

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,
And may Peace and Blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad*

OPEN LETTER TO HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,
Do not contend with people of the Book except in the fairest way
(The Holy Qur'an, al-Ankabut, 24 : 2).*

Your Holiness,

September 12th, we thought it appropriate, in the spirit of open exchange, to address your use of a debate between the Emperor Manuel II Paleologus and a "learned Persian" as the starting point of discussion on the relationship between reason and faith. We applaud your efforts to oppose the dominance of positivism and scientism in human life, we must point out some errors in the way you mentioned Islam as a counterpoint to the Emperor's view.

There is no Compulsion in Religion

You mention that "according to the experts" the verse which begins, *There is no compulsion in religion*

as a counterexample. To say that for Muslims “ God’s will is not bound up in any of our categories” is also a simplification which may lead to a misunderstanding. God has many names in Islam, including the Merciful, the Just, the Seeing, the Hearing, the Knowing, the Forgiving, and the Gentle. Their utter conviction in God’s oneness and that *There is none like unto Him (al-Ikhlās :)* has not led Muslims to deny God’s attribution of these qualities to Himself and to (some of) His creatures, (setting aside for now the notion of “categories”, a term which requires much clarification in this context). As this concerns His will, to conclude that Muslims believe in a capricious God who might or might not command us to evil is to forget that God says in the Quran, *Lo! God enjoins justice and kindness, and giving to kinsfolk, and forbids*

war and describes circumstances where it is necessary and just, that does not make that religion war like, anymore than regulating sexuality makes a religion

for many others around the globe, yours is arguably the single most influential voice in continuing to move this relationship forward in the direction of mutual understanding. We share your desire for frank and sincere dialogue, and recognize its importance in an increasingly interconnected world. Upon this sincere and frank dialogue we hope to continue to build peaceful and friendly relationships based upon mutual respect, justice, and what is common in essence in our shared Abrahamic tradition, particularly the two greatest commandments' in Mark 12: 29-31 (and, in varying form, in Matthew 22: 37-39), that, *the Lord our God is One Lord; / And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all i* *nk*

. **H.E. Shay h Ra il Gainutdin**
Grand Mufti of Russia

. **H.E. Shay h Ned ad G**

. Shay h Abu Ba r Ahmad Al-Milibari
RU