Islam and an integral part of the Qur'an and the Islamic tradition. Pluralism implied respect for the views of others in the context of intellectual and religious freedom. Talbi maintained that mutual respect (*ihtiram mutabadal*) provided the basis for true dialogue (*hiwar*), which was the cornerstone of religious (and intellectual) pluralism. Dialogue made pluralism real. Freedom was an inherent and inalienable right of an individual in society. Freedom was the absence of coercive force. Coercion by religious or governmental authorities was a major threat to freedom. Was Talbi trying to impose his modern and liberal ideas on the Muslim way of life? Yet he was convinced that he had derived these values from within the Islamic traditions and from the Qur'an.

The effort to identify these values in the Islamic tradition and in the Qur'an involved a substantial review of historical sources and religious thought. In the process, Talbi identified and highlighted the essential features and truths of Islam that were universal in nature and which provided a sound foundation for multi-religious and multi-cultural societies. These values were both Islamic as well as universal because they shared a common ground with modern values that had developed in

different cultural and religious contexts. For Talbi, these common values were truly universal because they were anchored deep within human *fitra* or nature.

TALBI'S INTENTIONAL METHOD

It is important to give attention to the way in which Talbi read the holy Book that lays the foundation for his religious convictions. Talbi proposed the "intentional reading" (IR) of the Qur'an as the method for eliciting the "intention of the Lawgiver" This 'intentional reading' considered the 'context of revelation' as the key for approaching the texts. Although IR went beyond analogical reasoning (*qiyas*), it received its intellectual confirmation from *qiyas*. However, Talbi noted that *qiyas* was unable to solve all modern problems because it was devoid of the dynamic dimension needed to engage with the present. It was past-oriented and sought to make the present conform to archaic models. *Qiyas* neither encouraged a new vision for progress nor facilitated fruitful interaction with modernity.

Talbi argued that God was living and eternal and that, as God, His word provided guidance for humanity (*hudan lil nas*) for all time. God's word remained relevant for all time as it constantly engaged with the present. Talbi emphasized that since the word of God was alive here and now, hearers of the word should heed to it but they first had to recognize that they could only find out what God wanted to tell them at this moment and in these circumstances by situating the question in the historical context of the revelation of God's word.

Talbi affirmed the importance of 'occasions of revelation' (*asbab al nuzul*), which described the historical context in which a verse from the Qur'an was revealed. The interpreter of the Qur'an needed this information to ascertain whether a particular teaching of the Qur'an was a prescription for all circumstances or whether it was meant only for certain specific

circumstances. Historical and human reading of the text was necessary in order to ascertain the dynamics of the message because such historical reading placed passages from the Qur'an in their historical context. IR incorporated the findings of this historical and human reading and brought a scholar closer to the goal of ascertaining the intention of the Law-giver.

Talbi drew an example from the custom of slavery, which was once prevalent throughout much of the world. The Qur'an and Hadith greatly improved the lot of slaves by giving them broad rights and guarantees. The Qur'an did not stop here but encouraged the freeing of slaves. As a consequence, Muslims no longer discuss the rights of slaves because slavery is gone and the context has changed. Today Muslims need to work towards freeing all men and women from modern forms of slavery. Talbi held that the intention of God was to reject all forms of modern slavery and suggested that IR could help Muslims to recognize this inner dynamism of the Qur'an.

In other words, IR is based primarily on an analysis of the orientation of the text. For instance, the orientation of the Qur'an with regard to slavery is the freeing of slaves. Thus, the complete abolition of slavery may not be specifically mentioned in the text but it is in agreement with its orientation to free slaves. The orientation of the text indicates the intentions of the divine Author. Talbi believed that IR would impact decisively on the development of Islamic thought. It was inappropriate to take literal meanings out of context and apply them to all circumstances. This could even contradict the true intention of God.

IR makes sense because we all recognize that sacred texts have within themselves the potential to create new meaning in different contexts. Texts can speak powerfully across geographical, cultural and linguistic frontiers. Reading is not simply about capturing a ready-made meaning but reading discovers the meaning in which the text of the author and the

pre-understanding of the reader have come together to express a new reality.[13] While emphasizing the intention of the Author of the Qur'an, Talbi recognized the context in which it was read. By means of IR, Talbi pointed to the harmony that could exist between the intention of the divine Author and the diversity of contexts. Setting a clear agenda for Muslims to be grounded in the values of the Qur'an, Talbi was also aware of Muslims living among non-Muslims.[14]

COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES

In a community of communities there is a common thread that binds people together despite different modes of belonging and different loyalties. This common thread will be strong and binding if different communities within the larger community interact and intermingle with mutual respect for one another. Talbi described two important values that generate mutual respect: openness and commitment. The key sentence in Talbi's approach to pluralism is the following:

> There can be no harmony if we are unable to reconcile openness and commitment: openness, which makes us accessible and available to others, commitment which roots us in the milieu from which we draw the sap of life.

Talbi remarked that, in the past, faith communities were exclusive and had defined boundaries. New communities interacted with the host communities and slowly learned to adjust and to live together in harmony. However, today this luxury was no longer available for many societies since religions as separate empires with rigid boundaries have ceased to exist. Today people of different religious beliefs mingle and

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[13]. Gispert-Sauch, G., "Devotion to the Light of the *Bhakti Sutra*," *Jeevadhara* 33 (2003), pp. 208-205 and 209.

[14]. Nettler R. L. (2010), "Mohamed Talbi: On Understanding the Quran," *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an*, SuhaTaji-Farouki (ed.), London: Oxford University Press, pp. 225-240.

interact with other faith groups in a way that no one could have imagined a few decades ago. Talbi suggested that this celebration of diversity was a part of God's plan and believed that the time had come for religions to leave the comfort-zones that have given them security and to prepare for the changes that beckon on the horizon. Religions have to rethink their role and mission in the new emerging world order.

In the past, the Muslim *ummah* was geographically situated. What was thought of as *Dar al-Islam*, 'the 'Abode of Islam', was a clearly recognizable area. In 1923, when the caliphate was abolished, Islam lost an important feature of the reality that was known as *Dar al-Islam*. On account of colonialism and the migration of peoples for various geo-political reasons, the earthly frontiers of the *ummah* have become less clear. As Talbi writes:

> These frontiers are hazier still because a process of disintegration is going on within Islam. "Islam-culture" – the street anchor of authenticity – remains strong and retains a wide allegiance. But "Islam-conviction" – a living faith, a commitment, including the dimension of metaphysical certitude as well as that of cultic observance, is going through a crisis. The edifice is crumbling, either on account of ignorance, at the lower levels, or through indifference or open revolt in the higher levels, ranks. Yet, everyone takes pleasure, (by every possible means), in confusing "Islam-culture" with "Islam-conviction". Now, though "Islam-conviction" supposes "Islam-culture", the opposite is by no means true ... the term *ummah* is, moreover, taking a new meaning (in modern parlance) without losing completely its ancient spiritual connotations, it is coming more and more to mean 'nation', and sometimes 'people' ... In other words, the content of the idea of *ummah* has changed considerably ... One thing

> is certain today, and there can be no going back on it: the frontiers of the *ummah* are not marked out in the world ... From now on they are to be found only in the hearts of those who pray, whether those hearts be in Sweden or in China, in Cairo or elsewhere. A German or Malay may belong, while a Tunisian or an Egyptian is excluded by his own free choice.[15]

These comments of Talbi made some 35 years ago are very relevant today.   Islam as culture in terms of public posturing on different issues that affect Muslim life under the guidance of the *ulama* continues to be strong while Islam as a faith conviction in terms of a faith response to God's revelation in the Qur'an here and now might be on the wane. In other words, the *ummah* as a political community continues to remain strong whereas the *ummah* as a spiritual entity and as a faith conviction has been weakened with time. Conversations about faith convictions tend to border on jurisprudence and on the 'dos and don'ts' of the Muslim way of life.   The key to Talbi's understanding of the *ummah* is religious freedom. The *ummah* is marked on the hearts of men and women who worship God in the way of the Qur'an according to the guidance of the Prophet Mohammad.

For Talbi, a Muslim in Germany and India both could be part of the *ummah* and share the same faith conviction while a Muslim born and brought up in a Muslim family could be excluded from the Islamic faith tradition. No one is to be forced in or out of a particular tradition. There is no compulsion in religion. Talbi's position becomes clear in the light of his comments on *Dar al-Islam*.

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[15]. Talbi, M., "A Community of Communities: The Right to be Different and the Paths to Harmony," *Encounter*, No. 77 (Aug–Sept. 1981), p. 3.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Islam was born in an environment of multiple religions and thus plurality is not something new to it. The history of Muslims' engagements with adherents of other faiths such as Judaism and Christianity was, however, often marked by confrontational approaches that produced polemics and apologetics. However, this history also showed some glimpses of an informed understanding of one another. The 21st century has brought people of different cultural backgrounds and religious traditions very close to one another. Several million Muslims from West Asia have had to flee their homes due to wars and conflicts and they find themselves as refugees in different Western countries.

The question as to how these Muslims can express their faith in Western democracies remains to be seen. Meanwhile, in South Asia, especially in the subcontinent, the rise of Hindu nationalism has unsettled Muslim minorities. While Muslim communities are facing such challenges, theological tendencies such as *Salafism* and *Wahhabism* shrink the secular space that Muslims had developed over the centuries.

In these circumstances, Kalam Azad and Talbi have taken a basic idea from the Qur'an, namely, the idea of plurality as a positive value. They asserted that acceptance of religious pluralism was necessary for relations between Muslims and people of other faith traditions in democratic societies. The heritage of Islam and the dynamism that is found in the Qur'an can enable Muslims to engage with diverse traditions and religions in the struggle for peace, justice and harmony. ∎

WHO CREATED GOD?
An Attempt to Deconstruct the Age-Old Question
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Mohammad Qasim Khan

ABSTRACT

This study explores the current literature's conceptual, philosophical, and analytical elements of theism. It aims to deconstruct the atheist paradigm and provide a thorough examination of the answer to the age-old question, 'If God created the world, who created God?' This article examines the perspectives of modern scholars on God's 'createdness' and argues that current theists may benefit from a philosophical perspective to provide a logical and rational response to the age-old question.

Keywords: *God, Deconstruction, Creation, Atheism, Theism, Infinite regression*

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, people have asked, "Who created God?" For adherents of many religions, this is a contentious as well as a troubling question. This article will attempt to answer the age-old question of who created God if God created the universe. New ideas from the works of modern scholars will be used to discuss this question.

Although many individuals are oblivious of their faith, very individual is born into a certain religion, heritage or culture. On the other hand, some people discover new concerns about their religion while they are young or at school or during a mid-life crisis or because of some traumatic event. Uncertainties about the notion of an all-loving God may develop at such moments and a believer may adopt an agnostic perspective by submitting his doubts to the test of rationality. People learn the truth by combining

revelatory (scriptural) information with acquired knowledge. Theism places a greater emphasis on scripture or revealed knowledge, whereas atheism emphasizes learned knowledge.

Atheism is the belief in the non-existence of God or the complete abandonment of the construct of theism. Philosophical schools of thought like naturalism, humanism, existentialism, empiricism, and structuralism may all be used to infer basic preconceptions of atheism. Given the absence of proof for God's existence, atheism is no longer regarded as belief in the non-existence of God but rather as skepticism regarding God's existence. Atheism has gradually evolved into a sociopolitical force championed by atheist intellectuals such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Daniel Dennett. According to orthodox theology, God is an uncreated, necessary, and everlasting being. In ancient times, there was a much discussion regarding God's 'createdness.' The existence of God has been a hotly contested issue since the Enlightenment.

Belief in God is a human decision rather than a question of opinion. There are two types of people that are perplexed about God's existence. The first group consists of individuals who simply renounce the concept of God. The second group consists of those individuals who see a connection between spirituality and atheism. This position is known as faitheism. Faitheism is the quest for common ground between atheism, religious conviction, humanity and religion's ideals.[1] The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that atheism is the outcome of a superficial comprehension of religion. Intellectual inquiry and the practice of religion together, on the other hand, makes it possible to live a life of faith. I will develop my argument by focusing on an important question raised by atheists: "Who created God?"

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[1]. Stedman, C. (2012), *Faitheist: How an atheist found common ground with the religious*, Beacon Press, pp. 8-9.

My research adopts a deconstructive methodology, presenting a conceptual analysis of modern theists and atheists premised on a study of historical and philosophical literature and followed by a discussion of the literature's history and current use. To arrive at my conclusions, I shall employ the continental philosophical approach of deconstruction. The research question of God's "createdness" will be deconstructed by examining existing literature on theism and atheism to understand the relevance of the age-old question. As this issue has always been contentious, this deconstructive approach will enable the reader to acquire greater understanding. Arguments for atheism and for theism will be addressed from the perspective of contemporary philosophers. The deconstruction approach will reveal underlying inconsistencies in these arguments and allow me to uncover the truth conceptually.

The process tracing method is also applied to this research. This type of method tries to connect the "possible causes and observed outcomes."[2] Process tracing also develops new variables and hypotheses for case studies on cause-and-effect relationships.[3] This study will make use of dependent variables in developing arguments about the existence of God. The study's scope, on the other hand, is one of its limitations.

This research is based on an examination of the philosophical and argumentative literature on atheism and the responses from theist thinkers. The writings that follow all address the age-old question, "Who Created God?" Zacharias & Geisler (2003) explores challenging questions regarding God in their book *Who Made God? And Answers to Over 100 Other Tough Questions of Faith*. This source helps scholars answer critical questions concerning the presence and creation of God, which are two essential components of faith. In their book *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, Flew and Varghese (2007)

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[2]. George, A. L. & Bennett, A. (2007), *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, p. 55.
[3]. ibid, p. 56.

examine key arguments regarding God. This book is divided into two parts: the first examines the negation of the divine and the second explores the divine's revelation. After explaining the origins of atheism, the author attempts to discover the divine's actuality by delving into questions like "who wrote the rules of nature?" "How did life start?" and "how does something emerge from nothing?"

Tzortzis' work *The Divine Reality: God, Islam and the Mirage of Atheism* (2020) is relevant because it counters the comprehension of atheists from a rational, reasonable and Islamic point view and encompasses the Qur'anic assertion for the existence of God. In his book *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* Lennox (2009) highlights several of Richard Dawkins' points. According to book reviews, Lennox's writing has had a significant impact on readers since he employs various concepts to elucidate the origin of life and the universe in exploring the Big Bang hypothesis and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Finally, Sarfati's (1998) dissertation, *If God Created the Universe, Then Who Created God?* uses thermodynamic laws and metaphysical concepts to support the existence of God.

WHO COULD CREATE GOD?

The question "who created God?" presupposes that God exists. Like the question "Can God make himself disappear?" A 'created God' is in essence an illusion. This is one of the most hotly contested and, at the same time, one of the most troubling topics for believers today. Since God created this universe, God exists outside of the universe. Time and space are likewise part of the cosmos, and he must have created them. Only if there is a time limit can the idea of beginning and end be applied. As a result, God does not require a beginning and he may exist outside the universe's time-frame. Life after death, as per God, is eternal. As a result, it is possible that the time experienced by human beings may be limited. The idea of time is derived by contrasting a religious belief with Einstein's Relativity Theory, which states that time is relative. It varies from one point to the next. Only

in this limited universe is the time of a human being limited. If anything exists outside our realm, it must be eternal.

Hamza Tzortzis' book *The Divine Reality: God, Islam, and the Mirage of Atheism* (2020),[4] explores the justifications for God's "creation." This is one of the most thorough analyses of the concept of God's existence. Tzortis begins by posing the following query: Is it possible to create something out of nothing? In reality, what does nothing imply? The state considered as nothing is best described as a state in which there is no energy, potential, material, or causal condition. Every effect is caused by a causal condition, which might be physical or non-material. The implication is that things formed from nothing can exist without energy, potential or matter. This logic is in direct opposition to reason. Neither can similar logic to explain a world formed from nothing be accepted because nothingness is incapable of producing anything.

According to the metaphysical principle, 0+0+0, the answer is 0, not 3. There must be some causal condition for any entity that may emerge from nothing. Nothing denotes a complete lack of all things. Someone who believes that being may arise from non-being may likewise believe that something might vanish without a cause. In this case, we should not be astonished if a house is suddenly destroyed. If things appear without a causal basis, the same rule may cause things to disappear without one. This scenario seems to be logically unacceptable. Quantum vacuum particles are believed to have created the universe but these quantum vacuum particles are considered to be nothing. In terms of physics, this is not the case. Any kind of energy or tangible object will obey physical laws.[5]

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[4]. Tzortzis, H. A. (2020), *The Divine Reality: God, Islam & the Mirage of Atheism*, Hong Kong: Lion Rock Publishing, pp. 96-120.

[5]. American Physical Society, (1998), Focus: The Force of Empty Space. Available at: http://physics.aps.org/story/v2/st28.

A SELF-CREATED GOD AND AN UNCAUSED CAUSE

The meaning of the term "created" indicates that it did not exist before it was brought into existence. This also introduces the notion of finitude, as all created things are finite. The idea of 'self-creation' seems to indicate that something may both exist and not exist simultaneously, which is impossible. For example, is it conceivable for a female to give birth to herself? When something is made, it is understood that it was created by someone or something that did not exist before. So the notion that the universe is self-created is illogical because the universe had no ability or power before its creation. This conclusion applies to all finite entities that have been produced, including the universe.

Andrew Compson, the British Humanist Association's spokesperson, argued against the existence of God. He said that self-creation is impossible but that single-celled creatures were capable of it and he was referring to the ability of single-celled creatures to self-create. However, this is a mechanism of reproduction, not of self-creation.[6]

Someone may say that if the universe is created, then what or who created the creator of this universe and so on, *ad infinitum*. This vicious cycle may indicate that there is a need for an uncreated entity since a created object cannot create the universe. Let's assume that this world is U1 and that it was formed by a cause U2 and that another cause U3 generated it and so on. Researchers could deduce that U1 did not exist in the first place since when U2 was created, U1 already existed and this will continue indefinitely.[7] According to Dr. Jaffar Idris, an Islamic theologian, this would only lead to a succession of non-existents. Since existent objects

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[6]. Tzortzis, H. A. (2020), *The Divine Reality: God, Islam & the Mirage of Atheism*, Hong Kong: Lion Rock Publishing, p. 109.
[7]. Idris, J. (2006), Contemporary Physicists and God's Existence (part 2 of 3): A Series of Causes, available at: http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/491.

surround people, the ultimate cause for these existent things must be something other than time-based causes.[8]

Similarly, if individuals believe that another God created the uncreated God, a question arises: who is that God's creator? Individuals claim that God's creation is greater than God; it creates an infinite continuity in the creator's terms, which is inconceivable. It must come to a halt at one point to represent God's existence. Who created God if God had a creator? If God had a creator, the next issue is, who will be that creator? And so forth. Infinite continuity is not feasible.

The alternative to the above is to posit a first cause or an uncreated being. The famous philosopher Al-Ghazali[9] presented his view for the existence of an uncreated creator as follows: there must be a cause of the cause. It can either carry on indefinitely (*ad infinitum*) or end at the initial cause, which is nonsensical. Something has to be in existence forever. Since it was demonstrated earlier that the universe has a beginning and is contingent, we can deduce that the universe does not exist eternally. As a result, only God exists in eternity.

In their book *There Is a God* (2007), Flew and Varghese assume that both theists and atheists can agree on one thing: that something must exist for anything to exist. Take God or the universe as an example. Something has existed eternally in both of them.[10] As a result, it is inferred that everything must have a beginning (finite and created). This demonstrates that there must be an uncaused cause. God must be an uncreated entity that has existed from the beginning. Anything that has never been created has always been and any being that has always existed is eternal. The Qur'an

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[8]. ibid.

[9]. Goodman, L. E. (1971), Ghazali's Argument from Creation (I). *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2(1), p. 83.

[10]. Flew, A. and Varghese, R. A. (2007), *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, New York: Harper One, p. 165.

refers to this as follows: "Allah is the Transcendent of all, the Protector and Far-Superior to all. He has neither begotten nor been begotten."[11]

CREATION OR RE-CREATION?

If God is uncreated, how did he create the universe out of nothing? There must be a first cause of the existence of the universe. The Qur'an addresses this question as follows: "God is the one who created the heavens and the earth. . . ."[12] Here the word 'created' stands for 'originated' (*bada'a).* The term "originated" refers to the act of producing something from nothing. A chair, for instance, is either manufactured (*sana'a*) or created (*khalaqa*): it is made of something. A chair cannot be constructed by a tree but is made from wood taken from a tree. The term "originated" (*bada'a*) refers to something that was produced out of nothing. So out of nothing (*bada'a*), God created the heavens and the earth.

The majority of people reason that God must have a creator because everything that exists has been created by a creator. The argument advanced by atheists is that everything has a creator. A carpenter, for instance, builds a table, whereas a computer creates a smartphone. As a result, since every creation has a creator, God must have one as well. Analyzing this way of thinking, it becomes clear that the table and smartphone are not inventions. Instead, they are re-creations since the material utilized to make them already exists in the world. Humans are materialistic creators who, as a result, re-fashion things that have been created. The only natural Creator is God. From nothing, he created something. He owns the copyright to the creation because he is the original creator. If a book provides a new idea or generates an original thought, anybody who turns to the same topic or thought later may develop the author's original thinking. The first author's ideas are the original ones and

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11. Qur'an, 112: 2-3.
12. Qur'an, 2: 117.

subsequent authors expand them. The copyright remains with the original author.

WHO MADE GOD?

John Carson Lennox (2009) examines the arguments in response to the question: 'Who made God?' Lennox employs the arguments of historians and scientists to investigate this question and he contends that those who cannot accept God as the irrefutable reality will always ask the question: "Who created God?" Similarly, the question, "Who made Y?" is assumed to refer to objects already created. It is logically accurate that the chain of cause and effect must end at some point (ultimate reality) because infinite regression is inconceivable.[13]

In his explanation to the question "Who created God?" Lennox uses an analogy described by Austin Farrer. He mentions that Farrer reminds us of our early explorations of infinite regressions. Why do individuals dress in uniforms and carry guns? The reason is that they are policewomen or policemen who enforce the law. Why did they want to be police officers in the first place? They needed to work to make a livelihood. Why did they feel this way? They, like everyone else, wanted to live. Why do so many people desire to live? Here the interrogation stops. There are instances when it is necessary to refrain from using the word "why" and to reach a conclusion. Atheists and theists disagree on where to end such an interrogation. According to the atheist, the ultimate reality is the universe.

For the theist, the ultimate reality is God. In physics and philosophy, whether matter comes first or thought comes first is a contentious issue.[14] Lennox makes use of assertions taken from different intellectuals and researchers to address the age-old question. He begins with Socrates, who stated that irrespective of how harmful it may be to our past ideas, it is

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[13]. Lennox, J. C. (2009), *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* Lion Books, pp. 174-175.
[14]. ibid.

important to study the facts and to see where this leads us. After this, Lennox quotes Dean Kenyon who says that the more molecular biology and explorations of the beginning of life teach people about the chemical intricacies of life, the less they believe in simply naturalistic explanations. He concluded that science indicates that DNA denotes an intelligent cause. However, science is not able to identify the intelligent cause. Religion and philosophy must provide a solution to this question.[15]

Lennox continues his quest and quotes the scholars Wilson, Sandage, and Flew. According to E.O. Wilson, any scholar or professional who can prove the existence of intelligent design within the existing structure of science will create history and receive unending appreciation. The issue of intelligent design is a puzzle that every scientist aspires to solve but no one has come even close to doing so. Since there is no hypothesis, criterion, or proof, there is no conclusion. A famous cosmologist, Allan Sandage, argued that this universe is highly intricate and all its dimensions depend on a single cause. Another prominent philosopher and atheist, Anthony Flew, thought that DNA could only be regarded as the work of an intelligent Creator at the beginning of life.[16]

Zacharias and Geisler (2003) provided philosophical and logical responses to this age-old subject. First and foremost, they said that God was not created by anyone. Things that have a beginning require someone to make or create them. Since God has existed for all time, he has no creator. Almost every atheist thinks that the universe did not exist before it was created and that it has always existed. They attempt to connect their arguments to the first law of thermodynamics, which states that energy cannot be destroyed or generated; it is always constant. Taking their reasoning further, the law states that energy cannot be created or destroyed; rather, it can only be conserved.

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[15]. ibid.

[16]. Lennox, J. C. (2009). *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* Lion Books, pp. 174-175.

Even if energy were created, the amount of energy should still remain unchanged. But these atheists claim that the universe has no beginning. In fact, traditional atheists believe that energy is uncreated, timeless, and without a creator. Hence, the question as to who made the world is meaningless. Similarly, it appears pointless to enquire about God because God has always existed. If this universe had been created, it would have required a reason for its creation but if it is eternal, no reason is necessary. Similarly, since God has no beginning, it is nonsensical to inquire as to who created God.[17]

Atheists such as Dawkins and other intellectuals (theists) both thought at one time or other that there must have been something that has existed eternally. How did this eternal being come into existence? The answer is that this being has always existed. One may choose between the universe and God as this eternal being. But something must have existed forever.

Human beings cannot see God but some progressive thinkers have provided a glimpse of the existence of God. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump contend that when someone fully comprehends the divine characteristics of ultimate reality, they will acknowledge God's existence. According to the theologian Alvin Plantinga, God, who is Necessary Being, is omnipresent in all conceivable universes. Kurt Gödel, renowned mathematician and scholar, is satisfied that the universe is founded on reason and is, therefore, rational. He explained his point of view by stating that natural law and order demonstrate a supreme entity in charge of the whole universe.[18]

Sarfatti (1998) presents Einstein's reasoning and the Law of Thermodynamics to solve the age-old question. Atheists pose several

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[17]. Zacharias, R., and Geisler, N. L. (2003). *Who Made God? and Answers to Over 100 Other Tough Questions of Faith*. Zondervan, pp. 30-32.
[18]. Flew, A., and Varghese, R. A. (2007). *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, New York: Harper One, pp. 165-167.

skeptical questions, which they say God must answer if the universe can have an explanation. One could respond by saying that anything that had a beginning, such as a universe, necessitates the existence of a cause. Time, according to Albert Einstein, is related to both space and matter since time started with both of them (space and matter). God is believed to be the creator of everything and so, according to this definition, God is also the maker of time for God exists beyond time[19]. As such, God does not have any cause.

Thermodynamic principles (the laws of physics) provide evidence for the origin of the cosmos. The first law deals with a constant quantity of energy, whereas the second law is founded on the notion that the amount of energy available for work diminishes with time. If the energy is constant but the working energy decreases every day, the situation can never remain the same. These laws describe the beginning of the universe. But the assumption that the universe is self-created or does not require a cause will make this argument unacceptable. The universe has no properties that justify its preferential coming into being before it did so appear. This also demonstrates that the universe needs a reason to exist.[20]

Pal (2010) summarizes the arguments of academicians in order to find a solution to the age-old question. Scientists such as Stephen Hawking and Albert Einstein have hinted at the answer to the same age-old question. For example, Hawking's book *A Brief History of Time* includes a chapter on *the origin and fate of the universe,* which makes an attempt to answer the age-old question. He claims that the universe contains particles and raises the issue of particle genesis. He uses quantum physics to support his claim that these particles are made out of energy. The next question is about the creation of energy. When everyone considers energy to be zero in the universe, no

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[19]. Isaiah, 57:15.
[20]. Sarfati, J. D. (1998), "If God Created the Universe, Then Who Created God?" *Creation ex Nihilo Technical Journal*, *12* (1), pp. 20-22.

further inquiries need to be asked and infinite regressions will come to an end.

The same argument may be used for God's existence. According to common belief, God's existence is based on his essence. God is everlasting, beyond space, immortal, changeless and timeless. However, if space, change and time are all set to zero to explain God's existence, it becomes difficult to demonstrate that God is beyond space, changeless, and timeless. Distance and time are deceptive because, according to Einstein's relativity theory, light reduces infinite distance and time (the volume of the entire cosmos) to zero since it is a property of light.

God is seen as light by scientists because he possesses all of the attributes of light. This is the first evidence that he exists. According to the energy-mass equivalence, if energy is zero, then the mass is also zero. Energy and mass calculations are all-inclusive. If God exists, then God's mass and energy are both zero. According to Einstein, anything with zero mass will travel at the speed of light. If God has no mass, he is likewise light and as a result, God will be beyond space and timeless, devoid of energy and mass.[21]

Anyone who examines the question "Who created God?" will see that the word "created" denotes that something has happened in the past, in time. Does God have a past? If God is the creator of time, how could something have happened before him? God created all things in time and space. God created time, followed by space, and then everything else. If God is also created, would time be presumed to be superior to God? If God were created, this would have occurred in a process that took place in time. A lapse of time is required for a procedure. So, if God were created, time must be greater than God. The issue of *who created God* appears illogical in this

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[21]. Pal, H. S. (2010), "If God Created Universe, Who Created God*?" Scientific God Journal*, 1 (8), pp. 582-584.

perspective. This is like asking the question: "Can God vanish?" because such a question is irrelevant in and of itself.

These are the questions and the arguments as far as they could be gleaned from the work of theologians, philosophers, and scientists in answering the age-old question.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the arguments for God's 'createdness' in order to address the age-old question: "If God created the universe, who created God?" and offers some counter-arguments to the arguments presented by atheists. I have offered explanations that were philosophical, theological and logical in nature and proved that God is above time and space, the creator of the heavens and the earth. The question of God's creation seems irrational. God is the uncreated creator who brought things into existence out of nothing.

If God were created, there must be something greater than God. This leaves us with an infinite regression, which is difficult to defend. Human beings are re-creators, which suggests that they are the ones who actually create. Human experience shows that someone can design something and bring it into existence. There is much evidence of causes and their effects throughout the universe. All natural laws, however, must have been established by one original cause. ∎

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A PLATONIC VIEW OF THE POLITICAL ORDER
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Ajith Wellington

ABSTRACT

P olitics, a noble discipline, can generally be defined as the activities associated with the governance of a country. Sadly, this noble activity has been deprived of its noble character by those engaged in politics. Truth and politics have never been on good and friendly terms with one another and lies have always been a justified and glorified tool in political dealings. The world's hope for a humanely and socially better order depends on the political order. The progress or the regress of a country is determined by the degree of transparency in political institutions. Unfortunately today, for many involved in politics, truth is not their forte. Virtue is not their ambition. Development of the soul is not their aim. The people who elected them to power are not their concern. Plato was of the opinion that either philosophers become politicians or politicians accept the values of philosophy. Here, by philosophers, he intends those who love virtue; those who love humanity; those whose sole concern is the welfare and well-being of the people.

INTRODUCTION

The world's hope for a humanely and socially better order depends on the political order. As Plato (428–347 BCE) states in his autobiographical *Seventh Letter*, "the human race will not see better days until either the stock of those who rightly and genuinely follow philosophy acquire political authority, or else the class of who have political control be led by some dispensation of providence to become real philosophers."[1] Here, by philosophers, he intends those who love virtue; those who love humanity;

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[1]. Plato, *Letter VII*, 326b.

those whose sole concern is the welfare and well-being of the people. These are men and women who will not allow their own interests to take precedence over the interests of the people. These are men and women who are at the service of humanity and who will not hesitate to sacrifice anything so that the human race will see better days.

SOCRATES AND PLATO REFUSE TO ENGAGE IN POLITICS

Plato, hailing from a distinguished family, with many involved in active politics, was naturally destined to take an active role in politics. He was full of eagerness for a public career and, in fact, cherished the hope of assuming a significant place in his political community. Plato, being a man of honour and virtue, refused to identify himself with any of the contending political parties and succession of corrupt regimes, each of which brought Athens into further decline. Plato's decision and resolve to leave politics was inspired and further strengthened by the unjust execution of Socrates (399 BCE) whom Plato considered the most just man of his day.[2]

Political leaders of his day (470-399 BCE) wanted to connect Socrates with their governments. His refusal to adhere to the demands of the political authority of his day infuriated the politicians. He was ready to face the wrath of the politicians rather than to become a partner in their wicked deeds. The Democratic court voted by a large majority for Socrates' execution on an unjust charge of impiety. This injustice, a gross violation of democratic principles spurred Plato to withdraw in disgust from the political abuses of those days. For Plato, making decisions about the right political order is the most important choice one can make in politics.

Socrates had a reason for not wanting to engage himself in politics. This is well elucidated in Plato's *Apology* (399 BCE) where it is stated that "no man on earth who conscientiously opposes any organized Democracy, and

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[2]. Plato's *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo* recount the last days and death of Socrates.

flatly prevents a great many wrongs and illegalities from taking place in the State to which he belongs, can possibly escape with his life."[3] In his opinion, "the true champion of justice, if he intends to survive even for a short time, must necessarily confine himself to private life and leave politics alone."[4] Such was the corrupt nature of the politicians for whom power and prestige mattered more than their service to humanity.

WHAT IS PLATONIC JUSTICE?

In a true democracy, justice is held in high esteem. In fact, justice can be described as the most fundamentally ethical and political concept in democracy. What is justice? The famous Sophist Thrasymachus, as recorded by Plato in his *Republic*, answers this question when he states that justice is nothing else than the interest of the stronger.[5] This understanding of justice has serious negative implications when justice, which is in the exclusive interest of the dominant group, is used as a means of oppression and becomes harmful to those without the means of power. Hence, there is nothing more harmful than domination by the powerful and privileged over the powerless. The moral language of justice is used merely instrumentally to conceal the interests of the dominant group and to make these interests appear universal.

As Plato states in his *Republic*,[6] true justice is concerned with the common good of the whole political community. It cannot and should not be the exclusive advantage of any faction of society. Rather it should be to the advantage of every single citizen. Justice, which is concerned with the common good of the whole political community, brings friendship and a sense of purpose to every citizen. Justice that is not concerned with the common good of the whole political community can in no way be

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[3]. Plato, *Apology*, 32ᵃ.
[4]. Plato, *Apology*, 32ᵃ.
[5]. See. Plato, *Republic,* 338ᶜ.
[6]. See. Plato, *Republic,* 339ᶜ ‑ 339ᵉ

described as justice. Justice that it not concerned with the common good of the whole political community only causes war, hatred and anger. In fact, it can never be described as justice. But justice that is concerned with the common good of the whole political community fosters respect for one another, fraternity, liberty and equality.

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

Democracy is an ideal of human society. A political democracy is an organized form of governance in which all the legislative, judicial and executive powers are exercised by representatives and agents who are entrusted by the whole people with the exercise of these powers subject to its will. In any event, political democracy is not an end in itself. It is an instrument for the realization of social democracy. The final justification of any form of political democracy must be that it will promote social democracy - democracy as a social ideal or ethical principle. What is the meaning of social democracy? It means the complete recognition of the right and duty of every human being to develop and give expression to his personality by participating in the life of the community. The ultimate justification of democracy is that it enables every citizen to express his ideas and to become a better person in the promotion of the common good.

Democracy makes greater demands on the intelligence and virtue of the whole citizenry than does any other form of government. The working of democracy presupposes sufficient intelligence and character on the part of the people to choose their representatives and leaders wisely. This condition is frequently not fulfilled. The people do not always choose the best representatives; do not always follow the wisest leaders and the most competent experts. Thus democracy becomes, to a large extent, a failure. It frequently fails to establish the best conceivable conditions for the realization of the common good. It fails in the efficiency of its government. Hence, democracy may not even be any more satisfactory than other forms of governance. It can fail to establish and maintain equally good

educational opportunities for all its citizens and economic opportunities for all its members. However, we cannot expect the complete disappearance of these shortcomings but only their slow and partial mitigation. Democracy is still better than government by a bureaucratic caste system, in which the dictatorship of a hereditary aristocracy and military caste together with plutocracy have complete control or a government by the dictatorship of a class-conscious minority

IS DEMOCRACY A SUCCESS?

Today democracy, government of the people by the people and for the people, is believed to be the best political system. The distinct features of Democracy are freedom and equality. Nevertheless, Plato did not consider democracy to be the best form of government because, as he stated in the *Republic*, it can easily be corrupted and provide scope for a tyrannical government led by a dictator.[7] In fact, the distinct features of democracy itself pave the way to this undesirable state. For, on one hand, democracy contains the possibility of excessive freedom, of doing as one likes.

On the other hand, it is based on a sense of equality according to which everyone has the right and equal capacity to rule. These qualities of democracy enable all kinds of power-seeking individuals motivated by personal gain rather than the public good to enter politics. For democracy to succeed and flourish, the leadership of society must be competent and honest. This is one of the reasons why, in the *Republic*, Plato decided to hand the steering wheel of the state to philosophers.

Another reason why he decided to hand over the steering wheel of the State to philosophers was his pessimistic view of human nature. For him, most people are corrupt and are driven by their desires and passions. Philosophers are those who can distinguish between true and false beliefs.

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[7]. See. Plato, *Republic,* 562ªff.

They are people who love knowledge and are motivated by the common good, people who can heal the ills of society because they love virtue and truth. They value the progress of society as a whole and are motivated by an earnest desire to see people flourish.

CAN A RULER BE A LOVER OF THE OTHER?

In the *Republic*, Plato talks about different classes of people. The rulers in Plato's Republic receive only a modest remuneration from the State. They are neither anxious nor motivated by the desire to acquire private lands or luxurious homes and money. Persons who are motivated by the acquisition of private lands, luxuries, money, etc.[8] soon come to dominate other citizens. Such people can never be leaders who are willing to risk everything in their lives to improve the conditions of human beings in society. A politician should be motivated by a desire to develop harmony among citizens by encouraging them to share the benefits that each class in society can confer on the community.

A city whose rulers do not govern with the intention to obtain personal gain will be free from civil strife because such rulers will have the interest of all the citizens and social classes in mind. Consequently, a politician should be well educated and should be someone who is able to move beyond changing circumstances by reflecting on such values as justice, beauty, trust and moderation. As Plato states in his *Laws*, peace is a value desired by all the people. The political order for Plato is one which promotes social harmony by mean of cooperation and friendship among different social groups that benefit from and contribute to the common good.

For the whole country to benefit we must be ruled by the most competent people. What motivates some people to take on the responsibility of a

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[8]. See. Plato, *Republic,* 416dff.

politician? Without genuine interest in the welfare of people, no one is willing to become involved in the problems of others. Today everyone expects some re-imbursement for services rendered. For this reason, politicians who are motivated by the desire for money, honour and power will never do what is best for people. The unjust man or woman will make every effort to get the greatest benefit out of everything for themselves. But a just man or woman does not seek their own advantage. Rulers should not seek power for themselves. Once they have made their contribution to society, they should transfer their responsibility to others.

DUTY OF THE STATE

The State has three major functions: protection of lives and property, development of education and culture and progress of the economy. A democratic society cannot endure and progress unless it is composed of individuals having good character and some level of intelligence. The State has to envision and provide a good educational system which is capable of producing leaders who are unselfish in character. An educational system which is competitive and strictly job-oriented may produce capable people but cannot produce responsible people. Moreover, it is difficult for such a system to produce leaders who are unselfish in character.

The State is responsible for more than simply formal education. It should promote culture and science. In other words, it should stimulate scientific investigation and provide encourage literature and the arts. Besides caring for the elementary moral culture of its members by preventing vice and by providing moral education, the State should support the enrichment of aesthetic enjoyment and its cultivation as well.

No part of education is more important than the training of the individual in the right use of his leisure by means of spiritually uplifting activities. Since it is the function of an organized society, through its public agencies, to secure a fair measure of freedom and opportunity for all members of

society to enjoy the rights that belong to them as persons, it follows that it is a proper function of the State to regulate the production and distribution of economic goods**.** However, this function should not be seen as an opportunity to use undue state power to oppress the people.

POLITICAL CORRUPTION

Many organizations in the world today monitor corruption in politics, business and finance. No country in the world is immune from corruption in politics. The problem of political corruption includes a wide range of acts committed by political leaders before, during and after leaving office. It includes acts that are proscribed by national and international law as well as activities that are not illegal but do have a corrupting influence on the political process such as when private sector companies lobby for policy favours. Corruption is not only something that happens in large institutions and on a large scale. It happens in much smaller ways and is really only a highly visible aspect of human sin. For instance, employing someone without public acknowledgment of their employment is a form of corruption that is much prevalent in modern society.

One nasty aspect of corruption is that it is like a disease which we catch from one another. Corruption by political leaders is abuse of the power entrusted to them in order to seek personal benefit in the hope of increasing personal power or wealth. Political corruption need not involve money changing hands; it may take the form of 'trading in influence' or granting favours that poison politics and threaten democracy. It is distinct from petty or bureaucratic corruption in so far as it is perpetrated by political leaders or elected officials who have been vested with public authority and who bear the responsibility of representing the public interest. Another aspect of political corruption must be addressed, namely, the bribes and commissions paid to politicians.

Political corruption is an obstacle to transparency in public life. In the established democracies, the loss of faith in politics and the lack of trust in politicians and political parties challenge democratic values, a trend that has deepened with the exposure of corruption in the past decade. In the developing States, political corruption threatens the very existence of democracy as it renders newer institutions of democracy vulnerable. Political corruption points to a lack of transparency but also to related issues of equity and justice: corruption feeds the wrongs that deny human rights and prevent human needs from being met.

The root cause of all corruption is that of political institutions. The progress or the decline of a country is determined by the degree of transparency in the political institution. This idea of transparency in political institutions can be compared to the idea of universal religion which ensures human emancipation and the improvement of the quality of life. Unfortunately, the existence of poverty and the poor quality of many developing countries is a clear sign that political transparency is still a dream.

CONCLUSION

Many politicians today talk in flowery language decked out with fine words and phrases. They work tirelessly to fill the minds of the people with false impressions about their opponents. Truth is not their forte. Virtue is not their ambition. Development of the soul is not their aim. The people who elected them to power are not their concern. Wealth and money are elevated to the level of the divine. To such a brood of politicians Plato would say, "For I go about doing nothing else than urging you, young and old, not to care for your persons or your property more than for the perfection of your souls, or even so much; and I tell you that virtue does not come from money, but from virtue comes money and all other good things to man, both to the individual and to the state." [9]

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[9]. Plato, *Apology*, 30a – 30b

It is very unfortunate that politicians focus much of their energy and time not on their policies and what they can do to enhance the quality of life of their people but on their political rivals with the unwarranted purpose of getting political mileage. Their intention is to reap benefits for themselves.

Unfortunately, most politicians think that they are wise, when in fact they are not. They resent the ideas and advice of others because they think they know things that in fact they do not know. Many politicians claim to know almost everything under the sky. Their arrogance is bewildering. They address us from a position of authority. They level false accusations against others and a scenario is created to make these false accusations appear genuine and true. Unlike Socrates who said that he was not going to change his behaviour, not even if he had to die a hundred deaths, our politicians change their conduct and their opinions to suit their own advantage.[10] They have no convictions but speak words that are empty of content.

Due to the lack of political transparency and political corruption, democracy in my native county (Sri Lanka) and in many countries throughout the world today are like a large thoroughbred horse which, because of its great size, is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly.[11] We need someone to perform the task of such a fly. Truth must be spoken and should never be betrayed. Sadly, on the one hand, truth and politics have never been on good terms with one another and, on the other hand, lies have always been a justified and glorified tool in political dealings. False news is nothing new in politics.

In many modern democracies, as well as in my own country Sri Lanka, campaigns are run on the basis of lies. Therefore, it is not surprising that lies have become so natural and abundant that we almost expect them to occur. Lies have become part of the fabric of daily political life and have become instrumental in gaining political advantage and favour.

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[10]. See. Plato, *Apology*, 30b – 30c
[11]. See. Plato, *Apology*, 30e

Often, but not always, those who stand for truth exist outside the realm of politics. They are outside and, like Socrates, are subject to exile and death. For example, we know of so many journalists and social activists who had to pay the ultimate price with their lives because they stood for what is right and true. Socrates was sentenced to death. Martin Luther King was assassinated (1929 – 1968). Aung San Suu Kvi (1945 -) was put in jail. In his *Apology*, Socrates wrote that "if you should offer to acquit me on condition that I must give up convictions, I do not want that freedom."[12]

He preferred to die rather than to betray his convictions. Today, unfortunately, many in the political arena make no secret of acquiring as much money as possible and do the same to acquire fame and honour without any concern for truth and honesty. They disregard the fact that the primary task of a politician is to focus on what is of supreme importance.

We do not usually like to submit our conduct to criticism. So we silence those who criticize us. We seek the elimination of those who oppose us in the belief that this will spare us from any further criticism. But Socrates was of the view that: "If you expect to stop denunciation of your wrong way of life by putting people to death, there is something amiss with your reasoning. This way of escape is neither possible nor creditable. The best and easiest way is not to stop the mouths of others but to make yourself as good as you can be."[13]

This was his last message for those who voted for his condemnation. Nothing can harm a good man or woman either in life or after death. In the *Apology* of Plato, Socrates addressed the jury and stated that "now it is time that we were going, I to die and you to live but which of us has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but to god."[14]

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[12]. See. Plato, *Apology*, 29c – 29d

[13]. Plato, *Apology*, 39d

[14]. Plato, *Apology*, 42a.

Let me end by echoing the words of Socrates who said that politicians should go about trying to persuade young and old to make their first concern neither their bodies nor their possessions but their primary concern should be the greater welfare of humanity, proclaiming as they go that wealth does not bring goodness but that goodness brings wealth and every other blessing both to the individual and to the state.[15] ∎

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[15]. See. Plato, *Apology*, 30[b].

Book Reviews

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This latest book by Mustafa Akyol explores and discusses the concept of 'liberal thought' from within the Islamic traditions themselves The book starts off explaining how current studies within Islam have focused more on legalistic inputs rather than a discussion on the beliefs about God, God's attributes, and God's relationship with the world and human beings**.** According to Akyol, Islamic culture has become 'legal,' focusing on 'proper behaviour' rather than belief. Thus, the vibrant intellectual query of early Islam, which had its diversity and thought, has sadly lost its way and eroded into a legal culture of countless laws and codes that seeks to control, regulate, and police every aspect of life at the expense of universal human rights.

Akyol discusses the theological thought of the Mu'tazila who embraced the need to maintain freedom and reason within their theology. This way of thinking encouraged the adoption of a worldview whereby they saw a relationship between faith and reason with both serving as valuable sources of knowledge.   The first principle in this theology was the concept of God's justice, *'adl'*, which they viewed as the most definitive attribute.

From God's justice came the principle of man's freedom, *'hurriya',* and thus humans are autonomous in their choices and are the creators of their own acts. From this came the concept of reason and from reason came the need

for an allegorical interpretation of revelation. Hence the Mu'tazila saw the world as having a "natural moral code" that enables humans to understand values apart from revelation. The Mu'tazila also believed that the attainment of morality is possible without absolute compliance to traditions, customs, and revelations of religion.

This theology of 'free will' or *qadar* that empowered human beings proved to be controversial to more conservative forces who were concerned with rational theology and its influence on jurisprudence. What was also controversial in this thinking that eventually caused the Mu'tazila thinking to be challenged and die out was the concept that "God's power was somehow 'constrained' with the principles of justice". In attributing a 'constrained' virtue to God, the Mu'tazila implied that somehow, God was bound perhaps by the same code of value as human beings, a thought process tantamount to an aspect of heresy.

The conservative forces which arose in opposition to the open-mindedness of the Mu'tazila were those who adhered to Ash'arism. They argued that reason was good for comprehending God's commandments, not to speculate on them, let alone to search for truth independently. Thus, Ash'arites believed in strict commitment to faith without need for any reasonable or rational justification. They denied "ethical objectivism" and also rejected embracing the gratitude and fairness of God's benefaction. Instead, they chose to place exclusive reliance on what is good/bad and right/wrong based on the exactitude in Holy Scripture.

In other words, according to Ash'arism scholars, sticking to the texts only meant that when God tells us "do this" or "don't do this" there should not be any questions because what is good is commanded and what is evil is prohibited. Akyol highlights that this "soldier-like obedience" to religious texts as propagated by the Ash'arites, reflects the mainstream religious mindset that has come to dominate broad parts of the Muslim world.

What is fascinating that I see in Akyol's chronicle of Islamic history is that it sheds light on effectively the big war of ideas between two schools of theology which ended with the victory of the "divine command theory" of Ash'arism, against the reason of the Mu'tazila open-mindedness. It is thus important to understand that in terms of history and theology, there was an 'alternative piety' in Islam that allowed people to think critically in understanding how the Qur'an guides us to practice justice and goodness and refrain from transgression and evil. It sheds some light on how the current worldview of Sunni Islam is very much influenced by the conservatism of the Ash'arist traditions which in the words of Akyol has caused a disconnect between piety and morality, a religiosity devoid of ethics, where Islamic jurisprudence has become a pile of rules.

I agree with Akyol's overall premise in the book, that there is a need for a moral revival that is based on a critical rethink founded on ethical values to liberate the 'captive conscience'. The book reminds me of the importance of the plurality of ideas within Islam and proposes that the Mu'tazila vision is important to revisit and consider, because it aligns revelation with reason and allows us as Muslims and people of other faiths the basis for a pluralistic coexistence with our differences whilst postponing the ultimate verdicts to God. This is the message of the Qur'an (5:45-48) which is an acknowledgement of the differences among religions, beliefs, ideas, and peoples because it is God who intended these differences. This is the type of universalism and values that I identify with as a Muslim and why Akyol's book speaks to me to renew our thinking, to reopen our minds to embrace more reason, freedom, and tolerance. In doing so, we must be willing to accept open-mindedness as a righteous and worthy path to fulfilling God's goodness. ∎

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SHAHNAZ ROUSE
Gender, Nation, State in Pakistan: Shifting Body Politics.
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This book offers a detailed account of women's position in the structure of Pakistani state and society. It deliberates on the prevailing narratives that position women along two opposite poles: religious/traditional vs. secular/liberal. The writer criticizes this binary by challenging the boundaries between both, explicating the level of convergence, and discussing the problematics of gender construction through this dyadic lens.

The prime argument is premised on the critique of existing discourses on gender that consider religion vs. secularism as *a priori*. These discourses are intellectually impoverished because they forget to take sub-continental history into account. Post-colonial narratives are well entrenched in colonial history that serves to establish the *status quo*, which works at both macro and micro levels (state-level and individual levels, respectively). These 'modern' (p. 3) discourses appear distinctive, yet display convergence in meeting the specific interests of their forbearers.

The purpose is to incorporate women's voices, manage and direct their struggles by repositioning them in favor of desired narratives and confining them to certain terms and conditions. Nonetheless, the author does not take a top-down approach but bases her arguments on the '*convenience of subservience*' (p. 3). The outcome is that women are not only sufferers but active contributors to patriarchal discourses and structures.

Instead of adopting this analytical spectrum, however, the writer prefers the analytical lens of struggle for democracy by large sections of the

Pakistani population (p. 32). According to her viewpoint, the primary contradiction is between democratic and non-democratic forces. In other words, to the extent that women operate with the aegis of the state, they become participants in the reproduction of the very statism and nationalism that reduces their status to that of secondary actors in the national process (p. 148). She admits, however, that this reality is more observable at the societal level where discourses of nationalism, colonialism and Islamism overlap to construct gender as a secondary matter.

The analytical approach of the author raises some questions. For instance, the writer argues that the 'false dichotomy' between secular vs religious or colonial vs. anti-colonial were the 'modern' concepts that developed through the trajectory of colonial India to the post-colonial era. However, the author does not investigate the concept of democracy, which, according to her, is the true analytical tool.

The concept of democracy was introduced by the colonial forces and developed throughout the colonial era. How does it differentiate from other dichotomies? Likewise, how should one decide between democratic and non-democratic forces and what should one think about the blurred space between them? For instance, should one consider governments accused of rigged elections as democratic or non-democratic? Furthermore, what can be said of the band-wagoning of political parties in the period of dictatorship and the role of MMA during the Musharraf regime?

If we define democracy as the 'representation of women . . . (who) operate with the aegis of state', can we conclude that the Musharraf regime was more democratic because it increased the representation of women? This question does not only concern the relationship between democratic and non-democratic forces in the context of Pakistan but also the debate about the conception of democracy and its historical context.

The book consists of three chapters: *Discourses on Gender in Pakistan: Convergence and Contradiction*; *Sovereignty and Citizenship*; and *Militarization, Nationalism, and the Spaces of Gender*. In the first chapter, the author presents the conceptual framework and bases her arguments on four points: practices and discourse of machinery of the colonial state, indigenous narratives to resist or cooperate with state machinery, the disputed landscape of gender that has been incorporated by the above two, and the individual experiences of women.

The historical framework, in the first chapter, discusses the gender discourses according to two kinds of dichotomies: religious vs. secular or colonial vs. anti-colonial. She convincingly presents these as false by drawing on examples from the writings of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Ulemas (religious scholars), particularly Deobandi scholars. She also discusses the perception of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Muhammad Iqbal as national personalities and concludes that the attitude to gender by Muslim nationalists has changed in successive generations. Describing individual experiences, the author presents an analysis of the '(con)*texts*' (p. 44) of two manuscripts by prominent Muslim women whose writings cover the terrain of colonial, transitional, and post-colonial times.

The manuscripts are autobiographies: *Father and Daughter: A Political Autobiography* by Jahanara Shahnawaz and *Hum Safar* by Hamida Akhtar Hussein. A comparative analysis of these texts serves well to corroborate her argument. She points out that the voice of Jahanara Shahnawaz contributes to the narrative of the state at various points. But the author's analysis of the state structure also enables Jahanara Shahnawaz to locate and protest against the anti-democratic and top-down approaches that may obstruct the development of women's equality with men. Her analysis on this issue as well as the mitigating voice of Hamida Akhtar Hussein, who does not take a political point of view, and the contemporary positioning of independent and non-governmental women's platforms all help to stimulate the interest of readers of this book.

In the second chapter, the author discusses the gender discourse vis-à-vis concepts of sovereignty and citizenship. The argument is based on how the characterization of women may lead to the accusation of being anti-national or anti-Pakistani. The chapter deals with the analysis of state laws by criticizing the Zia and post-Zia eras. The author describes the withered spaces for women in the domain of legislation and their impact on society.

The chapter discusses legislative work and provides some illuminating examples as well as presenting an alternative discourse (p. 112) and the challenges that emerge from these new approaches. For instance, the author suggests that the debate around secularism vs. cultural authenticity needs further attention. She also discusses the discursive terms that have been taken for granted in the discussion about culture and raises the question as to who benefitted from empowerment. Do these terms describe the collectivity or only individuals?

The third and final chapter deals with the debate regarding the militarization and masculinization of Pakistani state and society. To benefit from international capital reserves and to consolidate their rule, the Pakistani ruling class described religion according to distinctive categories such as the following:
Public/modern/material/secular and *private/traditional/spiritual/religious*
(p. 130).

While discussing nationalism and state, the author discusses the marginalized conditions of the production sector of society as well as the state of ethnic minorities and the vulnerable status of women who have become liable to be labelled as anti-national. For instance, women's integration is not based on the human rights of women but it has been attached to the developmental agenda of the nation. The chapter also engages the reader in the question as to how national and global politics can raise the militarization of society which, together with the religious

policies of state authorities, leads to the entrenchment of a culture of masculinity at the societal level.

In short, the book presents a precise, well-articulated and extensive analysis of spaces for women in Pakistani culture and society according to issues of state, religion and nationalism. The historical background makes it easier for readers to understand the use of various concepts and their development in the context of the sub-continent. The text, however, could have described concepts such as democracy, development and community in more detail. Nevertheless, the author has done well to deal with such big issues in a small book by focusing on the everyday experiences of women in Pakistani society. ∎

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JOSEPH VICTOR EDWIN SJ
A New Spirit in Christian-Muslim Relations in India – Three Jesuit Pioneers.
Hyderabad: Henry Martyn Institute, 2021
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This book presents a convincing argument for the fact that there has been a sea change in the practice of Christian-Muslim relations during the past few decades. This significant change is evident not only in India but in many other regions of the world. The book deals with three members of the Society of Jesus (Jesuit priests) who lived in India and who pioneered this enormous change in the way Christians relate with Muslims. The author himself is a Jesuit priest, living in New Delhi, India, and reminds the reader that the Mughal Emperor, Akbar, had invited Jesuit priests to Delhi in the 16th century for discussions on religion. It is well known that these discussions seem to have taken the form of debates and arguments on certain topics. Even during this polemical period in the past, however, there was a place for friendship and affection, as the author himself relates.

> On several occasions Akbar demonstrated his love and friendliness towards the Jesuits openly. When Antony Monserrate was ill, Akbar visited him and wished him well in Portuguese. Many times, the Emperor asked the Jesuits to sit next to him even as a gesture of familiarity and love. He walked with his hands around the neck of Rudolf Acquaviva. He used to take them to his inner chamber for private discussion. He shook hands with Jesuits in a most familiar way. Such gestures were simply Akbar's expression of his love for Jesuits. No other person in his court would even dream of such familiarity with the Emperor (p. 25).

Unfortunately, the Jesuits at the Mughal Court seem to have been more interested in proving the superiority of their religion by focusing on polemical debates. In contrast to the dogmatic approach of these early Jesuits, the three Jesuit pioneers discussed in this book bring a refreshingly new attitude to Christian-Muslim relations.

Victor Courtois (1907 – 1960), the first pioneer discussed in this book, showed "a deep love for Muslims and deep respect for their sacred scripture the Qur'ân" (p. 49). Moreover, "in stark contrast to the polemics that characterized the strained relationship between Christians and Muslims" in recent years, the vision of Courtois "ushers in a new era, in which Christians and Muslims belong to a single family" and so "polemical debate should end, and family conversation should begin" (pp. 51-52). The author traces the influence of European existentialist philosophers such as Soren Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel on Courtois whose life consisted of balancing serious study of religious texts with fostering friendships among Muslims for, "like Gabriel Marcel, he (Courtois) believed that only in relationships founded on love, hope and fidelity can the other be experienced, celebrated and treasured" (p. 58). In the course of his life, Courtois developed three principles for his relations with Muslims. First, develop mutual understanding and appreciation. Second, highlight the goodness of Muslims and their culture. Third, focus on what unites, not on what divides (pp. 63-65).

Furthermore, Courtois identified a key issue by which Muslims and Christians could develop better understanding. The core of the problem, according to Courtois, is that "Islamic religious leaders, at least in India and now in Pakistan, lack the sound philosophical and theological training which alone can open minds to a dispassionate study of truth and enable them to recognize other people's point of view." Courtois was of the view that Christians and Muslims should work together to resolve these issues (cf. pp. 91-92).

Christian Troll (b. 1937), who is the second of the pioneers discussed by the author in this book, also wanted to develop deeper relationships with Muslims rather than to engage in debates and polemics. While very much aware of his Christian mission, Troll was open to the mission or *d'awa* of Muslims. He felt that Christians and Muslims "should remain faithful to 'mission' and '*d'awa*' respectively" (p. 127). Courtois had also written that Christians and Muslims should not fear the mission dimension of one another's life. Similarly, Troll wrote that "Christians and Muslims can live together in peace and contribute to justice inspired harmony only if they both remain faithful to their moral obligation to give a reasonable account of their faith to others (p. 127). With these basic premises in mind, Troll came to India and spent many years developing friendships with learned Muslims. In Toll's own words:

> In Delhi I used to visit regularly a small number of respected Muslim scholars. Between us developed bonds of trust and friendship that facilitated an open conversation on basic questions of religion, the history of Islamic thought and spirituality, and not least on issues common to Christians and Muslims (p. 138).

The author discusses the interactions that Troll enjoyed with Muslim scholars such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Syed Vahiduddin, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Maulana Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi and others. As a Christian scholar of Islam, Troll informs Christian readers about contemporary Muslim thinkers that argue for peaceful coexistence of various religious communities in modern society (pp. 160-65). His study of Islam led him to recognize three types of Islam: cultural Islam (in which Islam is simply a cultural practice), Islamist Islam (which has an inherent tendency to be radical) and the Islam of reinterpretation that was based on the spirit of the letter.

Troll concluded that the proponents of the Islam of reinterpretation were open to see reason as a socially constructed ability, which can operate in a

variety of ways and can, therefore, respond to the challenges of modernity without denying continuity with at least some of the historical understanding of Islam (p. 161).

In discussing the approach of Paul Jackson (1947 – 2021), the author finds a paradigm shift in his approach to Christian-Muslim dialogue because, unlike his predecessors at the Mughal Court, Jackson listened to his own experience as well as the personal experience of Muslims. Jackson's *magnum opus* was his translation of the Letters of the fourteenth century Sufi saint Sharafuddin Maneri into English.

In accomplishing this work, Jackson "appears to develop a 'hermeneutic of experience' which is very close to that of Friedrich Schleiermacher. 'Listening' to Maneri taught him that 'listening' is the essential ingredient in the effort to understand the other and is, therefore, at the heart of human interaction. Jackson's own words bring out the importance of listening: "I listen to the voice of Maneri in my heart. I render Maneri's teaching in English" (pp. 217-18).

In contrast with the Jesuits at the Mughal court, whose exchanges with Akbar were limited to a kind of cerebral knowledge, the author stresses that the interfaith exchanges of the three pioneers discussed in this book, namely, Courtois, Troll and Jackson, were characterized by experience-based knowledge. In the author's view, this indicates a paradigm shift in Christian-Muslim relations.

The concluding section of this book describes the paradigm shift that the author claims took place specifically as a result of Jackson's preference for experience-based knowledge. The reader may conclude that Troll's many theological conversations with Muslims were also based on experience. Courtois, however, had called for a "sound philosophical and theological training, which alone can open minds to a dispassionate study of truth and enable them to recognize other people's point of view" (p. 91). Presumably

such philosophical and theological training should also consist of learning to reflect on personal experience because the author finds an intimate connection between knowledge and experience.

Much more could be said about the precise nature of the intimate connection between knowledge and experience but this would be beyond the scope of this book. The three pioneers discussed here were certainly examples of a paradigm shift in Christian-Muslim relations by their avoidance of polemical debates and by their stress on the need to listen and learn from another's point of view.

Although each of them in their own particular way also engaged in an exchange of knowledge, all their theological exchanges were expressions of a new awareness of the significance of human experience. In this book, the author provides the reader with three models of Christian-Muslim dialogue, each of which is based on experience-based knowledge. Readers of this book may draw inspiration from these three models for their own efforts to engage in interreligious dialogue with knowledge gained from experience. ∎

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OMER FAROOQ SAEED
Philosophical and Scientific Analysis of Richard Dawkins' *God Delusion.*
Auraq Publications, Islamabad (2021)
ISBN 978-969-749-102-5
pp. 150 PKR 1000.00

Richard Dawkins is a British evolutionary biologist whose book, *God Delusion,* has become a textbook of the new atheism. In his review of this book, Omer Farooq Saeed provides a Muslim response to Dawkins' book. Omer's intention is to break the spell of the book *God Delusion* by providing his own philosophical and scientific analysis.

He begins his critical review of *God Delusion* with a short description of faith in God that is to be found in the major religions of the world. According to Omer, the Semitic religions, commonly known as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all believe in an omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful) and omnipresent (all-present) God. But Omer says that the non-Semitic religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism and Jainism) also believe in God. Moreover, mysticism is a universal phenomenon and spirituality is also a part of every religion.
Omer goes on to say that most of the ancient Greeks also believed in God although many of them were polytheists. Even some prominent Greek philosophers, like Plato and Aristotle, were monotheists (p. 22). For Omer, there has never been a human society on earth that did not have faith in God. The study of anthropology also supports this hypothesis and even the study of human DNA can provide us with some kind of epistemological confirmation for belief in God. In fact, scientists have found human genes called "the God gene," which is also known as a Vesicular Monoamine transporter 2 (VMAT2) gene. Since there is no evidence for unbelief in God in human DNA, Omer concludes that faith in God is not unnatural (p. 20).

The author proceeds to give a philosophical and scientific analysis of the preface of *God Delusion* as well as each of its ten chapters. Dawkins understands events such as 9/11 and 7/7, the Crusades, the Partition of the Indian sub-continent as evidence for the violence present in all religions. It is this violence that makes religion the bone of contention and the root of all evils (Preface). Arguing against Dawkins, however, the author says that "no religion in the world regardless of its followers, promotes or idealizes violence . . . If a follower is deficient in following the religion correctly, it is not the fault of religion but the follower" (p. 37).

Omer writes that Dawkins tries to draw support for his rejection of belief in God by quoting famous scientists such as Einstein and Carl Sagan even though these scientists have expertise neither in theology nor in the scriptures of world religions. Another point raised by Omer is that Dawkins presents these scientists as atheists while it would be more accurate to call them agnostics because of their indecision about the existence of God (p. 52).

Moreover, Dawkins showed approval of those who created the *Danish cartoons*. On this issues, Omer begins his argument against Dawkins by pointing out that discussion of the sensitive issue of the Holocaust is regarded as an insult by millions of Jews. Omer argues that, in a similar way, to show disrespect for the Prophet of Islam insults millions of Muslims. On these grounds, Omer undermines the support that Dawkins provides for those who show disrespect for religion and religious views (p. 39).

Omer finds Dawkins' methodology unacceptable because Dawkins applies his criticism of the Bible to all religions (p. 42). Another example of Dawkins's unacceptable approach is the way he blames religions for various social issues such as child abuse and the oppression of women without adequate analysis (p. 49).

Dawkins even takes verses from the Bible to show that God is an immoral being. For example, Dawkins says that it was immoral of God to demand that Abraham sacrifice his son, Isaac. Omer's response is to say that God wanted "to check the loyalty and love of his prophet Abraham for him" (p. 46). But God accepted Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son and allowed his son to live. Omer finds nothing objectionable in this event.

Furthermore, Omer criticizes Dawkins for rejecting the title *Son of God* for Jesus without being aware of developments in modern Christian theology. Omer claims that some contemporary scholars (Herman Roborgh) explain the title *Son of God* metaphorically as an expression of the intimate relationship of God and his beloved people (p. 45).

In addition, Omer expresses his disagreement with Dawkins on the question of evolution. Dawkins claims that the origin of morality can be explained by the theory of evolution, which proves that morality is the result of a gradual development. But Omer rejects the assumption that morality is the product of evolution and claims that Dawkins cannot explain why people usually feel so bound by the rules of morality. Omer argues that only religion can explain the total obedience people show for the rules of morality.

The author develops his argument against evolution by referring to two models of genes that have been formulated by evolutionary scientists, Nathaniel Jeanson and Jeffrey P. Tomkins, which do not support the theory of evolution (p. 55). Moreover, some fossils found in different countries around the world also reject the theory of evolution. For instance, the mushroom fossils found in Myanmar are 100 million years old but do not show signs of evolution. Other fossils also exist that disprove the theory of evolution. Many scientists have found the theory of evolution to be unscientific for lack of evidence (p. 77). According to Omer, Dawkins cannot reject the existence of God based on the theory of evolution because many Jews, Christians and Muslim scientists also believe in evolution without having to reject their belief in God (pp. 71-73).

Dawkins goes on to argue that cosmic evolution and the theory of the big bang can explain the origin of the universe. In his view, therefore, these theories can be used to reject the existence of God. In Omer's view, however, there is insufficient evidence to explain the big bang theory and so the question about the primary cause of mass collection and explosion remains unanswered. This kind of question leads to an infinite regression, which is logically unacceptable. Hence, Omer argues that God is the prime cause of the universe.

In the last chapter of the book, Omer provides several arguments for the existence of God such as intelligent design. He claims that we can see intelligent design from the macro to the micro levels of the universe, from galaxies to genes. Without the existence of an intelligent mind who is responsible for this grand design, there can be no explanation for the operation of the universe. Omer says that the argument of intelligent design is supported not only by religious people but also by many scientists and he provides the names of 40 scientists who hold that the universe has been created by God (p. 122).

In my opinion, this is a satisfactory Muslim response to the book *God Delusion*. However, one shortcoming is the way Omer has based his argument on philosophy without using philosophical terms and expressions accurately. For example, he does not even mention the name of any serious philosopher who has provided arguments in favor of the existence of God. Moreover, Omer does not deal adequately with Dawkins' severe criticism of the traditional arguments for the existence of God, which are contained in chapter three of *God Delusion*. It also seems to me that Omer sometimes addresses Dawkins in a way that is not appropriate. For example, Omer assumes that Dawkins has not read the Qur'an and offers him advice on how to read it (p. 133).

In contrast, in the last chapter of his book, Omer provides his own reflections about the existence of God. He draws an argument for the

existence of God from Bohmian quantum mechanics in which atoms get energy from an unspecified source and follow the general relativity principle, creating a situation like a matrix controlled by a supernatural force. For Omer, this confirms the claim of religious people that God is controlling everything (p. 100).

I find Omer's book useful as a support for a life of faith that is seriously challenged by the views of atheism because his book provides arguments that can help the reader to deal with atheism in a critical way. ∎

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BHADRAJEE S. HEWAGE
A Name for Every Chapter: Anagarika Dharmapala and Ceylonese Buddhist Revivalism.
Sulochana Publishing (IngramSpark®), Division of Ingram, (UK, 2020)
ISBN 978-18382222-0-8
pp. 114 US$ 11.99

An intriguing title makes the reader pick the book either from a bookstore or straight from the cloud for a quick read. Each chapter dissects an outstandingly enigmatic 19th century personality, Anagarika Dharmapala, in the colonial period of British Ceylon. He has been read by many as a man with multiple character traits with a constantly shifting agenda, opinion maker and frustratingly a task-oriented man. Bhadrajee S. Hewage in his *A Name for Every Chapter* presents this multi-layered personality loved and hated for different things then and now, even though several decades since his demise.

Many historians, historiographers, scholars in South Asia Studies, anthropologists and sociologists studying and analyzing the Ceylonese colonial period cannot but encounter this vivid personality of Dharmapala and his 'zealot like' assertively reform-driven activities. Hewage may be credited here as he might be the latest researcher among the few (Ananda Guruge, Sarath Amunugama and Steven Kemper) who seems to have excavated Dharmapala's diaries now in the safe custody of the 'Mahabodhi Society Collection' in Sri Lanka. His findings enter freshly into this fairly readable book. It indicates possibly what Gananath Obeysekereke and Richard Gombrich identify as the19th century Buddhist revival being 'protestant' in ethos and ethics, in the widely known field of research of the period now known as 'colonial'.

Dharmapala seems to have unconsciously emulated, in fact, the strategy of the counter-reformation of the 16th century led by the Augustinian Catholic monk, Martin Luther in a frontal attack on the corrupt clericalist behaviors

and abuse of power within his own Church. Hewage shows how Dharmapala's lonely struggle unlike in the case of Luther was selectively received by the people.

The 'exuberant Dharmapala' seems perfectly 'evangelical' not just about being, first, a 'theosophic indigenous Buddhist,' a label from which he later purposely distanced himself. Secondly, reading Hewage, Dharmapala also displayed some Hindu ascetic tendencies in the concept of an *Anagarika*. Thirdly, towards the end of his life, it was as if he was seeking a Theravada manifestation of a Mahayanist model of the Bodhisattva view and practice too. Social welfare and transformation was a necessity for his witness to Dhamma as in some Mahayana schools of thought. The *Siyam Nikaya* (chapter) objected to his *upasampada* (higher ordination) within its chapter due to his mixed caste but later, however, he was admitted to the Sangha (community of monks) of the *Siam Nikaya*.

He probably felt as if he had returned to his 'Hewavitarana roots of the Theravada *bhikkhu tradition*', but he passed away just 3 months after his higher ordination in April 1933 in Saranath (India). There was an unfinished agenda with a gamut of misunderstanding of his own conduct more as an aspirant of self-identity with an uninterpreted indulgence in areas that might have sometimes been unmanageable to him. Hewage identifies Dharmapala's Bihari Buddhist heritage in Bodhgaya as if it is the only one to be claimed as the Ceylonese Theravadin patrimony. This claim was turned down by the British judiciary system persuaded by the Bengali pressure groups at the time. This seriously disturbed Dharmapala's sense of self alongside the lack of support he through he could receive from the 'Buddhist world'.

Hewage charts well what I read between the lines as a psychosocial 'inbetweenness' of the 'Dharmapala-identity-pursuit-rollercoaster' from young David to John in the junior Christian (CMS) missionary schools in Colombo to a mature religio-social polemic-activist. Hewage's creative

literary device in naming his protagonist's 'identity seeking route' into four chapters seems to tell the reader that the activism of Dharmapala has its roots in the upper middle class and the early 'elitist desire to be somebody' and is what I read in the pages of this material. Dharmapala's attraction to know 'the world' 'outside his world' was suitably timed with his 'indirect invitation' to the World Parliament of Religions (1893) even though he was already exposed in Ceylon to Theosophists like Henry Steel Olcott from whom he later seemed to have distanced himself and his mentor, motherly Madame Blavatsky.

No doubt that Dharmapala made an impact in the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, but not as profoundly long lasting as his fellow participant Swami Vivekananda. Dharmapala's focus was made clear with his inroads into the international, regional and national social structures because his single orientation, whether in Chicago, New York, Hawaii, London, Tokyo or Bodhgaya, was to revive Ceylonese Buddhism, which had been forcibly belittled, made dormant and lethargic under colonial rule. He profoundly detested not just the British but 'the foreignness' even among his compatriots. He called a 'spade a spade' and no wonder that this was considered provocative, partisan and even aggressively inappropriate by some of his contemporaries.

By Hewage's division of 'Four Chapters,' he exposes the psychological moorings of the 'Dharmapala dilemma' and his insatiable desire 'to be somebody' mediated by his profuse travel from East to West and East to East and encounters with influential foreign personalities in his life among theosophists like Colonel Olcott, Madame Blavatsky and of course his biggest funder, a Hawaii-based philanthropist Mary Foster, who was introduced to him by Presbyterian pastor John Henry Barrows, the chairman of the Parliament of World Religions in 1893; and later, his traveler friends Charles Webster Leadbeater and Annie Beasant in rural Ceylon. Hewage observes that Dharmapala gained more self-worth from

these 'foreign' men and women than from his own countrymen, as he browses through his protagonist's diaries.

Dharmapala genuinely envisioned a global Buddhism by attempting to reclaim Bodhgaya as a binding factor for worldwide Buddhists, and he perhaps was charged for this task at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago (1893). Also, it is clear that he was keen to look to the Bodhgaya Buddhist heritage after he came across the *Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold.

However, I have found that Obeyesekere, Gombrich, Asanga Tilekaratne and Gitanjali Surendran in their own study and analysis indicate that Dharmapala, though with a right intention, handled issues un-strategically. This was clear with the verdict of the Bengal High court, led by Justices MacPherson and Banerjee, as they claimed in their judgment that "the sole superintendent of the Temple" has little historicity as there was no evidence that "Buddhist priests have ever exercised any control or authority in the Temple within living memory."

Hewage interestingly draws a fleet of researchers and the court verdict into his discussion, insinuating that Dharmapala neither had the capacity nor the bold vision for such a colossal task as reclaiming Bodhgaya as a rallying axis for Buddhists even though his intention might have been desirable and on par with his cause-led prolific activism. What Dharmapala might have underestimated was the local politics of Bengal and British India which knew where their '*chapaati* and curry' came from. With severe criticism of Olcott for the Bodhgaya failure, Dharmapala felt abandoned by his Buddhist world. Even though Dharmapala's form of militancy (*Buddhagayawa Beraaganiv/Save Bodhgaya*), the reclaim campaign, contained a legitimate cause, his strategy towards an erudite defense of his claim in the courts proved otherwise.

However, Dharmapala is credited by all that Hewage refers to right through the text and consults, as a relentless magnate, an uncompromising

plutocrat for the Buddhist cause in colonial times. It is in this context perhaps that Kemper notes that Dharmapala was a critic first and a social reformer second, and the latter consequently damaged even the legitimacy of his intention, according to Ananda Guruge. Dharmapala's impulsive and even hostile outbursts were clearly directed against three groups in his psyche as I read the material. Firstly the British, secondly the foreign missionaries and thirdly the minorities.

Interestingly, he little knew that the Buddhists themselves were in some form politically linked to these three groups as well; de facto, he was fighting an enemy within. Hewage excavates by examining this scenario. This is further reiterated by him with Harshana Rambukwella's analysis that Dharmapala's view of 'Sinhalaness' seems to be a reformist one, but I wish to record a religio-social schizophrenic understanding of both religion and society by Dharmapala, which for Rambukwella is a dichotomy by Dharmapala between 'pride in a glorious Sinhala past' and an 'embarrassment with present impoverishment' and even decay.

In the epilogue, Hewage attempts a snapshot of Dharmapala's influence from his demise in 1933 up to 2019. It is a good attempt and he does it well but he conspicuously bypasses the two southern insurrections and the 30-year war which are a historiographical lacuna in the text. If one attempts an interpretation of the uprising of the radical left (1971) and the 1989 regrouping of the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (Peoples' Liberation Front) and the origin, then the formation, growth and the annihilation of the militant Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, LTTE (1983- 2009), should have been stated and interpreted in the light of 'Dharmapala content and remittance' as Hewage argues robustly in the rest of the book in other similar historical episodes.

In this sense Hewage arguably plunges into an epilogue and draws on a 'cafeteria type of hermeneutical style' (selective). In fact, it might have been

more suitable as material for his next book. The epilogue crosses the boundary of the scope of this piece of work.

It is easy reading, but assumes that the reader is aware of the background information. Except for two repetitions on pages 40 and 59-60, a few other typological errors and some mixed font sizes, the rest of the book flows well. I suggest that researchers of Sri Lanka Studies and South Asia Studies read it as part of the history of both the British period and post-colonial Sri Lanka/South Asia. ∎

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INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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