

## ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN PAKISTAN

**Rashid Ahmad (Jullundhry)**

Islamic fundamentalism is under constant discussion these days. A number of writings warn the West of a 'new type of religious development taking place in Muslim society'. Needless to say, in this age of democracy, and globalization such a religio-political development is not a "healthy sign" in the political life of the South Asia. In fact, the Western Press, which does not wish to see a repetition of Khomeini's Iranian revolution in other Muslim countries, does not adequately depict the religious mind of the Muslim peoples. Nor does it reflect correctly the prevailing intellectual paradox and social upheaval in Muslim society. It is noteworthy that, in the beginning of the last century, Prof. Margoliouth advised the colonial powers with reference to Pan-Islamism, not to be afraid of a few "Uncivilized persons... to whom the expulsion of Europeans from Asia and Africa would be most welcome." The passage of time made it clear that it was not the religious communities alone, as Margoliouth has warned, but the entire peoples of Afro-Asia who rose in opposition against the colonial powers in the East. It is strange that the majority of writers on this subject do not discuss the fundamental reasons for the present unrest which has given rise to the extremist tendencies both in politics and religion. Furthermore, both

point of departure for such studies. They represent a half-century's work of a conscious, faithful interlocutor between the two faith traditions.

### Notes

1. Kenneth Gragg, *Muhammad and the Christian: A Question of Response*, Oxford: One world, 1999, p. 136.
2. Kenneth Cragg, *Am I Not your Lord? Human Meaning in Divine Question*, London: Melisende, 2003, p. 231.
3. Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 3rd edition, Oxford: One world, 2000, p. 5.
4. Kenneth Cragg, *Muhammad and the Christian*, *op. cit.*, p. 136; Kenneth Cragg, *Am I Not Your Lord?* *op. cit.*, p. 231.

those thirteen years he was up against the vested interests of a pagan shrine, and the pride of the custodians from whose tribe he came as a junior member. The situation was not unlike Paul in Ephesus, where the people were making shrines to Diana, asking what would happen to their Goddess if this new message was accepted?"

"He was completely powerless. He bore this situation with very few results. The light at end of tunnel was not in Mecca but in Medina, the people invited him to take refuge there. He departed with his followers and gained a wide following. This was the pivotal event. Time in Islam dates from *hijrah* (622 CE), not his birth date."

"After eight years the Meccans succumbed to his superior power. What had become a transtribal message became an intertribal war. In Mecca, the message was just a religion, the practice of prayer, the beginnings of a caring community, without benefit of power. It was analogous in some ways to first three centuries of Christianity, the religion in the catacombs before Constantine the conqueror made it an established world religion. The priority of Mecca over Medina is not in doubt; witness the pilgrimage. Mecca is the place to which every mosque points."

## **Conclusions**

War, terrorism and globalization give unique coloration to the Islamic—Christian encounter. Hostility, misunderstanding and arrogance on both sides historically characterize the exchange. At the same time, the number of those who seriously study the interaction of Islam and Christianity grows. Cragg's numerous works provide a

quick to tell an Oxford audience that a common vocabulary and metaphors are not shared by the worlds' religions, and that patient dialogue held in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect is a requisite of a meaningful interfaith encounter.

He acknowledged that such encounters take place in a highly charged world, one of political, military, economic, and cultural disruptions. "These immense changes have occurred within two generations. We have absorbed these changes in the West since the Industrial Revolution, but in the Arab world people whose grandfathers were diving for pearls or driving camels are studying computers. But the twenty-first century is not like the sixth and the world community is not like early Arabian society. Islam is final; therefore it must be interpreted in a way that is abreast of the present time. Islamic political thought is yet to adjust fully to the idea of the modern secular state. "Traditionally, Muslims would and should be ruled by Muslims. The political dimension is integral to the completeness of Islam."<sup>4</sup> Thus, to live in the fullness of faith, Islamic peoples want to live in a state immersed with an Islamic worldview, sustained by Islamic law; living outside such a setting can leave a Muslim with strong feelings of being deeply uprooted.

*How important are the Mecca—Medina differences in Islam?*

"I am working on a book on the tragic in Islam. Sunni Islam often extols the amazing spread and success of Islam. Suffering is a minority concept, left largely with the Shia, who recall the immolation of Hussain, victim of the massacre perpetrated against Muhammad's direct lineage and followers. Many people do not realize that during the Meccan period Muhammad was a genuine sufferer. During

plays, or no one comes to Beethoven except through his symphonies. That is the father—son relationship.”

He switched the discussion’s focus away from in-and-out scriptural barriers, observing, “The ultimate unbelief is ingratitude, never saying ‘Thank you.’ It is not the God we deny, it is the God we ignore.”

Part of the understanding of God, he continued, comes from the nature of divine—human interaction, “God, Allah, Deus, Yahweh, what sort of a word is it? It is a relational word, like friend. You can’t be a friend unless you have someone to be friendly with. You can’t be a host without guests. These are relational words. The heart of the Christian faith is that we are in a relationship with God. I’m not saying that the meaning of God is exhausted there. There are ninety-nine names of Allah, just as Christ is seen as saviour, liberator, the lamb of God, etc.”

*How difficult is communication between religions?*

“You can’t be sure the other party has got what you said, but a misunderstanding can also be an occasion for learning for all people.” Cragg recalled the example of a Christian missionary who was shocked when a Turkish girl said, “How disgusting!” of the concept of the lord as a shepherd in Psalm 23. “They are illiterate, outcasts, very much on the margins of society. I would never marry one!” she stated emphatically. A cherished Christian concept meant nothing in a Muslim society, unless the missionary could explain that the relationship of the sheep to the shepherd was one of trust, dependence, guidance, and protection, like the relationship between people and their God.” Cragg was

*Could Christians say Christ is the son of God, and leave the final disposition to the "God of Gods, Light of Lights, Very God of Very God"?*

Cragg drew on linguistic examples for several answers. I paraphrase him to say that God is the same in the nominative in Islam and Christianity but not quite the same in the predicate, the verbal forms used to access the noun. "A simple grammatical illustration; in Arabic grammar God is the subject of all predication, yet different in different predicates, yet all predicates lead to the same subject. In English we can say 'Manchester is a city in Connecticut or a city in England.' The two predicates can be the same, but are different, leading to the same subject, the same word."

An important feature of both traditions is prophethood. "Prophethood is a tribute to the dignity of creaturehood. You would not send prophets to puppets. According to the Qur'an the human trustee is fickle, lacking in staying power, liable to forget. We are summoned to our vocation before God, but we forget or ignore our role. Creation, creaturehood, and prophecy are all related in the great religions."

*What about the "You only" passages in the Bible, such as John 13:4-11, those that say that Christ is the only way to God?*

"Again the noun-predicate illustration is helpful. In the Gospel of John he that has the son has the father. The father is fully and finally expressed in sending the son. When we appreciate the nature of Christhood we then see the nature of the God from whom that Christhood comes. No one comes unto this fatherhood except through the Son, just as no one comes to Shakespeare except through his

controlling, but in such a manner that students may make mistakes or come up with wrong answers.”

*“Does my God win over your God?” both sides might ask.*

“My concern is that Muslims should be ready to appreciate those dimensions of the nature of God that are distinctively present in God in Christ. Michael Ramsey’s phrase was ‘the Christ likeness of God’ and that is a distinctive Christian offering.” Elsewhere Cragg wrote, “We have to surrender copyright ownership of that to which we witness. There is a sort of monolatry latent in aggressive witness or theology, if we are implying that we only possess God truly or that the truth of Him is copyright to us alone... Monolatry, adopting one God, is distinguished sharply from monotheism or belief in the Oneness of God.”<sup>12</sup>

“Some might conclude that witness is at an end. I don’t think that would ever be true about the New Testament, but this witness should reflect that there are things we hold in trust for our tradition, so that the truth of them shall not perish from the earth. Yet, at the same time we should be happy to acknowledge that this to which they witness is in part a common territory. Other religions can come to a greater understanding of God through the Christian experience.”

In *The Call of the Minaret* he wrote, “Those who say that Allah is not ‘the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ are right if they mean the God is not so described by Muslims. They are wrong if they mean that Allah is other than the god of the Christian faith.”<sup>13</sup>

*How do you respond when some Christians or Muslims are unyielding that their God is the only God? Is there any way to move beyond such an impasse?*

“I don’t think they are right. The ultimate power is not in doubt. But both faiths have the clear concept, it is over to you, you humans to have dominion of the earth. It is very clear their humanity is set over the ‘middle state’ of nature. We control the plough, wheel, and what we do with what there is shows dominion. Nature is susceptible to our intelligent control. This is the raw material of consecration. That is a Judeo-Christian-Islamic concept.”

Repeatedly Cragg stressed cherishing creation as a religious concept common to the three Abrahamic faiths, one that could give them grounds for closer cooperation. He said, “We speak of ‘The Holy Land’ but it a usage I do not favour because no land can be holy unless all lands are holy.”

He concluded, “I like to come around to it this way, you have to have an idea of divine power that is consistent with the givenness of creation. This is quite genuine. This is where environmental issues are so deep. If one accepts this argument, the handing over of relative control, of stewardship of the earth, leaves no question of the source of ultimate control.”

“I sometime use the analogy of education. In a descent school there is no doubt about who is presiding, but the subject matter is constantly adjusted to the ongoing business of education. A student has the possibility to err. That is a condition of education. Any teacher in a classroom is



of Qur'anic exegesis that the content of the message reflects the temporal situation from which it emerges. The sequence of the Qur'an follows episodes of Mohammed's life. The occasions of revelation have to be interpreted in the context of 'time when' or 'place where' over twenty-three years."

*Mission is common to both Islam and Christianity, but must it result in conflict?*

"Mission is not fixed and static, it is something learned as we go along. The ten lepers learned of Jesus as they were cleansed, as they ministered they received."

"The Great Commission, the idea of making disciples out of all peoples, is in the plural. Peoples means cultures, languages, and religions. The object of the Christian religion is to bring the individual into faith. The symbol of that is baptism. I wouldn't for a second suggest that we forsake that, but we must ask, 'Is there a discreet and compassionate Christian relationship we can establish with other religions as such, realizing they are going to be part of the scene?' They are not going to disappear. They are going to stay."

"These great religions have so much in their care. They preside over peace and war as we can see today. Plus questions of poverty, malnutrition, emigration. Christianity of itself cannot monopolize the answers to these human issues. Therefore surely other faiths are part of a genuine communication of meaning. I think part of the lesson of 'Go ye and make disciples of all nations' is can we possible approximate the Muslim understanding of itself to the understanding of the love of God we have in the church?"

no doubt of our common Muslim/Christian theism. Where we differ is about the divine involvement this entails. It seems clear God cannot create and be as if He had not...It is a divine enterprise hinged on man, an intention on God's part, staked in a human concurrence... to which the divine calls and the human responds."<sup>1</sup>

*What do you say to those whose goal is to see the entire world become Muslim or Christian?*

"Religions have to coexist and witness, but not demand to dominate in universal terms. Islam has to coexist. The modern world can not be properly addressed as something to be Islamized. One fourth of all Muslims are in dispersion, and can not realistically anticipate Dar-al-Islam, an Islam exercising unilateral power. They need to ask themselves: what does it mean to be a British Muslim or an American Muslim?"

"The Qur'an should not be taken like a telephone directory where every line is considered authoritative by itself. Also the Bible should be considered both a book of revelation and one written by several authors across a considerable span of history. Today we would regard ethnic cleansing in the Book of Joshua as obsolete, though we still have it in the text." The goal is, "to keep an honest realism and not be patronizing. To balance our apprehension of others considering not only what defiles them but what commends them. So much depends on how we present our faith, at its core it is a mystery."

"What about the theology here? The question is how to diminish reliance on power. It is always a principal

It's giving 'democracy's opponents an excuse to censor, to display enmity and apathy. America is playing into the hands of hostile people. Even if the conflict goes well in terms of brevity, I think it will intensify the feeling that is an enormous power resorting to bullying." As for violence, "It is no good politicians saying "This is not Islam! It is *an* Islam", just as Christianity was marked by the violence of the Crusades, Inquisition, and the Wars of Religion."

*Is it possible for Muslims, Christians, and Jews to find a greater convergence than they have found to date?*

"What I have always thought is there is a genuine, honest, real overlap between Muslims and Christianity, so that the attitude many people had of 'them and us' alienation is misleading. It is important not to let that sense of otherness dominate; we can fraternize over what is genuinely mutual. The concept of creation, human creaturehood, the divine stake and human response, and the whole concept of prophethood are concepts we share."

"An approach can come through a greater appreciation of the mystery of God. 'Am I not your Lord?' (Surah 7:172) The question is asked in the Qur'an. It is at the heart of all theology. All of the progeny of the sons of Adam are congregated like a vast audience, and are addressed with this question. A negative question, I learned as a young student in Latin class, expects a 'yes' answer. All humanity answers, almost in anticipation, 'Yes, we bear witness to it.' Although for Islam and Christianity the patterns of response are both significantly akin and yet in crucial ways different." In *Muhammad and the Christian* Cragg wrote "This is a deep and unifying truth that we all share. There is

always something more to learn about Arab history and religion. “Those who drink of the Nile always return,” he said, quoting an Egyptian proverb. Presiding over a Sunday Eucharist, he resembled an eighteenth century divine, with reflective countenance and sparse gestures, dressed in a simple long-sleeved white bishop’s gown, as in a period engraving. The only hint of his international interests was a plain olive wood cross.

Cragg was one of the leaders who helped launch the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, a controversial undertaking in the 1980s and beyond. Local residents and some conservative Christians did not want to see a mosque and minaret among the town’s ancient stone spires and only a tie-breaking vote by the City Council’s chair allowed the project, even if it has the enthusiastic backing of its royal patron, Prince Charles. Located in Magdalen College’s old Deer Park, the centre includes space for 30 scholars, a library and lecture hall, plus a place of worship for Oxford’s growing Islamic community. Centres for Jewish and Hindu studies exist as satellites to Oxford’s colleges and a small but active interfaith community exists.

Our questions and answers were compiled during three meetings from 18 February to 18 March 2003, in Oxford, supplemented by occasional quotations from Cragg’s books.

*What do you think the shock waves of the Iraq war will be on Muslim—Christian relations?*

“I think they will set things back quite a lot. I feel very unhappy about this. Within the Qur’an there is a warrant to retaliate in a collective sense, and the whole concept of *jihad*—you must respond if you are attacked.

Council of Churches and residentiary canon at St. George's Cathedral, Jerusalem. In those three years, he established a series of seminars and other educational programs. He then returned to England and became part of the faculty and eventually warden of the Central College of the Anglican Community at Canterbury, where he stayed until it closed in 1967.

Cragg next served as an Anglican assistant bishop in the Jerusalem jurisdiction from 1970-1985, based in Cairo and covering a string of parishes from Morocco to the Arabian Peninsula. A visit to a city meant a meeting with local Islamic leaders, and the Bishop was one of a handful of Western Christians to actively seek an open exchange with Islamic counterparts.

From 1974 to 1978 he taught comparative religions at the University of Sussex, and also continued as an honorary assistant bishop, visiting the Middle East periodically. At various times he held visiting lectureships abroad, including in Lebanon, Egypt, the USA, and Nigeria. Cragg is an Honorary Fellow at Jesus College, and was a Bye Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he had a year free to do research. He presently is Honorary Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Oxford, and is active many Sundays.

In public presentations, his clear Lancashire accent and stentorian voice fill a room. Not far from his home is St. Matthew's church, a large, bustling evangelical congregation that considers the distinguished scholar an active pastor in its midst. More than 60 persons gathered on a particular Wednesday night for his presentation on "At School in the Middle East". This was a play on words, suggesting there is

shopkeeper who wanted to apprentice young Kenneth as an errand boy to a local pharmacist. A master at the local school persuaded Kenneth's father to let him continue his education, which led to a scholarship to Jesus College, Oxford, where he read modern history and took his first degree in 1934. Financially, Oxford life was "pretty much near the bone". The youth could not afford to join the social life of the Oxford Union, but after some hesitation joined the Christian Union, an evangelical group, and "it seemed to be the right thing". He began to think about ordination after graduation, took a short course at Bristol, and was ordained on his 23rd birthday in 1936.

His first Middle East posting was to Beirut, where he spent eight years, and on New Year's Eve 1939, married Milena, his companion for the next 48 years. His assignment was as head of a Christian hostel, St. Justin's House, at the American University of Beirut. Cragg added Arabic to Latin, acquired an Arabic concordance, and became fascinated with the Qur'an and the richness of Islamic spirituality and culture. Eighteen months later he could preach in Arabic. The next 60 years were spent studying, translating, and writing about Islam and Christianity. In 1947, the Craggs and their two young sons returned to Oxford, where Kenneth became vicar of a small church near Oxford, and completed a D. Phil. in 1950 on "Islam in the Twentieth Century, the Relationship of Christian Theology to its Problems". From 1951 to 1956 he was Professor of Arabic at Hartford Theological Seminary, Hartford, Connecticut, and editor of *The Muslim World* quarterly. He returned to Jerusalem in 1957 as Study Secretary for the Near East

**SPECTRUM****“Am I not Your Lord?” Kenneth Cragg on Muslim—  
Christian Dialogue****FREDERICK QUINN**

No person in modern times has contributed more to an understanding of Islam in the non-Muslim world than Kenneth Cragg, who turned 93 on 8 March 2006, and who spends most days working on another book. “What else is there to do?” he remarked, looking up from his small portable typewriter. Near it was a yellow pad and fountain pen, polished with years of use, and carefully arranged folders in a tidy ground level apartment in Pegasus Grange, Whitehouse Road, Oxford.

*The Call of the Minaret*, one of his 30 books, was a path-breaking work half a century ago, describing the basis of the Islamic faith to western audiences, urging Christians to respond with love, inclusiveness, and patience. It is now in its third printing, and from Cragg’s pen poured a series of related volumes including *The Event of the Qur’an*, *Jesus and the Muslim*, *Readings in the Qur’an*, *Islam Among the spires: an Oxford Reverie*, and *Am I Not Your Lord?*

“It was considered enemy country,” Cragg said of the Middle East he first visited as a young missionary in 1939 and from which he officially retired as an Anglican Bishop in 1985. He was born in 1913 in the northern coastal city of Blackpoll, where his father was a struggling but devout

