many of the world’s faiths instruct us, we get to know God through the heavens, the work of God’s hands; we get to know God through history, all history but especially through certain segments in which luminous persons have lifted back the veil for us; we get to know God through our own lives both individually and corporately. The peace, the deep down security we seek comes from God, but we must open to the God of peace and love.

NOTES

3. Ibid. 119.
5. George Herbert, op. cit. 245. Herbert said “a grateful heart.”
6. Conf.1.1.

Inner Peace Leading to Outer Peace

DR. ZEKI SARITOPRAK

“The Most Compassionate Who has taught the Qur’an, Who has created human beings, and Who has taught them articulation” (55:1-3).1 Human beings are the most precious creatures of God in the universe. While each has unique individual capacities, they are also social by nature. The Qur’an teaches about their relationships among themselves. “O humankind! Lo! We have created you from male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware.” (49:13) This verse clearly indicates our social nature as well as the reason for the diversity of human beings which is to know one another. Human beings have been given a variety of capacities for both evil and good, and as a result their duty is to develop the good capacities. These are similar to seeds planted in the human nature. Just as a seed grows and through good treatment becomes a tree, in the same way these capacities flourish and give fruits if they are nourished and treated well. If these positive capacities do not have a chance to grow, they will become like a rotten seed and instead the evil capacities will find a place to grow. The result of the first is peace and harmony.

DR. ZEKI SARITOPRAK holds the Nursi Chair in Islamic Studies at John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio. He is founder of the Rumi Forum for Interfaith Dialogue in Washington, DC and the author of numerous articles and books on Islam. Contact at zsaritopra@jcu.edu
and the result of the second is conflict and war. Therefore, to a certain extent, peace is both cause and effect. There is no doubt that for the development of good human capacities, both inner and second outer peaceful environments are necessary and as a result peace dominates both human spiritual dimensions as well as society. Without a climate of peace, there is no way for the development of good human capacities. And without developing inner peace, there is no way to have outer peace. In other words, inner peace is the foundation and a prerequisite for outer peace.

The Qur'an lists seven qualities of these types of people with inner peace.

"The servants of the Most Compassionate are those who are walking on earth humbly and when the ignorant address them they say, "Peace." They are those who are spending their nights with standing and prostration for their Lord, and they say "Our Lord! Prevent from us the punishment of Hell. Surely the punishment of Hell is necessarily occurring and surely it is the worst place to stay and to reside." And the servants of God are those who when giving charity to their families do not waste and do not hoard, and they are between these in the middle. The servants of God are those who do not claim partners for Allah—who do not kill the soul that God prohibits being killed, with the exception of justice. And they are those who do not commit adultery and anyone who does will face punishment. The torment for him will be doubled on the Day of Judgment and he would stay in it forever, humiliated, with the exception of those who repent and believe and do good deeds; for those, God will change their bad deeds into good deeds and God is the Most Forgiving and Most Merciful. (25:63-70)*

These particular verses of the Qur'an talk about seven qualities of believers who are known in the Qur'an as the servants of God. In other words, they picture an ideal society made of human beings with these qualities. They include humility, peace, prayer, supplication, charity, not associating anything with God, avoidance of murder and adultery, and finally, repentance. All these qualities directly or indirectly are related to both inner and outer peace.

The Prophet of Islam,² peace and blessings be upon him, says, Surely in the human body there is a piece of the body that when it is good, the entire body becomes good, and when it is corrupt, the entire body becomes corrupt. Lo, that piece is the heart.³ It is clear that what is meant by heart in this saying of the Prophet, is not the physical one (although the physical is also the center of the body), but the spiritual heart, which is symbolized by the physical heart. This spiritual heart is the center of peace but also can be the center of violence. If peace dominates this center, all actions of human beings start moving to the direction of peace and vice versa. That is why the Qur'an instructs that the spiritual heart can be healthy and it can be sick. For example, the Qur'an speaks of the hypocrites by saying, "in their hearts there is sickness" (2:10). The Qur'an speaks of another group of people whose hearts are hardened. "Then your hearts have become hardened like stones and even harder" (2:74). Contrary to sick hearts, the Qur'an also speaks of some healthy hearts. "Only through the remembrance of God hearts are satisfied" (13:28). As St. Augustine says in The Confessions, "Our heart is restless until it rests in You." The Qur'an speaks of the hearts of the followers of Jesus. Unlike the hypocrites and those with hard hearts, this group's heart is soft. One of the Qur'anic verses that indicates the closeness of Christians to the Islamic teaching says, "And we put in the hearts of those who followed him [Jesus] softness and compassion" (57:27).

Around two hundred verses of the Qur'an speak of a variety of states of the heart of human beings. Therefore the question is what is the way to purify, soften, and eventually satisfy the heart? In order to have a heart that is purified and satisfied with the remembrance of God, both actions and prayers are important. Muslims repeatedly say this prayer: "Our Lord, do not deviate our heart after you have guided us to the right path and bestow mercy upon us from your divine presence. Surely, You are the Giver" (3:8). Against possible hatred towards others this next prayer takes place. "Do not put in our hearts any malice towards the faithful. Lord, you are Most Compassionate, Most Merciful" (59:10).

Due to the importance of heart, it should be safe to say that among the duties of human beings, the most important duty is related to the realm of heart. There is an analogy that the duties of human beings are like expanding concentric and related circles. These circles from smallest to largest are the circle of the heart, the circle of family, the circle of neighborhood, the circle of country, and the circle of the world. Although the circle of heart is the smallest, it has the greatest duty. Loss and gain both happen in this circle. If that circle is abandoned, all other duties become superficial, with no foundation. Among the most important duties in this circle is faith in God, which gives a great tranquility to situate human beings in the universe. A heart that does not have faith is unsatisfied. In fact from our own planet, when looking at the dazzling movements of the stars and celestial bodies which are moving much faster and are much larger than us, it can make human beings worried and scared. It may seem as if all these moving celestial bodies have no central control and that each could crash into the other at any time and
any place. The idea that chaos defines the universe rather than God can make a heart restless, fearful, or detached from the world. However, it is faith in one’s heart that makes a positive connection between human beings and the elements of the universe, a connection that is based on brotherhood among all creatures because the Owner is One. It is like every creature is created and signed with the signature of God. When one has faith, one begins to see that signature on every creature which makes each part of the creation as parts of the painting of a single Designer. Such a faith is a foundational step toward inner peace.

The second step is to know God, *marfatullah*, as Muslim mystics would say. Knowing God is attainable through contemplating the universe, the realm of nature, as well as through constant prayer and meditation. The Qur’an clearly expresses this idea when it says:

“Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the difference of night and day are tokens of God’s Sovereignty for people of understanding. Such as remember Allah, standing, sitting, and reclining, and contemplate the creation of the heavens and the earth, and say: Our Lord! You did not create this in vain. Glory be to You! Preserve us from the doom of Fire” (3:190-91).

Therefore the dialectic of theology is criticized here. It should be noted that belief in the existence of God is different than knowing God. This state of knowing is not static. One can increase his or her own knowledge of God through contemplation on the divine names and on their reflections in the physical world. Through understanding the reflection of the divine names, which are not only 99 but are thousands, one can attain to a certain extent the knowledge of God. Awareness of the divine names such as the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful, the Peace, the Lover and Beloved, the Beautiful, and the Kind brings peace and tranquility to the heart—the center of inner peace.

The third step is spiritual enjoyment, an enjoyment that is beyond quantifiable measurements. This is a step of utmost peace, harmony and tranquility. This stage of inner peace is explained by mystics as the final stage of the three stages of soul which are the evil commanding stage, the blaming stage, and the stage where the soul is at peace. The spirits of prophets and saints generally are at this level of peace.

Our inner senses, of which there are thousands, are also indications of the divine names. For example, our sense of compassion reflects the divine name al-Rahman (the Most Compassionate). Our sense of mercy indicates the divine name al-Rahim (the Most Merciful). Our sense of love mirrors the divine name al-Wadud (the One Who Loves and is Beloved). Our inner ability of patience indicates the divine name al-Sabur (the One Who is the Most Patient). Our sense of peace and tranquility indicates the divine name al-Salam (the One Who is Peace). Scholars of Islam have spoken on these human capacities and how they are reflections of the divine names in detail. Because of the vast inner capacities of the human, one can say that each person has an entire universe folded into him or her. In other words, if our universe shrinks to the size of a human being, it will become a human. If a human being is enlarged, it will become a universe. Indicating the importance of the human being, Imam Ali, the cousin of the Prophet (d. 661), says, “O human being, do not think you are a small creature. A great world is folded in you.”

Attainment of inner peace is a direct reflection of the divine name the Peace. While attainment by itself is good and very precious, the continuation of inner peace is of paramount importance. That is why seeking inner and outer peace is a part of the daily prayers of Muslims. In fact, a cursory survey of Muslims’ five daily prayers shows the intense involvement of Muslims with such a prayer. A Muslim starts his day with morning prayer. In each unit of this prayer the divine names the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful are invoked. Then again in each unit of the prayer Muslims ask God for guidance to the straight path (al-sirat al-mustaqim) while reciting the first chapter of the Qur’an. The straight path is the balanced path of righteousness, the path of the prophets and saints. Through this path, an individual balances his or her desires, intellect, and other capacities such as anger. Most of inner and outer conflicts come as a result of an imbalanced use of these capacities. For example, if human anger is not controlled and balanced, the result would be disastrous conflicts and wars, both in the inner and outer world. Perhaps for this reason, on one occasion the Prophet of Islam asked his companions “Who is the greatest hero?” and they responded, “the one who would defeat his rival in wrestling.” And the Prophet said “No the greatest hero is the one who conquers his or her own anger.” Again, for this reason, the Qur’an says, “Compete with each other for the forgiveness of your Lord and for a paradise the size of which is as large as the heavens and the earth prepared for the righteous. Those who give charity in their prosperity and in their scarcity and those who swallow their anger and forgive people, surely God loves those who do good deeds” (3:133-134). When Muslims ask in their daily prayers for guidance on the straight path, all the above meanings are included in their prayers.

Also every Muslim during the sitting position, known as *tahiyat*, in prayer says, “Peace be upon you O Prophet of God and peace be upon us and all righteous servants of God.” This is repeated in the prescribed five daily prayers as well as all voluntary prayers. They ask peace from God for all righteous people, in the past, in the present, and in the
future. This is a continual request for peace. The final stage of prayer ends with a beautiful greeting of peace. The worshipers turn their heads to the right and says, "Peace and the mercy of God be with you" and then turn to the left and repeat the same beautiful greeting. This is intended to give peace and mercy to human beings and angels who may be joining them in the prayer.

Furthermore, in order to attain inner peace, one should strive for at least some qualities, such as humbleness, as well as active engagement, chastity, contentment, and sincerity. There is no doubt that the lack of humbleness results in egoism, which is one of the greatest problems of our times. As the Qur’an describes, “there are those who take their egos as their gods” (25:43) which leads to inner and outer conflicts and wars for self-interest. Humbleness is praised by the Prophet of Islam. Even if one accomplishes the greatest achievement in the world, still humbleness is essential, since nothing can measure up to the power of the divine. As a famous Muslim mystic Uways al-Qarani (d. 651) said:

“My Lord, You are the Creator, I am the created.
You are the Giver of Sustenance, I am the receiver
You are the Owner, I am the owned
You are the Majestic, I am the humble
You are the Rich, I am the poor
You are the Living, I am the dead
You are the Eternal, I am the ephemeral
You are the Kind, I am the blameworthy
You are the Good, I am the bad
You are the Forgiven, I am the sinner
You are the Great, I am the worthless.”

In the same way, chastity is an important quality. Following Prophet Muhammad, Muslims in their prayers supplicate to God “Lord, do not veil my reason with my impulses.” Many times emotions make human beings blind spiritually, and sensual behaviors overcome reasonable ones. A believer’s main goal is to please God with his or her actions. This is called sincerity, or ḫlasas, which is to do everything for the sake of God. A Muslim who acts for the sake of God does not expect a reward in this life; the real reward is in the afterlife. Such understanding of sincerity brings tranquility, harmony, and inner peace to the lives of individuals. As a well known scholar and theologian, Nursi, says, “In such a faith, there is a spiritual paradise, even in this world.” In paradise, the greeting for one another is “Peace be with you.” Therefore if one is living in a spiritual paradise now, one’s greeting should also be “Peace be with you.”

Through spiritual training, and a strong relationship with the divine, human beings are encouraged to reach the state of perfection or spiritual peace on earth. Muslim theologians have developed codes of behaviors to keep men and women on the right path in the way of perfection. The spiritual development is not something to be achieved and finished. It is a constant struggle until the end of life for an individual and until the end of time for humanity in general.

There are two aspects of humanity: angelic and satanic qualities. Human beings are innately good, since there is no original sin in Islam. But human beings have the potentiality of committing sin. So through their free will, they can develop their satanic side, following the instructions of Satan and the Nafs al-Ammarah, the evil commanding soul. All Qur’anic instructions and pre-Islamic scriptures have come to guide people towards the development of angelic qualities. So there are two ways, the way of the prophets and messengers of God and the way of opponents of the prophets, such as Pharaoh, Nimrud, and Nero. The Holy Book of Islam is very clear about this principle. It says, “We create man from a drop of thickened fluid to test him; so We have made him able to hear and see. Surely We have shown him the right path, whether he be grateful or disbelieving” (76:2-3). In other words, through the divine revelation, human beings have been given instructions about the right path; but because they have their free will, it is up to them to choose to be a believer or a nonbeliever. The Qur’an does not stop here; instead, it gives further encouragement for goodness and discouragement for evil. It describes the rewards of the believers, which includes Paradise and its divine bounties. It is interesting when the Qur’an speaks of the qualities of these believers, it refers to their actions of feeding the destitute, the orphan, and the captive. This feeding is not done with an expectation of reward; instead, the Qur’an refers to them as saying, “We feed you for God’s sake only. We seek of you neither recompense nor thanks” (76:9). When one develops the angelic qualities it is reflected in the outer peace that he or she creates with good deeds such as the above examples. All this is to be done with sincerity of which the foundation is inner peace.

Perhaps feeding contributes to the social harmony and that is why in the Qur’an it is presented as a great example of good deeds. It connects the poor and the wealthy and creates harmony between two very important segments of society. It should be noted that when a society lacks this harmony, revolts and revolutions are inescapable. History has shown examples of this type of revolutions including the French Revolution in 1789 and the more recent Communist Revolution of 1917 in Russia.
According to the Qur'anic verses, food is a gift from God. In the same way, freedom from danger also is a divine gift. They are strongly connected in the Qur'an. In one of the shortest chapters in the Qur'an, this fact is put as follows: “therefore, worship the Lord of this House (Ka'ba) who fed them when they were hungry and saved them from any fear” (106:3-4). When the Qur'an describes the negative qualities of people, it says, “surely, he did not believe in God, the Majestic, nor did he care to feed the destitute. And therefore, today [Day of Judgment] he shall be friendless” (69:33-36). The Qur'an remarkably integrates these two concepts of friendship and food; it suggests that feeding the needy is a great way to create friendship and prevent conflicts. Such an encompassing friendship is the locus of the spread of peace and harmony.

One of the main principles of Islamic civilization is to create an atmosphere of friendship and brotherhood. Perhaps because of this principle of the Qur'an the famous Turkish poet Yunus Emre (d. 1221) said, “We love Creatures because of the Creator.” All human beings, regardless of their faith or ethnicities are creatures of God and that makes them precious. Perhaps Rumi's famous poem can be better understood in light of the verse of Yunus Emre. Rumi says, “Love is the attribute of God, who has no need to anyone. To be in love with other than Him is the fake one.” Therefore, when we love others, we are loving them for the sake of God and not for the transient, worldly things we might benefit from doing so. In order to have such a peaceful environment founded on harmony and love of others, the Prophet of Islam has given some principles and rules to the members of society. These principles constitute the foundation of Islamic ethics, the root of which goes to the practice of Abraham, who is known in Islamic tradition as khalil Allah, or the Friend of God. In the Islamic tradition, Abraham is known for his hospitality and generosity. Therefore, giving through hospitality is a core belief of Islam. The goal is to build a society based on love and sharing.

The life of the Prophet is a great example of person's inner peace that has positively affected the outer world through love, generosity, and compassion. His compassion was not only toward human beings but animals as well. On several occasions, the Prophet admonished those who overworked or did not respect their animals. To the one who overburdened his camel, he said, “These animals are communities like you. Be compassionate towards them.” Even when faced with a human enemy, Muhammad acted with forgiveness rather than revenge. These acts of compassion were living examples of the message he brought.

Egoism is a driving force behind those seeking revenge. In any given society, egoism and self-interest are the enemies of a healthy community. Through hospitality, the Prophet guides his community to overcome the egoism that seeks only individual interests rather than the interests of others. Islamic social ethics require Muslims to be thoughtful of the members of their society and sincerely take care of them if they can without any self-interest. The Qur'anic verse says, “Do not expect payback when you give.” Thomas Ogletree’s description of our relationship with others can be considered from the Islamic perspective as well. He said, “It is the other addressing me who alone can shake and call into question my egoism, requiring me to take into account another center of meaning and valuations." Self-centered approaches are prohibited in Islamic teaching. Egoism, in Islamic theology, is the center of conflict and is the enemy of inner peace. Therefore, finding a spiritual way to get rid of egoism removes a great obstacle against both inner and outer peace. A prominent Turkish Islamic scholar calls those who have rid themselves of egoism “sacrificing souls” or the souls who are dedicated to peace. “They do not know obstacles, they do not look at their own comfort, and they do not have any interest in wealth. They have one goal, and that is to make society better and happier.” How beautifully expressed is this concept by the Bhagavad Gita, “Wars are fought in the minds of men. Cultivate peace in the minds and there will be no wars.”

Let me finish with one of the Prophet’s prayers which he used to say every morning and every evening, “Lord protect me from oppressing anyone or being oppressed by anyone, from attacking anyone or being attacked by anyone, and from making a mistake or committing an unforgivable sin.”

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, the author takes responsibility for all Qur'anic and hadith translations.
2. As a sign of respect to the memory of all prophets, including Muhammad, Jesus, and Moses, it is proper to say “Peace and blessings be upon him” when their names are mentioned. It is customary to mention it whenever their names are referred, but for the sake of flow, we will use this blessing only the first time their name is mentioned.
3. al-Bukhari, al-Sahih, “al-Iman” 34.
5. This topic was mentioned by renowned Muslim mystic Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-Arabi (d. 1249) who wrote to the famous Muslim theologian Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1210).
9. For more information, see the author’s article, “The Nature and the Dignity of the Human Person from an Islamic Theological Perspective” Chimago Studies (Spring 2011) 50:1, 27-38.
Loving God by Living Peacefully and Promoting Peace

DR. DANIEL BUTTRY

"Religious freedom for everyone is absolutely crucial if we are to have any hope for peace."

It is an honor to be here at this vital dialog between the Muslim and Baptist communities in North America. I bring you greetings from International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches, a global mission agency committed to the work of bringing peace in God's name to our hurting world.

I was asked to address the topic of loving God by living peacefully and promoting peace, to address this both locally and globally and to be practical, and to take about 20 minutes.—That’s a challenge! It’s a challenge I heard voiced in a different way by a Muslim friend of mine named Abdul El-Amin. We were relaxing together with a Jewish friend during a break of some work we did with our Interfaith Partners organization in Detroit. Abdul said, “It says in the Bible that Isaac and Ishmael came together to bury their father Abraham. Can’t we as the children of Abraham come together around that common ancestor?”—speaking of Abraham as an ancestor of faith if not blood.

That’s a good question, and Brenda Rosenberg, our Jewish friend sitting with us followed up by launching a project in which we got together Jewish, Muslim and Christian youth with a professional play writer and professional play director. They shared stories and pizza together for 8 months, coming up with an incredible play called “The