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Shaping a new Europe – the Muslim factor



by **DR CHARIS WADDY**
author of
THE MUSLIM MIND and
WOMEN IN MUSLIM HISTORY

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Shaping a new Europe – the Muslim factor

by Charis Waddy

The 1990s are a marking point in European history. At the close of a century of gigantic conflicts, and of soaring dreams of peace, there is growing co-operation, diplomatic and economic. Some walls at least have toppled, some ancient hates have been transcended, some frontiers eased. The path towards closer unity lies ahead. Much still needs to be done. In facing the next stage in what will never be a quick or easy process, we Europeans need to count our assets in the joint tasks ahead of us.

Islam is a major factor in European history. It has been present for 1400 years. It has sometimes threatened, sometimes enriched and always challenged European ways of life. Not everyone thinks of it as an asset. I believe it is. In any case, it is important to set aside the current fears and stereotypes and take a fair look at it.

For many centuries, the world of Islam was perceived as more powerful than Western Europe. For the past 400 years it has been the other way round. At the beginning of this century about 90 per cent of the Muslim world was under the domination of one or another western power. Then the tide turned. The

process of independence has led to the establishment of 46 Muslim states. At present we witness a colossal upheaval of change and renewal across the wide span of the Muslim world, from Morocco to Jakarta, and in Africa also. To live in such historic days is stimulating – but impossible to summarise. The media have to reduce it all to headlines day by day, and it is not surprising if they sometimes mislead. We need to seek understanding of the widely divergent currents in the tide of resurgence, and not merely to re-act to its anti-western aspects.

Why do I myself write about these things? All my life I have lived on frontiers where the Christian, Muslim and Jewish worlds meet. I was born in Australia. The First World War took my father with the Australian army to Palestine, at the time when the Ottoman Empire was breaking up. He was in Jerusalem two days after its capture from the Turks in 1917. In 1919 he was asked to undertake educational work in Jerusalem, when there was a lack of schools and colleges. The institutions which he and others started included all communities, and gave young Palestinians their chance of higher education.

My mother brought her five children to join him – six weeks on a slow boat from Sydney to Port Said through the Suez Canal. We loved Jerusalem. I went to school with girls from its many communities: 95 per cent Arab in those days, also Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Russians and more. When later I went to Oxford, my father said to me, “Why don’t you study Arabic? It is so important and so neglected.” I took a degree in both Arabic and Hebrew, and then a PhD on an Arab historian of the Crusades. Then I taught in a Training College for Teachers in Jerusalem, one of the early ventures in higher education for Muslim women.

All this was in the 1920s and 1930s. My generation faced a turbulent and uncertain world, and we wanted to do something about it. Many ideas competed for our allegiance, notably communism, later fascism. The idea that captured me was more challenging. It was simple, based on faith. God has a plan. It is a plan for the whole world. He has a part in that plan for you, and for every man, woman and child on His earth. If you commit your life to Him, He will show you that plan day by day, and give you the power to carry it out.

In 1938 this programme was presented to the world as moral and spiritual re-armament (MRA). The setting was a Europe rapidly arming for a war which would deepen ancient enmities, many still unhealed to this day. The experience which gave MRA's initiator, Frank Buchman, hope for mankind hinged on the basic point of bitterness: wounds inflicted by others but healed by the love and forgiveness of God. Men and women who find this freedom, personally, from the chains of past hurts and present hates begin to loosen the bonds of distrust and despair that paralyse their nations. Today, nothing could be more relevant for Europe's need for unity and reconstruction.

Twenty-five years ago I returned to the Middle East. People think of that region as a source of oil and a centre of conflict. Historically it is something far more: the source of three great traditions of faith, all stemming from Abraham and together perhaps the most powerful influence in shaping human history. Half the inhabitants of the globe owe allegiance in some degree to the monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The clash or co-operation of the adherents of these three Abrahamic traditions is of great import in the present world situation. One current in this century has

been a growing understanding between those who hold different traditions of faith. There are setbacks, but nevertheless a steady advance towards cooperation. All the great religions have contributed to this. The Dalai Lama, for instance, has taught mankind much, and especially to learn from enemies. In the first half of the century Mahatma Gandhi was the outstanding voice for spiritual force. There is growing recognition of primal tribal beliefs in the Creator, and their vision of human life in harmony with the rest of creation.

A special responsibility however rests on the followers of the monotheistic traditions. Europe has been, and is, one of the theatres in which the drama between them is played out, and could have a valuable part to play in ensuring that co-operation rather than conflict is the keynote of the next act in an historic story.

In the present scene there is much conflict. There is also a growing pattern of bridgebuilding initiatives by Muslims, Jews and Christians, looking at what they have in common in spite of much to forgive on all sides. The following points of initiative illustrate a widespread process.

First, in the 1920s my father talked with Jerusalem's religious leaders – patriarchs, muftis, rabbis – of “the comradeship of our joint belief” in God, so much more important than the things that divide us. He spoke of the need for “the energetic diffusion of the spirit that is the opposite of antagonism”.

The Times, sixty years after the capture of Jerusalem from the Turks in 1917, recalled his vision:

“Far the greatest unity of all we share, but the most often forgotten – we are all believers in One God. There is not a man of these three religions that has not a fiery conviction that of course there is a God who rules this world; and of course there is only One God – how could

there be more? The thing that really marks a man is that he is pressing on to know all the truth he can know about God, and living by the truth he gets.

“Not one of us would have any use for the flabby idea that our differences do not matter. But we are surely foolish if we are so afraid of seeming untrue to our own religion that we never dare appeal to the comradeship of our joint belief.”¹

André Chouraqui, writer and scholar, is a bridge-builder from the Jewish world. Born in Algeria, of a family whose ancestors moved from Spain at the time of the expulsion of the Jews in the late fifteenth century, he had a French education and took part in the Resistance during World War II. Back in Algeria, he rediscovered his Jewish faith through Christian nurses and Sufi mystics. He moved to Jerusalem, and has published new translations in French of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and finally the Qur’an. He speaks of a new order whose roots would reach down into the “still living depths” of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. “The nearer we get back to our sources, the nearer we will be to each other, without ceasing to be intensely ourselves.”² He is an example of cross-fertilisation between the different faiths. Others are Muhammad Asad, Austrian Jew, who went to Saudi Arabia as a reporter in the 1930s and became one of the best interpreters of Islam in this century; and the French scholar Louis Massignon who through the study of Muslim mysticism found again the Catholic faith he had rejected.

In 1965 I heard Cardinal Franz Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna, speaking in Cairo, at Al-Azhar, the oldest university in the world and through centuries the intellectual centre of the Muslim world. Its spiritual head, the Shaikh al-Azhar, had invited the Cardinal to

lecture on their common ground of belief, monotheism. It was one of the great bridge-building moments of our times. This historic invitation from the heart of the Muslim world was followed by a return visit to Vienna by the Rector of Al-Azhar.

Since that time, Papal journeys and statements have built many bridges with Islam. To give one example, in 1990 Pope John Paul II visited the island of Malta, with its memories as an outpost of Christianity facing Islam. At an ecumenical meeting he gave a special greeting to the Muslims present. "The Catholic Church looks to you with sentiments of brotherhood and esteem, trusting that much good in the service of humanity can come from increased understanding between us." The response to such messages has been equally warm. When the Secretary General of the World Muslim Conference, Doctor Inamullah Khan, welcomed the Pope to Karachi he said, "Between us Muslims and Christians we represent nearly 50 per cent of the world's population. Given genuine good will and understanding, our two communities can be a source of real peace on the basis of justice the world over." ³

We must be grateful to Poland for the present Pope's bridge-building. It illustrates a vital point. The new Europe must grow on a basis of giving its best to the rest of the world. If it remains nation-centred – or even Euro-centred – it will fail. My own country Britain needs to recognise this. The constant challenge of Muslims in our midst is an uncomfortable, but healthy, reminder of the need to think beyond personal concern and self-interest.

ISLAM'S PRESENCE IN EUROPE

Islam in Europe has a history, a future, and a strong presence today. Let us look at its position now, and then ask, in the light of its history, what we can expect its future contribution to be.

Today, Islam's presence in Europe has three aspects:

1. Muslim communities in Western Europe;
2. Neighbours around the Mediterranean, from Morocco to Turkey, with close links and growing numbers of immigrants into Europe;
3. Muslims in Eastern Europe, in historic frontier lands between Islam and Christianity.

Western Europe: Each western European nation has its communities of Muslims, large or small. Many Europeans speak about the friends they have among them. Students in French universities; Turks making their contribution to life in Berlin; Pakistanis taking a part in civic responsibility in Norway; a long-established group in Finland; in Rotterdam, half the patients in one clinic are likely to come from Morocco or Turkey. In France there are over three million Muslims – the nation's second largest religious group after the Catholic Church.

We in Britain have over a million Muslims who are fellow citizens, mostly from the Indian sub-continent. They are contributing much to our society, in spite of setbacks. The Rushdie affair, the Gulf War and the economic recession have all had serious effects on community relations.

There are about 300,000 British-born boys and girls from Muslim families in British schools. In Bradford they represent nearly a quarter of the school population. They are an important part of our future – our workers, doctors, teachers, businessmen and sports-

men. What happens to them largely depends on their acceptance or rejection by their contemporaries. Are they going to emerge from their education with a grudge, feeling disliked, cold-shouldered? Friendships and a common purpose in school and college are an essential element in their future and Britain's. Everyone – and every home – can play a part in building the right relationships.

Then comes the question of unemployment. Economic hardship bears most heavily on minority communities. It is added to the burden of alienation created by fears and stereotypes in the minds of the host communities. Any dark face – including young ones – may be teased and taunted and the injustice of such prejudice is wounding.

The cities of Britain, where many of the world's conflicts are represented in microcosm, could offer examples of healing instead of spilling over into street violence. In 1989, leaders of Bradford's 55,000-strong Muslim community publicly burnt Salman Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses* – an image which was flashed around the world. Prompt action was taken by the Anglican Bishop of Bradford, Robert Williamson, to defuse the tension. He called together all the city's religious leaders to issue a joint statement expressing their sympathy for the feelings of the Muslim community who had been outraged by the book.

Philip Lewis, the Bishop's advisor on inter-faith issues, comments, "A crisis tests the quality of relationships and institutional links developed before it explodes." In Bradford the Churches had been active in inter-faith and community relations for over 20 years. Because of the trust and goodwill developed, when *The Satanic Verses* affair blew up the Bishop was able to intervene. Lewis continues, "When Muslim and

non-Muslim were polarising into mutual incomprehension and anger, each questioning the good faith of the other, a dialogue was maintained. At a time when Muslims felt the established institutions were freezing them out, the Bishop, with the two Archbishops [of Canterbury and York] opened a dialogue with Muslim leaders at Lambeth Palace.”⁴

In another city in the north of England, Newcastle upon Tyne, Muslims form one among several ethnic minority communities. Hari Shukla, Senior Racial Equality Officer, has been at work there for 16 years, and has been awarded an MBE in recognition of the good relations achieved. He says, “With the creation of trust comes the ability to deal with crises.” When one community is in trouble, the others rally round. A mosque was vandalised. Very quickly, responsible leaders met with the Muslims – local elected councillors, city officials, the police, MPs, church leaders as well as other ethnic minorities – Hindu, Sikh and African. The Muslims felt supported, and practical action made it possible to repair the damage and ensure against a recurrence. This was 12 years ago, and these relationships have carried on through many times of difficulty since. “When my son died,” says one British member of the Racial Equality Council, “the Minister of my church came to visit me. He found a Hindu and a Muslim already there, and they were followed by a Sikh. Such friendships are at the heart of the achievement of good multiracial relations in Newcastle.” Relationships like these are a source of strength when serious tensions arise at times of economic stress.

The Mediterranean Region: The Mediterranean throughout its long history has been a means of

communication rather than a boundary, a focus for all its surrounding peoples. Despite all their wars and power-struggles they have together been one of the greatest civilising forces for mankind.

Today the ring of lands with a Muslim majority runs from Tangiers to Gallipoli, except for the eastern coast where the state of Israel faces the vital question of its relationships with its neighbours.

Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Turkey: each has its role to play. There are serious divides within and between Muslim neighbours, as well as with the countries of southern Europe. A Middle East historian recently listed 11 conflicts at the moment on the shores of the Mediterranean or in neighbouring Arab lands. These clashes are a challenge to European statesmanship to play a constructive role.

Such statesmanship has been shown in many instances through the past decades: in the course of independence struggles; in Euro-Arab initiatives; in negotiations for a pattern of agreements with and between countries bordering the Mediterranean on trade and matters of mutual interest; at moments of tension in French cities.

More important has been the building of countless bridges of friendship – a steadily growing fabric of trust in a world of fear. After the Gulf War one such bridgebuilder, Doctor Omnia Marzouk, Egyptian doctor working in Britain, stressed the essential role of Europe in continuing the search for peace. In response, a senior French civil servant, Daniel Dommel, acknowledged France's responsibility in the search for solutions in the Palestinian/Israeli sphere, as also in Lebanon and in better relationships with the Arab communities in France.⁵

A Frenchman born in Morocco commented, "What we

most lack is a constructive vision for the Muslim world: one which looks for balanced development, which takes to heart the difficulties facing its peoples, and which thinks for the future of the younger generation who, for their part, see no future for themselves... To win through to a positive vision for one another, we must become friends. This is the task which should occupy our generation for the next 50 years." One of his friends, a Tunisian teacher educated in France, describes his pilgrimage through isolation and bitterness to friendship and common purpose. "I have learned much from my experiences, good and bad," he says. "Belonging to the Arab and Muslim world by birth, and to the West through the years I have spent in France, I have felt a certain vocation growing in my heart. With one foot on each side of the Mediterranean, was I myself called to build bridges?" Of his friends in Tunis who hold strong prejudices against the West he says, "I am not sure we yet have the right wavelength for dialogue. We must find common tasks to get us working together." ⁶

Eastern Europe: Much of Eastern Europe was at one time part of the Ottoman Empire. There are memories of great victories and crushing defeats. With such memories, it is not easy to move forward into a new stage of co-operation and friendship.

Bulgaria, for instance, has a large Muslim minority with strong Turkish links, and there have been troubles in recent years over efforts to force assimilation. There is another side to these relationships, I am told. A celebrated Bulgarian writer, Yordan Yovkov, writes appreciatively and sensitively of the lives of Muslim peasants, in the north of the country. One popular short story is called *The Song of the Wheels*. It pictures an old

craftsman, who made carriages for the whole of his neighbourhood. He would shape the wheels so that each carriage had its own distinctive sound and song as it moved. In many country villages there are drinking fountains, family memorials given by Muslims to the public so that in a thirsty land all may drink.

Turkey itself has turned its faced westward and seeks closer links with the European Community. With its many guest workers in Germany and Switzerland it has a big stake in Europe's future, as well as a bridging role between Europe and countries further east.

The eastern borders of Europe take us into what has been the USSR. It is estimated that 60 million Soviet citizens, more than one in five of the population, are from a Muslim background. Of the 12 Soviet republics still today in some measure linked together, six have Muslim backgrounds: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Tajikstan, Turkmenia, Uzbekistan. Developments in these Asian regions will have their impact on their European neighbours. There is wide-spread awakening to the Islamic heritage, which survived as a private, domestic tradition through the Communist years.

Alongside renewed nationalism, a renewal of faith can be discerned – parallel to that among Russian Christians. For example, in 1989 in Kirghizia, far to the East, the leading Kazi (Muslim judge) spoke of honour and dignity and conscience, of the "God who lives in every man"⁷, and who offers a universal code. These are thoughts very similar to those of Archbishop Kyrill of Smolensk, who talked of the key role of conscience, of absolute moral standards and of God-centred ethics. Links with Muslims elsewhere are being renewed, and many of the different tendencies in other parts of the Muslim world are trying to gain influence in this newly opened area. The numbers who went on pilgrimage to

Mecca in 1990 and 1991 were greatly increased. There are classes for learning Arabic in new mosques – no doubt making use of the one million copies of the Qur'an given by Saudi Arabia.

ISLAM IN EUROPE – PAST

In the light of history, what contributions to the emerging Europe can we expect from Islam?

Like present day experts, historians tend to list the conflicts. Most people are still unaware of what we owe to our eastern neighbours, in enrichment of our living, in warmth of beauty and culture, and enjoyment. I once gave a talk on this subject. Along with weightier matters, I mentioned that ice cream came on to the European menu through the Arabs of Sicily. This is what people remembered – something they all enjoy. It brought to life the other, more important gifts.

European culture acknowledges three main roots: Greek, Hebraic, Roman. The first two were also roots of Muslim civilisation. In fact, in Europe the Greek contribution was largely lost, while it was preserved and developed in the great centres of Islamic learning, from Baghdad to Cordoba. The works of Aristotle, of the Greek mathematicians, the textbooks of medicine and pharmacy, reached Europe in time to nourish its first universities. While the Crusaders were fighting futile battles in the East, a real contact and interchange was going on at the western end of the Mediterranean, in Spain and Sicily. Latin translations from the Arabic supplied the basis of science and philosophy in Paris, Bologna and Oxford.

In 1981, the Bodleian Library in Oxford mounted an exhibition in honour of the beginning of the fifteenth

century of Islam. From manuscripts in its collection the whole colourful story of the process of transmission was illustrated, and the debt owed by the West to Muslim scholarship was acknowledged. I took slides of this exhibition to India, where I was invited to lecture in Kashmir, Delhi, Hyderabad and Baroda. The audiences knew the facts well. What aroused intense interest was a European acknowledging the debt and saying thank you.

This taught me the importance of gratitude. In the Qur'an, "thanks" (*shukr*) is an important word, an essential ingredient of faith. The venerable Indian scholar Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi speaks of gratitude as "one of the bases of culture and civilisation". It is, he says, "the acknowledgement of a truth, appreciation of the great achievements of others, and returning thanks to those who have done any favour to us."⁸ There is humililty in gratitude. It is hard to be grateful and arrogant at the same time. Gratitude may check arguments, and open closed doors.

Sayyid Nadwi spoke of another piece of history, a time when Europe as well as Asia was threatened. In the 13th and 14th centuries two tides of bloodthirsty conquest swept over Asia and into Europe, reaching as far as Russia and Poland: the Mongols and the Tartars, under Genghiz Khan and Timur (Tamerlane). There were famous battles between them and the Russians: St Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, with its colourful turbanlike domes, was built by Ivan the Terrible to celebrate the capture of the Tartar capital, Kazan.

To the South there was a different story. The Turkic tribes around Samarkand and Herat converted and civilised their conquerors. There seems to have been at that time a great strength of faith among the common people, fostered by Sufi orders – orders that are still at

work today. Timur had a Sufi master who used to play chess with him and was buried alongside him. Perhaps the old tyrant had a troubled conscience, remembering the pyramids of skulls that marked his battlefields. Certainly something astonishing happened in his family. His sons presided over an outburst of art and learning and architecture, of glorious mosques, exquisite manuscripts, poetry and painting. The Timurid civilisation is one of the transformation scenes of history. At the heart of it was a woman – one of the greatest among many in Muslim history. Gauhar Shad was married to one of Timur's sons, and from their home in Herat she was the inspiration and the patron of an astonishing range of creativity.

EUROPE AND ISLAM – FUTURE

We never know what may happen, even out of the darkest violence and cruelty. What fascinates me about history is the unexpected changes – unforeseen turnings – and the men and women who are somehow used to bring them about. The signs are that we have hard days of winter ahead still in Europe, and elsewhere. But I believe that beyond them waits a springtime greater than any yet seen.

We are told that the world is growing smaller. I have always looked forward to unity in that closer world, peopled by men and women giving their varied best. Frank Buchman said, "Division is the mark of our age: union is the grace of rebirth." Rebirth in people and nations can bring unity. But suppose the divisions deepen?

Two cracks threaten that one world:

1. North/South: rich and poor, the continuance of class war on a horrific scale;
2. The West and the Muslim world isolating each other, a division of mutual fear, of demonising, of name-calling: “Great Satan” or “devil incarnate”.

If Europe is to have a future, these two world issues must be intelligently addressed.

This means facing the dark side of our European character: the greed, the arrogance, the fear that makes us ride roughshod over others. The candid, challenging friendship of the rest of the world – of men and women from the Third World, of Muslims and of Jews – may prove an invaluable asset in this necessary process of change.

How do we build such relationships?

I talked to two Bishops about this, both men who know and love the Muslim world. One said, “We need to remember that God is our Creator. He made everyone on this earth and He loves them all.”⁹ And so, he implied, should we, without exception. The opposite of love is fear, and fear is a major factor in the world. It confuses every situation and it mounts daily. We Christians are told that love will cast it out, because it is a cause of torture and torment. We should take that seriously.

The second Bishop gave three points: 1. It is people who meet, not systems. 2. Maximise the points of agreement. Identify them, and make the most of them. 3. Do not be afraid of differences. They are there. Acknowledge them, and find ways of working together.¹⁰

COMMON GROUND

Absolute moral standards are one point of agreement. These are basic to all religions, and are not the exclusive property of any. Such standards are “the pillars, the foundations on which we can build together,” said one Muslim. They are controversial in secular, western society, and the temptation is to lower them. I thank God for Muslim friends who challenge me to heighten my practice in regard to them, and who expect Christian behaviour from Christians.

Family life and the care of the environment are both common concerns. At the 16th International Congress for the Family, held in Brighton, July 1990, one of the principal speakers was Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Muslim scientist and mystic. His theme was, “The harmony of man and nature”. He linked the harmony of the family to the urgent questions of ecology. He said:

“Harmony with nature is only possible when we are in harmony with ourselves which comes from harmony with God....

“There is no harmony between the sexes unless there is harmony with God. Disharmony between the sexes leads to diseases and sexual deviation....

“It is very late in human history, too late for niceties. We need to take the bull by the horns and fight against the destruction of nature and the family.”

We find our common ground in the best and deepest tenets of our traditions. Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s latest book is called *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*.¹¹ There are so many distortions of Islam, he says, and so many western misinterpretations. There is a varied range of voices all labelled “fundamentalist” by western observers. But who, he asks, speaks for traditional Islam, the Islam lived for centuries by

ordinary men and women, by theologians and poets, by simple people of faith through 14 centuries and still followed by the vast majority of Muslims? A senior diplomat said the same thing to me: “Where is the normal Islam, the Islam we read in the Qur’an every day, by which we seek to live? This is what we need to express, and few do so.”

Respect for holy books is a common feature of religions. To Islam, both Christians and Jews are “People of the Book”, with a scripture given them by God to live by. Christians can show a similar respect for the Qur’an and appreciate what it means to Muslims.

The Qur’an is not an easy book to read. I have studied it, but it has come alive for me when I have asked Muslim friends to give me some verse that means something to them personally. The many verses quoted in my book *The Muslim Mind* were given to me by Muslims in this way, to illustrate some facet of Islam which they wished to explain. I asked Muslims taking part in a recent conference to give me a verse which was part of their current experience.

One university lecturer from Iran had his Qur’an in his brief case, and his text on a piece of paper in his pocket, given him by his mother “for protection” and on the back of it the phone number of a member of the family to reach during his journey.

Some gave a saying (*hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad.

“Love for your brother what you love for yourself,” quoted a medical student from the Sudan. He added, “That is absolute unselfishness.”

Two students, husband and wife, also from the Sudan, were away from home, working for research degrees in law in Canada. The wife said, “I am often homesick and would rather go back. Two things help

me to stick to my work. The Prophet said, ‘Scholars and researchers are the heirs of the prophets.’ And the Qur’an says, ‘God respects those of His servants who study.’ ”

Her husband, when harmony was restored after some dispute, quoted: “Each son of Adam is a sinner. And the best of the sinners are those who repent.”

Finally, from Tunis I was given one of the great Qur’anic statements, often quoted as the basis of sound national and social policy: “God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in their own hearts.”

Europe must find its soul again. In this search its citizens of all nationalities, cultures, and faiths can take their part. Europe has its mountains – and its Alpine ranges of the spirit, its perennial sources of spiritual strength. Never has it needed them more. There is much to cleanse. Never in any previous century have so many seemingly unforgivable deeds been done: and never perhaps have so many of them been met with a generous and forgiving spirit.

Leaders and citizens alike are faced with hard and puzzling decisions. A gift from one European Muslim typifies for me the universality of the search for God’s will. It is a painting, hanging in Mountain House, Caux, centre of Moral Re-Armament near Geneva. The giver is head of an engineering firm, based in Germany with links eastward as far as Azerbaijan. His work is dedicated to supplying water to thirsty lands. His sister, a Pakistani artist, painted a series of calligraphic representations of the 99 “names” of God, attributes of His nature, traditionally used in Muslim devotion. The one he selected has the word “Al-Hadi”, the One Who guides, directs us.

The picture opens a window into a world of faith, of

beauty, of art and poetry, of love and courage: in all of which God is our Guide.

The word “Al-Hadi” and those connected with it run like a golden thread through the Qur’an. The first seven verses of the Qur’an, named “Al-Fatihah”, “The Opening”, are like the Lord’s Prayer to Christians. One verse prays, “Guide us in the straight path.” They open with two “names” of God. “Bismillah al-rahman al-rahim”. “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,” the One who is merciful and shows mercy.

God’s mercy and God’s direction are to be discerned in all the best of Europe’s past. They are also the key to the common future of all her varied peoples.

This is an expanded version of a seminar at an international conference for Moral Re-Armament, “Freeing the Forces of Change”, held at Caux, Switzerland in 1990. It was later circulated at a conference held by the Farmington Institute for Christian Studies on “Christians in Europe”.

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Photo: D Channer

Charis Waddy is author of *The Muslim Mind* and *Women in Muslim History*. She was the first woman to study Oriental Languages (Arabic and Hebrew) at Oxford University and went on to complete her doctorate, at London University, on the Arab view of the Crusades. She has lectured in Muslim centres in Asia and Africa and at conferences in Europe, Australia and North America. In March 1990 she was decorated by the Government of Pakistan with the Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Star of Excellence). She writes as a Christian who has experienced a life-time of wide-ranging friendships throughout the Muslim world.