

عيد الفطر 2006

الله أكبر! الله أكبر! الله أكبر!
الله أكبر كبيرا ، والحمد لله كثيرا ...
الله أكبر نحمده ونستعينه ونستغفره ، ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا
وسيئات أعمالنا ... من يهده الله فلا مضل له ، ومن يضلل فلا تجد له ولما
مرشدا
الله أكبر! الله أكبر! الله أكبر!
الله أكبر هدى وأرشد ، أعطى فكفى ، وأنعم فيسر ...
الله أكبر أرسل رسوله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره
الكافرون ...
الله أكبر! الله أكبر! الله أكبر!
الله أكبر وقد أعطانا رمضان لنصوم نهاره ونقوم ليله ونتصدق في أيامه
الله أكبر وقد بدأ رمضان لنا رحمة ، وجعل أوسطه مغفرة ، وندعوه تعالى أننا
قد بلغناه آخره بالفوز و العتق من النار ...
الله أكبر! الله أكبر! الله أكبر!
الله أكبر في يوم العيد وفي كل فجر جديد ...
الله أكبر يتجلى نوره للمؤمنين ، فيشرح صدورنا ملأها الأسى الحزين ...
الله أكبر يوم تجزى كل نفس بما كسبت، وإنما يفوز بفضل ربهم العاملون ...
الله أكبر! الله أكبر! الله أكبر!
الله أكبر رب العالمين ، رؤوف رحيم ، لطيف خبير
الله أكبر ملك جبار ، عزيز متكبر ، منتقم مهيمن ، سبحان الله عما يصفون
هو الأول والآخر و الظاهر والباطن
هو الله له الأسماء الحسنى فادعوه بها
الله أكبر! الله أكبر! الله أكبر!
الله أكبر ندعوه ونرجوه ونلجأ إليه ونتوكل عليه
الله أكبر إليه مرجعنا و معادنا ف"كل ما عليها فان ويبقى وجه ربك ذو الجلال
و الإكرام"

وأعظم الصلاة و أعطر السلام على رسول الله محمد الذي أدى الأمانة وصدق الحديث و نصح الأمة .
أما بعد !

Sisters and brothers

Congratulation to every one of you for completing the month of fasting; it was a great month;

An oasis of peace and tranquility...

A time out of our busy and hectic life...

A period of reflection, repentance and renewal...

An interval of patience, generosity and prayer ...

A spot where the faith "إيمان" is increased and strengthened

A cycle!... yes Ramadan is a cycle, it comes back every year to make us stop and think, change our routine and devote some time for the life after. And as we are told in the Qur'an; we might gain Taqua and we might become among those who are grateful to their Creator.

Thanksgiving is what Ramadan is all about, by abstaining from what is always lawful we gain the sense of the deprivation from what we ordinarily take for granted, and we are always reminded in the Qura'an that every thing we have is not but a gift from our Lord that we should cherish. For example

"قل أرأيتم إن أصبح ماؤكم غورا فمن يأتكم بماء معين" 67-30 الملك

"Say: See you water if it is lost who would supply you with clear flowing water?"

In a clear and logical way the Qura'an advances our knowledge of life and creation, we are always challenged to think, analyze and ponder. It is no mystery we are asked to believe in blindly, no idol we are asked to listen to speaking for God, no priests no monks no Pope. Every one is enjoined to do good and avoid evil and every one is responsible for his own action, All humans are equal in the eye of God, and all have the same responsibility according to their ability. When a nation becomes a tyrant the individual can't make the excuse that he was misled by a certain leader

" وإذ يتحاجون في النار فيقول الضعفاء للذين استكبروا إنا كنا لكم تبعاً فهل أنتم مغنون عنا نصيباً من النار؟" 40-74 سورة غافر

In the Day of Judgment we are told the weak followers will ask the arrogant leaders that;" we were not but followers of you, can you take from us a portion of the hell fire?"

Is that fascism?

I wonder if those who use the term “Islamofascism” know what they are talking about; certainly they don’t know what fascism is and they are totally ignorant of Islam.

No more two opposite concepts are to be found ever. Fascism makes the individual a slavish follower of the national leader, it glorifies nation state and it looks in disdain to people of different race or different nations. Islam frowns upon following a leader when he is wrong and puts the responsibility on the followers individually to take action appropriate to correct the wrong. As we have just read; it doesn’t absolve the follower the fact that he was merely following orders.

Furthermore Islam is transnational in its message. The Qur’an always addresses humanity as a whole and clarifies the purpose and the reason for having people belong to different nations;

"ياأيها الناس إنا خلقناكم من ذكر وأنثى وجعلناكم شعوبا وقبائل لتعارفوا إن أكرمكم عند الله أتقاكم"

“ O’ people we have created you into male and female, and made you to be different nations and tribes so you get to know one another, the best of you are those who have the greatest God’s consciousness ”

The nation state is a western concept, it is a fascist concept, unfortunately it has been promoted among Muslims nation by those same people who continue to throw their accusation at Islam in a manner that actually insults themselves as ignorant of history, and as bigots who disdain the truth.

"يريدون ليطفئوا نور الله بأفواههم والله متم نوره ولو كره الكافرون" 8-61 الصف

“Their intention is to extinguish the light of Allah by their mouths but Allah will complete his light even though the unbelievers might detest.”

When the prophet (PBUH) started his message, the unbelievers threw on him one accusation after another; a liar, a sorcerer, a poet, an imposter. The answer always came in a calm way to refute these accusations and to give the proof that Qur’an is the revealed word of Allah

"ولو كان من عند غير الله لوجدوا فيه اختلافا كثيرا"

“If this Qur’an was written by anyone other than Allah they would have found in it a lot of discrepancy”

Should we learn something from that? Should we learn that the truth does stand by itself and people can’t be fooled for a long time? Should we learn that refuting unjust lecture, a catching sound bite or a false article will not require but a calm well thought-out response? Indeed a violent response doesn’t serve but to confirm certain accusations.

Before we are able to respond we should understand what that it was said and in what context, and we can't accept an apology unless we know it is a sincere one. So in his lecture in Germany when Pope Benedict describes the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaeologos as the "Erudite Emperor" The Pope's apology rings hollow, it will not be accepted unless he explains further his position vis-a-vie his quotation of a 14 century script of a conversation between that emperor and a Persian Muslim scholar, a conversation that we can ascertain never actually took place.

While we can't speculate about the intention of Pope Benedict, we can be certain that he has inflamed the "Clash of civilizations" that some ill advised thinkers and politicians are eager to cultivate.

Uri Avneri an Israeli's journalist wrote about this episode in September; he explained that the relationship between popes and the emperors have varied from one time of history to another; while in the beginning emperors threw Christians to the lions, Constantine encouraged the practice of Christianity by embracing it, and later on the struggle between the emperors and the popes played a central role in European history. "But there were times when emperors and popes lived in peace with each other and we are witnessing such a period today" Mr. Avneri continues " *the* speech by the Pope, which aroused a world wide storm, went well with Bush's crusade against "Islamofascism", in the context of clash of civilizations."

Muslims on the other hand are ordered to respect and to dialog with the "People of the Book" not to clash with them;

" قل يا أهل الكتاب تعالوا إلى كلمة سواء بيننا وبينكم أن نعبد الله ولا نشرك به شيئا "

"Say: Oh people of the book come to agree on one thing we both agree on and that is to worship one God and not to associate others in that worship." Muslims will not defame Christianity or Judaism because Moses and Jesus (PBUT) are mighty prophets of Allah; we praise their efforts in enlightening humanity. We believe in the evolution of one message sent down by one God to one Human race through many prophets and messengers. The message of Christianity is the same message of Islam, and the same message of Judaism. It is people who misinterpret the message and miscarry the orders.

Unfortunately when there is a political conflict it seems that the political leaders in the West, the head of the church and some intellectuals always attack Islam as the cause of the conflict rather than attacking their adversaries for what they are. Of course when Pope Urban II gave his speech

encouraging European Christians to liberate Jerusalem, he nullified Islam and Muslims as “pagans” and “vile race.”

Pope Benedict in his speech asserts the superiority of Christianity as being a religion of reason. To prove the lack of reason in Islam, The Pope says that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ordered his followers to spread their religion by the sword. In his opinion that defies reason because faith is born of the soul not the body, how can the sword influence the soul? In order for the Pope to appear reasonable in the face of his fabricated accusation he admits that The Qur’an specifically forbids the spread of faith by force

"لا إكراه في الدين قد تبين الرشد من الغي" 256-2 البقرة

“There shall be no compulsion in religion; the truth is distinguished from misguidance.”

The verse itself refutes his claim but he cleverly argues that this verse was presented in the beginning of Muhammad’s career, and that, as he got stronger the Prophet ordered his followers to use the sword. Well the Pope after all is no Islamic scholar, he is not aware that this verse is located in the second chapter of the Qur’an AL-Baqara, which was revealed in Medina in the latter time of the message of the Prophet (PBUH) not in the early days. This fact makes the whole accusation false, refuting his whole reasoning.

The story about Islam and the sword is an evil legend; it is a myth which grew up in Europe during the time of conflict with Muslims. Unfortunately many scholars in oriental studies in respected universities are unable to grow out of this myth.

In the Boston Globe James Carroll reminds us of what the Pope has forgotten; he says: “Benedict seems to have forgotten that the European rejection of violent coercion in religion came about not through religion but through the secular impulses of the Enlightenment.” More significantly Benedict praises the rationality of Christianity “as this inner rapprochement between biblical faith and Greek philosophical inquiry”

He is either ignorant of history or ignoring history. This rapprochement indeed was made possible by Islamic scholars like Al-Farabi and Averroes, through them Aristotle and Plato became known to Christian Europe.

Finally one can’t help but remind the Pope that the oldest Christian communities indeed reside not in Europe but in Islamic countries, That when the crusaders invaded Jerusalem, they killed all its inhabitants including the Arab Christians, and that some Christian communities in Syria

still speak the Aramaic language. No one forced them to abandon their religion.

But we would like to ask him about what happened to the Muslim and Jewish communities that thrived in Spain for eight centuries? Ignoring the facts of history doesn't speak well for scholarly presentation.

Dr. Ahmad Atif Ahmad professor of religion at Macalester University reminds us that before he became Pope Benedict, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was the head of the "Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faithful" a congregation originally instituted at the time of the Spanish inquisition to prosecute Muslims and Jews Its responsibilities now focus upon preserving the faith of Christians. As such the Pope is probably full of fears about the future of Christianity in Western Europe, the same fears that made him one of the leading opposition forces against allowing Turkey to join the European Union.

What should we learn from this episode?

First; this is neither the first attack nor the last attack on the man who we love and know as the Prophet of Allah and his Messenger (PBUH)
Second; violent response is not what we are ordered to do; the examples in the Qur'an of such accusations and the proper response to them are plentiful.
Third; no response shall arise as a knee jerk reaction, otherwise we will be exchanging ignorance with similar ignorance. We do have to understand the issues involved and we do have to attempt to reach the concerned people, each of us according to his own ability لا يكلف الله نفسا إلا وسعها
Fourth; we do have to distinguish in our own minds religious and theological problems from political and territorial ones.
Sixth; regardless of the anti-Islamic polemics the others choose to engage in, we should never engage in anti-Catholic or anti-Christian polemics.

"ولا يجرمكم شأن قوم أن لا تعدلوا"

"Don't allow the transgression of some to make you unjust in their treatment"

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله

الله أكبر! الله أكبر! الله أكبر!

أحمد الله حمدا لا مزيد عليه... وأصلي على نبيه المصطفى خير خلق الله صلاة تليق بمقامه الكريم ، وأدعو الله أن يبعثه المقام المحمود الذي وعده ،
الله أكبر في العيد وما بعد العيد إلى أن يحشر الناس في يوم معلوم

الله أكبر! الله أكبر! الله أكبر!

Before we close with دعاء

I would like to read this quote from Uri Avnery's article:

“Every honest Jew who knows the history of his people cannot but feel a deep sense of gratitude to Islam, which has protected the Jews for fifty generations, while the Christian world persecuted the Jews and tried many times “by the sword” to get them to abandon their faith.”

He continues “Not for the first time in history, a religious robe is spread to cover the nakedness of economic interests; not for the first time a robber's expedition becomes a crusade”

We ask God to show us the right path, the path of salvation

We pray for peace on earth, we pray to know others so we are able to recognize our differences.

We pray to God to save human blood from being shed, we pray to end wars, all wars

We pray that “peaceful engagement” of nations will replace “clash of civilizations”

We pray for the poor and the needy, for the sick and for the oppressed.

We ask that God has listened to our prayers, and has accepted our fasting in Ramadan, and we pray that our charity was well received by him.

We pray for our nation and for the world. We pray for ourselves, for our parents, for our friends and for our neighbors.

وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه وسائر النبيين والمرسلين وسلم تسليما كثيرا
الله أكبر! الله أكبر! الله أكبر!

In this sermon I relied heavily on the following articles:

- 1) Muhammad's Sword by Uri Avnery
- 2) Bigotry and Ignorance of Islam by Charley Reese
- 3) Pope Benedict's hierarchy of truth, faith by James Carroll
- 4) Benedict's Fears by Ahmad Atif Ahmad