

# **Book Review: 'Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures' By Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI. Introduction by Marcello Pera**

Reviewed by Shazia Sohail



This was a lecture delivered by Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, in 2005 at the School of Catholic Culture, in Italy. In it he aims at solving what he believes is the greatest immorality in the European culture: abortion. He makes the argument that the crisis of cultures does not comprise the clash between one religion and another, or one continent and another; rather it is the clash between religious and moral truths on the one hand and the secular or Enlightenment culture, based on a scientific attitude, on the other. He makes an elaborate case to prove the moral bankruptcy of the Enlightenment culture, the most obvious symptom being the 'murder' of the 'weakest of the weak,' the unborn child. Throughout the lecture he proposes agnosticism as a solution, but towards the end he rejects it as a viable option and invites the audience to choose faith and God with the totality of their beings and sneaks in Christianity as the only option, without establishing her exclusive claim for a theistic paradigm.

In the foreword, titled "A Proposal That Should Be Accepted," Marcello Pera admits that the cultural break from Christianity occurred due to acceptance of Galileo's proposal that the spheres of science and religion should never be allowed to influence each other since the Bible clearly contradicted scientific truths; the resulting gap continued to widen to the point that morality came to be replaced by the universally accepted values of personal liberty and freedom of expression. In deference to Kant, no action was considered good or bad in itself; the consequences that ensued from it determined its value. At some point the idea of human rights superseded all other values. But when

other advances joined this one like scientific freedom, autonomy of technology, and women's self-determination, it created difficult problems. Pera closes the introduction with a powerful appeal to accept the Pope's opinion formulated in the book, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*.

In the opinion of the Pope the greatest failure of the modern society pursuant to its break from Christianity is the recognition of a woman's right to choose abortion for her. He does not tell us why the unborn child, even if it is illegitimate and the result of rape or incest must be born. Why are the rights of a potential person more valuable than those of a woman? How did he deduce from Genesis that a fetus, even in the earliest stages of its development, is a person? If something cannot exist or live on its own how can it be called a life and have rights? Why must the state enforce Christian values if the church has failed to teach it to its own followers? Why non-Christians living in a Christian state must be forced to practice the Christian doctrine of the 'right to life?' Pope does not answer these questions but tries to convince us that if we just lived our lives as if God existed, even if we didn't believe it, and imposed Christian values on ourselves we would come to believe that He does indeed exist. Throughout the book Pope laments Europe's lack of connection to its Christian roots and would like Europe to re-connect with its past values, but to what end? It is naïve on his part to assume that the sanctity of human life would be restored if people had Christian values. To an enlightened reader the author himself appears to be disconnected from Christianity's past. Is the Pope not aware of the bloodshed in the name of Christianity? He also does not take into consideration that it was only after Europe distanced itself from Christianity that it began to make progress. Scientific progress became possible only after commitment to scientific truth came to be valued more than religion. Women attained liberty and equality after justice based on secular values became the mandate of the state.

For a Muslim it is almost painful to watch the Pope trying to offer simple solutions to intricate problems. Europe has tasted the fruit of intellectual honesty and it is not possible for it to unlearn or overlook the scientific inconsistencies of the Bible. Only a religion that can offer complete harmony between revealed scripture and science would be worth its consideration now. Moral values would be much more palatable coming from a holy book that is in perfect accord with nature, and offers scientific information, unknown to man at the time of its revelation, as proof of its veracity. Fortunately for humanity, the Holy Quran meets this test; it not only provides glimpses into the intricate workings of the physical universe but also repeatedly invites the reader to reflect upon natural phenomenon to attain a better understanding of God Almighty.

The Quran recognizes the complexity of the abortion issue and refrains from being intrusive in this matter. The only condition it places on abortion is that it not be carried out for fear of poverty. Other than that it remains silent on the subject. However, in all matters of faith, one is required to submit to the will of Allah to the ultimate extent of one's endurance and capacity. The Merciful God clearly states in the Holy Quran, "Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity." (Al Quran 2:287) Common sense also dictates that until a fetus can survive independently, outside its mother's womb, its rights as a person cannot come into play, and the rights of the mother would take

supremacy. Thus, while the state should not be allowed to penalize her for an early stage abortion, a Godly person would take solace in the fact that God Almighty, Who knows the deepest secrets of her hearts, and is never unjust, is the Ultimate Judge of her actions.

### The Crisis of Cultures

Pope asserts that scientific and technological advancements have not led to a corresponding increase in morality, resulting in greater threats to human dignity and security than ever before. Scientific progress has yielded more powerful weapons and terrorism, which is a war without national borders. There is a need for stricter homeland security due to the threat of biological weapons.

The author goes on to enumerate the great problems of our planet, and attributes them to the lack of moral strength:

“The inequality in the distribution of the goods of the earth, increasing poverty, the depletion and exploitation of the earth and of its resources, famine, the illnesses that threaten all the world, the clash of cultures. All this demonstrates that the growth of our possibilities is not matched by an equal development of our moral energy. Moral strength has not grown in tandem with the development of science; on the contrary, it has diminished, because the technological mentality confines morality to the subjective sphere.”

He declares the rational culture to be a failure on the basis of these unresolved issues and tries to establish the need for the revival of Christianity. He starts by exploring the need for a “public morality” that can respond to these threats. He dismisses the moralism that exists in Western society today in the following words:

“It is indeed true that a new moralism exists today. Its key Words are justice, peace, and the conservation of creation, and these are words that recall essential moral values, of which we genuinely stand in need. But this moralism remains vague and almost inevitably remains confined to the sphere of party politics, where it is primarily a claim addressed to others, rather than a personal duty in our own daily life. For what does “justice” mean? Who defines it? What promotes peace? In the last decades, we have seen plenty of evidence on the streets and squares of our cities of how pacifism can be perverted into a destructive anarchism or, indeed, into terrorism. The political moralism of the 1970s, the roots of which are far from dead, was a moralism that succeeded in fascinating even young people who were full of ideals. But it was a moralism that took the wrong direction, since it lacked the serenity born of rationality.”

The author admits that morality seems to have become irrelevant to public life and that Kant had clearly shown that it is the consequences that ensue upon an action that determine whether it is good or bad. Without making it clear if he agrees with Kant or not he states:

“In this way, the category of the good vanishes, as Kant clearly showed. Nothing is good or evil in itself; everything depends on the consequences that may be thought to ensue upon an action. If, then, it is true to say that Christianity has found its most efficacious form in Europe, it is also true to say that a culture has developed in Europe that is the most radical contradiction not only of Christianity, but of all the religious and moral traditions of humanity. This shows us that Europe is going through a genuine 'traction' (to use a medical term), and we can understand how deep-rooted are the tensions that our continent must face up to.”

This statement appears to say that Christianity is facing an anti-Christian culture in Europe. It also implies that Christianity is responsible for the scientific and civic progress of Europe.

Then the author asserts:

“Above all, it is here that we also see the responsibility we Europeans must shoulder in this moment of history: in the debate about the definition of Europe and its new political shape, we are not fighting some nostalgic battle in the ‘rearguard’ of history. Rather, we are taking seriously our tremendous responsibility for humanity today.” One is again not sure what responsibility he is referring to since the present face of Europe bears no resemblance to the Christian Europe of the past.

The author then highlights the friction between Christianity and the radical culture in Europe embodied in the European Constitution, which says that there can be no mention of either God or the Christian roots of Europe in the Constitution. While lamenting about this friction the author admits the ineffectuality of Christianity: “We are told that we need not be alarmed, since article 52 of the Constitution guarantees the institutional rights of the churches. But this in fact means that in the life of Europe, the churches are assigned their place on the level of day-to-day political compromises; but the message they proclaim is not allowed to make any impact on the level of the foundations on which Europe rests. Only superficial reasons are given in the public debate for this clear refusal, and it is clear that such justifications conceal the true motivation instead of disclosing it.”

The “true motivation” mentioned above, according to the author, “presupposes the idea that only the radical culture born of the Enlightenment, which has attained its full development in our own age, can be constitutive of European identity.” Religious culture must be subordinate to this. “This Enlightenment culture is substantially defined by the rights of liberty.” These rights are still being defined because of the conflicting human rights of a woman’s right to choose and the unborn “child’s” right to life. A direct result of liberty is that:

“The concept of discrimination is constantly enlarged, and this means that the prohibition of discrimination can be transformed more and more into a limitation on the freedom of opinion and on religious liberty. Very soon, it will no longer be possible to that homosexuality (as the Catholic Church teaches) constitutes an objective

disordering in the structure of human existence, and the fact that the Church is convinced that she does not have the right to confer priestly ordination on women is already seen by some as irreconcilable with the spirit of the European Constitution.”

The author painstakingly tries to say that the Enlightenment culture has many values that we cannot do without, but the idea of liberty is contradictory and ill-defined. He talks about the inherent contradictions in the Enlightenment culture and attempts to prove that it could never be universal, proven by the fact that Turkey, despite repeated attempts, could not get accepted into the European Community. He seems to take pride in the fact that the Enlightenment culture matured in the Christian world, and that its secular values could not be planted in a Muslim country. One is left wondering if he is trying to distance himself from it, since it is essentially non-Christian, or take ownership of it since he clearly believes it is superior to other cultures in terms of basic civil liberties:

“We must begin by replying that we have undoubtedly made important gains that can claim a general validity: the assurance that religion cannot be imposed by the state but can only be accepted in liberty; the respect of the fundamental rights of man, which are equal for all; the separation of powers and the control of power. These are fundamental values, which we acknowledge to be generally valid; but we cannot imagine that they can be realized in the same manner in every historical context.”

The author then tries to answer the question whether a universally valid, completely scientific ideology had been discovered. He rejects the notion that democracy could be planted everywhere because the total religious neutrality of the state does not exist everywhere. Also, in his eyes, the Enlightenment culture failed to provide complete liberty since it took away the liberty of the church to conduct its business along the lines that conflict with the values of the state. In other words, he admits to the inability of Christianity to get its followers to adhere to its precepts without the help of the state. In the areas of a woman’s right to choose, homosexuality, and the ministry of women, people would prefer to act within the boundaries set by the state rather than Christianity.

The constant refrain throughout the book is that the Enlightenment culture needs to acknowledge, and reconnect with, its Christian roots. All the arguments are based on the notion that Christianity somehow turned against itself and created people who believed in racial and gender equality, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state! The author continuously laments that the Enlightenment philosophy is incomplete, irrational, a mutilation of reason, and sick; and “can recover its health only through reestablishing contact with its roots. A tree without roots dries up . . .” He then asserts that the clash of cultures is not between the great religions but between religion and the lack of it:

“The real antagonism typical of today’s world is not that between diverse religious cultures; rather, it is the antagonism between the radical emancipation of man from God, from the roots of life, on the one hand, and the great religious cultures, on the other. If we come to experience a clash of cultures, this will not be due to a conflict

between the great religions, which of course have always been at odds with one another but, nevertheless, have ultimately always understood how to coexist with one another. The coming clash will be between this radical emancipation of man and the great historical cultures.”

Thus relativism has replaced religion and, “In reality, this means that we have need of roots if we are to survive and that we must not lose sight of God if we do not want human dignity to disappear.”

The Pope then makes a proposal to those outside the church that since the Enlightenment had failed to provide certainty of rectitude perhaps society should go back to belief in God on the premise that:

“Kant had denied that God could be known within the sphere of pure reason, but at the same time, he had presented God, freedom, and immortality as postulates of practical reason without which he saw no coherent possibility of acting in a moral manner. I wonder if the situation of today’s world might not make us return to the idea that Kant was right? Let me put this in different terms: the attempt carried to extremes, to shape human affairs to the total exclusion of God leads us increasingly to the brink of the abyss, toward the utter annihilation of man. We must therefore reverse the axiom of Enlightenment and say: Even the one who does not succeed in finding the path to accepting the existence of God ought nevertheless to try to live and to direct his life *veluti si Deus daretur*, as if God did indeed exist.”

According to the author God can only be seen through godly people and the church needs an increasing number of them to make God credible in this world. He advises monks in the words of Benedict:

“Just as there is an evil zeal of bitterness which separates from God and leads to hell, so is there a good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and life everlasting. Let monks, therefore, exercise this zeal with the most fervent love. Let them, that is, give one another precedence. Let them bear with the greatest patience one another’s infirmities, whether of body or of character.... Let them practice fraternal charity with a pure love. Let them fear God.... Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ. And may he bring us all alike to life everlasting.” Exhibiting forbearance for all the infirmities of fellow monks seems an extremely inadequate solution to all the problems and controversies the Catholic Church has been facing in recent years.

Thus in the first part of the book Joseph Ratzinger tries to make a case for the need of Europe to re-connect with its Christian roots and reverse an erosion of morality due to science which proposes agnosticism to the European man. He proposes that Europeans should live their lives as if God really did exist even if they did not believe in one. The one issue that he kept coming back to as being demonstrative of the correctness of his thesis is that of abortion, as if the right of a woman to have an abortion was the greatest evil of the present-day western society. He makes a brief mention of several other problems the world is facing today but the main focus of his lecture is to demonstrate that the culture of enlightenment, that valued human liberty over all else, had not made man more moral, as demonstrated by the ever-increasing

social acceptance of the 'murder' of the weakest of the weak, a potential life, an unborn child.

The Pope rightly points out that progress in science has not led to a corresponding advancement in morality. He goes one step further and blames science for the erosion of morality; one would argue that if this was true then the primitive or medieval man would have exhibited superior morality to that of the modern man. History does not bear that out. The author fails to acknowledge that although science has given man greater ability to wreak destruction it has also given man greater ability to do good.

It is surprising that the Pope does not invite people to embrace Christianity, or faith in God, but proposes the adoption of agnosticism, with the caveat that once a Christian lifestyle is embraced then God will inevitably put faith in people's hearts. In his opinion agnosticism is the demand of humility and honesty; since neither the existence nor the non-existence of God can be proved one should live as if God did indeed exist. In his opinion it is arrogant to say that God does not exist because it could never be proved scientifically. This is the weakest argument one could ever come across regarding the existence of God. Should one believe in all supernatural phenomena because science cannot disprove their existence? He is proposing that even if Europeans do not believe in the existence of God they should structure their lives in such a way as if God did exist because secular morality is not providing mankind with solutions to all its problems, overlooking the fact that belief in the Christian faith provided even less solutions. And, whichever way you look at it, this proposal would appear to be an upside-down way of doing things that is against human nature.

Everyone agrees, including the Pope and Marcello Pera that civil liberties came to be the norm in the West only after its break from Christianity. The author is thus making a series of circular arguments that go something like this: Europe was Christian - Europe could not make scientific progress - It broke away from Christianity and developed a secular ideology called Enlightenment - Enlightenment culture is good because it establishes human rights - Enlightenment culture is imperfect because it takes away the power of the church to take away some of these human rights - Enlightenment culture is not universal because it arose from Christianity and can only flourish in Christian lands - Even though Enlightenment culture clashes with Christianity and is more good than bad, it is not as good as Christianity whose biggest achievement is that it gave rise to a culture that can only survive if it makes a complete break from Christianity - The best example of the failure of the Enlightenment culture is that it fails to protect the rights of an unborn child, the right of the church to reject homosexuality, and the right of the church to discriminate against women - The church cannot get people to remain Christian within the framework of the Enlightenment culture - Europeans must behave as if they believe in God, even if they don't - Europe must become Christian again!

### The Right to Life

The author recognizes that the European public is finding the discussion of the issue of the 'right to life' increasingly distasteful, as evidenced by the fact that almost all Western

countries have legalized abortion. However, he finds the justification for continuing the fight in Genesis 9:5-6:

“And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.”

Freedom of expression is valued above all else in Western societies; “The right to abortion is invoked as a constitutive element in the right to liberty on the part of the woman, the man, and society itself” to safeguard their specific interests. The author contends that since the abortion law is based on power, it is undemocratic:

“Nevertheless, it is a fact that this claim to exercise real rights is demanded to the detriment of the life of an innocent human being whose rights are not even taken into consideration. In this way, one becomes blind to the right to life of another, the smallest and weakest person involved, one without a voice. The rights of some individuals are affirmed at the cost of the fundamental right to life of another individual. This is why every legalization of abortion implies the idea that law is based on power.”

The author declares that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (“UDHR”) states that the right to life belongs to man by nature - and that UDHR can only recognize it, not confer it. Similarly a fetus has been conferred the right to live, by God, at the instance of conception.

The author then goes, with some detail, into the subconscious reasons for, and the psychological impact of, abortion. The refusal of the pregnant woman to ‘see’ the face of the unborn child, because it makes demands on her liberty, later leads to unresolved feelings of guilt. He appeals that we must fight for the right of the fetus because it is the weakest of the weak - much like Jesus Christ was when he was crucified. He asserts that Man should not be treated like a thing because he has personality; and that this is a concept that could only be grasped in the context of morality. Morality breathes in a religious environment; therefore, only Christianity can restore the dignity of man and respect for life.

If I were a Christian woman reading this book, I would find it difficult to accept Joseph Ratzinger as my holy father. Even if I were a committed pro-life woman, I would expect a man of his stature to address the issue of abortion as being symptomatic of a wider social malaise and not just that of the liberation and self-determination of the western woman. I would have expected him to chastise men for putting women in a position where they had to make such a terrible choice. I would have expected my holy father to show some sympathy for a rape victim who might find herself pregnant – rather I would have expected him to censure the rapist and leave the victim alone. Better still, I would have expected him to render constructive advice whereby women could protect themselves from such a horrific fate. At the least he could have mentioned the words modesty, chastity, and celibacy, for both men and women, as potential solutions to a

wide array of issues instead of expecting women to bear the entire cost of sexual permissiveness in the western society.

The countless numbers dying due to hunger and disease around the world were not considered worthy of mention or something to burden the conscience of the European man with. One would expect that the man who aspires to be the spiritual father of the whole world would at least have considered giving a voice to the misery of the voiceless that are already sentient and suffering immense pain. The fact that he only decries the 'murder' of a potential Christian life, the fetus of the European woman, only serves to confirm that the Christian philosophy is too limited in its scope to address global issues. Perhaps the Pope is more worried about the European population diminishing due to abortion and homosexuality, termed as 'objective disordering in the structure of human existence,' and the likelihood of Christianity to lose its stronghold in the West to the sheer mass of other cultures and religions. The fact that Europeans actively distance themselves from Christianity, as the Pope repeatedly points out, would further speed up the process.

### What Does it Mean to Believe?

The author describes Faith as being a fundamental human attitude; we exhibit it in everyday life. For example, we have faith that operations of food processing companies are hygienic and regulators of pharmaceutical companies are competent and reliable. The faith is essential for human life to function. Although it is of lesser value than knowledge, it is still fundamental to human existence, for the very survival of society.

The author then asks if agnosticism can be a solution to lack of faith. The foreword to the book, written by Marcello Pera, is titled "A Proposal That Should Be Accepted," the proposal being the Pope's suggestion to adopt agnosticism as a solution to Europe's moral dilemmas. Surprisingly, in the final chapter he ends up denouncing agnosticism as a viable option: "When one attempts to 'put it into practice' in one's real field of action, agnosticism slips out of one's hands like a soap bubble; it dissolves into thin air, because it is not possible to escape the very option it seeks to avoid. When faced with the question of God, man cannot permit himself to remain neutral. All he can say is Yes or No-without ever avoiding all the consequences that derive from this choice even in the smallest details of life. Accordingly, we see that the question of God is ineluctable; one is not permitted to abstain from casting one's vote."

The Pope admits there are three elements to certainty of faith: Qualified persons possess knowledge, multitude relies on them and trusts them, and faith can be verified and confirmed through knowledge. However, when it comes to the existence of God, he does not hold out any hope that it can be verified or confirmed by any means:

Obviously, however, the conditions relevant to the knowledge of God are necessarily of a particular kind. In this question, we are not analyzing isolated fragments of reality that we might in some way take into our hands, verify experientially, and then master. This question regards, not that which is below us, but that which is above us. It regards, not

something we could dominate, but that which exercises its lordship over us and over the whole of reality.”

According to the Pope the knowledge of God is present in man’s heart. The truth is suppressed by man due to weakness brought on by decadence of society. He then describes faith as being based on communion with men, and asserts that theology is a science of saints. Knowledge of God can only be attained through mediation of men like Jesus; no direct contact with God is possible. Faith is verified through the ups and downs of life, and by sharing in the knowledge of others.

Secular values of liberty and non-discrimination are eroding the church’s ability to retain its identity and loyalty to its scriptures. Already there is pressure on the church to confer priestly ordination upon women and gay men in Europe. In an attempt to challenge the right of the Enlightenment culture to curtail the church’s freedom he tries to prove that it owes its existence to Christianity and could only flourish on Christian soil. He challenges the self-proclaimed universality of the Enlightenment culture by giving the example of Turkey – how the attempt to ‘plant on Muslim soil the secular attitudes that had matured in the Christian world of Europe’ has failed. His attitude towards Muslims is dismissive, and there is no acknowledgement of the contribution of Islam towards the development of secular knowledge in Europe.

The perusal of this book makes it blatantly obvious that scientific discoveries have made loyalty to the Christian faith increasingly difficult. One should not have to choose between the ‘public and objective scientific knowledge,’ and ‘private and subjective religious belief;’ between ‘truths of faith’ and ‘truths of science.’ It also does not behoove the Pope to defer to philosophers like Kant and Pascal and preach agnosticism. It would have been better if he had said that God could only be found through pious conduct, so one should progressively do righteous deeds to find Him, and offered some encouragement that it is indeed possible to ascertain God’s existence. The only case he makes for the existence of God is that Jesus Christ told us so; just as one would take medicine at the behest of a pharmacist, one should take Jesus’ word for the fact that God does indeed exist. One is left feeling that a man of his stature should have been able to offer more eloquent persuasion than this.

### An Invitation That Must Be Accepted

In the Foreword by Marcello Pera, Galileo is quoted as saying “It is the intention of the Holy Spirit to teach us how to go to heaven, not how heaven goes.” It is the contention of the Holy Quran that a revealed scripture should be able to do both, and there can be no conflict between the Word of God and the Act of God (science). The Holy Quran challenges us to find such a contradiction in the following words:

“Say, ‘Allah Who knows every secret that is in the heavens and the earth has revealed the Quran. Indeed, He is Most Forgiving, Merciful.’” (Al Quran 25:7) And again, “No incongruity canst thou see in the creation of the Gracious God. Then look again: Seest thou any flaw? Aye, look again, and yet again, thy sight will only return unto thee confused and fatigued.” (Al Quran 67:4-5)

It directly talks to the non-believer about the creation of the universe, or the Big Bang, and issues an invitation to believe:

“Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were a closed-up mass, then We clove them asunder. And We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” (Al Quran 21:31)

It talks about the expanding universe: “And the heaven We built with Our own powers and indeed We go on expanding it.” (Al Quran 51:48)

And that it will again be gathered back into a black hole: “Remember the day when We shall roll up the heavens like the rolling up of written scrolls.” Al Quran 21:105)

Then the universe will be recreated: “As We began the first creation, so shall We repeat it; a promise binding on Us; that We shall certainly fulfill.” (Al Quran 21:105)

It tells us about the elliptical movement of all heavenly bodies: “And He it is Who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon; everything gliding along in orbit.” (Al Quran 21:34)

There are many more verses of the Holy Quran that speak about “how heaven goes” and invite us to believe based upon the accuracy of that information.

Although the Holy Quran repeatedly invites us to reflect upon nature to infer the existence of God, it does not stop there; it urges us to call upon God Almighty to reveal Himself:

“And to Allah alone belong all perfect attributes. So call on Him by these.” (Al Quran 7:181)

One of the attributes of Allah is Az-Zaahir, the Manifest; thus if we call upon Him by understanding this attribute, He will manifest Himself to us; another attribute is Al-Mutakallim, He Who Speaks to His Servant, and yet another is Al-Mujeeb, the Answerer (of Prayers). Thus, there are ninety-nine attributes of Allah that He can be recognized by.

I will share with readers the following passage from the writings of the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, to be contrasted with the Pope’s understanding of God:

“Listen, O those who can, to what God desires from you. And what He desires is only that you become solely His and do not associate any partners with Him, neither in the heavens nor on the earth. Our God is that God who is alive even now as He was alive before. He speaks even now as He used to speak before. And even now He hears as He used to hear earlier. It is a false notion that in these times He does hear but does not speak. But He hears and speaks, too. All His Attributes are eternal and everlasting. None of His Attributes is in abeyance, nor will it ever be.”<sup>ii</sup>

Additional excerpts about God from the writings of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community can be read online.<sup>iii</sup>

We believe that in a trilateral discussion between the Christians, atheists or agnostics and the Ahmadi Muslims, we can find authentic Faith and Reason and the right balance between the two. If Faith and Reason are based on good foundation, they do not have to be polar opposite. They can be synergistic, as Albert Einstein has said, "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind."

In the past several centuries in Europe, there have been only two parties to the debate for human civilization, Christianity and the Enlightenment scientific culture, with emphasis on agnosticism. Each party has denied the strengths of the other lest it self-annihilates herself. With the arrival of a third party in Europe, namely of Islam, as understood by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, an open, honest and rational discussion has begun. In this trilateral dialogue we can not only find solutions for the crisis of Europe, but also for Asia, Americas, Africa and Australia!

## Bibliography

1. The Holy Quran, <http://www.alislam.org/quran/search2/index.php>
2. Ahmad, Mirza Tahir, Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth (Islamabad, UK: Islam International Publications Ltd., 1998). Pages 303-328.  
The Quran and Cosmology [http://www.alislam.org/library/books/revelation/part\\_4\\_section\\_5.html](http://www.alislam.org/library/books/revelation/part_4_section_5.html)  
Entropy and the Finite Universe [http://www.alislam.org/library/books/revelation/part\\_4\\_section\\_6.html](http://www.alislam.org/library/books/revelation/part_4_section_6.html)

## Author

Shazia Sohail earned her Masters in Business Administration at Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad. Mother of four children, she lives with her family in California.

## References

---

<sup>i</sup> Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The Will, page 12.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.alislam.org/library/books/thewill/>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.alislam.org/books/Essence-1.pdf>