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Islamic/Christian Dialogue

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It was a remarkable sight. A heterogeneous group of people drawn from all over the globe at the invitation of one of its youngest republics — a new nation still in metamorphosis — a strange, slowly emerging country.

It was a gathering, a happening. It was an exhibition for writers and a photographic session. It was a collection of theologians, historians, politicians, scholars and journalists all there to satisfy some curiosity — all reaching, too, for an elusive dream.

We were there to observe, record or take part in a debate which began well over a thousand years ago. A debate which would touch the most sensitive parts of man's being, his faith, his spiritual understanding, his creeds and codes for living, his hopes.

Centuries ago dialogues such as this took place regularly and with a certain measure of equanimity. But political interests, environment, economics sent these two great religions on ever more divergent paths until today in our modern space age we know less about each other than did the ordinary believer of the tenth century. Ignorance and fear have shrouded our views. Only a tiny minority of scholars have kept some strands of understanding between us, and frequently these strands have been twisted to suit individual beliefs.

The conference in Tripoli was held under the patronage of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, the Chairman of Libya's Revolutionary Command Council. Over sixty countries were represented in some capacity. A journalist from Sri Lanka, a politician from Venezuela, an archaeologist from Denmark, a bishop from Russia, a Muslim from the U.S.A., an historian from Scotland, some five hundred of us talked, wondered, listened, argued.

DELEGATES

The Christian religion was represented in the dialogue by the Vatican. Some Orthodox and Protestant Churches sent observers. They occasionally took the floor for some specific contribution.

The Muslim religion was represented by Islamic scholars from Libya, Sudan, Syria, Palestine, Pakistan, Algeria, Tunisia and the Lebanon.

The Vatican delegation, precise, practised, its papers well prepared, was supported by a battalion of priests, monks and Roman Catholic theologians. In the search for human peace in a chaotic world they were ready and willing to reach for some common ground with Christianity's nearest theological neighbors.

The Muslims, relaxed, at home in the inevitably Arab atmosphere girded themselves for defense and attack, and seemed to hope that the conference would bring some measure of recognition they thought long overdue.

LIBYAN WELCOME

The seminar took place in Libya's newest conference hall, the "at-tahrir" — new theatre. Flags flew, police doubled as guards and guides, Libyan newsmen hosted the journalists in one hotel while the huge new Shati (beach) Hotel was given over to all other guests. Buses, minibuses and cars without riders ferried us to and from the theatre, dinners or receptions. The atmosphere was remarkably harmonious. The Libyans were welcoming and caring. Dozens of languages melted into a pot which eventually poured out, principally, French, English or Arabic. Dozens of costumes, head dresses, bishop's mitres and mufti's turbans created color and pattern.

The conference began on a cool Sunday afternoon. We entered the theatre through a human funnel created by Libya's security men, soldiers and police. The auditorium was packed. Though every observer's seat was numbered and named, few were to stick to their



Islamic Christian Dialogue (Continued)



allotted place either that day or in the days to follow. The air of casual camaraderie and general curiosity was such that everyone moved from place to place according to interest or acquaintance.

Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Al Cherif, Chairman of the Islamic Delegation and President of the Conference, called the seminar to order. The Makhariah (reader) began with a hauntingly beautiful chanting of the story of the birth of Jesus from the Koran.

Egyptian Dominican Père Anawati, a member of the Vatican Delegation, followed by chanting from the fifth chapter of the gospel according to St. Matthew including both the beatitudes and Lord's Prayer. The tone of the meeting was set.

THE PURPOSE

After praising God and asking his blessing on us Dr. Al Cherif, in his opening speech, declared that the conference had been called to create a new atmosphere of mutual confidence between the Muslim and Christian worlds and to provide a firmer basis of cooperation.

He announced that four topics would be discussed:

1. Is it possible for Religion to be an Ideology of Life?
2. The Common Bases for Beliefs and Spheres of Meeting Together in all Fields of Life.
3. Social Justice, a Fruit of the Belief in God.
4. How can we eliminate faulty Prejudices and Weak Confidence which still separate us from each other?

Cardinal Pignedoli, leader of the Vatican Delegation, benign, smiling, with a simplicity and humility which gradually won the hearts of all who attended, was second to speak. In quiet assured French, he lifted up the two essential values SHARED by religions — values, he affirmed, both sides SEEK to foster: First, love of God; second, the brotherhood of man.

THE DEBATE

On Monday debate began in earnest. It was between Dr. Abdurachman Utba and Dr. Anthony Chullikal. The subject — *Can Religion be an Ideology of Life, or Religion and Contemporary Society*. BOTH sides agreed that RELIGION is superior to all ideologies. Dr. Utba's paper was a well-constructed presentation of the meaning of ideology, the inadequacies of secular ideologies, and

man's search for a just and equitable life. He then presented Islam with its creed, ethics, and jurisprudence as the positive answer to man's search for spiritual and material well-being. It was a straightforward and scholarly paper which set the tone for much that was to follow.

Dr. Chullikal's approach was quite different. He emphasized that true religion implies a far deeper reality than simply a mode of behavior based on ethical principles. Christianity, he stated, is primarily interested in building an "intimate, personal and unique" spiritual life which will give the individual meaning and purpose. Christianity does not, he said, seek to impose a life style on humanity, but recognizes the need for a genuine pluralism in which the freedom of each person is maintained. It became obvious that many were confused by his theological and philosophical approach. In the period for elaboration he, therefore, emphasized how Christian individuals, taught, inspired and enabled by the church, undertake many initiatives in the field of social justice and moral reform.

On Monday evening, while the probing of Dr. Chullikal's thesis was being continued by Dr. Izaddin Ibrahim, one of the week's most constructive and healing debaters, a commotion was heard at the back of the hall. Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi entered in a swarm of security men. Cameramen and newsmen, many of whom had never seen this extraordinary, charismatic leader before, clambered over seats to reach him. Tall, smiling, in cardigan without a jacket, he stood in the aisle unable to move for the crowd of admirers.

Cardinal Pignedoli assisted by Dr. Al Cherif made his way off the platform and up the aisle. It was unforgettable to see the red-sashed, white-haired Catholic prelate and the young chairman of the Libyan Revolutionary Command Council greeting each other with dignity, warmth and mutual respect.

THE COLONEL'S QUESTIONS

Ghaddafi, after listening to the debate for a brief time, joined the Muslim side and put three questions to the Vatican side.

"I would like to ask some questions," he said. "The Vatican State. Is it based on religion or . . . what sort of state is it?"

Father Rassano replied that the role of the Vatican has constantly developed within the changing patterns of history

and that the explanations concerning it have been conditioned by the frame of reference of the one who questions as well as by the one who answers. Each is an attempt to understand or explain the fact that for those in communion with her, the Holy Roman See is a source of unity, truth and concerted action.

Ghaddafi then asked about the day's subject. ("Can religion be an ideology for life?") "Supposing," he said, "we reach a yes or no on today's question. What next do you do? Anything?" Plans and suggestions for positive actions were as numerous as those who attempted to respond. Ghaddafi was visibly distressed that the counsel of religious men should so widely differ. So he threw his third punch. "Is religion one or another or several?" The classic debate. All the affirmations of the unity of God, and of the common historical source for the three great monotheistic religions could not belie the historical reality that man's response to God's initiative has created radically different theological, ethical and ecclesiastical systems. The unity of religion is not a fact in today's world. Ghaddafi visibly hardened as he realized that it WILL NOT be easy to achieve the religious solidarity he seeks as part of a solution to the ills of the twentieth century.

Ghaddafi then argued the case for Islam on the basis of its being written at the time of the prophet Mohamed, whereas since the text of the four gospels differ, their complete historicity may be doubted. He then made an unexpected statement about Jihad — holy war — which gave the journalists plenty of copy that night. "A Jihad is between believers and unbelievers," he said. "The war (with Israel) is not a Jihad but a fight for principle. The Jews are people of the Holy Book." He then invited the Jews to join in this sort of dialogue.

The discussion of Colonel Ghaddafi's appearance at the conference, his questions and the answers that were given continued in the hotel lobby and corridors long after the conference session was adjourned. Did the Colonel speak for "the average layman"? Where the guidance of the religious leader is being sought by the layman is he not seeking for practical guidance in meeting life's day-to-day problems, as well as direction for achieving a rich energizing spiritual life? Does he not expect from them a workable plan in which he can join with others to guarantee freedom and to improve the quality of life? Above all else, is he not asking his religious lead-

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● HIGHLIGHT

Concepts Which Unite Islam and Christianity



Father Maurice Borrmans

Father Maurice Borrmans, lecturer in Arabic and Islamics at the Pontifical Institute of Arabic Studies in Rome, spoke on the third day of the conference. His paper was entitled *The Doctrinal Basis Common to the Two Religions and Different Areas of Convergence*. Using comparative passages from the Bible and the Koran as punctuation points and gaining support and strength from the Constitutions, Decrees and Declarations of the Second Vatican Council, he drew an ever clearer picture of the similar foundations on which Muslim and Christian build their faith and demonstrate it.

He began with our common heritage basing our knowledge of God on the verse in St. Paul's letter to the Romans (Ch. 1, Verse 20)

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead . . ."

Creation

Explaining that our common heritage is God's creation, the heavens, the earth, and all things thereon; that we are His people; that we believe in Him, one God, omnipotent and omnipresent and that we watch for ways to prove his presence and power, he told us that "the human mind is capable . . . of knowing that God exists," adding that "contingent being supposes a necessary being."

Reason and Faith

Christians and Muslims both affirm that there are two sources of knowledge; creation and revelation, therefore, we are both people of reason and faith.

Prophets and Books

United by faith in one God, both Muslims and Christians believe that God sent prophets and communicated with mankind through them and that the sacred Books, give worthy guidelines for behavior and commitment. We have *one origin*, we are *one community*, we have *one goal*, God.

Father Borrmans then developed his thesis by discussing our identical views of one living God, as recorded in scripture.

"Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4)

"He is God, one, God alone" (Koran 112,1-2)

And His creation:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

(Gen. 1:1)

"Creator of the heavens and earth" (Koran 2, 117)

A God who knows and loves men, who pardons and is merciful, who is worthy to be praised and glorified.

Then he presented the prophets Abraham and Moses whom we call "God's friend" and "God's interlocutor". He recognized that since Muslims and Christians hold differing views of Mohamed and Christ Jesus that "authentic dialogue requires that each side should respect totally the viewpoint of the other, and show extreme patience, leaving it to God to purify this viewpoint, illuminate and perfect it."

Worship

As for our methods of worship, we both worship God through submission, obedience and prayer. Though our rites and forms of prayer may differ, "We are all trying to adore God in Truth." And we both hold that "each man is responsible before God alone for his personal development and his faith." Furthermore we require that each should belong to a particular community — the Umma for Muslims, the Church for Christians.

Commandments

We have common laws in the commandments which were given to Moses whom we both recognize. We have a common command to love our brothers given through certain "hadiths" as well as the teachings of Jesus.

"No one is a true believer until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself."

(Ghazali, Ihya, K. al-madabba)

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:31)

The second section of Borrmans' thesis was on our areas of convergence. He began with the challenges of the modern world to faith in God, specifying Marxism, Nietzscheism, psychoanalysis, existentialism and structuralism, as well as our own minimizing of economic injustices and class structures. "Should not Christians and Muslims renew their methods and exchange experience so that together they may face up to the challenges of modern thought and give positive answers to the questions set by an atheistic culture?", he asked. Idols constantly spring up in the name of the state, sex, money, technical achievements, consumer society, fame, false freedom, illusory happiness. "Cannot this struggle to free our brothers from all forms of oppression unite us?"

Our faith in God is the basis of such a commitment to service. "It is because we believe in the living God who loves life . . . It is because we believe in a just God . . . It is because we believe in God who is free to create and initiate . . . It is because we believe in God who is Peace . . . It is because we believe in a God of mercy and pardon . . ." Borrmans' phrases punctuated his call for a united effort to serve mankind and fight against modern discrimination, wars, indignities, decadence, and ignorance.

"Life for all, justice for all, freedom for all, brotherhood for all men, these are the human values which, since they are values of faith constitute common ground . . ." said Borrmans. Concern for man's dignity, the human community, and the value of human action will help bring about God's plan for his creation, "a new heaven and a new earth." The dignity of marriage and of the family, cultural development, and socio-economic order are urgent problems for Christians and can constitute further common ground for the commitment of Believers.

These as well as the maintenance of peace and the building up of a community of nations are modern challenges for the "brotherhood of Believers."

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

(First Epistle of John Ch. 3:18)

"Work and God will surely see your work, and his Messenger and the Believers" (Koran 9, 105)

Borrmans concluded that in the very fight against prejudices we, both Muslims and Christians, will discover how much unites us already.



Cardinal Pignedoli and Colonel Ghaddafi

THE HOST: Col. Muammar Ghaddafi

Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi was born in Crete, a desert area some 800 kilometres east of Tripoli. He is a Bedouin, a member of the Kathathfa tribe. His Bedouin childhood and family background are still an essential part of his nature, a cornerstone of his life. Indeed one could divide his character into three essential elements: Bedouin, Politician, Man of religion.

As a Bedouin, Ghaddafi is constantly haunted by their material poverty and endless battle against their chosen environment. These are his "masses", his people, his responsibility. He has a deep and abiding love for them and a passion to see them housed, fed, clothed and cared for.

As a politician, he began at the age of sixteen to battle for justice in what he saw as a corrupt state. He holds as his hero the man of that time in the Arab world, Nasser. It was the Nasser rebellion which inspired him then. It is the Nasser dream of a Pan-Arabian nation which inspires him now.

As a man of religion, he maintains a complete and absolute faith in one God (Allah, the All Merciful, and All Compassionate) and in the teachings of the Koran. He lives his faith and tries to implement Islamic jurisprudence in his nation.

He has unquestionable charisma, that quality of attraction which marks certain leaders. Tall, thin, with a broad smile and strong jaw, his eyes can go from charm to discipline in seconds.

The young Ghaddafi had read avidly, had managed through perseverance and sheer intelligence to get an education, had joined the Army. Through these years his political activities had increased. He had gathered a small group of dedicated Libyans around him. The situation in the country was unquestionably difficult. His Bedouins

were ill-housed, if housed at all, ill-fed, without sufficient hospitals or schools. UNICEF rather than the Libyan Government was running and building what facilities there were.

With the coming of oil, Ghaddafi began to see the nation's wealth pour either out of the country or into a few pockets while he watched his beloved Bedouins starve. It was a situation ripe for revolution.

On September 1st, 1969 Ghaddafi and his group of young officers, all of whom were members of his revolutionary committee formed some years before, took over the government of Libya without firing a shot. Since that time he has been leader of the Revolutionary Command Council, originally a group of twelve officers.

Today he is criticized for his blunt unequivocal statements on the Palestinian issue. He is equally criticized for his radical support of Islamic law. Internationally he backs any and all Islamic minorities, he supports causes he believes or understands to be anti-colonialist. He has showered money onto third world nations, increased the price of Libya's crude oil (and therefore world oil) on a per barrel basis and reduced Libyan oil production. He has tried unsuccessfully to marry Libya to other Arab nations.

Nationally, he has built housing on a massive scale, created new ports, refineries, schools, hospitals. He has developed agriculture and has invested in the army and in the greening of the desert in equal proportions. He has taken over communications and implemented social welfare.

A complex nature, he is adored by the Bedouin, respected by the "masses" of Libya, and watched by the rest of the world.

VATICAN DELEGATION

Cardinal Pignedoli, Chairman
President of Secretariat for Non-Christian Affairs

Monseigneur Pietro Rossano, Rapporteur
Secretary of Secretariat for Non-Christian Affairs

Father Francois Abou Moukh (Egyptian)
Head of Bureau for Islamic Studies

Father Maurice Borrmans
Lecturer, Pontifical Institute of Arabic Studies

Father Jaques Lanfrey (French)
Berber Studies - Algeria

Father Arnwf Camps (Dutch)
Professor, University of Nijmegen, Holland

Dr. Anthony Chullikal (Indian)
Commission for Justice and Peace, Rome

Bishop Sanusi (Nigerian)
Bishop in Nigeria - Nr. Lagos

Archbishop Sangare
Bamako, Mali

Monseigneur Dione
Thies, Senegal

Father Roest Crollius
Lecturer, Gregorian University, Rome

Father Nogalez (Spanish)
President of Spanish/Arab Friendship Alliance

Father George C. Anawati (Egyptian)
Director, Dominican Institute Oriental Studies

Father Joseph Cuoq (French)
Tunisia

ISLAMIC DELEGATION

Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Al Cherif, Chairman
Minister of Education, Libyan Arab Republic

Ibrahim al-Ghuweil, Rapporteur

Ahmed Shahati (Libyan)
Secretary, Arab Socialist Union

Dr. Abdurachman Utba (Syrian)
Faculty of Education, University of Libya

Babakr Kirar (Sudanese)
Lawyer

Yusuf Feraj (Indian)
Kenya

Dr. Ahmed Sidq Dijani (Palestinian)
Professor

Dr. Mohamed Laichoubi (Algerian)
Author - Politician

Dr. Umar a Tumi el Shabani (Libyan)
Former Director, University of Libya

Abdel Amir (Egyptian)
UNESCO

Sibrat Allah el Majdani (Afghan)
Islamic Centre, Brussels

Dr. Bashir al Turki (Tunisian)
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Dr. Moustapha Mahmoud (Egyptian)
Author - Doctor of Medicine

Dr. Izaddin Ibrahim
Private Secretary to Sheikh Zayed, Pres. U.A.E.

Dr. Sabhi Saleh
Professor, Arab Univeristy, Lebanon

Ismail Farouki (Palestinian)
Professor, Temple University, Philadelphia, U.S.A.

Dr. Khurshid Ahmed (Pakistani)
Faculty of Economics, Islamic Centre, London

THE TWENTY-FOUR DECLARATIONS

1. The Two Sides affirm their belief in God, the Only One, and recommend sustained work in one row and in one front for the deepening of religious and ethical values in the souls of men.

2. Both sides honor all Prophets and apostles in all revealed Religions and denounce discrediting them or dare to disgrace their eminent position, for such an act is a protest against the will of God who gave them their mission.

3. The Two Sides affirm that RELIGION, in its essence, is the source of moral obligation and that is the fundamental regulator of the behavior of individuals, communities and states.

4. Organizing one's life cannot be accomplished in seculsion of religion which draws to humanity plans of guidance and righteousness, the two sides, accordingly affirm that RELIGION is the basis of true legislation, and that all legislations enacted by man alone will never reach the acme of perfection.

5. The Two Parties affirm that the belief in God implies the necessity to stand by the side of truth wherever it is, and to help the triumph of man, his dignity and his welfare. They invoke all moral forces in the world to embody this meaning in the behavior of men, communities, peoples and states in order to stand against tyranny in all forms, to achieve the triumph of man's dignity, his welfare and his freedom.

6. In triumph of man's dignity, the Two Parties declare their condemnation of racial discrimination in all its forms and dimensions, as discrimination underrates the value of man whom God has honored.

7. For the realization of human welfare the Two Parties affirm their concern in recommending the necessity of unifying efforts to draw programs of development for the service of humanity as regards planning, distribution and international transactions, as the existence of millions of hungry and naked people in all parts of the world constitute a SHAME to humanity, and a degradation to all religious values. The Two Parties appeal to all states and international institutions and bodies whose tasks are connected with project of development to take into its prime consideration this objective.

8. The Two Parties affirm that peace is a message of RELIGION and look forward to its religious rites, and the right of the family to raise their children in accordance with their religious beliefs. They denounce all types and forms of religious persecution and consider the regimes and theories which call for the persecution of believers as non-human.

9. The Two Parties affirm that peace is a message of RELIGION and look forward to its realization on the basis of truth and justice. They appeal to those states which own destructive weapons to cease its production and invest their resources in serving peaceful purposes to realize the prosperity and welfare of humanity.

10. Both Sides believe that RELIGION is a comprehensive perception of the Universe and existence, and affirm that science is a part thereof, and that all progress in the field of science gives new evidence of the supremacy of God, creator of the Universe in the best of moulds, and its laws in accordance with rules of which science discovers each day its accuracy and miraculousness. Science should always remain in the service of RELIGION and committed to its values and ideals, and directed to the service of humanity, thereby restraining man from atheism and delinquency which both ruin many youth of the world when they mistakenly imagine that science contradicts RELIGION. When science supports belief, it can succeed in liquidating many problems of youth.

11. In view of the fact that an effective role is played by the youth in building the future, the Two Parties recommend full recognition of the importance of the curricula in schools and colleges, and that among the fundamental aims of these curricula be the implanting of religious values and moral virtues in the souls, and that they should avoid all that would degrade the doctrine, morality and understanding among nations.

12. Both Sides encourage the translation of the Divine Books to all languages, and condemn any attempt aimed at confiscating these Books or prohibiting their circulation in any part of the world.

13. The Christian Side expresses its desire that the Muslim Side should continue the historical research and satisfactory interpretations with regard to the evaluation of the "Holy Bible" in a genuine scientific approach.

14. The Muslim Side desires that the Christian Side spare no endeavors and efforts to separate the church from the Mosque of Cordoba and effect the separation at the earliest possible time.

15. The Two Parties recommend the necessity of joint work to follow up the mistakes included in the school curricula, textbooks, in the books of some orientalists and scholars regarding the beliefs of each party with the view of correcting them in accordance with the beliefs of their holders. The Muslim Side accepted with appreciation the initiative of the Christian Side in seeking the advice of Muslim scholars in all that is written on Islam in the schools belonging to the Christian Side.

16. The heritage of civilization and culture are the property of all humanity, and humanity has the right to receive this heritage in a true way. Owing to the circumstances of past misgivings between the Muslim and the Christian worlds, the Two Parties appeal to the universities, religious and theological institutes to act as host to visiting professors of the two Religions.

17. To effect real cooperation between the Muslim and Christian worlds the two parties recommend the cessation of all endeavors aimed at diverting Muslims in their beliefs by Christians, or to divert Christians, in their beliefs by Muslims.

18. Lebanon, a country dear to the hearts of both Muslims and Christians, has been exposed to a sedition in which thousands of innocent people were victims. Certain people of ill-intention, inside and outside Lebanon, have tried to describe the struggle as a sectarian one between Muslims and Christians. This slander does not only insult the Muslims and Christians in Lebanon, but it aims at exploding all genuine and earnest endeavors for "rapprochement" between the Muslim and the Christian worlds. The Two Parties, therefore, denounce the sedition which rose in Lebanon and refute stamping it as a sectarian struggle, and condemn all attempts of such evaluation or distort the sublime, magnanimous co-existence prevailing among the religious families in Lebanon.

19. Desirous of narrowing the gap between the states scientifically advanced and the developing countries, and believing in the right of all the peoples of the world in their advancement, the Two Parties appeal to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for issuing a universal charter to be sanctioned by the United Nations ensuring all peoples the legitimate right to obtain Scientific Development and Technology and its methods and not curtailing this right from the Third World in particular, and to ask all conferences which study questions pertaining to raw materials the necessity of introducing technology and its methods to the developing countries - the producers of these raw materials. The realization of this objective will avoid possible discord and lack of harmony between the Third World and the developed world.

20. The Two Parties look upon the revealed RELIGION with respect, and accordingly they distinguish between Judaism and Zionism, the latter being a racial aggressive movement, foreign to Palestine and the entire Eastern region.

21. Abiding by Truth and Justice and being fully concerned with Peace and believing in the right of people for self-determination, the Two Parties reaffirm the national rights of the Palestinian people and their right to return to their homeland, and to affirm the Arabism of the city of Jerusalem, and the rejection of Judaization, partition and internationalization projects, and denounce any violation of all sacred shrines. The Two Sides request the setting free of all the detainees in occupied Palestine, above all the Muslim 'Ulema and the Christian clergy, they also demand the liberation of all occupied territories and call for the formation of a permanent commission to investigate the alteration of sacred Muslim and Christian sites and reveal all these to the world's public opinion.

22. Should there be other difficult circumstances, as is the case prevailing in the Philippines, both parties shall undertake a mutual initiative in finding appropriate solutions based on justice and impartiality.

23. The Two Parties decided the formation of a permanent joint follow-up Committee whose task will be the implementation of the resolutions and recommendations mentioned above to follow-up any new problems which might arise therefrom. The Committee shall also be entrusted to prepare for similar forthcoming symposiums.

24. The Two Parties, with great esteem and consideration, greet Colonel Mu'ammar al Ghaddafi, Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, who patronized this symposium and positively participated in its discussions. His deep concern in the symposium greatly contributed to its success.

Comments and Suggestions By Observers and Delegates



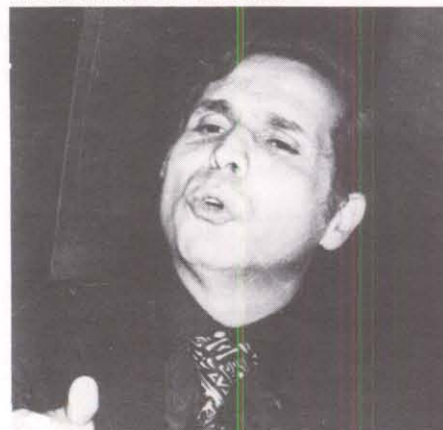
Father Arnulf Camps



Dr. Subhi Saleh



Rafael Caldero,
ex-President of Venezuela



Dr. Ahmed Sidq Digani

Bishop Sanusi: "Mission is part and parcel of the Christian and Moslem religions. If there are no missionaries, there is no spreading of the Word of God."

Fr. Joseph Cuoco: "In the past there have been those Christians and Moslems who put their religion at the service of colonialists. But there has been a change in the past century. People in this past century have been talking and speaking of Islam with great love."

Dr. Ismail Farouki: "The general awareness of Muslims and Christians ought to be developed, until the truthfulness of the common base and the moral desirability — nay, imperativeness! — of cooperative endeavor are recognized. The themes of common essence, shared ideals and necessary cooperation ought to be promoted, defended and elaborated, in all mass media, as well as in learned publications."

"Christianity and Islam are *par excellence* religions of hope, of optimism and good cheer. God did not create man to be miserable, to suffer in adjectness and despair. Even to the chronic sufferer and victim, each of them counselled endurance and perseverance as it announced 'glad tidings,' divine help and victory. How they allowed modern man to fall into despair will always remain a mystery. But the challenge has touched both religions in the raw."

Dr. Ahmed de Jally: "Our world has achieved great material progress but this has oriented it towards destruction; alienated the human being from his Creator. All men who believe in the Lord must stretch out their hands to their brothers — help them find balance. It is useless to discuss these problems unless we are prepared to solve them."

Bishop (Rumanian): "Our faith in one unifying God must draw us together. We will, together, form one family. The principal mission is to make social harmony. 'I am come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly.' All conflicts can be settled by dialogue."

Sheikh Abdul Aziz Mubarek: "We must stand together. We call to our brothers in blood, Christians and others, to stand against all who attempt to push this world into chaos. Today people urgently need to stand together instead of making war. War means destruction for all mankind. We must uphold each other. Work together where we agree. There is no need to state our differences. We must prepare ourselves for the Lord. Stand as one man against those who wish to destroy the world."

Rafael Caldero, ex-President of Venezuela: "It's very difficult to be a perfect Christian. It may be very difficult to be a perfect Muslim. We are human beings. We have many failures. But religion gives us the motive to serve others and abandon selfish instincts. These dialogues are not easy. There have been many centuries of conflict. It is not from lack of Christian teaching that social justice has not been realized. Social justice has still not been accepted as an international criterion. We must have some rules to have social justice. International social justice."

Bishop Ignatius, Patriarch of Lebanon: "I propose that at the end of this seminar a mission be formed, which takes place in Israel, on justice and the rights of individuals. I consider world Zionism the greatest challenge to Christianity and Islam in this world."

Dom Mintoff: "I have prayed and listened. What affects religion affects all. The time has come for more open sharing. We need to develop and rise above our prejudices. May this be a first step towards understanding. Future students of history will read our words. Today belongs to us, tomorrow to them. Let us not only talk but act now. Unity is not a propaganda expedient, not an emotional appeal. All believers should be one unanimous witness."

Dr. Ahmed Sidq Dijani: "We would like to put principles into the policies of the world. Principles must move governments. We are pioneers. When people meet they can solve their problems. I have lived five days in a beautiful spiritual atmosphere. Many have spoken of feeling this atmosphere. It has been a 'high'. The life of the human being is not measured by years and days but by the moments of spiritual truth."

Mohamed Laichoubi: "Religion assumes its whole meaning in realizing Man's happiness through obedience of God and in so far as it contributes in establishing good relations between people. Religion, today, must be a basis for justice among peoples of the World."

Père George C. Anawati: "There is ignorance about the social documents of the Church. We have the law 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' We are talking in a closed circuit here as we are all believers. Unbelievers are led to Marxism for social justice and they often find it. So what shall we *do*? Could we co-operate to bring about social justice?"

Dr. Gomez: "There is the problem of minorities who work in foreign countries. Students, Labourers. It is a sword of Damocles. We identify them. We may find some of them are there illegally. If we help them with money, we could be accused of winning them over to our religion. We need an international plan of action for those who are living precariously."

Fr. Roest Croluis: "All forms of fanaticism should be condemned. We should set up a dialogue with all human beings. We are with some in faith, some in a political identity or other ways."

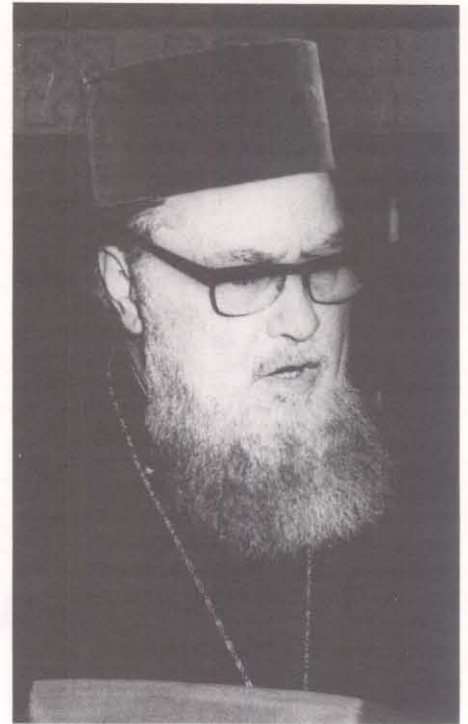
Monsgr. Pietro Rossano: "There is a problem of language. Ambiguities come from language and cultural differences. Our sensitivities are not always the same. The Christian side should study what church means to Muslims. We need a clarification on many points. We must understand in the milieu which our Muslim brothers come from."

Father Jaques Lamfrey: "In the name of Catholics and Protestants we speak on this one point — the authority of the Bible. It is there — open — for everyone. We hope there will be greater understanding about this and that Christian/Islamologists and vice-versa will multiply."

Dr. Izaddin Ibrahim: "Father Lamfrey's greatest statement was *forgiveness* and *recognition of mistakes*. We must also be understanding and forgiving. If you come towards us one mile, we will go towards you two miles. If you walk towards us in forgiveness, we will run towards you."

Prof. Montgomery Watt: "As a Christian, a member of the Church of England, I propose Christians spend much more time in the study of the Sharia, studying it fully and thoroughly as part of the history of thought. Second, that Muslims with scientific and historical method study our philosophy. Third, that we both reflect on the conception of man as Vice-Regent on earth."

Archbishop Antim Nica: "It is high time we abandoned centuries of old tensions and completely annihilate the remains of hostile attitudes towards one another. Our faith in One Merciful and Compassionate God must become a unifying factor in order to draw us closer in reverence, esteem and love of one another. We all form one single human family and the main mission of the religions we represent is to serve social harmony, common good, and the welfare and happiness of our fellow man."



Archbishop Antim Nica

Continued from Page 2

ers to heal the divisions that have too long separated men of faith? If the Colonel expressed distress and impatience when the leaders did not offer more, was it not the reaction of the man in the street that he symbolized? Many at the conference answered all of these questions, "Yes."

DIAGOLUE HARDENS

Whether caused by Ghaddafi's dramatic visit or not, the seminar certainly hardened on Tuesday. Father Borrmans presented what can readily be called the most brilliant of the papers providing, some said, enough meat for ten years of discussions.

A respected Palestinian, Ishmail Faruki, now a professor at Temple University in Philadelphia, spoke next. He attempted to help the Christian side understand the anger and bitterness many Muslims feel when they recall the Christian's participation in movements considered diametrically opposed to the best interests of Islam, i.e. colonialism, zionism, missionary activities and furthering the misinformation propounded by some orientalist. He called for an immediate withdrawal of the Christian from all these activities and urged the establishment of new cooperative activities to defend the case of religion, re-establish a framework for personal ethics, undergird family life and effectively oppose materialism, nihilism, colonialism

and national competition.

Professor Faruki said clearly that Christianity is not Christendom nor the church. But the degree to which the delegates — western, eastern and from the third world — identified with the church and Christendom was evident. African bishops were quick to defend the value of Christian mission, and the Eastern churches and Christians of the third world testified to their presence within Christendom but of course rightly denied responsibility for such activities as the crusades or colonialism. Again, Iz-zadin Ibrahim poured oil on troubled waters.

"We want to present you beautiful flowers," he told the Catholic delegates, "But some flowers have thorns. We wish they had no thorns, but the thorns are there." He continued with a plea for correct information in text books and referred also to the "Bible" published in Israel which has deleted any references offensive to Jews.

Dr. Ahmed Sidq Dijani, also a Palestinian, distinguished himself that day and at several other times by pinpointing the unifying factors; common heritage, common history, common faith.

From the floor of the auditorium came many statements declaring that the fact of our being there in one place, at one time, affirming belief in one God, that we have faith and hope, proved that we had a future together.

Wednesday, the subject was *Social Justice is the Product of Faith in One God*. Ibrahim al-Ghuweil wrote what can only be described as a short book on the subject especially for this dialogue. He precis-ed it from the platform. A difficult task as it dealt with the role of the state, culture, law, economics, ownership, labor and charity under Islam as well as the "Vice-regency" of man.

Father Camps replied by presenting "the empirical way" to social justice and "the doctrinal way". A short pithy paper essentially saying that Christian Social Justice was founded on our following Jesus' mission as declared in Luke, 4:14-22.

On Thursday Mohamed Laichoubi from Algeria presented a solid working paper on the history of our prejudices and differences. His charming smile and gentle manner smoothed over some of the bitterness of his stories of the crusades, colonialism, modern technocracy and orientalism. The Vatican representatives replied that all men of faith joined in condemning the excesses and sins committed in the past and in the present hour. They considered it unhelpful to link the distant past with what is happening in the present moment. They thought it necessary to point out that much of the political and economic maneuvering in the past and the present was carried out by men who were well-known as being without faith

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in any religion.

FORGIVE US

But it was Father Lanfrey who gave the most moving speech of the week. Humble, admitting Christian errors towards Muslims, asking for forgiveness, presenting prejudices which we must fight, he showed some of the ways Christians have tried to make a bridge. He quoted Nassan Saab, a Lebanese Muslim, who said, "The Catholic Church, concentrated on its own truth, goes back for the first time to look at the reflection of truth in other religions. Islam is present there as a sister religion. The Christian is exhorted to end all discrimination not only against Jews but against all non-Christians. In this

new attitude the Church deserves to be imitated rather than criticized."

The intensity of his feeling brought tears to his eyes and Izaddin Ibrahim and Sabhi Saleh went over to embrace him. It was dramatic, memorable.

At the final session of the conference TWENTY-FOUR DECLARATIONS were presented. The document was remarkable for its strength and resolution. Four of the twelve members of the Vatican delegation and four of the twelve Muslims were given the task of preparing the statement for presentation. Both sides prepared a draft and then four pairs — one Christian and one Muslim — worked on each segment of the text. The statement does not purport to be an official document which represents the view of all the Islamic leaders any more

than it represents the Vatican itself. No one speaks for all of Islam. The Pope alone speaks for the Holy See in such matters. A message to men of faith and to the world, it most assuredly is. It rightly reflects the opinion of many of the delegates and the mood which prevailed at the conference. As such, it will be received and pondered by all.

The longing of the Muslims for acceptance and understanding and the genuine humility and love expressed by the Catholics had created an atmosphere in which unity of purpose, faith in God, and love of man could be expressed.

"The name of Tripoli will live in history," said Father Rossano as he concluded his arduous job of rapporteur.

What's Happening Now

- A. The Faith of Islam is presented with respect and comprehension in Sunday school publications and catechisms designed for use by the young Christian.
- B. Regional dialogue groups between responsible Christians — Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant — and Muslims have been organized.
- C. Christians have in some instances given and at other times loaned Muslims houses of worship.
- D. Delegations of Muslims and Christians are present at the inauguration of Churches or Mosques.
- E. Greetings are exchanged between members of both faiths at Christmas and the end of Ramadan
- F. Leading ecclesiastic and Moslem representatives are exchanging official visits.

A long journey begins with the first step

THE LINK aims at maintaining contacts among Americans who believe that friendship with the people of the Middle East is essential to world peace, who would contribute to this goal by spreading understanding of the history, values, religions, culture and economic conditions of the Middle East, and who would—in this context—press for greater fairness, consistency and integrity in U.S. policy toward that area.

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