CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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By Senator Professor Khurshid Ahmad

But if the right of a blind man waiting to cross the road is determined by his colour, class, race, religion or nationality and we refuse to help him, then, Askari argues, 'something very seriously wrong has entered the human situation - an abnormality or sickness which is too familiar to comment upon'.4"4

Khurshid Ahmad (1932-)

Khurshid Ahmad was horn in Delhi in 1932. He had a traditional Islamic education at home and completed his secondary education in an Anglo-Arabic Higher Secondary School in Delhi. At the time of India's partition, his family moved temporarily to Lahore and later settled in Karachi. He enrolled at the Government College of Commerce and Economics and graduated in economics. In 1955, he took an MA in the same discipline; in 1958 he became a Bachelor of Law; and in 1964 he took an MA in Islamic Studies. He proved to be a brilliant student. His formal training in these disciplines was to have a decisive influence on his later, public life. Through the study of economics and law 'not only did he develop a propensity for empirical and sociological analysis (something that is very rare among active Muslim workers), but he also acquired that uniquely "practical" bent of his personality, the ability to give a concrete, institutional form to vague dreams and visions .[1]

Delhi provided him with a multicultural environment. He describes how from 'a very early age I was in contact with Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Sikhs in particular'. This encouraged him, in later life: 'when I was working", he says, 'for my Masters in Islamic Studies, one of the subjects was Comparative Religions. That further increased my interest in the comparative study of Islam, Christianity and other religions.[2]

During his student life he had an obsession - to have command of the English language. This led him to read Jawaharlal Nehru's writings, which guided him, gradually, towards 'secularism' and 'atheistic thought'. Through Nehru's writings he discovered N.M. Roy, whose writings further developed and deepened atheistic roots in him. Later, he says, he read Bertrand Russell. John Stuart Mill and others, whose writings inspired skepticism and doubts about various aspects of human life, especially about religion and God. He was searching for a direction. During these years of intellectual wandering he sought the advice of a close friend, who advised him cither to read the literature of the Communist Party or Mawdudi's writings and to understand the system of Jamaat-e-lslami. Although Mawdudi was a close friend of his father, Aziz Ahmad, Khurshid discovered him through Tanqihat (lit. Evaluation), Tafhimat (lit. Explications) and Khutbat (lit. Orations or Sermons). The writings of Iqbal - The Reconstruction of Religious Thought - and Mohammad Asad's Islam at the Crossroads attracted him to Islamic thought in general. These proved to be the turning point in his life.[3]

Khurshid joined Islami Jamiat-e-Talaha and became its national President from 1953 to 1955. Then he joined Jamaat-e-lslami in Pakistan in 1956, was elected to its Central Executive Council in 1957, and is currently one of the four Naib Amir (deputy leaders) of the

organization. As editor and translator into English of Mawdudi's thoughts, he became one of the best communicators of Jamaat-e-lslami outside Pakistan.

He is an activist. His very mission in Jamaat-e-lslami is to establish Islam in all its totality in Pakistan. This brings out the whole question of Shari'ah - its meaning and implementation, as well as its relation to other believers. This makes a discussion on him more significant. How does an activist, and not a theologian as such, understand dialogue in its wider context? Secondly, his experience of living in the West, especially in Britain, and maintaining a continuous connection with various Islamic organizations and institutions in the West, provides an added dimension to his views on dialogue. Furthermore, during his stay, he has actively participated in and organized dialogues, mainly with Christians, but also with Jews, at regional, national and international levels.

Khurshid first came to England in 1966. From 1969 to 1972 he joined the University of Leicester as a research scholar. This was a period for encountering questions dealing not only with the challenges that come from secular ideologies or from Western civilization as such, but also with the challenges that come from the Christian and Jewish religions. He argues that there are major areas where Islam and Christianity cannot meet, but he stresses that 'there is also a vast area where our approach is common'. But he points out the approach of the Churches is much more accommodating of 'the Western civilization and culture', rather than realizing that the Church 'has a much higher role to play in the future of mankind . . .'.[4]

His direct involvement in dialogue began when he decided to live in England for a longer period. He established the Islamic Foundation in Leicester in 1968, but began functioning in 1973. Through the activities of the Foundation, he was exposed to various national and international dialogues, especially with Christians. He also took the initiative to have a multi-religious dialogue involving Jews. This step, he notes, had 'some political risk element, but somehow', he stresses, I didn't give that much importance and I thought that as a man of religion, we should try to rise above immediate political interests'. He further says, 'if there is a possibility of developing some kind of faith-based approach to the problems with which humanity is confronted today, this is worth trying'.[5] Once this multi-religious dialogue had developed he was elected Vice-President of the Standing Conference on Jews, Christians and Muslims in England (JCM), 1974-8. He became a member of the Advisory Council of the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian- Muslim Relations (CSIC), Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham. 1976-78. He was invited to give a series of lectures as a Visiting Professor on 'Islam', 'Christian-Muslim Dialogue' and 'Islam and Orientalism' by the Free University of Amsterdam and the Catholic University of Nijmegen in 1976. In the same year, he was invited by the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, in Rome, to give a series of lectures on Islam.

DEFINITION AND BASIS OF DIALOGUE

For Khurshid the definition of dialogue is simple: 'instead of talking about each other, we should start talking with each other. He claims that this is 'the real spirit and ethos of dialogue'.[6] He finds, as a Muslim, the basis for dialogue with other religions to be in the teachings of the Qur'an. It is the unity of divine revelation which, he argues, gives one the strength and encouragement to involve oneself in dialogue. The 'element of divine message'

in all religions must encourage us all to engage in a meaningful dialogue. He contends that the Muslim 'approach is not exclusivist, our approach is not isolationist'. A Muslim, he argues, by definition, 'belongs to the whole family of divinely guided people'. As a Muslim all 'faith-based communities have some relationship to my faith, my community and my approach to the world'. Therefore, a natural consequence 'is contact, conversation, dialogue, amongst men of faith in particular'.[7]

Secondly, Islam is by nature a religion of Da'wah or invitation. Once a Muslim accepts that what he believes has an 'outward direction', .'an invitation open to all', and is not limited to blood-ties and political and economic interests, then he will share his faith with everybody and anybody. For Khurshid this is also a part of dialogue, which involves 'knowing, learning, reaching, talking, discussing and persuading each other'.[8]

Thirdly, he emphasizes, God has given people (he right to choose and freedom of choice, 'even the right of a man to refuse to accept God as his Lord'. This shows, he claims, that 'variety (and) plurality is not abnormal, it is not an aberration ... it is not something to be eliminated, it has to be accepted.' Khurshid stresses this is only possible 'through dialogue, through contact, otherwise we would go for either a strategy of isolation where everyone lives in his own world or a strategy of elimination where there would be a perpetual struggle and warfare . .'.[9]

Fourthly, he stresses that the Qur'an has laid out in clear terms that a Muslim is not allowed to abuse the gods of others. 'While we do not subscribe to them, we do not regard them as right and just, which means a state of co-existence'. He calls this 'a state of pro-existence, where you respect each others' position without agreeing to it or subscribing to it'.[10]

Fifthly, he argues that the Qur'anic critique of Christianity and its encouragement and invitation to Christians to share in a common cause should be taken seriously (Al-e-Imran 3:64). This is the verse that he calls 'Ayatul-Hewar,[11] (verse of dialogue), which makes it 'incumbent upon the Muslims to invite the Christians and Jews and by implication to all to a dialogue, to a discussion that if there is some area of agreement then the area of disagreement should not hold us from at least co-operating as far as the area of agreement is concerned'. He stresses that in dialogue there has to be some common ground, otherwise, as he puts it, 'it would be a dialogue between deaf and dumb'.[12]

He finds that even within the area of difference there is a point where we can share with others. He points out, though, 'our concept of Taw hid may not be shared by others', somehow we all 'claim to believe in that God. Look toward Him as the Guide, the Lord, believe that [our] return is towards Him [and] . . . look towards Him for salvation, for guidance, for light, for grace, whatever that be'. In this approach to God he finds an area 'which can provide a basis of commonality, of co-operation, of co-existence'. Along with that, 'there can be an area of differences where we can continue to discuss and differ and live with our differences and that is what dialogue is .[13]

Finally, Khurshid traces in the Qur'an two fundamental needs of human beings - survival and procreation. In both these areas he argues that Islam has 'opened the gates of a perpetual relationship' between Muslims and Christians and Muslims and Jews. He stresses that Kosher

meat is also 'Kosher for me'. He has some hesitation, though, about eating meat slaughtered by the Christians because 'when Christianity was proposed in Europe [it] somehow moved away from the Judaic-Christian tradition of the credulous civilization that was the Middle East, [and] they departed from the manner of slaughtering of the animals to.[14] Yet he finds a valid basis for meeting at the dining table, at least with the Jews.

He also points out that Islam has given permission to Muslims to marry a Christian or Jewish woman, and she can remain a Christian or a Jew and be the 'wile of a Muslim, a member of its family and responsible for the procreation of humanity'. Khurshid argues these are two major 'dimensions of human conditions and in both there is a contact between the three religions, their co-existence, their perpetual dialogues have been institutionalized'.[15]

DA' WALL/MISSION AND DIALOGUE

Khurshid suggests Da'wah is a 'built-in mechanism' in Islam. Da'wah, he argues, 'keeps the community as well as individuals who compose it, active and upright, ensures the moral health of the individual and the community and acts as a corrective force and a blessing for the whole of mankind'.[16] Islam's primary concern, and therefore the purpose of Da'wah, is 'to build correct relationships between God and man, between man and man and between man and society. The central issue, according to Islam, he stresses, 'is not man's need to know the person of God and to extricate himself from a vicarious predicament by seeking the grace of a Saviour, but his need for Hidayah (Divine Guidance) to enable him to know the will of God and to try to live in obedience to it'.[17] Here one can find a profound difference of approach between Islam and Christianity towards life, its mission and purpose.

Da'wah, in his opinion,-has to be given in an atmosphere of freedom, where individuals have choice. Islam, he argues, 'does not believe in forced uniformity which is against the demands of nature'. Islam, in his view, 'accepts differences as authentic'. This acceptance provides 'a modus vivendi for different individuals, societies, cultures, religions and civilizations to live side by side with each other, competing in what is good, tolerating where they differ and as such able to work for seeking what is good for mankind and what brings man nearer to God'.[18] He further argues that just to turn towards God is not enough, cooperation 'in society and its organization to achieve Adl (justice) and Ihsan (moral excellence and benevolence) is a Divine-imperative'.[19]

Can dialogue be part of Da'wah or mission? Khurshid has no qualms about it. As we have seen earlier, dialogue to him is a part of Da'wah, He is prepared to accept dialogue as a part of mission. 'I have no quarrel with it', he finds, 'as long as it is a religious mission ... as long as it is dialogue, as long as it is an invitation, as long as it is an effort to share. I welcome it.' One must not try, as he puts it, to 'cheat' or 'masquerade', and he stresses the importance of not allowing 'such methods as will imperil the morality, the spirituality and (he religiosity of the whole effort' either by the Christians or by the Muslims.[20]

Khurshid has articulated the areas of mission which Muslims feel unhappy about. He points out that, in the past, some missionaries who arrived in Asian or African countries 'might have been motivated by the best of spiritual intentions' and he emphasizes this is not among the points in dispute. The Churches' emphasis on diakonia (service), he says, 'is a laudable

objective and effort, no one can be opposed to that'. What he opposes is 'when diakonia becomes an instrument of proselytization, conversion and influences a person not morally, intellectually, ideologically, reaching a person not through dialogue or discussion but trying to exploit his weakness, whether he is a child . . . sick or under strain, poor. . .'.[21]

Khurshid, writing as guest editor of the International Review of Mission, sums up the Muslim critique of Christian mission in the following four points:

1. Gross and flagrant misrepresentation of the teachings of Islam and of the life and message of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Instead of examining Islam as it is, a totally unreal picture of Islam was concocted and used to denigrate Islam and Muslims. Although the high watermark of this type of approach to the study of Islam has passed, the effort still persists, even though low in profile and under many a disguise.

2. The methodology of Christian mission concentrated upon influencing the object in a state of weakness and helplessness. Instead of direct invitation, approaches were made to those who were disadvantaged, exploiting their weaknesses for the sake of proselytism. The poor, the sick and the immature were made special targets of economic- assistance, medical aid and education. Many a Christian mission acted as an organic part of colonialism and cultural imperialism. All this was a very unfair way to bring people to any religion.

3. Whatever the ultimate aim, subversion of the faith and culture of Islam seems to have been the prime target of the Christian missionary enterprise. Nationalism, secularism, modernism, socialism, even communism were fostered, supported and encouraged, while the revival of Islam and the strengthening of Islamic moral life among the Muslims were, and even now are, looked upon as anathema.

4. Muslims were treated as political rivals and as such subjected to overt and covert discrimination and repression. Their just causes fail to evoke any significant moral response from the Christian world . . . Muslims are puzzled when they compare the relative lack of Christian concern over the increasing de-Christianization of the Christian world with their obsession to what amounts to de- Islamization of the Muslim world.[22]

In later dialogues he pursued this line of argument.

THE CHURCHES AND DIALOGUE

The initiative of the Churches especially the Second Vatican Council and after, and the World Council of Churches, Khurshid points out, it has been very encouraging. But whereas dialogue began with enthusiasm and hope, now he finds 'stalemate or simple repetition of what was said earlier'. A position where 'we are moving', he says, 'in blind alleys and the breakthrough is not around'.[23] He claims the WCC 'made a good beginning, but somehow midway they realized that the way things had unfolded did not enable them to achieve the objective they had in mind.[24]

Referring to the Second Vatican Council's appeal 'to forget the past', he notes, /'the message that I get from the . . . Council and what I myself believe in is that the past should not

become a shackle'.[25] He suggests that in the past there were many things which had been very good, 'reassuring' and 'rewarding', yet others were 'obnoxious', 'disturbing'. He argues that both are important today. It is 'only through learning from the past that the present and the future can be protected'.[26]

He suggests that the past should not be allowed to become a 'bottleneck', neither should the difference be 'exaggerated'. One cannot ignore the past; ignoring the past, Khurshid argues, is 'a positive disadvantage. He stresses the need to recognize the differences, but these should not become a hurdle in dialogue.

Khurshid describes the last 40 years of the Churches' initiative and experiment in dialogue as a 'positive' step. He reminds us that 'four decades . . . are not sufficient time to make final judgment'[27] on the issues of dialogue. He notes that despite the 'degree of coolness', com-pared to earlier dialogue, 'the chapter is not closed' and it would be better if both Christians and Muslims 'leave it open'.

MUSLIMS IN THE WEST AND DIALOGUE OF CULTUKES

Khurshid's reclining theme is Islam and the West. He looks at the whole encounter between the two. Muslim minorities in Europe, and religious plurality and democracy from Islamic resurgence perspective. He describes the West as a 'concept and a culture'. He places much emphasis on the forces of history and civilization.[28] Therefore, the West is not purely a geographical entity, and he describes Western culture as being 'in its late phase of maturity.[29]

He compares the West with Islam - Islam being faith and a civilization - and argues that the West did not perceive Islam as a civilization or religion, but 'merely as a rival political power. Describing the popular image of Islam (of 'Arabian Nights' and 'Anti-Christ') in the West, he argues, 'these images were blown into existence to serve specific purposes', and claims that 'they were inflated or deflated to suit the shilling sands of politico-religious relationships between the world of Islam and the West'.[30] He notes that although these images have now begun to fade, they 'pollute the public mind and constitute an obstacle to the growth of a correct and sympathetic understanding of Islam and the Muslim life'.[31]

In the contemporary situation, he finds that the Islamic resurgence in the West is seen as 'fanaticism' and 'militant'. Khurshid believes the resurgent Islam or Islamic movements 'have their roots deep in the society of the Muslim people, medieval as well as modern*. He re-marks that these 'movements have mostly been conveniently ignored by the Western observers of the Islamic scene, who have confined their gaze to the ripples on the surface of the water, never caring to understand the currents and cross-currents beneath the surface'.[32]

The urge, that the West should understand what Muslims are saying, is ever more alive in his writing and speeches. He reminds live West again: 'Muslims do not constitute a threat to the West.' He describes how there 'is no indication or even a remote possibility of any Muslim armed incursion into any Western country or even a threat of sabotage of their political system'. He emphasizes that 'Muslims are only trying to set their own house in order. They

want the right to order their individual and collective lives and institutions in accordance with then own values and ideals'.[33] He argues that the Islamic resurgence is not against modernization, but Muslims want to do this 'in the context of their own culture and values'. What they disapprove of is 'impositions of Western culture and values' upon a people 'who have then own distinct culture and civilization'.[34] He emphasizes that there is a possibility of coining closer and having a closer relationship between Islam and the West. 'If China and the United States and Russia . . . and India can have friendly relations without sharing [a] common culture and politico-economic system, why not the West and the Muslim world?' Much depends upon how the West looks upon this phenomenon of Islamic resurgence and wants to come to terms with it.[35] (Khurshid's stalics). He urges passionately that differences should be resolved 'peacefully through dialogue and understanding, through respect for each other's rights and genuine concerns'.[36] In a long article on the subject, he points out that the disagreement between France and America in the GAIT agreement on cultural issues is a good indicator A completely free trade policy may put Europe, and France in particular, at risk from American cultural invasion. Khurshid asks, 'Is it too much if Muslims expect the same sensitivity to be shown to their own cultural concerns and religious sensitivities?[37]

Describing the Muslim situation in Europe, and referring to the educated elite, Khurshid argues that this small percentage of Muslims have wielded a considerable influence in community affairs, they can articulate the community's case to the local and national social and political bodies. Hut their involvement within the community is often minimal. The bulk of the community consists of unskilled or semi skilled labourers. 'Their commitment', he finds, 'to religion is more traditional and less rational.' Referring to the community's elders, or the first-generation immigrants, in most cases, it has been seen, they have a limited knowledge of the indigenous languages, English. French or German, and they 'find it difficult to develop a dialogue on religion or ideological matters with the local people'. 'Psychologically', he argues, 'also most of them arc .primarily interested in the wage nexus. This has naturally affected their outlook and areas of interest.[38]

Khurshid points out that the most important problem Muslims in the West are facing is 'to maintain and strengthen their distinct religious and cultural identity while participating positively in. the national life of their homeland.[39] Muslim culture, he stresses, is a Value-oriented culture and the Muslim community derives its identity from its religion. That is why religion is not regarded as a personal affair.'[40] The behaviour of the community takes shape and pattern in dress, food, marriage and family life. This may not be very important from the Western perspective, hut it is of crucial importance for Muslims. Lack of full appreciation of this culturally important area of Muslim behaviour, in his opinion, is at the root of many tensions.[41]

Democracy, which is supposed to bail out this situation, Khurshid finds completely inadequate. 'The basic problem with the Western democracy', he contends, 'is that it has been developed as primarily a political system. The idea of cultural and social democracy is still undeveloped.[42] He argues that the recent developments in communications and technology in the world of commerce and tourism, etc., arc forcing upon us the ideal of a 'multi-cultural' and 'multi-religious' society. He contends that the idea of a multi-cultural and multi- religious society cannot be an abstract idea, and points out the change not only should reflect 'attitude', but also 'institutions and laws'.[43] Here he suggests a dialogue of 'Muslim

experience', which accepts 'plurality of cultures, religions and life-style', could be of great help. This, he emphasizes, is not merely an idea but a historical reality.

Although Muslim experience could be very useful, Khurshid finds that Muslims in Europe are in a state of 'unpreparedness' and are 'ill-equipped for the task ahead', he points out the 'old groups and loyalties' persist amongst Muslims and lack of 'enlightened and committed leadership' makes the matter worse.[44] To overcome this state of 'unpreparedness' Khurshid suggests that the Muslim community should evolve 'a new pattern of Islamic life and culture in the context of the Western society'. He stresses (hat they 'should live as full participants and not as pseudo-citizens. They have to develop a new mode of life, in consonance with the values and norms of Islam and in the context of local conditions'[45] and not transplant it from their country of origin. They have to leave behind their nomadism. Once this 'nomadism' has been uprooted or even faded from memory, Khurshid slates, 'Muslims in Europe can make a significant contribution by developing the vision of multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-racial societies'.[46] In the past the minorities, he argues, were instrumental in evolving 'political democracy', and he suggests that Muslim experience can help in evolving a socially and culturally rich democracy.

But did the issue of The Satanic Verses in Britain and the head scarf issue in France help towards cultural understanding? Khurshid suggests that both issues have been blown up out of proportion 'due to the media or due to human failing'; 'things which arc of marginal importance quite often' affect 'the relations between Muslims and Christians or Islam and the Western world'.[47] He Stresses that the relationship between Islam and Muslims in the West, as well as with the Christians are more 'fundamental issues'. He finds that, as in the past, both Muslims and Christians' will be able to live in harmony and understanding 'without risking the whole fabric of relationships on issues' like these.[48] He points out that there is variation within Western culture as far as dress is concerned from 'bikini to evening dress', and this variation is accepted as natural. But what is unnatural in this spectrum, the colour of Hijab (scarf), immediately becomes obnoxious and unacceptable, and threatens relations between Muslims and Christians and local culture.[49] Khurshid suggests future dialogues should address issues like The Satanic Verses, which have been described and-protected as 'freedom of expression', and the scarf issue in France, which has been, perceived as a threat to local culture.

SHARI'AH - ITS MEANING AND PERSPECTIVES

Khurshid has been one of the chief protagonists of Shari'ah. Since his days as a student he has been active in the movement to implement of Shari'ah in Pakistan as well as helping and encouraging the efforts made by others in the Muslim world. In various dialogues in Tripoli, Chambesy and Colombo, he has emphasized that 'Christians should not object to the Muslim effort to build their society on (the basis of the Shari'ah',[50] rather. Christians should help Muslims in this process. He writes: 'Shari'ah means, literally, the path and in Islam it stands for the path that has been spelled out in the Qur'an and Sunnah. So Shari'ah is defined as the Qur'an and Sunnah.[51] He points out that it has a number of dimensions in the areas of commands and commendations. Commands (Ahkam) relate to what is prohibited (Haram) and what is made obligatory (Fard). Commendable means one that is disliked (Makruh), the other that is preferred or advised (Mustahab) and the rest is permissible (Mubah). Khurshid

argues that the 90-5 per cent of Shari'ah's areas come under the list of permissible or Mubah. He suggests that 'within the legal framework there is a vast area of flexibility, innovation, change, evolution'. He stresses that it is only the 'framework which has to be protected' and within that framework there is plenty of room for 'change and evolution'.[52] But Shari'ah is not mere legality, 'there are also moral imperatives' and 'spirituality", which help to fulfill the injunctions of Shaii'ah. This is what Shari'ah is.

Khurshid disagrees with the suggestion that Muslims are not defining Shari'ah properly. This suggestion; .he argues, is due to the fact that their outlook is Western and secular, where the law can he enforced through the law courts only. In Islam, law has a wider view. The injunction (Ahkam) of Islam also deals with areas like prayers, fasting and Zakah. The Anglo-Saxon legal perspective is inadequate to understand such a wide concept of Shari'ah. A second difficulty from the Christian perspective, Khurshid points out, is in the approach to the Old and the New Testaments. The two were not looked upon by the later Christians as complementary; rather the New Testament was seen in isolation. In that perspective Shari'ah considers Christians as something 'non-spiritual' or 'non-religious'. He suggests that "the Christians should be happy to see that Muslims demand for Shari'ah to be the basis of their individual familial and collective life' and argues they 'should not look upon these as either encroachment of their rights or as a defeat for the value system which some people think would mean a loss to Christianity . . . and to think that Westernization is helpful to Christianization' is incorrect.[53] He emphasizes that Muslims are asking that Shari'ah be introduced for Muslims only. Or where it has been introduced, introduced only in Muslim majority areas, even in a country where Muslims are in the majority.

Christians are caught in a situation where, in countries like Pakistan, the Sudan or Nigeria, they have been able to find not only freedom from colonial rule but are also trying to sever their relations with whole systems of the colonial legacy, so the Christians are trying to respond in a way which dissociates them from the former colonial systems. That problem in itself is enough to be faced. The other much more serious matter is the Muslim insistence on Shari'ah with the confidence they have found in Islam. Christians find themselves, perhaps unwittingly, on the side of past colonialists in opposition to Shari'ah. Khurshid insists that Muslims have to make sure that Christians have 'full protection of their rights, giving them the opportunities in whatever fields, religion, education, culture, they want to protect and develop and perfect their identity . . . [including] all the human rights'.[54]

Referring to Pakistan's Christian population, which is about 1 per cent of the population, Khurshid argues that in the contemporary political climate of Pakistan it would have been 'very difficult for them to get elected to the Parliament, yet we have developed a system of election where non-Muslims elect their own representative', whether Christian, Hindu or Parsee. Describing his own participation in parliamentary committees he claims that 'we had threadbare discussions with both the Roman Catholic as well as the Anglican bishops in Pakistan, we invited even Parsees, we invited not only the Members of Parliament but the Bishops were invited to the Parliament to come and discuss with us their rights in the country'.[55] Khurshid is now a Senator in Pakistan's Parliament, finds an opportunity of dialogue with other religious representatives and finds a worthwhile role in that capacity.

The introduction of the Shari'ah Bill, moved on 13 July 1985, has generated an emotional debate in the country. The Christian press was unanimously opposed to it. Khurshid argues in one of his earlier works: 'the true position is that the representatives of the Christians in the First Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and some of the leaders of the scheduled castes, who form the most important minority, have demanded the establishment of an Islamic stale, for they hold that their rights can be better safeguarded in such a state . . .'[56]

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44. *Ahmad, Islamic Da'wah in Europe', op. cit., p. 32.*

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid., p. 41.*

47. *'Interview', op. cit., p. 19.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. *'Interview', p. 9.*

51. *Ibid., p. 17.*

52. *Ibid*

53. *Ibid., p. 10.*

54. *Ibid., p. 11.*

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Syyid A. Mawdudi, The Islamic Law and Constitution, ed. and trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd, 1969), pp. 65ff.*