

From the Editor

On behalf of the Center for Civilizational Dialogue, I would like to make this important announcement: the Center has ceased to publish its bilingual journal known as *Katha, Journal of the Center for Civilizational Dialogue*. The last published issue of the Journal was *Katha* 3, 2007.

Katha is now known as *Katha: Journal of Civilizational Dialogue* and it is published entirely in English. In this first totally in English issue, all the articles with one exception deal with topics of inter-religious dialogue, especially insofar as these pertain to relations between Islam and Christianity. Articles by Dr Mohd Fakhruddin Abdul Mukti, Emeritus Professor Osman Bakar, Ma Zhanming, Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury are all concerned with the theme of inter-religious relations and dialogue in its various aspects. The exception, authored by Dr Yamin Cheng, and dealing with the various intellectual shortcomings in the post-Enlightenment understanding of religion in the West, may not explicitly dwell on the subject of inter-religious dialogue but many of the issues discussed in it are relevant to inter-religious dialogue at a more philosophical level.

Of the articles dealing with issues of inter-religious relations and dialogue, all of them are concerned with the encounters and relationships between Islam and Christianity at various points in time in the common history of the two religions. The sole exception is the article by Ma Zhanming, which seeks to highlight hitherto unknown aspects of inter-religious relations and dialogue between Islam and other religions in China.

Dr Mohd Fakhruddin Abdul Mukti's article treats the subject of the Qur'an's characterization of the "People of the Book" and its attitudes toward them. In discussing the subject he identifies a good

number of the relevant verses for interpretation and commentary. In doing this he seeks the help of two well-known Qur'anic interpreters, one classical (al-Tabari) and the other modern (Sayyid Qutb). Dr Osman Bakar's contribution deals with the issue of cultural symbiosis and the role of religion in the contemporary world. He approaches the issue primarily from the perspective of Islam, but his discussion of it is of universal import. A great part of it also touches on the issue of the relationship between Islam and Christianity in the West.

The article of Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr deals with the issue of whether Christianity may be regarded in principle as a revealed religion. The two papers take up different and even opposite positions on the issue at hand. Claiming to present the traditional Islamic views of Christianity based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the hadiths as these sources have been interpreted throughout Islamic history, Nasr defends the position that Islam views Christianity as a matter of principle as a revealed religion, even if it has to criticize some of its fundamental teachings such as the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation.

The article of the Archbishop of Canterbury deals with the controversial issue of the possible place and role of the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) in Britain. The article is not only important to societies grappling with the problem of how to secure a legitimate space for religious law alongside secular law, particularly for Islamic law such as in Malaysia, but also for inter-religious and inter-faith dialogue.

The current issue of the journal also includes two book reviews and a conference report. The first review, contributed by Dr Stephen Bucher, is on the book *Buddhism and Environmental Ethics in Context* published by the Center for Civilizational Dialogue. The book is authored by Alastair Gunn and Ruth Walker. The other review written by Dr Mohamed Ajmal Al-Aidrus is on Dr Osman Bakar's book (new edition) entitled *Tawhid and Science: Islamic Perspectives on Religion and Science*. The conference report is prepared by the Oxford Center of Islamic Studies. It is based on the proceedings of a conference on Islam and the Environment which the Center had organized in October 2008.

This journal will continue to publish in its future issues scholarly articles devoted to the broad theme of inter-religious, inter-cultural

and inter-civilizational relations and dialogues, which, in fact, is the central concern of the Center for Civilizational Dialogue.

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