

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ
الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

[143]



Wasatia: Centrism and Moderation in Islam

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[Islam, like Judaism and Christianity before it, declares the virtue of wasatia (moderation) to be an integral part of religion. Thus, the Wasatia Initiative comes as part of the historic dialogue that has started long time ago to bridge the gap between two civilizations - between the civilization based on the Bible and the Torah and the civilization based on the Quran.]

- *“Three things are good in small quantities and bad in large: yeast, salt, and hesitation.”* [Talmud: Berakoth, 34a]
- *“There are eight things of which a little is good and much is bad: travel, mating, wealth, work, wine, sleep, spiced drinks, and medicine.”* [Talmud: Gittin, 70a]

- *“Too much sitting aggravates hemorrhoids; too much standing hurts the heart; too much walking hurts the eyes; so divide your time between the three.”* [Talmud: Kethuboth, 111b]
- *“The Torah may be likened to two paths, one of fire, the other of snow. Turn in one direction, and you will die of heat: turn to the other and you die of the cold. What should you do? Walk in the middle.”* [Talmud: Hagigah, 2:1]
- *“Give me neither poverty nor riches.”* [Proverbs. XXX. 8]
- *“Too much good food is worse than too little bad food.”* [Falaquera, Sefer ha-Mevakesh]
- *“Nothing is more precious than light, yet too much of it is blinding.”* [Joseph Delmedigo]
- *“Observe moderation. In all, the fitting season is best.”* [Hesiod (720 B.C.) **Works and Days**, line 287]
- *“Be not too zealous; moderation is best in all things.”* [Theognis (570-490 B.C.)]
- *“Moderation, the noblest gift of Heaven.”* Euripides (484-406 B.C.) **Medea**, Line 636.
- *“The virtue of justice consists in moderation, as regulated by wisdom.”* Aristotle (384-322 B.C.)
- *“In everything the middle course is best: all things in excess bring trouble to men.”* Plautus (254-184 B.C.)
- *“Let your moderation be known unto all men.”* Philippians 4:5
- *“The heart is great which shows moderation in the midst of prosperity”.* Lucius Annaeus Seneca (5 B.C.-65 A.D.)
- *“Everything that exceeds the bounds of moderation has an unstable foundation.”* Seneca (8 B.C.-65 A.D.)
- *Power exercised with violence has seldom been of long duration, but temper and moderation generally produce permanence in all things.”* Seneca(8 B.C.-65 A.D.)
- *“Fortify yourself with moderation; for this is an impregnable fortress.”* Epictetus (60 A.D.)
- *“Candor and generosity, unless tempered by due moderation, leads to ruin.”* Tacitus (55-120)
- *“Moderation is best, and to avoid all extremes.”* Plutarch (46-120 A.D.)
- *“The best way is moderation.”* Prophet Mohammed (570–632 A.D.)

- *“Moderation is the silken string running through the pearl chain of all virtues.”* Joseph Hall, Bishop of Norwich (1574-1656), in **Christian Moderation**, Introduction.
- *“Avoid extremes.”* Benjamin Franklin (1706-1757)
- *“It is incumbent upon them who are in authority to exercise moderation in all things. Whatsoever passeth beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence.”* Bahá'u'lláh (1817 - 1892)
- *“Whoso cleaveth to justice, can, under no circumstances, transgress the limits of moderation.”* Bahá'u'lláh (1817 - 1892)
- *“In all matters moderation is desirable.”* Bahá'u'lláh (1817 - 1892)
- *“Water, taken in moderation, cannot hurt anybody.”* Mark Twain(1835-1910)
- *“A wise man is superior to any insults which can be put upon him, and the best reply to unseemly behavior is patience and moderation.”* Moliere (1622-1673)
- *“The spirit of moderation should also be the spirit of the lawgiver.”* Charles de Montesquieu (1689-1755)
- *“Moderation is commonly firm, and firmness is commonly successful.”* Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)
- *“Moderation in temper is always a virtue.”* Thomas Paine, (1737-1809) in **The Rights of Man** (1792)
- *“Only actions give life strength; only moderation gives it charm.”* Jean Paul (1763-1825)
- *“Moderation is the center wherein all philosophies, both human and divine, meet.”* Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881)
- *“The choicest pleasures of life lie within the ring of moderation.”* Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881)
- *“My experience through life has convinced me that moderation and temperance in all things are commendable and beneficial.”* Robert E. Lee (1807-1870)
- *“Be moderate in everything, including moderation.”* Horace Porter (1837-1921)
- *“Moderation is the key of lasting enjoyment.”* Hosea Ballou.
- *“I believe in moderation in all things, including moderation.”* J. F. Carter
- *“The true boundary of man is moderation. When once we pass that pale, our guardian angel quits his charge of us.”* Owen Feltham.
- *“In moderating, not in satisfying desires, lies peace.”* Reginald Heber

- *“We have followed a path of moderation, development is our priority, national unity, good community relations, Muslims and non Muslims, this is what has given us the advantage.”* Abdullah A. Badawi
- *“America is a model of force and freedom and moderation - with all the coarseness and rudeness of its people.”* Lord Byron
- *“Never go to excess, but let moderation be your guide.”* Marcus Tullius Cicero
- *“Moderation is the inseparable companion of wisdom, but with it genius has not even a nodding acquaintance.”* Charles Caleb Colton.
- *“In order to grow old, you have to experience everything, but in moderation”*
Compay Segundo (1907-2003)
- *“Moderation is part of faith, so those who accuse Muslim schools of fostering fanaticism should learn a bit more about Islam.”* Cat Stevens (1948-.....)
- *“I think we just have to make sure we do things in moderation.”* Lynn Swann (1952-.....)
- *“Moderation is the key.”* Leif Garrett.” (1961-.....)
- *“Everything should be done with moderation and using common sense.”* Eartha Kitt (1927-.....)

Fundamental Judaism and Christianity versus Fundamental Islam

The three religions talk about making the world a better place by serving God. The Jews are guided by the *Taurat*, the Torah, the Christians by the *Ingeel*, which is the Evangelion or Gospel - namely the New Testament, and the Moslems are guided by the *Holy Quran*. "Fundamentalism" is a word that came from the heart of religion. It means faith that goes by the word of the holy books, *Taurat, Ingeel, Quran*, which Islam recognizes all:

{“After those prophets, We sent forth Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming the Torah already revealed, and gave him the Gospel, in which there is guidance and light, corroborating that which was revealed before it in the Torah, a guide and an admonition to the righteous.”} (The Ma’eda (The Table) Surah 46)

{“And to you, We have revealed the Book with the truth. It confirms the Scriptures which came before it and stands as a guardian over them.”} (The Ma’eda (The Table) Surah, verse 48.)

{وقفينا على آثارهم بعيسى ابن مريم مصدقا لما بين يديه من التوراة وآتيناه الانجيل فيه هدى ونور.} (سورة المائدة. آية 46.)

Fundamentalism, or practicing the teachings of religion does not mean violence and terrorism and denying religions of others in the name of religion. Those speakers in the holy forums who deliver sermons or speeches inciting hatred and violence against the other, whether Moslems, Christians or Jews, do not reflect the spirit or the text of the Holy Books. *There is no good Islam and bad Islam but there are good Moslems and bad Moslems, as there are good Christians and bad Christians, as well as, there are good Jews and bad Jews.* Radicalism and the claim of exclusive monopoly for the truth is the disease. If

you are a Jew, Christian or Moslem, you have to behave according to the rules of your religion as set down in your Holy Book.

The Language of Islam

So far, the essential dilemma between the Western community and the Moslem *ummah* lies deep in ways of communication. For example, the West addresses the Islamic world using western lexicon. They speak to Moslems in terms of democracy and in terms of moderation, and globalization, using their own terms and concepts. An American professor describes this "like a football reporter describing a cricket game in baseball terms". One cannot use for one culture or civilization the language or terms of another and expect that they will understand him¹.

For Islam, you've got to use the language and concepts of the *Quran* for the message to reach the Moslem community². As stated in the Holy Quran, it is wise to talk to people in their own language to explain to them distinctly in order for them to understand and respond to you:

[4 :] .

Each apostle We have sent has spoken only in the language of his own people, so that he might make plain to them his message [Surah Abraham: Verse 4].

The Western Arabic lexicon is growing fast and Arabic terms such as *intifada*, *muqata'a* [district], etc. has become part of the English dictionary, as on

¹ This is similar to the idea the Japanese call *oyakudachi*, which means, "walking in the shoes of the other." As Atticus Finch advises his daughter Jean "Scout", in "To kill a Mocking Bird": "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it."

² Here, one is reminded of *Fulla*, a *Barbie*-like fashion doll created in Damascus and marketed to children of Moslem countries as an alternative to Barbie. She hit stores in late 2003, and since then the sales of Barbie dolls in Islamic countries dropped dramatically in its favor. Fulla offered a role-model to many Arab people, displaying how most Moslem people prefer their daughters to dress and behave.

the other side, terms such as sandwich, Kleenex, computer, cinema, telephone, radio, etc. has become part of the Arabic dictionary. Also, Islamic terms such as *Quran* [Kuran, Koran], *rasul* [apostle], *caliph*, *hijra* [migration], *fatwa*, *mahdi*, , *mufti*, *sheikh*, *imam* [faith], *hajj* [pilgrimage], *masjid* [mosque], *shahada*, *hadith*, *jihad*, *shari'a*, [law], *shurah* [consultation], *hudna* [armistice], *tahde'a* [lul]; or names such as *Fatah*, *Hamas*, *Hizballah*, *Jihad Islami*, *Qa'eda*, etc. has invaded the English dictionary. But unfortunately the important Islamic term and concept of *Wasatia* has yet to be introduced to the western public³.

Driving Principles of Islam

Let me explain the principles that are driving the religion of Islam. Every Moslem has to acknowledge the fact that there is only one God and Mohammed is his prophet {Seal of the prophets but not the only one}. Beyond that, Islam is a civilization. Like Judaism and Christianity, it is a religion that gave first and foremost a wide and unique legal system that engulfs the individual, society and nations with rules of behavior.

One cannot but feel sad when he sees the spirit of Islam being overshadowed by the forces of darkness and evil that in the past predominated the pre-Islamic era in the Arabian Penninsula. The spark of hope that flashed in some parts of the Islamic world indicating a revival of genuine Islamic traditions is being smothered by rancor, bigotry, and embitterment. At this time when every other person is becoming a self-proclaimed *mahdi* and in nearly every place political disintegration and religious rivalries overcome all other issues, we need

³ Google search results: 11,600,000 for [Islamic terrorism](#); 6,040,000 for [Islamic jihad](#); 2,830,000 for [Islamic fundamentalism](#); 898,000 for [Islamic radicalism](#); 481,000 for [Islamic shura](#); 2,740 for [Islamic shurah](#); 265 for [Islamic Wasatia](#); 83 for [Islamic Wasatia](#); 7 for [Islamic wasatieh](#); 1,560 for [Wasatia](#); 109 for [Wasatia](#). (November 2006)

to closely scrutinize our values and beliefs to determine whether it is the singer or the song that is failing us in our pursuit of happiness on earth and eternal felicity in the afterlife.

Before addressing ourselves to the issue of *Wasatia* in Islam, let us examine the basic teaching of the faith and discuss briefly the Islamic call which *Allah* [God] revealed to man through His Messenger Prophet Muhammad. Though in Islam the five pillars of the faith dominate, (namely, profession of the faith, prayers, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca), the following doctrines and characteristics which reflect the *Wasatia* spirit are also important:

First: Freedom of the faith, and its establishment on a foundation of Conviction and free will.

{ "فَأَنْتَ تَكْرَهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّى تَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ" [سورة يونس، آية 99] }

"Had your Lord pleased, all the people of the earth would have believed in Him. Would you then force faith upon men?" [Jonah Surah 99]

The Holy Book instructs in the Surah of the Cow:

{ " . [256] }

"There shall be no compulsion in religion." [The Cow Surah 256]

The Holy Quran also confirms religious freedom in a number of its suras such as:

{ " وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفِرْ. " [سورة الكهف آية 29]. }

"Say: This is the truth from your Lord. Let him who will, believe in it, and him who will, deny it." [The Cave Surah, verse 29]

{ " لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَلِي دِينِي. " [سورة الكافرون آية 6]. }

"You have your own religion, and I have mine." [The Unbelievers Surah, verse 6]

Second: Total guarantee to faithful of the liberty to think, to discuss, and to observe.

{ "ادع وإلى سبيل ربك بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة وجادلهم بالتى هي أحسن." } [سورة النحل آية 125] .

{ "Call men to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation. Reason with them in the most courteous exhortation." } [Surah of The Bee verse 125]

Second: Advancing Islam by adherence to the word of God, setting good examples for others to follow.

Forbidding aggression.

{ "Fight for the sake of God those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. God does not love the aggressors." }

يقول الله تعالى في سورة البقرة: { " وقاتلوا في سبيل الله الذين يقاتلونكم ولا تعتدوا إن الله لا يحب المعتدين." } صدق الله العظيم.

that in dealing with faith, calls for free choice, dialogue and coexistence as reflected in the following surahs:

{ " ومن آياته خلق السماوات والأرض واختلاف السنتكم وألوانكم إن في ذلك لآيات للعالمين." } (سورة الروم آية 22)

{ "Among His other signs are the creation of heaven and earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. Surely there are signs in this for all mankind." }

[The Greeks Surah, verse 22]

In another part of the same *Surah*, the Quran asserts:

{ "There shall be no compulsion in religion. True guidance is now distinct from error." }

يقول الله تبارك: { " لا اكراه في الدين. قد تبين الرشد من الغي." }

Third: Abolition of mediums between man and God. Each Moslem is

only responsible for himself. He has an open channel to God. He prays directly to his creator to seek guidance, forgiveness, and blessings. God instructs his Prophet in the Surah of the Cow:

{"Should my worshipers question you about Me, tell them I am near. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls to Me; therefore let them answer My call and put their trust in Me, that they may be rightly guided."}

"} واذا سألك عبادي عني فإني قريبٌ اجيبُ دعوةَ الداعي إذا دعاني فليستجيبوا لي وليؤمنوا بي لعلهم يرشدون." { صدق الله العظيم.

Fourth: Islam calls for an unquestionable equality among all believers without any consideration to race, color, social status, or financial ability. In Islam, there is but one scale to judge the faithful: his belief in God and the apostles as exemplified in word and deed.

Messenger Prophet Muhammad also emphasizes:

"There is no merit for the son of the white over the son of the black except in the degree of faith and the doing of the good deed."

وفي حديث للرسول عليه الصلاة والسلام: " ليس لابن البيضاء على ابن السوداء فضلٌ إلا بالتقوى والعملُ الصالح".

Fifth: Affairs in society are conducted in council. The Quran affirms:

{"And their affairs are consultative among them."}

ويقول القرآن الكريم في سورة : "وأمرهم شورى بينهم"

Those leading the Islamic *Ummah* (community) are in charge not because they are powerful, wealthy, or popular. In a true Islamic Ummah, men leading are those who have shown themselves to be most learned, most faithful, most just, and most compatible. There are no absolute monarchs or dictators in Islam. It is only when such political systems had spread in the Islamic world that the Islamic civilization declined and Islamic had power and influence weakened.

Sixth: Essentiality of prescribing justice and forbidding evil. God describes the true believers in *Surah of Omran* as those:

{ "...Who believe in God and the Judgment Day; who enjoin justice and forbid evil and vie with each other in good works. These are righteous men." }

ويصفُ الله تعالى المؤمنين في سورة عمران: {ويؤمنون بالله واليوم الآخر ويأمرون بالمعروف وينهون عن المنكر ويسارعون في الخيراتِ واولئك من الصالحين.}

At a time when paganism had spread its grip even beyond the sands of Arabia, Islam descended and Muhammad, at the age of forty was awakened from a trance by a voice that commanded him to read. "*Recite*", he was told. "*I am no literate*", he responded. Three times did the voice call and three times did Muhammad give that same answer. Finally the voice of the angel said:

{ "Recite in the name of the Lord who created, created man from clots of blood. Recite! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One, who by the pen taught man that which he did not know." }

ويقولُ القرآنُ الكريمُ في سورة : {اقرأ باسم ربك الذي خلق. خلقَ الانسانَ من علق. اقرأ وربك الاكرمُ الذي علم بالقلم. علمَ الانسانَ ما لم يعلم.}

The Arabs were greatly honored to have been the ones chosen to relay the message of Islam. Their language was chosen to be the language of the holy

Book. Their land encompasses the most holy Islamic Shrines. It was their arms that were chosen to be the first to carry the banners of the call. Yet, those privileges end there. Islam does not belong to the Arabs, nor did the Arabs ever claim that they have property rights on Islam. The message of Islam was sent to guide all mankind, and the Quran was descended in all parts of the world throughout all periods of time. As a matter of fact, the word "the world العالمين" is repeated seventy times in the Holy Book. God relays to His Prophet:

"And We have not sent you but in compassion for the world." (The Holy Quran, 021.107)

ويقولُ القرآنُ الكريمُ: " وما ارسلناك إلا رحمةً للعالمين."

In another Surah, the Quran reads:

{ "Say, Men, I am the messenger of God to you all " }

ويقولُ القرآنُ الكريمُ: " قل يا أيها الناسُ إني رسولُ اللهِ إليكم جميعاً."

ويقولُ القرآنُ الكريمُ: { " ولو شاء ربك لجعل الناس أمة واحدة ولا يزالوا مختلفين" } [سورة هود: آية 118]

"Had your Lord pleased, He would have united all mankind. But only those whom He has shown mercy will cease to differ. For this end He has created them." [Surah Houd: verse 118].

In the *Surah of the Chambers*, God says:

"Oh People, We have created you from a male and a female and divided you into nations and tribes that you might get to know one another. The noblest of you in God's sight is he who fears Him most."

ويقولُ القرآنُ الكريمُ في سورة الحجرات: { " يا أيها الناسُ إنا خلقناكم من ذكرٍ وانثى وجعلناكم شعوباً وقبائل لتعارفوا. إن أكرمكم عند الله اتقاكم." }

Observing the first Islamic community during the early days of Islam, we find a mosaic of people toiling together, praying next to each other, and sharing with each other the responsibilities of running the affairs of the faithful. There was Bilal the Ethiopian who was the first *muezzin* (caller to prayers) in Islam and the first keeper of *beit al-mal* (the treasury); there was Selman the Persian who was the prophet's consultant during the Invasion of the Ditch (Gharat al – Khandaq); and there was Sahib the Roman. The prophet used to repeat: "**People are all equal.**"

وفي حديث للرسول (صلعم): "الناسُ سواسية".

Messenger Muhammad felt it so important to stress this spirit of brotherhood and equality that he made it part of his farewell speed. In addressing the Moslem *Ummah* he urged:

"Your God is but one. There is no preference for an Arab over a non-Arab, or a non-Arab, or a black over a red or a red over a black but in the faith. Most close to God are those most faithful". He asked: "Did I fulfill my mission to you?" and the people responded: "Yes, indeed, oh Prophet of God."

ونرى النبي في حجة الوداع يخطبُ الناسَ فيقول: "إلا إنَّ ربكم واحد، لا فضل لعربي على عجمي، ولا لعجمي على عربي، ولا اسود على احمر ولا احمر على اسود، إلا بالتقوى إن اكرمكم عند الله اتقاكم".

Call for Peace

We read in the *Surah of the Chambers* God's instructions:

{ "The believers are a band of brothers. Make peace among your brothers and fear God, so that you may be shown mercy . " }

{ ويقولُ القرآنُ الكريمُ : " إنما المؤمنونَ إخوةٌ فاصلحوا بينَ أخويكمَ واتقوا اللهَ لعلكم تُرحمونَ . " }
صدقَ اللهُ العظيمُ.

The Quran hammers on the notion of brotherhood time after time: the unified origin of man derived from the uniqueness and oneness of the creator. In the *Surah of Unity*, we read:

{ "Say : `God is one , the Eternal God. He begot none, nor was He begotten.
None is His match!" }

ويقولُ القرآنُ الكريمُ : { " قلْ هو اللهُ أحدُ . اللهُ الصمدُ . لم يلد ولم يولد . ولم يكن له كفواً احد . " }

In the *Surah of Man*, God says :

{ "We have created man from the union of the two sexes so that We may put
him to the proof." }

ويقولُ القرآنُ الكريمُ ; { " انا خلقنا الانسان نطفةً امشاجٍ نبتليه فجعلناه سمياً بصيراً {

The Essence of Islam: *Al-Wasatia*

Historically, there has been many shades of Islam and the shade the majority of Moslems have been adhering to *al-wasatia*, a term extracted from the Arabic word "*wasat*" which means "middle of the road", and "center of the circle". *Wasat* is said to be the midst of extremes such as hot and cold, rich and poor, tall and short, big and small, empty and full, generosity and stinginess, courage and cowardice. In English, it means moderation, mid-ground, and centrism. In the *Holy Quran* it means justice, righteousness, and goodness. *Al-wasatia* concept emphasizes balance in life. No extremism. Just balance. The essence of *wasatia* is the avoidance as well as the rejection of extremes and radicalism. Here, I am using the Wasatia concept to mean centrism, moderation, reason, justice and balance.

Islam calls for Muslims to take mid-ground that stands between those who sanctify literally the text and tradition and those who opt for rational thinking and *ijtihad* (analytical explanation) in reading, comprehending, and understanding the surahs in the *Holy Quran*.

In compliance with Islamic traditions, the Moslem majority adopts the concept stipulated in the *Holy Quran* which in the following verse describes the Islamic *ummah* as “*ummatan wasata*”: “just”, “balanced”, “temperate”, “midground”:

{ “*And so we have created you a midway nation.*”} [*Cow Surah, verse 143*]

Translated also:

{“*We have made you a just community.*”}

{“*Thus have We made of you an Ummat justly balanced.*”}

{“*We have made you a temperate nation.*”}

{“*We have made you a just nation.*”}

قال تعالى: {وكذلك جعلناكم أمة وسطا}. [143 :

This *surah* in the *Holy Quran* among many others tends to capture the religious mind set of the Moslem people such as: {“*Be neither miserly nor prodigal, for then you should either earn reproach or be reduced to penury*”}. [*Isra Surah, verse 27*] The Quran instructs Moslems to avoid extremist religious practices (*Al-In’am, verse 153*). In adopting this approach, the Moslem majority are adhering more to the message of Islam than to the call of the faithful. The gap is and has always been very wide between the song and the singer; Islam being a peaceful religious ideology.

The Moslem majority from their early history, have been treading this mid course in their religious journey being neither radically fanatic nor totally secular. A number of scholars have taken the initiative to form the *Wasatiah Party* and the *Wasatiah Forum* for research, studies and training in order to promote peace,

justice, moderation, coexistence, and tolerance within the Moslem *ummah*. The goal is to hold the *ummah* in the center away from the lure of radicalism. The *wasatia* road taken in conflict resolution is negotiation, not confrontation or *jihad*. It is time for *wasatia* creed to emerge and rise in the Moslem world that it may guide the Moslem *ummah* (community) in its search for the right path. Moslems should always be proud of their Islamic traditional heritage. No one need to be reminded that it was Islam that passed the torch that shed light in Dark Ages.

The goal should not be to focus on problems and conflicts but to search for ways and means to solve those problems. It is not enough to identify the enemy but to overcome him. The question that this would raise is : How ? What should be done? Here are some suggestions that I hope would enrich your views and ideas.

First and foremost , We need to learn not only our religion, but the religions of the other, and then practice what we believe.

Second, We ought never to exploit religion for political, social and economic gains. We ought not to be selective in our faith, picking those *surahs* that could be supportive of our desires. It has become the fashion of the non – believer to pick up verses from the Quran out of context to use them in their attack on the faith, or in doing things that religion forbids.

Furthermore, we need to restrain our lust for material pleasures. Civilization should not be equated with money, palaces, cars, property, and worldly belongings. That was the civilization of *Sodom* and *Ghamourah*.

- Third,** We need to cast away the zealous partisanship, the tribal solidarities, the fanaticism, the racism, the bigotry, and the intolerance that we too often allow to dominate our thoughts and actions. These are the tendencies which drive man to become the mortal enemy of man.
- Fourth,** We should aim at nourishing community spirit among the young. We ought to train youth to think positively and to work for the welfare of the community rather than the interests of the individual. The “I” should dissolve into the “we”. Young men and women should be guided not to search in their lives for personal gains or glories, but rather to join hands and thoughts with others to help in cutting the tough road for human salvation.
- Fifth,** We need to spread the *wasatia* word the word of God and to stand up in its defense whenever it is often misunderstood and misinterpreted and it is our duty to expect and relay the true message of the faith.
- Sixth,** We need to hold together like a clingstone. We should help one another and look after each other. The strong should give power to the weak; the able should give shelter to the feeble; those who have sight should lead the blind; the have should cater for the needs of the have-nots. We need to stick together as one body, with each organist performing its duty, our faith being the spirit of this body.
- Seventh,** We should stretch our hands and extend the bond of brotherhood to include our brothers and sisters who have embraced the other two

heavenly religions: Christianity and Judaism⁴. The Holy Quran did not come to negate the truths of the Old and New testaments but to confirm and corroborate them. Allah, the God of Islam, is the same monotheistic God of Judaism and Christianity. The Holy Quran says:

{“He has revealed to you the Book with the truth confirming the scriptures which preceded it. He already revealed the Torah and the Ingeel (Gospel) before for the guidance of people, and the distinction between right and wrong.”}

يقولُ القرآنُ الكريمُ: "نزلَ عليك الكتابُ بالحقِّ مُصدِّقاً لما بينَ يديهِ وانزلَ التوراةَ والانجيلَ من قبلُ هدى للناسِ." صدق الله العظيم

Islam reveres and respects all the biblical prophets from Abraham to Christ. Muhammad was but the last messenger of a success of prophets. He was the “Seal of the Prophets.”

The Holy Quran makes the faith of the Moslem incomplete until he believes in all heavenly religions (Judaism and Christianity), their Prophets, and their Holy Books according to His saying in the Holy Quran:

“Say: We believe In God, and in what Has been revealed to us And what was revealed To Abraham, Ishmael; Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes, And in the Books Given to Moses, Jesus, And the Prophets, From their Lord: We make no distinction Between one and another among them, and to God do we submit in Islam.”.

⁴ God descended nine verses in the Quran in the Surah of Women to defend a Jew who was falsely accused of robbery when the real culprit was a Moslem.

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Eighth, We should always remember that Islam's third holy city of Jerusalem is under occupation and no efforts should be spared to allow Jews, Moslems and Christians to pray freely in their holy shrines. Judaic, Christian, and Islamic emotional and religious bondage to Jerusalem has always been strong, and to pray in Jerusalem is a dream for all religious people. A woman asked the Prophet: "O Messenger of God! Give us a rule as to Jerusalem." And he responded: "It is the city of the Resurrection and the Judgment assembly; go and pray there, for indeed a prayer there is worth thousand elsewhere."

The continued strength and durability of Islam derives from its emphasis on moderation and brotherhood. To a Moslem, religion and politics, faith and life, are inseparable. Islam's immense success lies in the conviction of the believer that God is one, that God is compassionate and merciful, that God is an omnipresent ruler and an omniscient judge. Islam endured hard ordeals because it is a brotherhood of men working hard to please their creator. It is that kind of brotherhood that transcends barriers of race and nation, all united in one effort: to execute God's will.

The set-backs that checked the progress of Islam stemmed from disintegration within rather than outside the Moslem faith. When Moslems adhere to their faith and practice it properly, Islam takes the ascendancy. As

Moslems are lured to the dens of materialism and become intoxicated by secular pleasures, the Islamic *Ummah* (nation) disintegrates and crumbles. Today our crucial dilemma is not social, political, nor even economic. It is spiritual. We are not pure enough to dare raise our eyes in the Day of Judgment and confront our Lord.

Islam as a faith will, no doubt, endure time and adversity. It had already survived the test of time. The question is: Will the Moslems survive? Returning from battle, the prophet told his followers: "*You have come back from the lesser to the greater struggle.*" They asked: "*But what is the greater struggle, O Messenger of God?*" And he replied: "*The struggle within.*" Here is where the battle needs to be won.

Concluding Remarks

Positive thinking in the past has contributed to the establishment of peaceful communities. Let us imagine a peaceful future. Since peace and justice are inextricably linked, people seeking peace also seek justice. Indeed, it was their love for peace, harmony, equality, and justice in different parts of the world that led some Jews, Christians, and Muslims to set up peaceful communities. Whether we succeed in our efforts or not we need to try to explore creative ways of reconciling our differences.

No doubt, there will be no peace in the world unless there is peace among the religions; and there will be no peace among the religions until the *wasatia* concept dominates man's behavior belonging to any religion.

Peace starts with dialogue, peace continues with dialogue; and peace is sustained by dialogue. We hope you will give your dedicated support for this noble initiative.