

# **The Future of Mankind**

by Uneeb Qureshi

Since the earliest recorded writings of civilizations, man has resorted to religious belief to further his own understanding of the universe. The Abrahamic faiths were direct revelations from God to mankind to understand their true purpose. Man's own inhumanity to man was a direct result of his inability to comprehend prejudice. Misunderstanding within Jerusalem led to factions and the crucifixion led to even more dispute and Christianity was followed to spread Jesus' disciplines. People saw Christianity as a true path and warred to right wrongs, however this progression had ended a peaceful age. The emergence of Islam returned to an age of relative religious tolerance. As Islam emerged victorious in its quest for religious liberty it ruled over the Arabian Peninsula in peace, neither Christian nor Jew was harmed under Islamic rule. Again however as time carried on people grew less tolerant and old hatreds emerged. The crusades were a direct result of peoples' inability to understand the true value of peace and the misunderstanding continues today. People must learn to understand inter-religious differences in order to create a religiously tolerant world.

Each Abrahamic faith developed its own guidelines regarding inter-societal relations. However like other guidelines, they stand for many interpretations and it is by no means anyone's fault to determine it one way or another. This leeway allows people to openly express new ways of following a faith, but the problem of extremist factions taking the disciplines to unwanted levels exists. The Judaic faith has evolved through such historical eras as the inter-testament, medieval, and rabbinic periods. At each point it had developed new ways of thinking, to evolve to contemporary times. However at the core, it has maintained strict ties to the teachings of the torah.

The Talmud is the official/revered collection of commentaries on the Torah. Even the Talmud states that, “[t]he whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace”<sup>1</sup>. While some other traditional beliefs stress that, “Man is to pursue peace, justice, and righteousness”<sup>2</sup>. The Talmud even signs its end with, “G-d found no better receptacle for Blessing than the Peace”<sup>3</sup>. Christian theology stresses many of the same aspects for peace. The bible says, “blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God”<sup>4</sup> and “[that] the peace of God...guard[s] [their] hearts and [their] minds...”<sup>5</sup>. The bible states that Jesus, “himself is [the] peace, [that] has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility”<sup>6</sup>. The similarities are evident, both Jewish and Christian faiths incorporate the belief of a loving God that represents the epitome of peace and understanding. The last of the Abrahamic religions, Islam, has also followed a similar adoption of traditions of peace and love of God. The Qur’an specifically states to, “not allow [peoples’] oaths... to become an obstacle to virtue and... the promotion of peace between men”<sup>7</sup>. Even the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said in his hadiths,<sup>8</sup> “Don't say [peace] be on [God], for He [is the peace], but say, [a prayer for all the blessings]... then it will be for all...between heaven and earth”<sup>9</sup>. And Islamic tradition says even in times of war “if [enemies] incline to peace, incline [oneself] to it as well, and place thy trust in God...”<sup>10</sup>. Showing that during times of war, peacemakers can always be present and should stop bloodshed if requested. These doctrines again show Islamic doctrines intertwining with those of Jewish and Christian teachings. Islam like Christianity believes in Jesus, but Islam only sees Jesus as a prophet of God; however this does not

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<sup>1</sup> Talmud, Gittin 59b

<sup>2</sup> Elwell Evangelical Dictionary, “Judaism”

<sup>3</sup> In the last Mishnah in Uktzin

<sup>4</sup> The Holy Bible, King James Version, Matt. 5.9

<sup>5</sup> The Holy Bible, King James Version, Phil. 4.7

<sup>6</sup> The Holy Bible, King James Version, Eph. 2.14

<sup>7</sup> Qur’an, 2:224

<sup>8</sup> The Prophet’s interpretations and meanings of the Qur’an

<sup>9</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari v.794, Narrated Shaqlq bin Salama

<sup>10</sup> Qur’an, 8:61

stop the teachings of Jesus and his peace from being endured. The Qur'an states, "peace was upon [Jesus] on the day when [He] was born...[and will be] on the day when [He] shall be raised to life [again]"<sup>11</sup>. With such striking similarity in theology it is a wonder why so much bloodshed is present today. Many wars being reported by the media are of religious nature, many people engage themselves in inter-religious conflicts. The recurring inferences of God being the eternal peace and prophets and saviors vying for peace between people continue to endure in many of these faiths. Because of these doctrines undermining the reasons for conflict it is the duty of all the followers of these faiths to stand together and unite under the common belief of all their prophets and saints and come to terms of peace.

Enduring faith has always surrounded the lives of many people, and peace has always been a changing fact in many nations. During my childhood I used to live in poorer parts of the country, areas where people are less fortunate and are often more inclined to racial or ethnic prejudice. It was a religious journey as well as a spiritual journey. But September 11, 2001 was a harsh journey for many people around the country and it had changed many lives. As a student being evacuated from classes and sent home I understood nothing of what was happening. The first thing on the TV was the horrific event unfolding. Tragically, many people had suffered. The drastic actions taken after the attack by the government did not only strengthen national security but it made times harsher for families across the nation like ours. While on track for U.S. citizenship it hit us by surprise, our journey to a better life had to take longer than we had thought. The way people treated each other in school had changed my views of the world forever. People I considered good friends began turning on me, hating me not only for my skin color and face but for my religion. Religious understanding and friendships were always important in my life, I had to adjust my religion to school and that is a hard thing to do with Islam. Recalling one day at lunch a girl I once

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<sup>11</sup> Qur'an, 19:33

knew well hugged my friend, jokingly I had asked why I did not receive a hug, and she veered with unkind eyes and blatantly said, “I don’t give hugs to terrorists.” That shook me, I had apparently been stooped down to the level of a terrorist. Epiphany after epiphany soon after cleared my understanding of the life; the world never understands the other side, no matter how hard people try. People are ignorant to change and fail to see their actions under times of great stress. Friends had talked to the girl momentarily and she returned and apologized, I accepted the apology knowing that she had not known better at the time. The events had changed my views of the world to something that required deep understanding.

From experience and living through many hardships, people learn to coexist much easier. But because of our relative position in world affairs, it is crucial for people in the United States to learn about other religions and views. If we are to change the world, we must first understand ourselves. Some of the best ways are community service projects and using media attention to get to not only local communities but possibly state-wide or nation-wide audiences. Many town projects often falter because of low expenditures, some of the best ways to improve the lives of people are to both directly act and get many religious communities involved in the process. Many prophets and saints have implied in many teachings that when communities come together in common goals, that is when true peace and stability is achieved. People must come together physically and spiritually in common interests. Charities often welcome aid and religious groups can volunteer together to help, and during the work hours many opportunities for sharing, understanding and communion ensue. People will converse and socialize about both daily lives and so on, during this process trust is built and trust is the foundation of any peace. A common community project could involve building roads or housing. Many projects do not require that people be artisans in their trade, even minor tasks such as measurements and cooking help

anything get done. While the knowledgeable among the communities can actively engage the project, the others can help manage or monitor progress, help organize food and rest breaks. And some of the most important things in most projects like these are children, whether they help or not children are affected by activities like this. They may not be helpful during the actual community project but children will learn as they go. Play areas or rest areas specifically for children will help them learn and meet new children. Friends are often the most influential in a child's life, and the children usually will learn to appreciate people of other religions at this point in their life. If you nurture children in an environment where many groups are working together, the children themselves will learn to abstain from stereotypes. However this project should not only apply to local communities only, projects involving the state or nation at large such as aid efforts. Often these grander efforts receive more public attention and with enough attention the entire public will become involved in the task. This chain reaction will turn to world attention, the once racially stereotypical America will be seen through world eyes as leaders in abolishing religious hatred and protecting cultural diversity. In order to make these projects work however, there has to be a cohesive understanding between local communities. People from each religion must unite and funnel their resources to make this happen. Along the way of aid efforts and other community development efforts, there are several other activities that can be implemented. Many mini-games and topic guided discussions can help people bring out ideas and understanding. A life-size board-game like activity would help bring out friendly competition and fun in all groups of people. The game would involve some religious ideology and theology questions and other common ethical and moral issues, and different teams will be able to progress together if they help the other team answer, progress alone if they answer it alone, or if one group fails that group or groups would move back one space. The purpose of this layout would make sure that people cooperate and help

each other understand different religions and views, if they correctly come to understand each other and help one another, the reward would be that each team gains one step forward. The center of the giant life-size board would be “Peace and Unity”, of course the goal would be to finish together because peace should not be attained by one group alone. There will most likely be special movement squares or bonuses attained along the way to help even out the teams. And of course the teams will get prizes for achieving or attempting peace, excluding one group for not winning the game would negate the whole exercise. Therefore the winning team(s) would receive the pride of winning for recognition, but in essence each team is a winning team for attempting the process. Topic-guided discussions will help bring out deep thoughts to project to others. The first path to peace understands how other people feel. When people can eliminate fear and modesty, as is done in large discussions, the true way to get to people is found. Discussions such as instances of racism in one’s life will help dispel stereotypical fears of talking about controversial subjects and it will help people become loose and easily understandable. When a person dispels his or her own fear of talking about racism and understands that the audience at large is there to understand, then there is a common goal and each side gets something out of it. All these activities combined with the ultimate goal of developing a world-wide community that will learn to lay down arms and come together in peace, peace is possible. No matter what we believe in; Jews, Christians, Muslims are all capable of universal understanding and peace. What people require is a feasible and simple means to this peace. Group projects help people learn team skills and these skills are universal throughout our life, whether used in work or leisure. People must utilize all basic skills and advanced skills to help build a community of interfaith believers, the Abrahamic religions show similar trends of theological development. If along the progression of these activities people understand how similar other religions really are, then the activities have served their true purpose.

We must understand the real reason why people fight, why we as humans never really can fully achieve a weaponless peace. We are all afraid, and the greatest challenges we face aren't terrorists or disease or famine, things that we can eventually change or rid ourselves of, but ourselves. Prejudice is inevitable; however this should not stop us from attempting to achieve peace. The Jesuit priest John Dear once said, "as we make peace...we will learn to make peace with those around us and with others throughout the world...[and] we will become the true instruments of God's own peace [and make] the world [better] for all"<sup>12</sup>. When people understand themselves and know that peace cannot be achieved alone, then the true path to peace has been paved. Peace is possible and will never be impossible, but it all starts with a dream, intimate cooperation and the will to succeed.

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<sup>12</sup>Dear, John. Living Peace. New York: Doubleday, 2001. 9-10