

## **A MUSLIM RESPONSE TO QUR'AN BURNING**

Abidullah Ghazi

Executive Director of

IQRA' International educational Foundation

Islam is a religion of peace, consideration and evenhandedness. Its revealed book, the Qur'an, explains it, the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) exemplifies it and, with few exceptions, our history manifests it. Yet Islam, its Prophet and its history are now under ruthless attacks by certain interest groups that have both financial means and media assistance to propagate their allegations. However, there exist simultaneously movements of understanding, dialogue and sincere inquiry that are counteract to some extent the negative and divisive trends that are been set in motion, and these movements are for promoting conciliation and mutual respect.

As Muslims, we must not become overwhelmed by our detractors and we must build partnerships with other religious and social groups in order to strengthen trends of peace and conciliation. Never in its history has Islamic world had faced the intellectual and ideological challenges that it faces today. Yet at the same time never has it been given such an opportunity to creatively respond to these challenges and spread its message of universal understanding. It is up to Muslims to take on this challenge and rise to the occasion and provide reasoned, dispassionate and scholarly and reasoned responses to both incendiary attacks on our tradition as well as sincere inquiries about our religion.

Muslims believe that Islam is the eternal religion of God that is sent to all mankind through heavenly prophets and messengers, from Adam to Muhammad (peace be upon them all). These individuals are givers of good tidings and warners of evil. Humanity has received God's divine guidance, as can be seen mankind's natural inclination towards religion and their core message of peace and reconciliation. This primordial religion can be called al-Islam, roughly translated as "submission to the will of the One Creator God." All of human kind's prophets delivered a common message: the Oneness of God (which in Arabic is called *Tawhid*), the oneness of humanity, the oneness of revelation and the oneness of all prophetic missions. Their messages emphasize personal responsibility of action, and the power of compassionate God to accept or reject our services and reward or punish our actions.

The Qur'an reaffirms this simple message, its simple moral code and brings all previous messages to their culmination and fulfillment. The Qur'an provides human kind with a universal moral code -- defining both righteous actions and sinful deeds. Islam corroborates all the spiritual truths that came before it and with its final revelation invites the human family to live freely and in peace follow. Traditionally Islamic states have granted each religious community to accept Islam or have the freedom to follow their own spiritual paths and social laws. What the Qur'an preached and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplified, we have in our personal behavior and political history endeavored to follow. And contrary to the assertions of our adversaries we Muslims - with relatively few exceptions - constructed pluralistic, tolerant civic societies and safeguarded the social fabric, places of worship for myriad communities across the world. Each Muslim society is still a reflection of religious, cultural and social pluralism.

The incongruous folks who plan to engage in a Qur'an burning down in Florida this weekend must know that the Qur'an is only book safeguarded by God though hundreds and thousands of *huffaz* (memorizers) of the Qur'an worldwide. They can burn away, however their juvenile act will neither hurt Islam nor the Qur'an. On the contrary, their act may hurt the image of tolerance this country of ours and the noble reputation it gained in championing religious freedom. These acts will bring into question our civility as Americans and affect our relation with the one fifth of humankind that Muslims constitute. They should also know that not only our country but the entire Western world needs Muslims for their own survival and development. They should also know their offensive behavior and high profile abuse of religion might actually attract more people to seek out what Islam's really all about, and who knows, once they find out, some may be convinced by it. It would certainly strengthen the hands of terrorists and endanger peace and security of all Americans, specially our armed forces

Controversies such as Salman Rushdi's notorious book, Taslima Nasreen's inflammatory comments, and a myriad of cartoons, documentaries, articles and talk shows, do not contribute to the stability of the globe which is melting where it should freeze and freezing where it should melt. The change in the environment, both physical and ideological, is very fast and any incident in any part of the world, whether

environmental, social, religious or political, would shake the global village and would be detrimental to its stability and peace.

America's Muslims form a talented minority that contributes to the social, political, and economic progress beyond their number; yet we have to learn much from the experience and struggle of our predecessor minorities like African Americans, Jews and Catholics. Their patient struggle has produced the results we enjoy and our patient and reasoned struggle would pave the way for more open and accepting American society. It is time for Muslims to show patience and perseverance following the commandments of the very book their foes are attacking. In situations of adversity, opposition and personal violation the Qur'an teaches patience, perseverance, steadfastness and civic dialogue. In the following selections from the Qur'an, we attempt to understand the message of Islam in relation to our situation. We can share this information with our family, friends, colleagues and neighbors. In the modern informational global village there are so many avenues open to get the right knowledge about Islam and it's our responsibility to provide it to whosoever who desires. The Qur'an is God's book; He has promised to both safeguard it and deal with its enemies. Let Him deal with His adversaries and let us fulfill our responsibilities, in cooperation with our interfaith partners, fellow citizens and professional colleagues. We must at every cost maintain peace and harmony with our fellow Americans and humans and frustrate the evil designs of those who are creating mischief to provoke us. The Qur'an assures us:

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا ﴿٨١﴾

*“And say: Truth has arrived, and Falsehood would perish:  
the Falsehood is (by its very nature) bound to perish,”*

Isra 17:81