

DICID

مركز الدوحة
الدولي لحوار الأديان

DICID

Doha International Center
For Interfaith Dialogue

مؤتمر الدوحة لحوار الأديان في دورته الحادية عشرة
بعنوان " دور الشباب في تعزيز قيم الحوار "

المركز يزور جامعة كامبريدج

تنظيم دورة "فن الحوار" بالتعاون
مع مركز مناظرات قطر ومركز القرضاوي للوسطية

DICID Focuses on Youth
to Promote Dialogue

DICID Delegation Visits the
University of Cambridge

Training Course on
"the Art of Dialogue"



Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue Hosts

Prof. Karen Armstrong

Karen Armstrong is an award winning author who has popularized a respectful biography of Muhammad and Islam's beliefs to a western audience. She comes to Doha to speak for tolerance and understanding between different religions on the occasion of annual DICID Woolf institute lecture in April, 2015.

For more details, please call 44864666.



Dear reader

Welcome to the 9th issue of the DICID newsletter. We are entering in the eight year of our activities locally and internationally, promoting interreligious dialogue, mutual respect and understanding.

In collaboration with other interfaith institutions in Europe, America, Asia and Africa, DICID has planted deep roots in the world's interfaith scene.

In this issue, you have the opportunity to read detailed information about the 11th Doha Conference and also about the 4th Local Communities Roundtable Discussion organized by the Center, where selected group of academics and scholars participated in this great event.

The new issue of the journal ADYAN has been also published. The theme of this issue is "Culture and Heritage". You can also see many other activities of the center.

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue and do not forget to visit us on our newly designed official website and Facebook site. We invite you to post your tips, suggestions and criticisms, if there are any.

DICID Public Relations Department

OUR MISSION

We strive for constructive dialogue between followers of different faiths towards better understanding and harnessing of distinct religious principles and teachings to the benefit of all humanity, on the basis of mutual respect and acknowledgement of differences and through cooperation with related individuals and organizations.

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DICID Focuses on Youth to Promote Dialogue, March 2014

DICID held its 11th Conference in Doha under the patronage of HE, the Minister of Justice, Dr. Hassan Bin Lahdan Al-Mohannidi. This three day conference started on March 25th with as a theme/ title "Youth and enhancing the value of dialogue".

In his inaugural address, HE Al-Mohannidi foregrounded the importance of an interfaith dialogue and Qatar's mission in promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence. This was followed by Prof. Ibrahim Al-Naimi, DICID Board Director, and HE Dr. Mounir Tlili, the Minister of Religious Affairs of Tunisia, His Eminence Cardinal John Onaiyekan, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria, and Dr. Mark Cohen, representative of the Jewish faith.

Prof. Ibrahim Al Naimi also mentioned that the theme of our conference "the role of youth in Promoting dialogue" is informed by the center's conviction of the significance and dynamics to include youth in an interfaith dialogue and provide them with platforms for debate, such as conference activities and discussions that revolve around interfaith dialogues.

The session ended with the projection by a movie and the award ceremony. Best organization award was equally divided between Jordan Three Faith Forum and the International Forum for Moderation. The Best Individual Award went to Dr Vladimerscu Mihai from Romania and HH princess Rohaniza Usma from Philippines.

Conference Agenda

It includes many points and themes, such as "Youth's conception of religion", "youth inspired religious tales", the opportunities and challenges that face youth, including the obstacles that stop them from participating in interfaith dialogue. The conference dealt with other themes, such as what the interfaith dialogue offers young people, including teaching programmes at schools and universities along with the theme of what youth present to interfaith dialogue. Side-issues are media programmes in interfaith dialogue, religious reforms and their role by focusing on social networks that combat perversion, atheism, and religious fanaticism.

The conference drew more than 350 participants from the three monotheistic religions, and other cultural backgrounds. The participants debated four key themes:

1. Religious perspectives on youth: five academic sessions
2. Opportunities and challenges facing youth today: eight academic sessions
3. Interfaith dialogue for youth and its relevance to them: one academic session
4. Youth contribution in interfaith dialogue: one student session.

All sessions were conducted in an overall spirit of dialogue, tolerance, coexistence, amidst an academic atmosphere of diversity and pluralism.

After two days of extensive debate the conference ended with a set of recommendations

- 1-Teach stories of prophets, inspired by the scriptures.
- 2-Overcome difficulties and challenges that prevent youth from playing a leading role in the dialogue process.
- 3-Develop a media strategy that advocates a culture of dialogue and coexistence.
- 4-Urge social media networks to embrace objectivity, coexistence, peace and security.
- 5-Invite production companies to produce youth interfaith media programs inspired by cooperation,

love and peace between the followers of three monotheic religions and other cultures.

6- Initiate adequate use of social media and other highteck methods to build bridges of communications and cooperation between followers of different religions.

7-Line curricula and teaching programmes with the DICI goals and vision.

8-Invite universities, colleges and institutions to create research centers to investigate real social conditions and the challenges facing youth.

9-revise the concept of otherness in educational curricula in all faiths. 10 Urge NGOs and institutions locally regionally and internationally to engage youth and enhance the culture of dialogue

11-Activate dialogue process through civil society, to achieve stability and peace in society, with special focus on minorities.

12-Call on policymakers in countries where minorities live to achieve citizenship and positive integration, taking into account the identity of minorities.

13- Have participants of the 11th Doha Conference recommend sending a delegation to view the situation in Central Africa to work on proposals to achieve peace, security, stability and co-existence.

14-Call on the United Nations, as well as other international and regional organizations, to adopt laws and regulations promoting individual freedom and belief, and the rights of

minorities in devotional practice. 15-Invite Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue to organize seminars, workshops and conferences, in countries of minorities, as part of their mission, and to activate the recommendations of all previous conferences.

The participants raised the highest expressions of appreciation and respect to His Royal Highness, the Emir of the State of Qatar, his government and subjects. They took this occasion to convey their sincere appreciation for the pioneering efforts of the Doha International Center for the Interfaith Dialogue and its trailblazing role in building bridges of understanding between the followers of different religions and cultures.

Istanbul Initiative

On the sidelines of this conference, Doha Executive Meeting on the Promotion of Religious Freedom and Interfaith Collaboration is being also held, a follow-up of the Istanbul initiative OF 16/18, which was first lunched by the Islamic Organisation of Cooperation to fight fanaticism and religious segregation. Religious scholars from fifty countries attended a meeting that concluded with a set of recommendations that were raised to the UN for deliberation. The UN issued statement that will indicate the significance of this meeting in the drafting process,

and the pivotal role of the state of Qatar, in this respect.

In his speech, Prof. Al-Naimi stated that previous follow-up meetings were held in this respect within the framework of the Istanbul initiative in America, United Kingdom and Switzerland, where political, cultural, social issues were debated.

He added, "It is an opportunity for people from different cultural and religious backgrounds to build up channels of communication which will in turn improve interfaith dialogue's quality."

He said that many secondary school students in Doha with different religious beliefs would enrich the event through sharing their religious tolerance experiences in dealing with their peers of different origins and beliefs.





DICID Delegation Visits the University of Cambridge

(November 2013)

Within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding and Academic Cooperation between DICID and Woolf Institute Center, a delegation from Doha International Center for Inter-Faith Dialogue (DICID) recently made an official visit to St Edmund's College, Cambridge, and other top ten UK universities. Professor Ayesha Youssef al-Mannai, Head of the Qatari delegation and Director of the Centre for Muslim Contribution to Civilisation at the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, presented a lecture at St Edmund's College, entitled

"The Challenges of Contemporary Dialogue and my Experiences in Teaching Religious Studies". This event was attended by academics, religious scholars, and students. The lecture focused on the Qatari initiatives in promoting universal peace and mutual understanding between different faiths and communities. Professor Manai stated that her country sees interfaith dialogue as a primary necessity for peaceful coexistence. This vision is informed by and based on reliable religious resources and Islamic teaching. She acknowledged "the obstacles that this process faces", and maintained "the importance of women's role in the dialogue". She went on to add "that Middle Eastern women's participation in the dialogue is very limited, and men's role is crucial in carving public spaces for women in different areas and cultures. Understanding is key to know and appreciate our differences, and our diversity becomes a step towards peaceful coexistence, and mutual respect. Professor Manai spoke in part about teaching Islamic Studies in both the West and the Muslim world and made a few suggestions. She underlined the need to balance scientific rigour and academic honesty, and boosted her argument by referring to

"Al Koran", a book written by a group of "specialists" and published by the University of Cambridge. Its thesis contradicts the basic premises of the actual Koran, and undermines the authenticity of the revelations. The authors dismiss the prophet's (PPUH) sayings and enduring legacy without substantial argumentation and evidence. Had it been the case at all, the Koran, the Prophet's (PPUH) teachings and sayings would have collapsed, along with Islam. This important event was attended by his excellency, the Ambassador of the state of Qatar to the United Kingdom, Mr. Khaled Manssouri, who praised the initiative and emphasized its importance in strengthening ties between the two countries. Professor Ibrahim Salah Al Naimi read the inaugurating speech on behalf of DICID. This event is a good opportunity to address the misconceptions and stereotypes about Muslim women.

Professor Al Naimi underlined the importance of these public lectures. They will be convened in alternate years in Doha and Cambridge as a platform for discussing and debating interfaith issues between religious scholars, academics, and students. He stated that this first lecture, given by Rt Hon The Lord Woolf and entitled

"Rule of Law and the Interfaith World" in Doha at George Town University, was the first in a series of high profile lectures launched last November within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding and Academic Cooperation Between DICID and Woolf Institute Center.

The delegation visited the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Cambridge where Professor Ayesha al Manai presented a public lecture to students. In her talk, she urged students to study and to never yield in the face of hardships and difficulties.

It is worth noting here that the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Cambridge is the first in its kind in the UK to teach Muslim leaders working methods and ways in an inspiring and worldwide respected environment.





DICID Participates at 11th Annual U.S.-Islamic World Forum June 2014 in Doha

The Brookings Institution's Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, in partnership with the State of Qatar, convened the 11th annual U.S.-Islamic World Forum from June 9-11, 2014 in Doha, Qatar. The 2014 Forum was entitled "Islam and Integration" and focused on the problems of integration within Muslim communities around the world, especially in the context of governance, academia, religious institutions and civic society.

The Forum's plenary sessions, that were broadcasted online highlighted different aspects of the USA relations with a rapidly changing Muslim world. Panelists discussed topics, including:

- The future role of the United States in the Middle East.
- The conflict in Syria, with a particular focus on the role of the global community.
- The future of the Palestinian people beyond the context of the peace process.
- Strategies for accommodating religious diversity and respecting religious expression.

The Forum also convened working groups, which focus on current issues confronting the Islamic world

The groups' conclusions and recommendations on these topics may be published as papers. The 2014 Forum also featured a new endeavor, the action group, which seeks to promote integration, reconciliation and sustainable economic development in Timbuktu, Mali through the revival of its rich cultural heritage.

CLOSING SPEECH - US ISLAMIC WORLD FORUM 2014 delivered by Prof. Al-Naimi

وما أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ
And We have sent you (O Muhammad) not but as a mercy for the Alameen (mankind, jinns and all that exists)" I begin with this verse from Surah al-Anbiya' [21:107].

Firstly, there is no clearer message than this that covers every aspect of what it means to live a Muslim life that is MERCY, MERCY for all that exists.

We have to remind ourselves at the end of this inspiring gathering of intellectuals and activists from the broad spectrum of Muslims from around the world that ISLAM and its conversation with Europe and

America is nothing new.

There have been many an occasion in the past where our beloved prophet Muhammad has been part of the conversation of what it means to be European and American in medieval and early modern history. Poets like Goethe and Emerson have been in conversation with the central organizing text of Islamic life that is the Holy Quran.

Moreover, there have been both positive and negative perceptions perpetuated of our beloved prophet Muhammad, the central focus of reverence and imitation for the world wide Muslim community.

There are historically rooted prejudices in European literature from Milton's Paradise Lost, to the tale of the three imposters and the more recent Satanic Verses that all depict our prophet in a negative light.

Yet these negative perceptions were fundamentally important for Europeans to understand who they were in opposition to the Muslim other that was conceived as the enemy by both church and state.

We are reminded again and again by the best exemplars of ALL our religions that the first step in leading a religiously sincere life is to begin by getting rid of prejudice against our fellow human beings.

THIS is the basis of living an ethical life. We also have to begin by not looking down upon our brothers and sisters who share our own faith and who we consider less mature and developed intellectually, physically or economically than our selves. This is also the starting point for an ecumenical feeling or the feeling of belonging to one ummah.

SECONDLY, I remind you that Islam is nothing but a socially transformative project. Our beloved prophet attracted much hatred in his enemies because he wanted to transform society on the basis of ethics and justice. Qatar's position in the world and in the region is a hall mark for living upto the prophetic call of justice to be established where possible otherwise reconciliation must be attempted.

We heard plenary discussions on Syria and Palestine where we morally support the aspiration of the masses even if they are against the rulers or occupiers of those countries. There is no shortcut to dealing with extremism other than through tackling injustice in society. We believe in speaking truth to those with power and hope that we inspire others to do the same in their respective contexts. We also implore to our fellow Muslims to not transgress the boundaries of

ISLAMIC ETHICS OF MODERATION, which is a model that Qatar has lived upto and continues to aspire towards.

We are developing strategies of facilitation between parties who have been at conflict.

Our recent interventions in Libya, Afghanistan and Central African Republic are examples of such facilitations. At the end of the day the real lasting solutions lie in the hands of the people themselves. No external force can do more than facilitate peace.

I quote here the American essayist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson's treatise on "heroism" that begins with an epigraph from our prophet Muhammad's statement that "Paradise is under the shadow of swords."

Emerson, however, did not perceive our prophet Muhammad as a violent prophet as many contemporary critics of Islam believe. He instead portrayed the prophet of Islam as a man of self-control: He says "Every great and commanding moment in the annals of the world is the triumph of some enthusiasm. The victories of the Arabs after [Muhammad], who in a few years, from a small and mean beginning, established a larger empire than that of Rome, is an example." Here Emerson advocates that the ascendancy of Islam was not due to "the sword" and violent expeditions of expansion, but rather faith in God and the universal appeal that so many people find in Islam. Thirdly, I remind you that the message of Islam is ALL INCLUSIVE and is for the greatest good of all.

Here in Doha we are attempting to create a society based on Islamic principles that attempts at including perspectives and experiences from around the world in our effort to create a just and modern society. I refer back to Emerson's theory of "oneness" which is most clear in his essay "Over-soul," in which he argued that mankind should be united like "the water of the globe, [being] all one, and, truly seen, its tide is one."

The topic of the soul is in fact one of the main sources of truth and the catalyst of spiritual growth for Emerson: "Within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related, the eternal One." I end with the poem by Goethe, the famous German poet who says in his universal message cutting across the "clash of cultures":

God is in the west
God is in the east
Northern and Southern Islands
Rest in his hands peace

This was surely inspired by the Quranic verse with which I end my remarks from Surah Baqarah [2:115]

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَجُوهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

To GOD belongs the east and the west; wherever you go there will be the presence of GOD

I would like to highlight also the work of the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue which has been working since 2007 in the field of promoting co-existence between followers of different faiths and those with none. We have hosted 11 annual conferences on a wide spectrum of themes including youth empowerment, social media, freedom of religion, solidarity and education. We have worked in conflict zones like the Balkans and we have spread the message of interfaith dialogue outside closed sessions and into the mainstream of society.

We hope the participants will take this interfaith friendly message of Qatar and the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue to their respective homes. I wish you safe return journeys in Gods protection.



Training Course on "the Art of Dialogue" Organized in Collaboration with QCD and QCIMR (February 2014)

A Training Course on the Art of Dialogue was organized last February 2014 by Qatar Debate Center - Member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development - the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, and the - Qaradawi Center for Islamic Moderation and Reform at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, and the Supreme Council of Education, and hosted by Amina bint Wahb Independent Secondary School for Girls. A large number of coordinators and teachers of Islamic science and Arabic language in public schools took part.

The course falls within the Doha Debates' scope, which aims to spread dialogic culture and to develop communication skills, and cognitive learning. This symposium seeks primarily to define the concept of interfaith dialogue: its aims, conventions, and how it is viewed. Trainees were urged to focus on argumentations, and constructive debates. Classes should be conducted efficiently and should keep controversies at bay, and address religious misunderstandings of the interfaith dialogue whilst preserving and consolidating their Islamic religious identities.

Mrs. Amel Nasser, patron of Amina Bint Wahb secondary school, underlined the importance of such seminars and symposiums in inculcating and diffusing the culture of dialogue. She recognized in her speech the role played by the organizing parties in spreading dialogue and debate. The organization of

such programmes contribute to teaching young students, at a tender age, the principles of polemics and debate. Nadia Al Ashqar, Doha Center for Interfaith dialogue conference organizer, stressed the importance of including the art of dialogue in school curricula to enhance positive responses in Muslim and Non-muslim societies. She stated that Qatar has become the magnet of brethren feeling and a haven for human prosperity. Its capital, Doha, an international hub of human dialogue nestles a myriad of different nationalities that come together in the process of building this rising nation.

Mrs Al Ashqar added that cultural bonds and affinities with different people happen when we are open to different traditions and shared values. In this global age, our world has become a small village. This echoes the Prophet's (PBUH) saying: "You descend from Adam, and Adam is from dust". Educational and cultural institutions should enhance the spirit of dialogue and cooperation. God ordained us, as stated in this holy verse "Oh you people, we have created you from a single pair of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, verily the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah, is the most pious of you; surely Allah is Knowing, Aware" (Al Hujurat 49: 13)

She stated that the collaboration with the Qaradawi center for Islamic Moderation and Reform to implement projects, such as convening lectures, seminars, and workshops. These activities are informed by the aims of DICD and its endeavor to promote the culture of coexistence and peace, noting that the first symposium was held in March 2011 under the banner of "Preparing the Muslim Polimist".

Professor Mohamed Khalif Hassan, the Head of the Qaradawi Center for Islamic Moderation and Innovation, outlined in his speech the concept of Al Daawa (spreading religion through preaching and reasoning) in Islam. He underlined the fact that Muslims have not been able to keep pace with the development in polemics. Dialogue as a reasoning process should rely heavily on the methodologies applied in humanities and social sciences. It has to be set as an academic field of religious study at schools and universities. He stressed the lack of qualified muslim polemists who can cope with the ongoing changes in the art of dialogue at the local and regional and international level. He went on to say that:

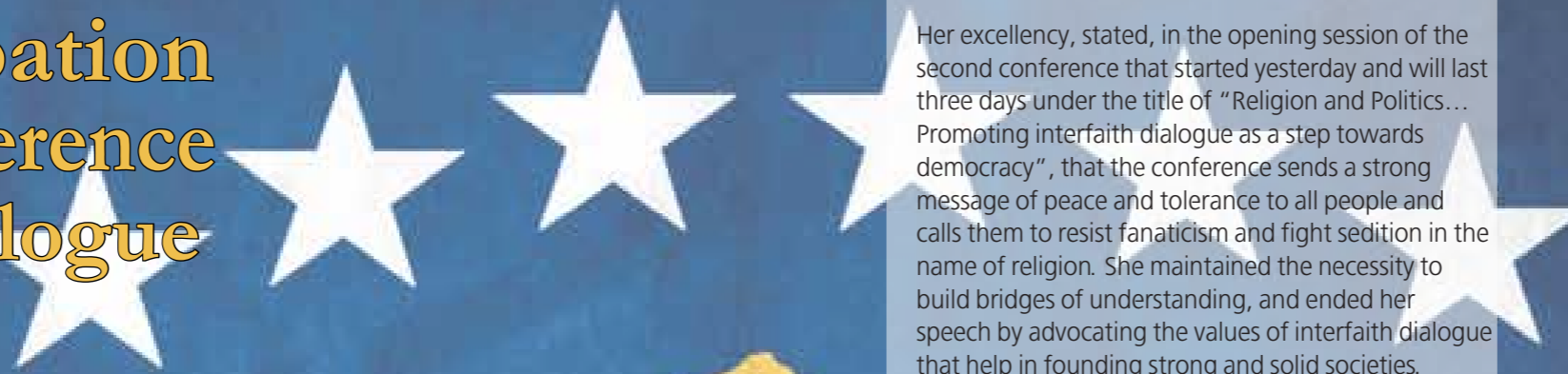


"It was quite obvious to note the poor Islamic participation in international conferences of interfaith dialogue. This results in the absence of positive outcomes for Muslims.





DICID Participation in Kosovo Conference on Religious Dialogue (May 2014)



A Qatari delegation took part in the interfaith dialogue, held in Kosovo from 23-24 May 2014. The delegation included some members of the DICID, among them Dr. Hamed Abd Al Aziz Al Marwani, a board member and Mrs. Nadia Al Ashqar, conference organization official.

Dr Marwani underlined, in his speech, DICID aims and aspirations. He proclaimed that the creation of a constructive interfaith dialogue for a better understanding of religious values will benefit all mankind and help people respect and accept differences. DICID contributed through its pioneering efforts to the establishment of peaceful coexistence between the followers of religions and sustaining an internationally- recognized interfaith dialogue.

Doha conference drew more than 350 participants representing the three monotheistic denominations and other cultures. Dr. Hamed mentioned that the panelists urged universities and institutes to:

1. Create research centers to study the current situation and issues and youth aspirations, hopes and the challenges that face them.
2. Address and revise the image of the other in curricula in all religions
3. Call all organisations and local, regional and international institutions to promote and spread interfaith dialogue amongst youth, in order to establish peace and security, especially amongst minorities.

Her excellency, the president of the state of Kosovo, Attifa Yahya Agha, who took part in the conference, underlined in her speech the importance of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue to bring people together on the basis of shared human values towards democracy and peaceful coexistence across the world.

Her excellency, stated, in the opening session of the second conference that started yesterday and will last three days under the title of "Religion and Politics... Promoting interfaith dialogue as a step towards democracy", that the conference sends a strong message of peace and tolerance to all people and calls them to resist fanaticism and fight sedition in the name of religion. She maintained the necessity to build bridges of understanding, and ended her speech by advocating the values of interfaith dialogue that help in founding strong and solid societies.

This conference comes within the scope of Kosovo Initiative of interfaith dialogue. This initiative is a multilateral project between NGOs, the ministry of foreign affairs in Kosovo and other countries. The initiative is part and parcel of the Week of Tolerance and Reconciliation in Kosovo. It will be organized by the state of Kosovo and will be attended by international policymakers to discuss a set of political issues and the current development in Kosovo and other Balkan states.



The 4th Roundtable among Local Communities

HARNESSING MORAL VALUES FOR OUR TIME

The fourth Roundtable among local communities in Qatar was held at La Cigale Hotel on Saturday, 8th of November 2014 by Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue in collaboration with Christian Churches Steering Committee under the title 'Harnessing Moral Values for Our Times'. The meeting was chaired by Aisha al-Mannai, Head of the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Doha Bank Group CEO Dr R Seetharaman said though the lack of ethical and moral commitments was generally felt across the world these days and said that the economic crisis which had started as a result of abandoning values has now resulted in a global crisis. Dr Seetharaman also highlighted the necessity of inculcating more transparency to achieve greater success in our individual and collective lives.

Speaking earlier, Bisanty Anba Bishoy, president of the Churches Steering Committee, said God has created every human being to deliver to the society in which s/he lives and each individual is assigned a role to perform. Man, he said, represents the image of God and whatever he does in his day-to-day activities is being delivered on behalf of the Almighty. Fr Thomas Michel a professor at Georgetown University-Qatar discussing a topic on "Children are a reflection of their parents" said that most of the attitudes children had about other people were always formed at a dinner table with their parents. "By the time a child goes to school they have already learnt which kinds of people are dirty, lazy and not trustworthy," he said.

Dr Edward Omar Moad the professor at College of Arts and Science at Qatar University discussing the same topic however disagreed that children were always a reflection of their parents. He said it was common for children to take a different course and perspective of life from their parents as it had been the case with Prophet Ibrahim who despite growing in a community of idolaters' and his parents being idolaters', he himself looked to the sky and took the path of worshiping a single God.

Sheikh Abdul Salam El Bassyouni from the editing and Translation department of Fanar urged communities not to nurture hatred among the young generations through using religion for political gains.

Most religious differences prevalent in communities that often lead to violence were cultivated not as teachings of specific religions but as programmes with political agendas and people should be wary of whoever wanted to cultivate discord among communities, he said.

Ms Prabhjit Kaur, from the Supreme Council of Health, highlighted the universal values of Sikhism that she grew up with that help her live a full and ethical life.

In the session on "Fostering Morality in Educational Institutions" Dr. Subash Nair of Shantiniketan Indian School, Dr. Khalid Mohd. Al-Khanji of Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Mr. Hassan Al Baker of Ahmed Bin Mohammad School and Ms. LaKisha Tillman of Northwestern University in Qatar spoke about the practical steps that their respective institutions have taken to encourage dialogue, respect for others and values of tolerance.



In the last hotly debated session on the "Ethical Practice in the Workplace" Dr. Ray Jureidini of Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies argued how the exploitation of migrant labours takes place systemically by recruitment agencies who make the workers pay for their recruitment. Something that he feels needs to be brought into the attention of the highest levels of policy and lawmaking so that such exploitative practices can be made illegal.

Ms. Amal Al Mannai of Social Development Centre spoke about her organisations work in promoting healthy work environments. Dr. Dennis Roberts of Hamad Bin Khalifa University spoke highly of the event and the work of DICID to promote interfaith dialogue through its journal and its many activities. Dr. Thomas Kurien spoke critically of the role of culture and society negative aspects affecting places of worship. He asked for a return to the essential lessons of religions to make workplaces ethical.



New Issue of Religions

All the natural and cultural units of transmission and heritage, such as the family and the homeland, enjoy a dual relationship with the principles and goals of religious traditions. On the one hand, natural and social bonds nurture human beings, and play an essential role in the transmission and strengthening of religious identity. The family, in particular, is to be highlighted in this respect, for it is within its fold that the most precious moral and cultural values are passed on, together with the loving care that is the emotional energy, as it were, in the process of raising a child into adulthood. The very verb "to raise" is highly indicative of a development whereby the "horizontal" nature of the infantis brought up to be elevated along the vertical "standing" of the adult.

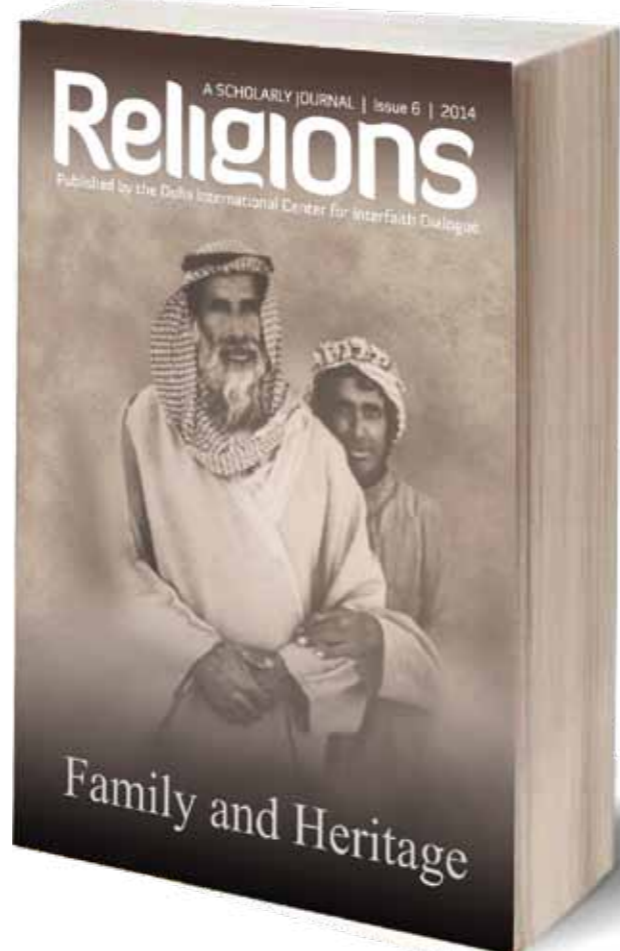
This vertical motion is a fitting symbol of religious teachings and their aiming at transcendence. When contemporary religious movements espouse and promote so-called "family values" they refer, explicitly or implicitly, to this network of human interactions through which an adult becomes part of a community of the faithful, and can thereby relate to the Divine within the meaningful and transformative context of a religious culture and civilization. It is as a child of men and women that someone may be prepared to reach the goals of religion. Hence, there is no religion that does not preach the love of parents, siblings, spouses and children, since the natural is the soil in which the supernatural may grow. The Bible teaches: "Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long on the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Exodus 20:12) and the Quran enjoins similarly: "And lower unto them (your parents) the wing of submission through mercy, and say: My Lord! Have mercy on them both as they did care for me when I was little." (17:24)

This is not, however, the only aspect of the question for, on the other hand, natural kinship and religion may come into a state of tension, and even opposition. This happens when the former stand in the way of what is, for religions, the highest vocation of mankind, that is transcendence. Hence, even religious traditions that are most emphatically teaching the religious and moral significance of the family, the ethnic group or the homeland, are no less clear in alerting their faithful to the potential obstacle represented

by natural and socio-cultural relations. Religiously speaking, any human relationship, as intimate and profound as it may be, remains unfulfilled if not situated within the context of a relationship with the Divine. This is why, among other reasons, heritage and transmission are also, and above all, the purview of religious institutions of learning and authoritative scholars and masters. Many thinkers, both in the Western and Islamic scholarly traditions, have for that reason raised the degree of the teacher far above that of the biological father. Short of its fulfillment into spiritual brotherhood natural kinship remains spiritually lacking, and it potentially or actually obstructs the way to the highest inner vocation of mankind. It therefore remains also a possible source of inner and outer conflict. This is what is taught by the Gospel and the Quran alike: "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law" (Matthew 10:35) and "O ye who believe! Lo! among your wives and your children there are enemies for you, therefore beware of them. And if ye efface and overlook and forgive, then lo!

Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (64:14) So what happens when the influence of religions has become marginal in society? How does religion position itself in view of the defense of its norms without colliding with a secular ambience or the various modes of deviated understanding that surround it? This is an urgent question that some of the following essays address from a variety of perspectives, either directly or indirectly. The complex and challenging role of religion is to preserve the transmission of that which lies beyond any transmission, for virtue and loving service of God cannot be transmitted but only realized, and this is ultimately a personal privilege and responsibility. The best that can be done is to foster an ambience in which such realizations are made possible, at a time when experiences of this kind have grown as rare as nurturing instances of authentically religious influence on society.

Patrick Laude
Senior Editor



ON AIR

DICID and QF Radio Produce First Interfaith Radio Program in the Gulf

The interfaith community is growing in Doha and QF Radio has been stressing the importance of increased dialogue between people of different religions by broadcasting a series of special programs during Ramadan. Adeel Khan and Hamdi Blekich, took to the airwaves for the second season during the Holy Month of Ramadan, with their show, Children of Adam and Eve, that has been very well received by listeners. Welcome to CAAHwa where we explore the knots that bind us together as people of faith through frank conversations with members of our diverse communities in Qatar.

This program celebrates diversity, mutual well-being and enriches our spiritual lives in the process. As we live in a world of constant neighborly strife, distrust and conflict where misunderstandings are plenty, there is no better time than now to realize the importance of interfaith dialogue so that we can all work together in knitting the social fabric between the Children of Adam and Haawa. Children of Adam and Eve was broadcasted several times a week on QF Radio 91.7FM throughout Ramadan.

DICID Sponsors 12 Cities Network Project

DICID supported 'Awakening the soul of Europe Conference' held in Dortmund, Germany from 12th-15th September 2013 to develop a campaign for countering Islamophobia through a network spread across 12 cities in Europe. The partner sponsors were the German Lutheran Evangelical Church. The event was intimate and very useful for its participants. Mentoring relations were developed between young activists and religious clerics of an older generation. 50 individuals were engaged through the forum, half of which were youth. A website and facebook was launched to build on relations formed for more effective engagement in future. For reference have a look here:

https://www.facebook.com/12CitiesNetwork/photos_stream





DICID Participates at Conference on Islamic Civilization in Brunei Darussalam (Nov. 2014)

The fourth international conference entitled “The Teaching of Islamic Civilization in Today’s Universities and Colleges: A Review for New Strategic Educational Goals” was held at the Center of Islamic Studies at University Brunei Darussalam from 3rd to 5th November 2014. The aim of the conference as defined by the organizers is first of all to review the current teaching of Islamic civilization in learning institutions, especially in universities and colleges. Secondly, the aim was to initiate new methodological strategies to make the courses on Islamic civilization more appealing to students and other learners. Thirdly, with respect to the audience, particularly those of non-Islamic background, the participants of the conference were asked to contemplate on the issue of how to make Islamic civilization be better understood and appreciated due to its enormous contribution to humanity in general. Finally, the objective of the conference was to provide a new platform for scholars and lecturers of Islamic civilization aiming to further popularize the subject of Islamic civilization within universities and other learning institutions.

Among the institutions that participated in the organization of the conference was Oxford University, Sarajevo International University – Bosnia and Herzegovina and International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization - Malaysia. The conference has gathered about thirty or so scholars from all over the world who contributed with their presentations respectively to the event. Besides three keynote speakers, namely, Prof. Dr. Tariq Ramadan, Prof. Dr. Kamal Hasan and Prof.

Dr. Osman Bakar, the active participation in the conference was also taken by the representative of DICID, namely, Senad Mrahorovic who is currently a researcher in DICID. He presented a paper during the second day of the conference titled “The Role of Qatari Educational Institutions in Teaching, Nurturing and Promoting Islamic Civilization”. Another participant from Qatar was Prof. Abdelkader al-Bakhoushe who attended the conference on behalf of Prof. Aisha al-Mannai, the Dean of Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies, who was initially invited as a keynote speaker but was not able to attend due to her other commitments.

The conference, we believe, was a very successful event in Brunei Darussalam, as it has succeeded in achieving its objectives within the program of University Brunei Darussalam, an institution that has already introduced certain subjects on Islamic civilization as compulsory courses for all of its students. The abovementioned objectives of the conference and the proposed ideas and plans by the scholars and experts on Islamic civilization who participated at the event will certainly be further studied and analyzed in order to begin with the actualization of the conference goals in other parts of the world as well.



