

United Reformed Church, General Assembly Speech by Shadi Bashir

8 July 2003

Moderator, members of the General Assembly - Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh. May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be with you.

On behalf of the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, Iqbal Sacranie, and all its members I would like to convey to you the greetings of peace and blessings of God, and express thanks for inviting me to speak today on the MCB's behalf.

For those of you who don't know much about the MCB, I'll tell you a little bit about us and what we aim to achieve in Britain. We believe strongly in fostering closer relationships with other faith communities and to have the opportunity for collaboration, and to work together towards a fair, just and inspired British society.

The MCB is a member of the interfaith network and last year we invited the interfaith committee to an interfaith reception at the commonwealth institute. An example of our earnest efforts with other faith communities is that of the religion question that was achieved in the census. I'm sure you're all aware that the recent census had in it the first religion question; and the results of that proved something of vast importance, and that is this nation is a nation of faith, of belief in God with 71% believing in Christianity and only 15% not following a faith. This may not be reflected in church, mosque or synagogue attendances but it does signify some feeling of reflection of people with their faith community. Belief in religion is something so natural, and belief in God even more so.

I think it is also important to note that Muslims have found friends and allies in this country. Taking one example of the march against the war in Iraq, in which over a million people of all faiths took part in London alone. It was truly an historic occasion and a parable of what people of different faiths coming together to a common platform to achieve a common goal can do. And it is a common platform on which we base our two wonderful religious traditions: Islam and Christianity.

It is needless to say, but I would like to express it nonetheless; it is important for the faith communities to collaborate to ensure that society does not forget important (and the importance of) moral values like honesty, trustworthiness, and justice. We need to embed these core natural values and virtues in our hearts and reflect them in our lives. As human beings, we need to remain faithful to our naturally good state in which we were created. We need to remember that all human beings are thus equal and only acquire eminence and stature through the strength of their God - consciousness and by what each contributes to the good and well-being of society.

On that note, I would like to close with a verse from the holy Quran:

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you in the eyes of God are those who are most pious. Indeed, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware."

We at the MCB look forward to working with our friends in the United Reformed Church as we together work towards building a just, prosperous and peaceful Britain in which we all have the opportunity to reach our God given potential.

Peace be with you and thank you for listening.

Shadi Bashir of the Muslim Council of Britain.