

The Episcopal Anglican Province of Alexandria



Centre of Christian-Muslim Understanding & Partnership

المركز المسيحي الإسلامي للتفاهم والشراكة

Newsletter, 8th of February 2023



Dear friends,

We are happy to share with you our news and activities that happened since the last October 2022 newsletter.

We would like you to know that we appreciate your friendship and support to the Center.

May God bless you,

+ Mouneer

Archbishop Emeritus Mouneer Anis,

Director-General

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I. Seminar - The Attributes of God in Islamic Theology: Definitions, Problems, & Debates Among Muslim Theologians

By Dr. Feryal Salem, 6th of December 2022, 10h30 - 12H30



The Centre of Christian-Muslim Understanding & Partnership (CCMUP) welcomed Dr. Feryal to discuss the subject of “The Attributes of God in Islamic Theology”, defining them within the Ash'ari and Maturidi frameworks. These frameworks were also examined through the Salafi and Mu'tazilite objections, while reviewing the Ash'ari/Maturidi responses to these objections. The presentation was a sophisticated theological discussion of interest to Muslim and Christian theologians alike in that various overlapping criticisms and concepts were provided a platform for a more profound engagement with Muslim theology and its similarities and differences with Christian thought.

Dr. Feryal Salem (PhD, University of Chicago) is Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at American Islamic College in Chicago, USA. Her research interests include post-classical Islamic philosophical theology (*kalam*) and Christian-Muslim dialogue. She previously taught at Hartford Seminary where she also directed the Islamic Chaplaincy Program.

II. Course: Understanding Islam

CCMUP, in partnership with the UK foundation Gingko, organized a week-long course from the 11th to 15th of December, 2023, entitled Understanding Islam, which was designed to help its students make nuanced sense of the Islamic tradition and its schools, offering them a well-rounded and complex idea of classical and modern Islam.

This intensive course was offered in English and taught by: Dr Mohammed Gamal Abdelnour, Dr. Melanie Gibson, and Dr. Barbara Schwepcke.

The course focused on the following six dimensions of the Islamic tradition:

1. Theological teachings,
2. Acts of worship,
3. Spiritual experience of the divine,
4. Islamic ethical theory,
5. Social and institutional aspects,
6. Physical manifestation of faith.

The course also included visits to different historic religious sites such as Al-Azhar mosque, Ibn Toulon mosque, and Sultan Hassan mosque.

Dr. Abdelnour is a lecturer of Islamic theology and comparative religion at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, and a postdoctoral researcher at the University of York. He received his primary, secondary and undergraduate education at Al-Azhar, where he memorized the Qur'ān at the age of ten, mastered the various disciplines of the Islamic tradition, and graduated as valedictorian of his class with a bachelor's in Islamic Studies and Philosophy. He holds an MA in Catholic Theology (Durham University, U.K.) and a PhD in Comparative Theology (SOAS University of London). He is the author of *A Comparative History of Catholic and Ash'arī Theologies of Truth and Salvation* (Brill, 2021) and *The Higher Objectives of Islamic Theology: Towards a Theory of Maqāṣid al-ʿAqā'id* (Oxford University Press, 2022).

Dr. Gibson is Senior Editor of the Gingko Library Arts Series and joined the board as an Executive Trustee in 2018. After studying for a B.A. in Arabic at St. Anne's College Oxford, she received her M.A. and Ph.D. from SOAS,

University of London. Since 2005 she has lectured regularly at SOAS, the Courtauld Institute of Art and other academic institutions. Her publications focus on sculpture, ceramics and glass produced around the Islamic world.

Dr. Schwepcke is the founder of Gingko and serves as the charity's CEO. After receiving her doctorate from the London School of Economics she worked as a publisher for Prospect Magazine. In 2003 she founded Haus Publishing.





III. Peacemaking & Conflict Resolution Training



Through the patronage of the House of the Egyptian Family (Beit el A'ela Al Mesrya بيت العائلة المصرية), the Centre of Christian-Muslim Understanding & Partnership (CCMUP) partnered with the renowned peace-making UK-based Rose Castle Foundation (RCF) in organizing a much needed & a highly important training for the establishment of a well-qualified peace-building and conflict resolution team. The training was held during the last week of January, starting from Monday 23th till Wednesday 25th of January, 2023, at the All Saints Conference Center.

Canon Dr. Sarah Snyder, RCF founding director, led the team's training in mediation and peace-making, drawing from her over thirty years of experience working with communities and senior religious figures around the world to promote faith-based ways of finding peace and rebuilding relationships.



A Cambridge University theologian specializing in Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations, and a trained mediator, Canon Sarah is also the Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Adviser for Reconciliation Programmes and Resources. She has previously worked as the Director of Partnerships at Religions for Peace International, and directed conflict schools for the Cambridge Interfaith Programme at the University of Cambridge.

The end purpose of this project is to address the root causes of sectarian violence by identifying geographical areas that have a historical pattern of violence, to focus our peacebuilding projects in those areas, in order to mitigate any potential future conflicts. In addition, we aim to well-equip the team to be able to promptly respond to and resolve sectarian conflicts wherever and whenever they may arise, in a genuinely peaceful, constructive and sustainable approach.

As such, our hope is that this team would travel to areas where there are potential sectarian clashes, to train local leaders on conflict resolution and peace-building.

The team's members are composed in a manner that reflects the geographical and sectarian diversity of Egyptian society, including Muslim and Christian priests, as well as secular members. This initial team will be involved in training a further five teams in 2023, subsequently five teams every year afterwards. The Christian members were nominated by the leadership of the Coptic Church and other denominations, while the Muslim members were nominated by the Grand Imam's office.



A. Celebrating the Establishment of the 1st Peace-Making Team

On Thursday the 2nd of February, 2023, we celebrated the completion of the Peace-making and Reconciliation training at CCMUP.

The celebration began with a welcome and a word from Archbishop Samy Fawzy, followed by a presentation about the Centre, Rose Castle Foundation and Beit El Aila, including the role they've played in the workshop, the latter which was presented by Archbishop Emeritus Dr. Mouneer Anis. Furthermore, Bishop Armia, the secretary general of Beit El Aila (House of The Egyptian Family), gave a talk on the importance of peace building, followed by Dr. Nazir Ayad, representative of the Grand Imam of Al Azhar Al-Sharif who

conveyed the greetings of the Grand Imam. Dr. Abu Zaid Al Amir, the coordinator of Beit El Aila, expressed his special gratitude to the Centre for organizing this workshop, while congratulating the participants. Two representatives of the participants gave very encouraging feedback on the workshop. We're all deeply appreciative for the great contributions of Rose Castle Foundation, rendering the training an excellent one.



IV. International Cooperation Meetings

A. Meeting Dr. Fr. Emmanuel Pisani, Director of the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies (IDEO)



On Monday the 28th of November, 2022, the Centre welcomed Dr. Fr. Emmanuel Pisani (*2nd from the photo's left side*), Director of the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies (IDEO). The meeting included discussing the projects of our respective organizations, and brainstorming the many ways our organizations can partner and cooperate on projects of common interest. Receiving Dr. Pisani from the Centre's side were: the Centre's Director-General, Archbishop Emeritus Dr. Mouneer Anis; Rev. Dr. Matthew Anderson (*1st from the photo's left side*), Director of Academic Studies; and Mr. Kareem Gerges (*1st from the photo's right side*), Director of International Partnerships and Public Policy.

B. Meeting Diplomats from the European Union Delegation to Egypt

On Thursday the 1st of December, 2022, the Centre's executive directors, Archbishop Emeritus (Ab.E.) Dr. Mouneer Anis, Rev. Dr. Matthew Anderson and Mr. Kareem Gerges, met with the following EU diplomats at their Embassy in Cairo: Mr. Laurent Benhamou, Political Counsellor; Mrs. Pilar Villanueva, Minister Counsellor; and Mr. Hassan Mosa, Political Affairs Officer.



And on Tuesday the 17th of January, 2023, Ab.E. Dr. Mouneer Anis and Mr. Kareem Gerges welcomed at the Centre Mrs. Antonia Zafeiri (*2nd from the photo's left side*), Head of Political, Press and Information Section, along with Mr. Hassan Mosa (*first from the photo's right side*), Political Affairs Officer, at the EU Delegation to Egypt.

Both meetings were quite successful; the Centre shared its projects, discussed subjects of common interests and learned about the work of the EU in Egypt, exploring avenues of future cooperation.

C. Meeting the Dutch Deputy Ambassador & Second Secretary

On Sunday 18th of December, 2022, the Centre's Director-General, Ab.E. Dr. Mouneer Anis and Mr. Kareem Gerges, Director of International Partnerships and Public Policy, shared a good productive meeting with Mr. Wierish Ramsoekh, Dutch Deputy Ambassador, and Diplomate Mrs. Olivia Lin, Second Secretary, at the Dutch Embassy in Cairo. Both parties shared interesting discussions on common subjects, including the history of the Dutch Embassy's support to the Diocese's work for peace and development in Egypt, while exploring potential avenues of future cooperation on shared interests.

D. Meeting at the Irish Embassy in Cairo

On Tuesday 31st of January 2023, the Centre's Director-General, Ab.E. Dr. Mouneer Anis and Mr. Kareem Gerges, Director of International Partnerships and Public Policy, had the pleasure of meeting with Mme. Nuala O'Brien, the Irish Ambassador to Egypt, along with the Consul Mr. Cathal O'Hagan, at the Irish Embassy in Cairo.

Within the meeting, Ab.E. Dr. Mouneer Anis shared the great historic ties shared between the Irish Embassy and community, with the Anglican-Episcopal Diocese of Egypt, in which both have worked for years on several projects of common interest. Consequently, both parties shared their interest for the continuation of such beneficial common work and support on subjects of shared interest.

E. Meeting Mme. Brigitte El Samman



On Thursday 2nd February, 2023, Ab.E. Dr. Mouneer met with Mme. Brigitte El Samman, the wife of our late friend, Dr. Ali El Samman, who played a key role in historic interfaith dialogue agreements between Al Azhar Al Sharif and the Anglican Communion. Discussions included how to preserve and celebrate the legacy of Dr. El Samman, as well as continuing his noble work in promoting interfaith peace, understanding and cooperation.

F. Visiting the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Center



On Wednesday the 25th of January, 2023, Mr. Michael Mansour, TV Presenter at ME-SAT - the official Coptic Orthodox TV Channel - kindly invited and welcomed representatives from the Rose Castle Foundation, the Anglican Diocese of Egypt and CCMUP, at the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Centre. The visit included a tour within the Centre's museum of ancient Coptic manuscripts and artefacts, as well as a visit to the memorial dedicated for those who were persecuted and martyred because of their faith. Discussions included reflections on the history of the Coptic Church in Egypt and the potential for future cooperation amongst our respective organizations.

Representatives from the Rose Castle Foundation (RCF): Canon Dr. Sarah Snyder, Founding Director; Mrs. Hannah Larn, Programme Manager; Mrs. Phoebe Dill, Programme Facilitator.

Representatives from the Anglican Diocese of Egypt: Rev. Yeshua Yacoub, Associate Dean of the All Saints Anglican Cathedral; Mr. Fouad Roshdy, Legal Counsel of the Anglican Diocese of Egypt.

Representing CCMUP: Mr. Kareem Gerges, Director of International Partnerships & Public Policy.

V. Fundraising

All of the Centre's deeply impactful events and projects, promoting interfaith peace and cooperation, within Egypt & beyond, would not have been possible without your support; whether it is financial, or through prayers or by other means, to which we are deeply appreciative. At the moment, we are particularly in need for your financial support to fund the following:

A. Fixing the Ceiling of the Meeting Room & Roof Renovation



Due to the heavy rain which Cairo has witnessed in November 2022 and January 2023, the ceiling of the Center's meeting room collapsed in January 2023. As such, fixing the ceiling and renovating the building's roof to mitigate the recurrence of such damage is of paramount importance to the continuation of our work.

B. Community Project: It's Our Planet, Let's Save it.

We are continuing our fundraising work to begin this community project, whose expected overall budget is about 31,644 USD. The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) have generously donated 5000 USD, thus remaining nearly 26,644 USD.

The purpose of the project is to educate Egyptian school children about the causes of environmental pollution, our responsibility to protect our planet and to recover our environment. Our aim is to enable children to see the planet as a gift from God to humanity. We also hope to encourage school children (about a 1000 pupils in 3 different schools) to play an active and positive role in protecting the environment. To achieve this aim, we will use various media tools to initiate discussions and practical activities. Our plan is to involve both Christian and Muslim children to preserve God's beautiful creation, and in doing so create genuine life-long interfaith friendships, understanding and peace.

For further info, please click on the following link to read the project's proposal:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1S_JWh9XNycomzc31R5BOZMPfNLG6f9qT/edit?usp=sharing&oid=104459964196174883885&rtpof=true&sd=true

C. Project: Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Team

Despite the lack of funding, we managed to graduate the first peace-making and conflict resolution team, thanks to the generosity and training carried out by the Rose Castle Foundation. We need to raise funds, however, for the team to be effective and able to fulfill its peace-building mission in the long-term, including its ability to train other 5 teams from different geographic areas all over Egypt in 2023.

In brief, the end purpose of this project is to address the root causes of sectarian violence by identifying geographical areas that have a historical pattern of violence, to focus our peacebuilding projects in those areas, in order to mitigate any potential future conflicts. In addition, we aim to well-equip the team to be able to promptly respond to and resolve sectarian conflicts wherever and whenever they may arise, in a genuinely peaceful, constructive and sustainable approach.

The project's overall budget is estimated to be around: 16,352 USD

For further info, please click on the following link to read the project's proposal:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MIQHgSVJGYehZSuLddjeXnK1tqYuPQ9AhVPHMUV6cHc/edit?usp=sharing>

If you'd like to support a certain project or support the Centre in general, you can reach us directly on the following emails:

info@ccmup.org or directly contact Mr. Kareem Gerges, the Centre's Director of International Partnerships & Public Policy: kareem.gerges@ccmup.org

We would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for your continuous support and interest in our projects. And we would be more than glad to hear from you, including your thoughts and reflections on how -together- we can advance and progress the mission of the Centre of Christian Muslim Understanding and Partnership (CCMUP).

The Centre's Executive Team



Centre of Christian-Muslim Understanding & Partnership

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