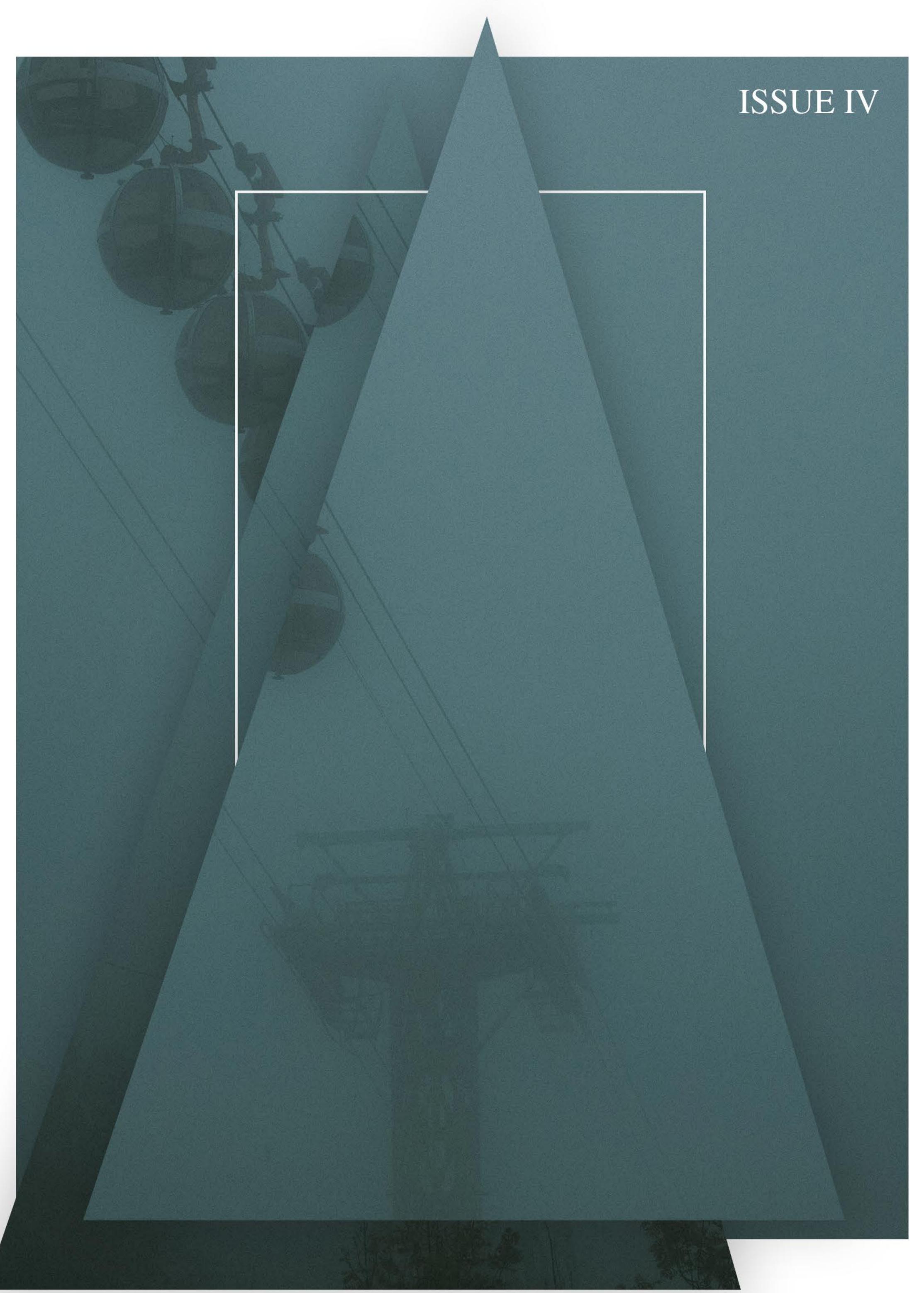
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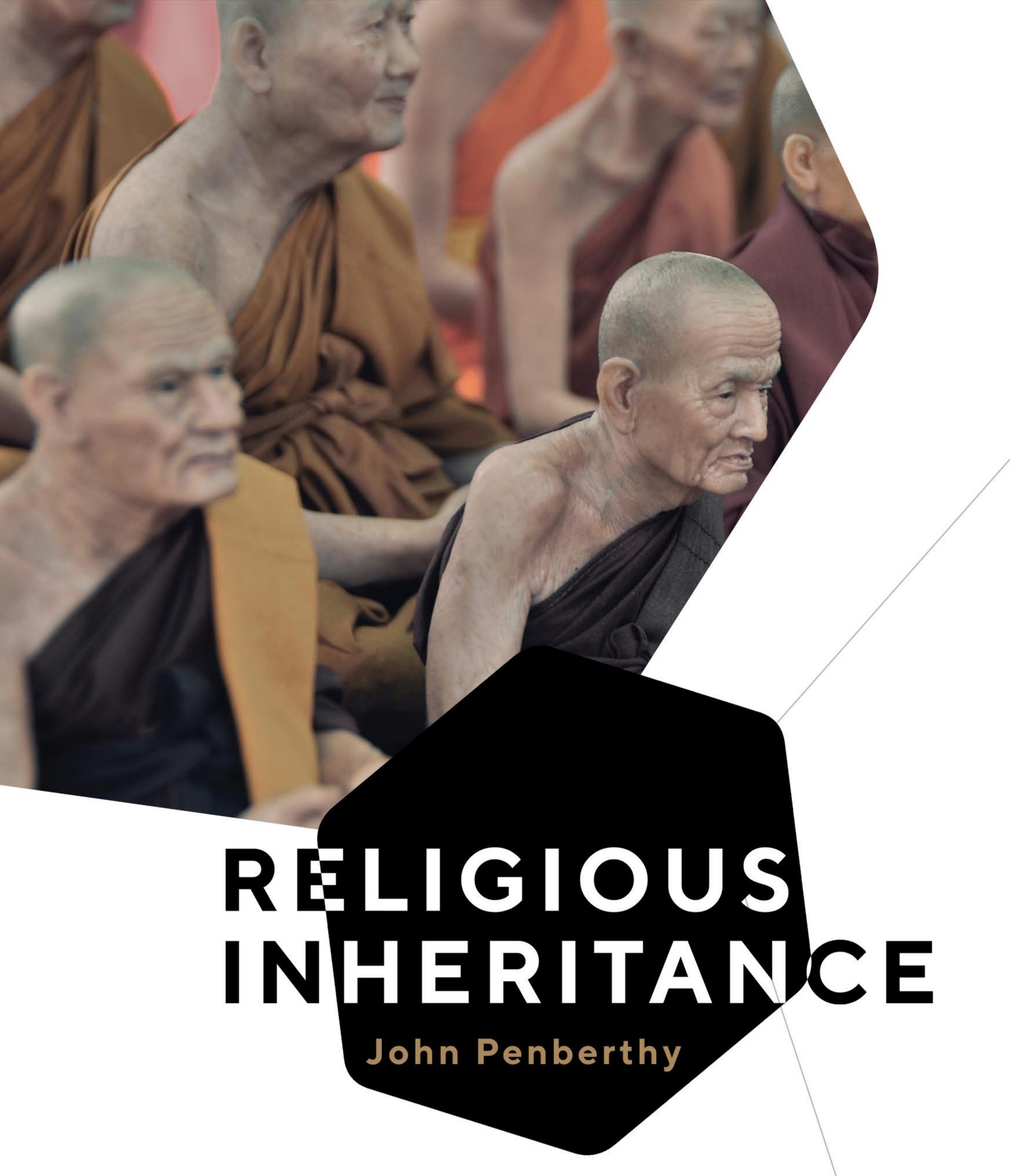


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Waves of Violence

Zahra Yoonus



The vast majority of people in the world automatically and unquestioningly inherit their religion from their parents. For something as important as religion, why are we so reluctant to shop around?

One Saturday morning I was sipping my coffee and reading the newspaper when the doorbell rang. This was an unusual occurrence as we lived in a somewhat isolated log cabin in the mountains outside Denver. At the door stood two attractive college-age girls who wanted to talk to me about becoming a Jehovah's Witness.

Normally I would politely say, "No thanks" and return to my paper, but that morning I decided to engage with them. After hearing their initial pitch, I asked one of them, "Are your parents Jehovah's Witnesses?" "Our whole family is," she replied.

"Do you think religion is an important thing for people to have in their lives?"

"Very," she replied, and I agreed.

"How many other religions have you studied and investigated?"

"None."

"Is a car an important thing in your life?" I asked.

"Well, yes, but not as important as religion."

Again lagreed. "What kind of car do you drive?"

"A Toyota."

"Is that what your parents drive?"

"No."

"Why not?" I inquired.

"Because I like Toyotas better." She was starting to get impatient but politely continued to humor me.

"How do you know?"

"Because I like the way my Toyota looks and drives, plus it was inexpensive and gets good gas mileage."

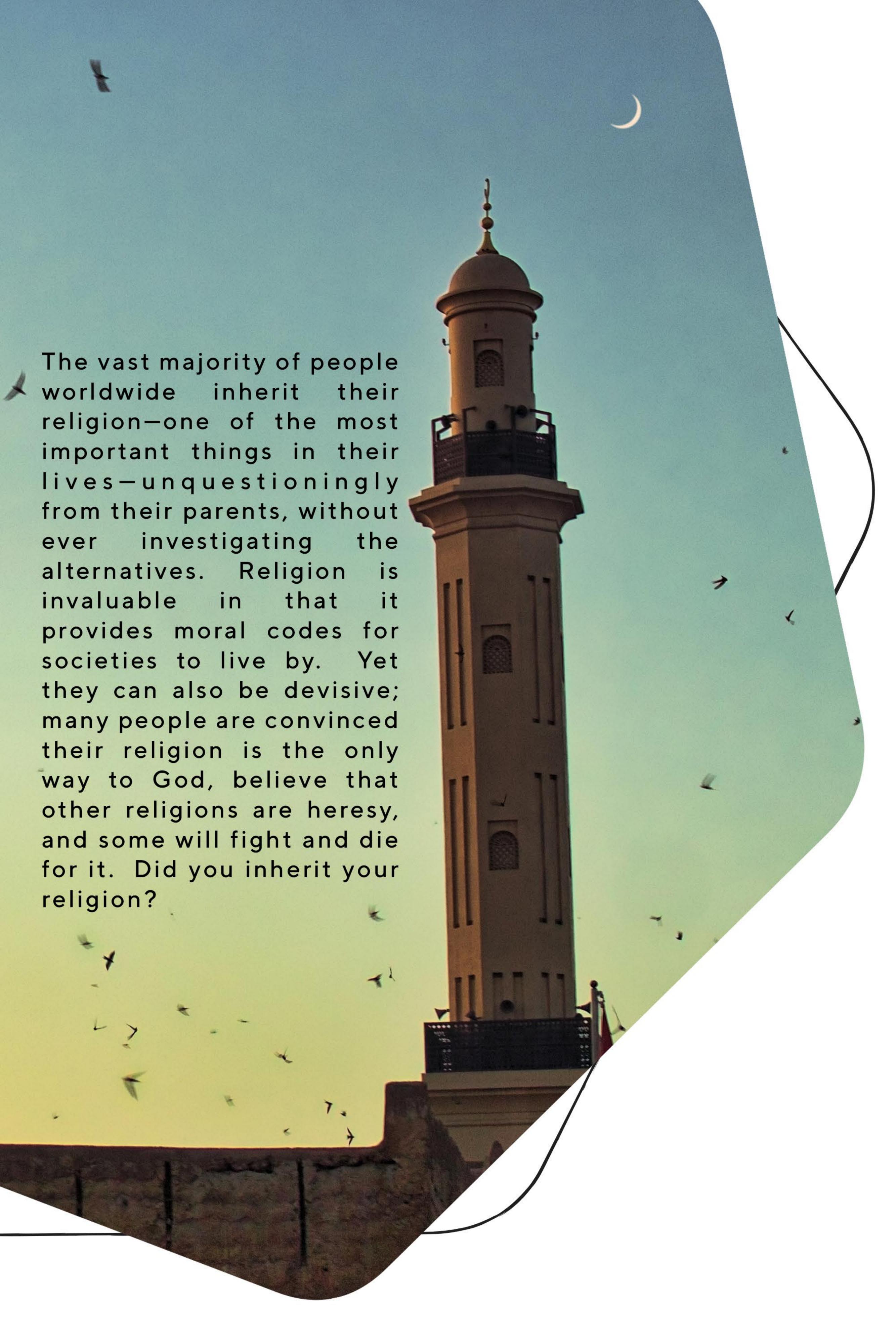
I nodded toward my Toyota sitting in the driveway and agreed. "How did you know that about your car when you bought it?"

"I test drove different cars and talked to my friends about their cars." she said, increasingly exasperated.

"So you checked out lots of different cars before deciding on your Toyota," I gently summarized, "but your religion, which is much more important, you inherited from your parents without knowing anything about the alternatives?" "Yeah," she replied rather sheepishly, catching my drift.

"I'll tell you what," I said. "Spend the next five years investigating and studying the other great religions of the world and then if you still want to talk to me about becoming a Jehovah's Witness, we'll talk."

The girls, realizing they had a hopeless case on their hands, thanked me for my time and left.



MATHEW'S GOSPEL

Alan Garrigan

Some fools just want to get high,
Although life is more important than that,
Its literally a chance to live forever,
And as sure as an insect cannot comprehend
space flight.

A man cannot comprehend the possibility of his own - immortality-

They will raise the ashes And as all convexes into one veritable singularity

One God Or whatever you could call it-Peace comes when you pray.

I met a woman crying She said she'd lost her faith All her words went with it Her paper stares her down

Like the wrong ones who wore out your years and gave you Only pain and pretty stories You cry for the loss of the lie

More than for the loss of them
But at least it's the end of pain
So sing of rage and sorrow
Sing of lost tomorrows

Who were they anyway
To insist they be the only
Ones to hold the compass
Let's dance around the fire

Till it speaks, spin beneath
The stars until we find our
Own way home and then

We'll sing the Goddess in
The dead have told me many things
Who took the rings, the drawer
They're in, that you let her flowers die
And you took down that wall

They told me that a being's heart Is a living being with a heart of its own And that all these hearts are a road We can walk, if we want to, now or later

ALL THE GODS ARE DEAD

The friendly dead
They never tell me what to do
Threaten, punish or trick
But the god who says he is the only one

Makes all sorts of threats, plays every Shade of trick and game, I hear Mary says he told her If we do not love and obey her, then he

Will punish us with wars, famines and death And she can barely stay his angry hand Just wait till your father gets home The cruel kind of parents who twist

Confuse, beat and shout to achieve Obedience, instant and complete Their children turn out just the same Or they leave and try to be better

There is a story about Buddha, teaching By a mountain path – someone asked him What about those others walking by? Buddha said They will come around again

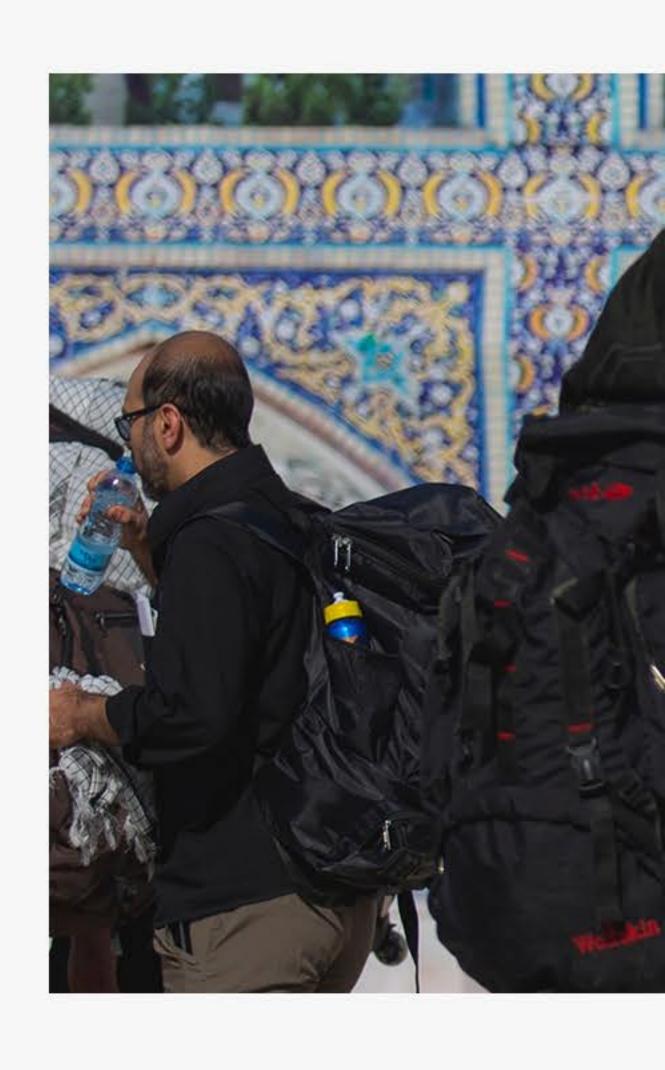
Both have followers
Who injure in their names and claim
To be the true and only path to salvation
I think their gods are just the dead

Some longer dead than others I don't know what they want from us Or why they need so much But I know that an abusive parent

Will lose their children
And a cruel spouse their lover, a teacher
Who cares more for the stick than the pen
Will be feared but not respected
And will grow old and weak one day

I will make my own way
With my friendly dead and their whispers
About lost rings and the nature of things

What do you believe in? Does religion have the answer? Can modern religion be better than the old ones? Is religious extremism real religion? Has religion come from an ancient race of advanced beings?



DOES THE WORLD REALLY BELIEVE IN REALLY BELIEVE

If one is to believe all that one researche on the internet regarding religion, terrifying stories of death and destruction are portrayed. We have reached the 21st Century where in many sections of the world humankind still embraces intolerance. Tolerance is over-practiced in most democratic countries to such an extent that an ensuing weakness is exposed. In countries where religion is paramount, tolerance is seen as a weakness. The democratic populations of this world accept that all free thinking individuals have a right to worship as they so desire without discrimination and bias. Some religious rulers see democracy as a threat to their way of life, and such threats are met with violent rhetoric and others with violent actions where debate is not allowed. This is not just confined to the present day but to the many factions in our religious heritage. History is filled with theological disasters that have plagued humanity through three thousand years. These nightmares of reality have been forgotten in the stealthy progress of time. This article sets out some of those anomalies of the religions of man.



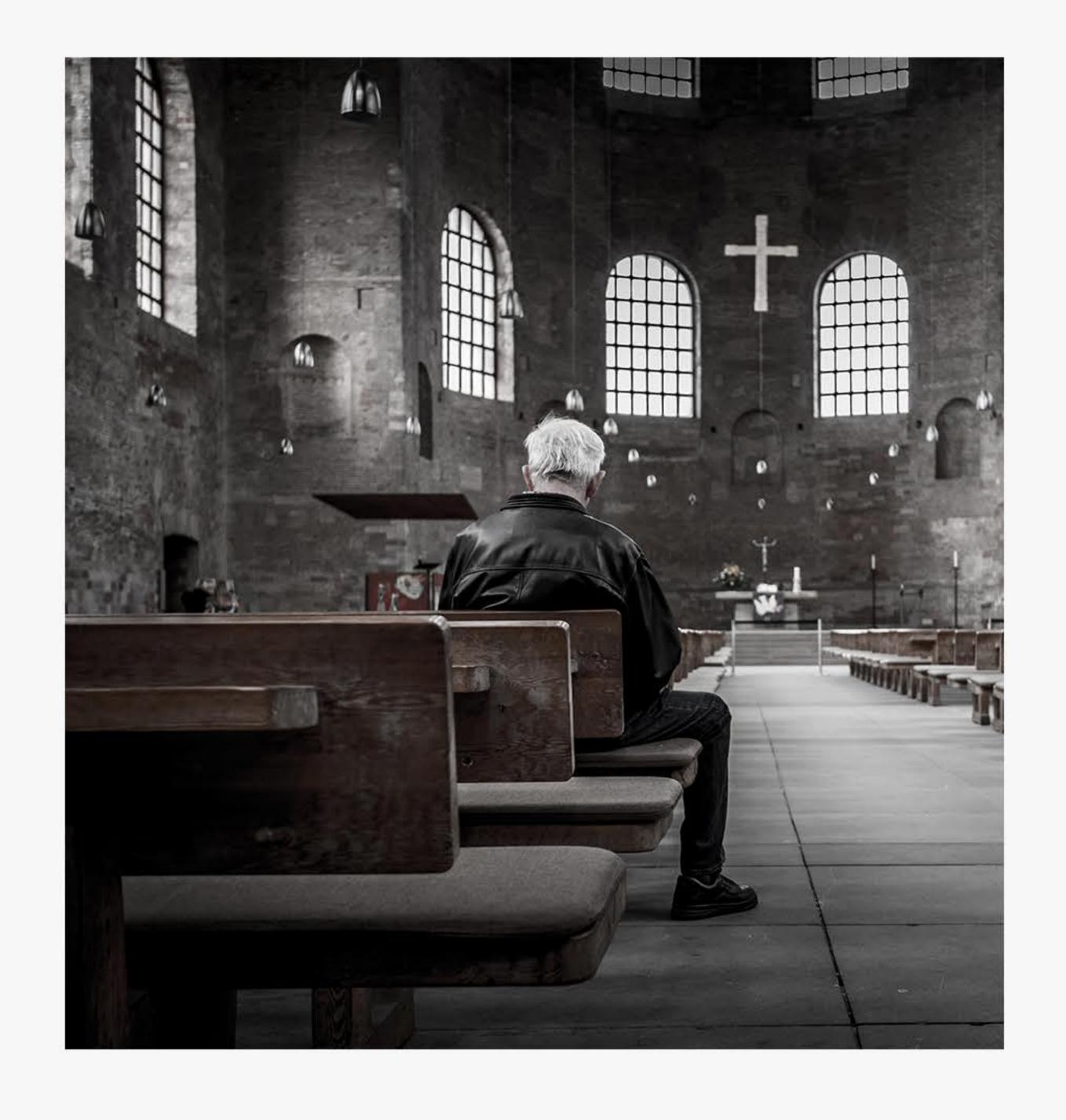
Religion | noun

- 1. Belief in, worship of, or obedience to a supernatural power or powers considered to be divine or to have control of human destiny.
- 2. Any formal or institutionalized expression of such belief.
- 3. The attitude and feeling of one who believes in a transcendent controlling power or powers.

Taking this to a basic level, you and you alone choose or create your religion. You believe, you worship and you are obedient to a supernatural source. You can personally follow any religion in the world or create your own. Naturally, many world religions are now established institutions created centuries ago in an unenlightened age. A time when man struggled to find the meaning of life and religions created war to control minds and vast quantities of land. The people were starved of knowledge and kept in their place by doctrine. In the far distant past man worshipped the sun, the moon and other Gods. In Greece and later Rome, people believed their Gods were like adult humans. They would argue, have children play music and party. It was important for them to please their Gods. An unhappy God would bring punishment and death. They even believed that stones or rock contained spirits especially boundary stones. Another belief was that werewolves roamed and attacked herds at night, returning to human form at daybreak. The religions affected politics because they were riddled with superstitions. Epileptic fits were deemed grave and serious at meetings of the senate. In 114BC a vestal virgin was killed by a lightning strike. To allay the anger of the Gods such a bad omen was appeased by burying alive, two couples, one Greek and one Gallic. Roman religion was undermined by Greek philosophy and then came the suggested idea of a single God.

In relation to historical fact, the gray area of Christianity came into being. The birth date of Jesus, a Jewish leader, historically speaking, was uncertain. His birth pinpointed to AD 1 is a judgment made 500 years after the event. The stories told of him circulated from person to person through the ages. Paul of Tarsus famed for his missionary voyages into the empire spread the new religion for non-Jews mainly by word of mouth. The turnabout came in Ad 380 when Christians ruled the empire. The result of the definition of heresy (people who disagreed with official Christianity) was religious suppression and slaughter. In the inquisition brutal torture became the normal procedure and Christian slaughtered Christian and anyone else who did not follow the hazy official doctrine.

The Pontiffs carried on in line like monarchs, with their armies, administration and territory. OnePontiff had six sons and three daughters by several women. Another had three daughters whilst a Cardinal, and was a fierce warrior who wore silver armour and crushed anyone who defied his authority. One Pope was poisoned and clubbed to death whilst another was imprisoned and strangled. Corruption and the selling of spiritual blessings for money led Luther to the start reformation in 1517.



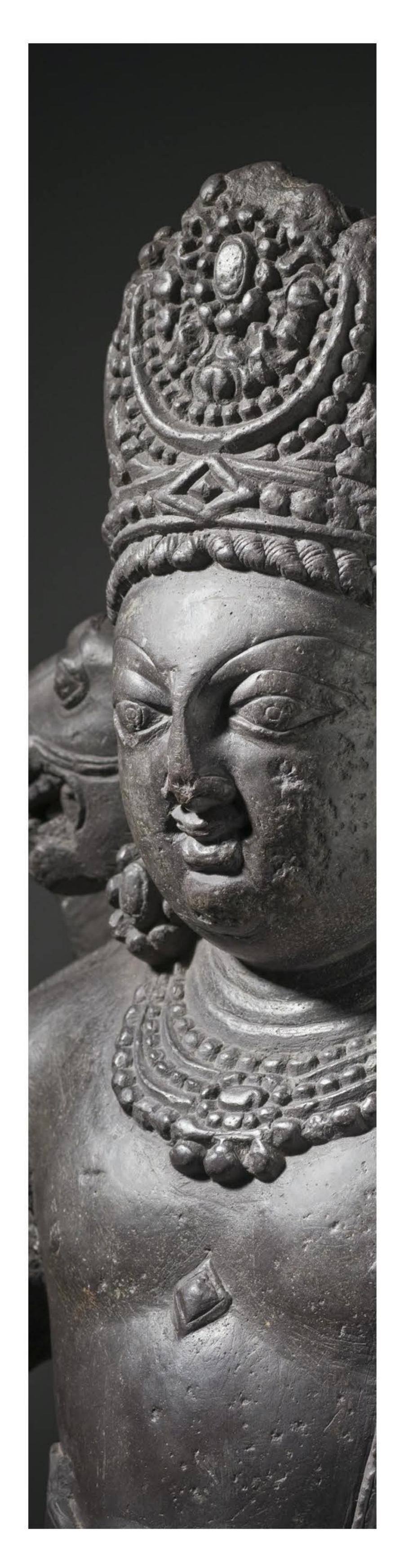
The prophet Mohammed lived around 570-632 and came from a family of traders. Mohammed mediated the religion's book of revelation the Koran, the beliefs of Islam. He completes a succession of prophets, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus. All refined and restated the message of God. Doing research on the internet from the public domain the dark side of Islam reveals certain areas that cause logic and science to shiver with apprehension. It is a religion that has 123 verses in the Qur'an about killing and fighting for Allah. Mohammed the founder of Islam said, "Invitation first," (an offer to embrace Islam) "If refused, then war". The sword is the key of heaven and hell. Whosoever falls in battle his sins will be forgiven." This gives the notion that dying for Jihad for Allah results in direct entry into paradise. The Popes of the Crusade era made the same promise, a promise of spiritual forgiveness of murder and slaughter.

In Japan in the year 1281 a great Typhoon destroyed an invading Mongol army and became known as the kamikaze or divine wind. In the Second World War the dominant Shinto religion of Japan decreed that the Emperor was a descendant of the Gods and a God in his own right. Thus, the kamikaze pilot came into being with a brainwashing technique that they would earn through death in combat, a free trip to heaven. They had small books in their pockets with self belief text to spur them on. Young men between 16 and 20 were recruited to give their lives. One of the items in the book was:Transcend life and death. When you eliminate all thoughts about life and death, you will be able to totally disregard your earthly life. This will also enable you to concentrate your on eradicating the enemy with unwavering attention determination, meanwhile reinforcing your excellence in flight skills.

The Germans also developed a suicide weapon, Selbstopfer. Flying bombs with a small cockpit on top were being tested. Fortunately the weapon was not used in combat possibly because there was no spiritual or religious following to condone it, but the Nazis were brilliant at propaganda and brainwashing and if the war had continued who knows what would have happened.

Hinduism from the ancient Indians is more spiritually complex. A Hindu may worship more than one God, or just one God, he can be an agnostic or atheist. Ancient Indian texts contain exact scientific calculations. The speed of light, the age of the universe are all in ancient texts. How can this be so to modern scientific calculations? A text on astronomy thought to be compiled in 1000 BC and believed to be handed down from 3000 BC by recital gives the earth's diameter and distance from the moon. As far as we know it is the only religion on earth which gives a fairly accurate time-scale of the earth and universe, 8.4 billion years.

Buddhism has its origins about 2500 years ago. A man, Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha was enlightened at the age of 35. Buddhism is very spiritual and more of a philosophy or way of life. Wisdom should be sought with compassion. It has the answers to problems of a materialistic nature and nurtures a code of practice. Tolerant of other religions and beliefs and in agreement with the moral teachings of other religions, wars and slaughter of fellow men has never occurred in the name of Buddhism.



Eastern religions express the idea of reincarnation. Formulated in India it spread to, and was later adapted into Chinese Taoism about the 3rd century BC. Platonism states the existence of the soul in a celestial world returning to the human body through sin. In order to return to a state of pure being the soul is purified through reincarnation. The Tibetan book of the dead alleges experiences between two incarnations and mentions a mental body.

From 1517 came various Christian Churches. Historians trace the early Baptist Church to 1609 in Amsterdam and believe John Smyth as the founder. They apposed infant baptism and that baptism should only be performed on believers. He stated that true worship was from the heart and that any reading from a book in worship was an invention of sinful men. He would not allow the reading of the bible during worship saying the translations were the work of man. The Baptist Church formed in 1639 by Roger Williams spread to the North American colonies.

Unitarianism came from Transylvania in 1600 introduced into Britain in 1668 and 1673. It was not fully legal in Britain until 1813.

Jehovah's Witnesses was founded in the late 19th century as a Bible study group they retranslated the Bible from the teachings of Charles Taze Russell. Their predictions have been sadly wrong. After Russell's death, Joseph Franklin Rutherford a trial lawyer and prosecutor took over resulting in a leadership battle where he was accused of autocratic behaviour losing one seventh of its membership. The end of times has been predicted from 1914.

The Church of Scientology was founded in 1954 by an American science fiction author named L.Ron Hubbard. He was a blood brother of the Blackfoot Indians at the age of six. After studying nearly all religions, he produced complex and profound beliefs in this modern age. After his death, the church has been quoted as a cult society. Scientologists cannot live or associate with non members even if they are close family. They recruit young seals – dominating young minds. Fixed donations are required; some have called it a pay as you go religion. The church leaders play mind games with people who appose them. The church is believed to be based on a secretive issue called Lord Xenu.

Summary:

Can a terrorist group exist within the framework of religion? Once again religion is: belief in, worship of, or obedience to a supernatural power or powers considered to be divine or to have control of human destiny. Therefore, a terrorist group would be worshipping a God that instructed bloodlust, murder and slaughter. This would be their interpretation of their beliefs and their God.

Suicide warriors are a dark part of history, brainwashed by other religious people into believing that life is cheap and that they will reap a spiritual reward. It is also strange to realize that always the young are ensnared into this bizarre thinking. Do the leaders or the older members of their organizations strap on bombs and kill as many people as they can? No, otherwise there would be no leaders to brainwash and create the atrocities.

In regard to lord Xenu, I am sure that Ron Hubbard would have done research on Atlantis at some time in his career. I have an open mind as to Atlantis, nothing can be proved or disproved that a race of advanced humans commanded by a warlord existed. In fact it does answer some of the problems we are having today and where the technological advancement of society has come from. In the story from Plato the warlord's actions cause dissension and many break away from his rule.

In religious teachings there are no physical warriors for God and if there are such leanings, they are from man.

So be careful in what you believe.

ONGODSAND GOD



- Awosusi Oluwabukunmi Abraham -

when we were young, we know the rhythm to Ògún, the god of Iron, the wild sound of Sàngó, the god of thunder the songs of Ọbalúayé, the one that plagues with sickness. But we were damned. So was it said by those who came with cross and oil.

So we change the tune, reciting the Nicene creed

while kneeling on dusty pews; taking sacrament on our heathen palms.

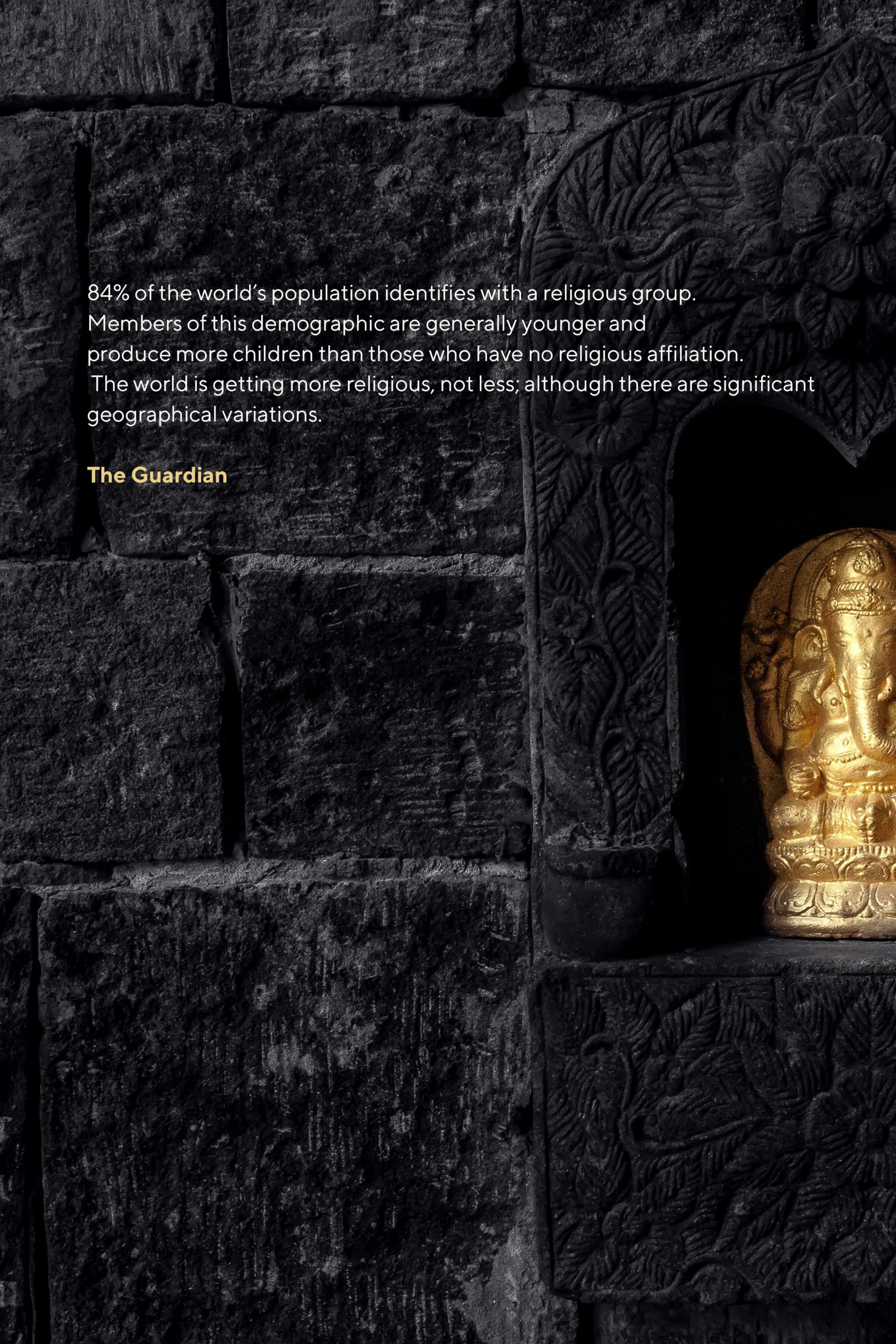
On some days, we still whistle the tone of Egungun, the dead who live in the sky

wiggling to the lyrics of Osun panegyrics.

perhaps, we have given unto Caesar Caesar's.

We are Janus, two face gods.

We are Ògún, yet, we are Jesus.



There is a great myth, I once read About early mankind, it was said That was called tale of creation Was narrated after Eve temptation When man and woman were in the same body When one dress was enough for both to embody At that time man was predestined with only one wife Throughout his whole life He didn't have for a lover to look All was in his lot, in his book They loved each other by nature And nothing could change this feature Man and woman were forever together Nothing could make their love wither Not only one body, but also one soul Doom and lot drag them and enthrall They have their own life and happiness And never knew solitude or loneliness The soul was in love with the soul Even before being created at all They own everything, even the universe Always together from birth to death They had the land, not the sky They could walk and swim, but not to fly They heard about Gods' in the skies Whoever stares up would lose their eyes The sky means suffer and fear

Where Gods are cruel and unfair In order to laugh and have fun They sometimes removed the sun Gods' hands were of good and evil Sometimes hands of merciful and others of devil There was a God of war And other of love and adore There was a God of hate And a God for improving fate Suddenly there was a fierce war among Gods And turning people into bugs or even buds They began to throw balls of fire They had their dream and a desire Separating man away from his wife Without caring about their life People began to Gods pray Despite being victims and prey For stopping the irony of these conflicts In turning people into insects Nobody could hear or care To stop that nightmare Till Zeus participated in the game And became "king of Gods" his name Zeus easily stopped the war But couldn't fix the violations happened before Man and woman from now on are separating Can't any more weld and became impossible their meeting From now on man lost his own lover And has to search for her forever Rarely some succeed in finding her Some fail although she is very near People are cursed to hesitate Can't make up their mind by fate Man must walk everywhere and wander To meet either success or surrender Even if his lover is very near He can't make sure and say "that's her" is this fair.

Walid Abdallah

BELIEF

Guna Moran

Faith is like mercury level of thermometer Rises in the warmth of believer Decreases in the company of disbeliever

Early in the morning someone delivered a faith at home

After making a round in the rotund world not getting any help from anyone he asked from `1000 from me

I too am not a big shot thought that I'd buy a pair of dress for my lady with the little amount I set aside every month

He arrived As I had been ruminating these things

My lady understands me
She won't mind
If she gets the dress after a couple of months
But faith would be lost
If the one extending the hand to me
Is let down

After pondering deeply
I handed him the amount
Did plant a sapling of faith
Right in the morning

Seeing that my lady too Hugged me with love



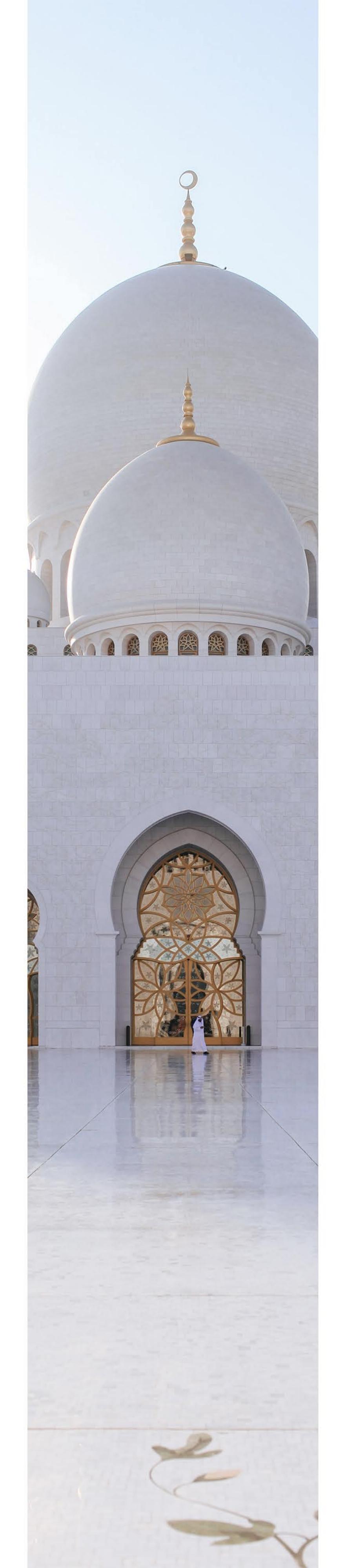
Shaziya Fayas

"A way of life, a way of life, Islam is a way of life" - the lyrics of a popular song, from the 80's, decades old, yet sung even today.

Islam we believe is not simply a religion. The Arabic term for it is "Deen", defined as the rules which one must comply with divine laws, which encompass beliefs, deeds and character.

We believe that Islam is not simply a religion. It is indeed a way of life. Believing in Islam and its divine rules makes one a "Muslim". Which means one who submits to Islam and ALL that it entails. For my creator, who created man and all that exists. We've been told of what was, what is and what will be.

Scriptures narrate what was. We believe in ALL of them.



We say we believe In all the words revealed

And gleam with pride At the proofs so bright. The truth is clear As night and day

How can you question?
How can you disbelieve?
I read about the water - barriers impenetrable
I read about the stars - It's count innumerable

And am amazed by its accuracy I read some astronomy

And am awed by its anomaly I read about man - His creation so intricate

And the places on earth - Oh the beauty indescribable!

I'm taught manners
And to learn exemplary traits
I'm taught guidance
To live a healthy and happy life
I'm taught cures
For all ailments that may arise
How can you doubt?
How can - You disbelieve?

I'm to be generous Moderate and not extravagant
I'm to be obedient
Respectful and not arrogant
I'm to hear and obey
The commandments of my Lord.

I'm to be Patient In times of tribulation Content and modest And never doubt.

He knows best What is For He created You Me and everything that exists.

A way of life, a way life Islam is a way of life.

I repeat lyrics and can't help but be mesmerized.

Choices

Out of the horizon's den Here gapes again the two-way road Where right and wrong converge. Walking through it is obligatory. Only the strong Who dare to pass through it! Yet, the white-livered may also Sneak to finish it Immaculately! The day and the night, The sun and the stars Rise at the same moment. They appear joining hands They seem bold when Menacing and promising. Enjoyment is the expected result. Yet, destruction is the sole reward In the game of no choices That ends up by daring voices.

Naeema Abdelgawad

Aliya opened her eyes as feeling of watching an emotional movie at Opera. She looked all over the place, her bed sheet covered with drops of sweat. She started to question her self as where she's now, afterwards she recognised at home. So she calmed her nerves down. She griped a breath, rolled out from the bed & seated on her room floor. She dragged her closet out from the bed, as she open the closet she perceived with her eyes of a photograph, which gave an electric shock to those vintage photographs. His tongue was the sweetest; every word uttered by him would always leave her weakened & more deeper in love than before. These were the memories she cherished most.

"The sun filtered through the clouds, signalling as it's about to rain now"

Her emotions & feelings was so dim to express at the moment. She tried to hold with patience bar unfortunately she couldn't even bear anymore. Just as caterpillar modify into a butterfly, all of sudden wanted to spread the wings to fly & explore the world she did too. He gave hopes to a small butterfly, she was unable to fly but when she wanted to fly using her wings, she had to go through number of obstacles & with mini heart attacks too. She could hear his voice even though she haven't seen him for couple of years. Aliya felt heart wrenching feeling after recalling their faded memories. Those eye catching phrases remembered their strongest bond, she loved him even more but at the end fate didn't allow them to live together.



She uttered his name over and over again, it pushed her to the rugged wall. It was down hearted feeling which brought roller coaster of emotions behind. Her tears burst off like water from a dam, spilling down on her face. Brick by brick, her walls came tumbling down. She slammed the washroom door & tried to heal her broken heart all alone.

Eventually she began to question her faith. Aliya wondered why my better half has left me? Why God has punished in this way? She started to think why hardship & suffering existed in this way?



She felt like God has pushed her into a darkest prison afterwards her thoughts knocked like why God allowed me to sense this kind of paranoid alone, since God was the Almighty & ever merciful. Once again her emotions turn jagged. Every single day she gave a call to her mind like that he's not mine that's brought her endless pain inside. There's a void that can never be filled because she thought there's no other love in this world like the love of her better half. Eventually, severe anxiety kicked like a heavy weight on her shoulder to lift it up. In the end she stopped praying & worshipping to God. Aliya thought her depression would ease over time, but she often shed tears without exception. Bag full of anger & melancholic thoughts moulded her as 'atheist'

Each & everyday she goes to school & touched with his memory bag. Time passed, little by little things began to fade.

One evening artistic golden sun waved hand like a baby & offset painting the orange sky into a darkest blue sky. Surprisingly she looked at the sky & astonished then remembered the Lord of the universe. As a coincidentally she remembered a verse of holy quran.

"So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny"?

She was walking through the crowded street then her attention turned back to a catchy moment.

"Under the moonlight the street lay still, the heat of the day had been replaced by an eye catching incident, an old man was carrying a load of sticks on his shoulder, as an ant was trying to carry a grain of wheat as large as itself. That old man was too old in his age & also he was weak in his appearance, couldn't even carry that load of sticks in a proper way because it was heavier than weight of his body. By the way he didn't bother about weight or heaviness but he focused to reach his destination without worrying, so his dreams came true.

So Aliya was thinking this old man's heaviness is on his shoulder & head which is visible to each & everyone, in the same way my heaviness is on my heart which is an erasable scar. It's invisible to everyone I am alive but nobody can see my inner sadness, I speak but no one can hear tales of woe & all thinking I am the most happiest but I cannot beat the nostalgic filter on my camera. Finally she wanted a change in her life, as that old man didn't complain about lifting the heaviness but accomplished his goal.

"If you want to shine like a sun, first burn like a sun"

Finally Aliya wanted to shine like a sun in her journey so this incident was turning point of her life. which is lack of faith boosted her to increase her faith level. Moreover she thought carrying bag full of heaviness for life long is useless. If I put everything on God's hand he'll solve my jigsaw puzzle.

"Lead your heart to prayer & one day your heart will lead you to prayer"

Therefore she became more concerned about religion and then never ever forgot to worship God. Ultimately she held the rope of patience with the word of trust. She lived happily ever after!

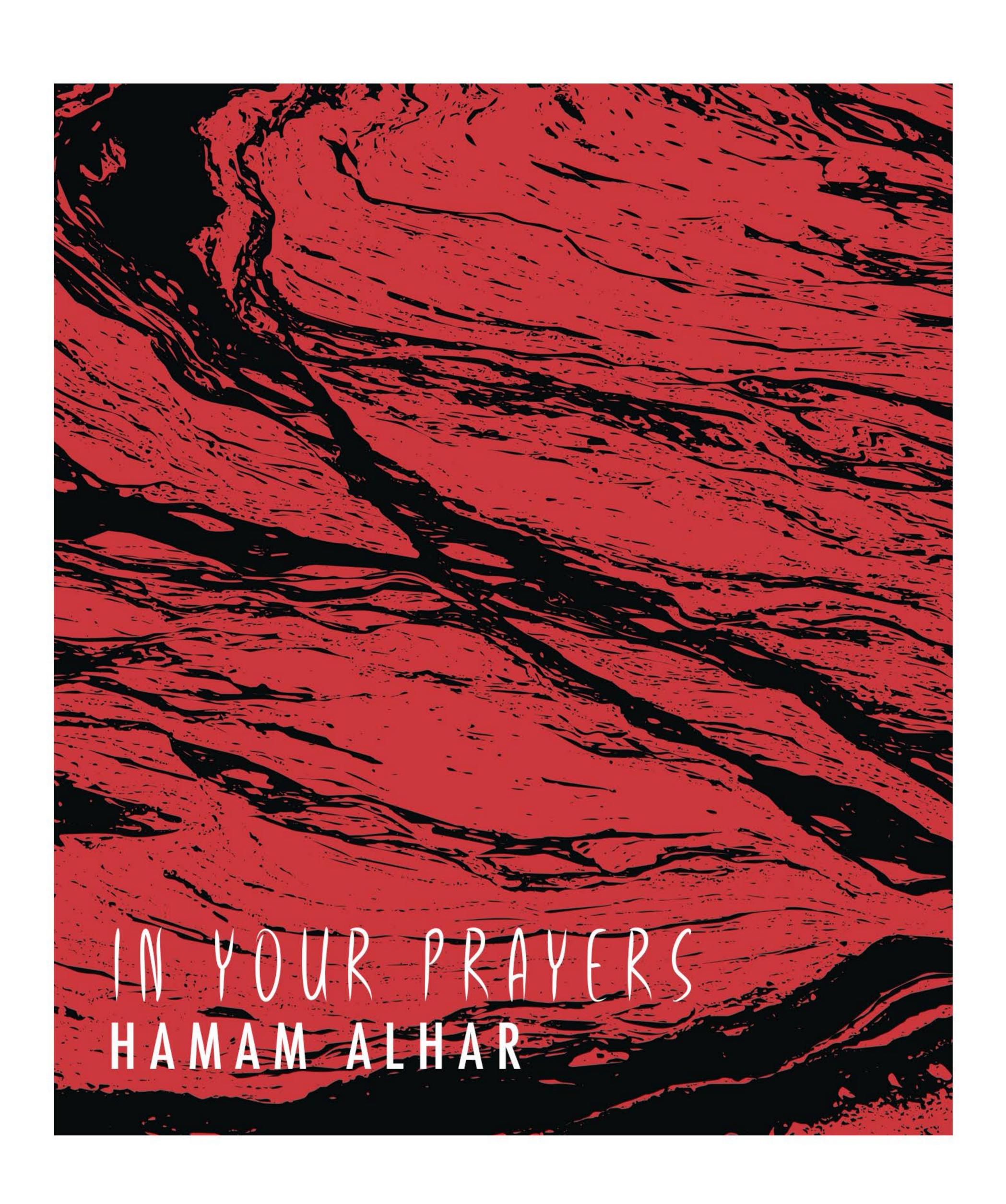
Did you know?

According to some estimates, there are roughly 4200 religions in the world. Out of which Christianity is the largest religion and followed by Islam as the second largest.

It's 2020. Do not fear an apocalypse. Fear a generation that finds reading #geeky. For your daily dose of poetry, shorts, non fiction, book reviews and more.







I remember,
The days I'd throw a tantrum,
Demanding food from restaurants,
And now that I'm far away,
I can't even find
a cup of tea like yours.

I remember,
Wanting to hug you
For one last time
But you were snoring,
I would leave,
Hurting you more
Than death.

I remember,
While I embraced your lap,
You taught me,
To accept the world,
But why, why
Didn't you teach the world,
To accept me?

I remember,
Torching your soul,
When I told you that,
I no longer feel God,
Your world wouldn't
be the same again
But on the next day,
You still reminded me to eat,
Unconditional, aren't you?

I know dad wouldn't express,
But he feels no less than you,
And your youngest,
Would take care of you,
I know because
He takes after me,
But I hear you,
There's a difference of infinity,
Between one and two.

I'm safe now,
I hope you know, now that
You don't hear the threats,
But even though I wish,
I can't come back yet
Since monsters still roam,
Hiding in the shadow of peace.

I can't tell you where I am,

But I wish I could

Fill the space

And light up our home,

And I'm sorry that
the world still isn't a place

For us to unite,

For you to ruin my hair,

With coconut oil.

I hope you still pray,
I wish someone heard them,
But more importantly,
You should still pray,
So that I know,
At least then,
That you think of me, Ma!



Because here tears are Prayers too,

a boy somewhere
today will bend his kneels
and go to God in Prayers _
He Says , when I die bury me with a poem
like the burnt silhouettes on my mothers
grave and
Sometimes what we carry is a lie__
We hide our pains
Behind a beautiful smile
That's also to say that
Memories are dark shadows like my
father's wrinkled body
Because here tears are prayers too
They travel to God when
we can't speak.

Samuel Junior Irusota

Waves of Violence

F. Zahra Yoonus

Minutes before the bomb explodes, a mother walks into the sacred place with her son's hand clutched on to hers, careful not to lose him. She grasps onto his shoulders and lurches him forward, whispering the prayer in his ears. She prays for his eyesight at every passing second, tears welling up within her eyes, kneeling down, desperate to cast the anxiety in her heart upon the almighty.

As the clock struck 12, her body hits the floor and she lets go of her son. An earsplitting sound drums the place followed by a sharp pain that runs through her body. She hears her son yelp helplessly, but her vision is blurred. A sharp pain sends a griping sensation shooting down her body and she hears many more voices crying out of agony, but the only voice that echoed through her mind was her son's.

The sound of gunshots thunder through the hall as the screaming becomes intense.

Bodies over bodies are dragged outside by the very remains, as some become unrecognizable. Little children are found burnt to death, thrown across the place, their skin streaked with blood, strewn at different parts of the hall. Faces crushed and bones damaged, they forever lose the sense of peace and life they had minutes before.

Plenty of unnumbered, innocent lives are destroyed and robbed away from their bodies' seconds before they're able to acknowledge their deeds that could have possibly led them to an agonizing death.

Terrorism becomes constant as religious misinterpretations arise day by day, loathing forward towards wars and multiple terrorist attacks.

Verses from the Quran, Bible, Vedas and Tripitaka are reversed as people interpret different meanings and use them to advocate terror. Personal vengeance and political issues sweep waves of violence into religions for the growth of controversy among massive relationships. Countries come at war against one another as humanity shuts its eyes with passing moments. Bloody headlines take over the news and people lose trust and unity as doubt arises among communities. Justice prevailed puts no end to wars as the rage and grief grows day by day.

People undeserving of their authorities sweep into every opportunity they get to ignite religious disputes, as they use the differences in belief as a flame that could flicker the rage and fury within the society.

Anger and grief builds bars around communities and places weapons in the hands of the innocent, whispering "war" into the ears of the teary-eyed, grief-stricken souls.

Mothers who whispered 'peace' and 'blessings' into the ears of their children, start whispering 'revenge' and 'discriminate' instead.

The peace among communities diminish bit by bit, as believers loyal to the core creed, are deprived of practicing their religion.

Waves of peace that were once ebbing and flowing among the sea of beautiful beliefs, turns into waves of violence and terror, as the very remains of humanity seeps amidst them, longing to usher the waves...

So many hearts mutilated with fear after enduring indigestible and horrifying experiences, lose their respect as their hearts fill up with ethnic attitude and paranoid delusion, resulting in the spur of prejudice and discrimination towards believers.

Perhaps the events of the previous decade served to expose a darker reality, and debilitated the psychic mentality of people, eventually mutilating their mindsets.

Perhaps pain and fear arose among them to finally rebuff and destroy, in order to assuage their desires and find inner peace – in order to bring disputes to an end. Yet, a meaningful change will not come by easily, but by understanding and letting go of what happened as a crutch. It would hold the promise, however faint; of a more hopeful future with respect and deeper knowledge towards the intrinsic part of religions, rather than judging by the actions of people.

Perhaps, change and serenity awaits at the doorstep of understanding various beliefs with acceptance and respect.

With such powerful, evocative mindsets, the beauty of religion comes alive:

"True religion is real living; living with all one's soul, with all one's goodness and righteousness. You do not do evil to those who do evil to you, but you deal with them with forgiveness and kindness."



Of Religion

the Reality

however much clouded

by delusion

'tis easy to live without religion shines through

of heedlessness

to shun clear like the sun

it in some so when you see the Light

and sum beautiful and bright

of life's matters embrace it; walk in it

for what you've found

then the human heart

what's hard is the Straight Path

and takes heart to the One Lord

is to take the veil

off your eyes removed from darkness

and seek the Truth far from being faithless

for what is Faith filled with the joy of Oneness

when not followed with its Only Lord

but Reality revels in His Revelation

ignored realizes at its core —

not easy to live without Religion

let alone rise without One...

Salman Sowdagar

ENIGMATIC WORLD Raeesa Usmani

I woke up to the news of a horrific plane crash in the City claiming two hundred fervent eyes and zealous minds.

I picked up a newspaper filled with pictures of a huge rally in the Town demanding instant actions to be taken to save Mother Earth.

Before it takes over my mind
a phone notification caught my attention
Alas! to inform about the heinous rapes
of a beautiful aspiring Professional lady
and a cute charming small girl
a former brutally raped and burnt alive
whereas the latter abducted, molested, deeply injured
murdered, thrown away in the outskirts.

Still struggling not to let my faith in humanity, ethics and law quiver I instantly moved to my laptop, to read a pop up update on the screen a horrifying mobbing of a naïve aghast lad heading towards university.

And the following notification proved the final blow.

Spotting The County struggling with natural calamities, wide-spread maladies and dogmatic society heading no-where with an absolute uncertainty.

Such a brief awful dawn bound me to ponder over a very question, haunting me time and again Am I living in an Enigmatic World?

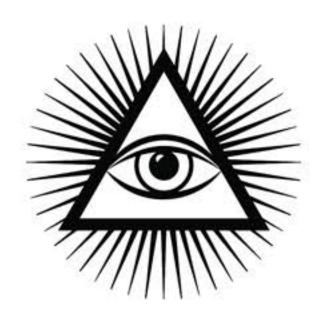
There may be those who persist in the assertion that religion is inseperable from goodness, and goodness from religion. Would any religionist be honest to state that without god, they would allow themselves to be heartless and brutal -- to become the epitome of savage behavior, of unspirited meanness and sincere hatred? Would anyone who called themselves close to god, and with good intentions, if this individual were to suddenly discover that there was no god, would they find themselves to be less considerate, less hopeful, less charitable? If any religious person can honestly say yes to this, then it would only be right to be suspicious of the claim that they are hopeful, kind, or charitable now. God, this mythical being who lives apart from the physical

world, and his existence are only questions of science: he either exists or he does not. If he did not exist, it would hardly deprive anyone of ethical or moral behavior. If a city, a road, a mountain, a lake, or a natural formation did not exist that we had believed to exist, at discovering this, would we abandon all humaneness and all forms of goodness? Only those who had reveled in hypocrisy and deceit can truly say so. There is nothing innately special of the mythical beings called gods that means their existence gives privilege to moral behavior.

There are, though, the genuine claims that we should not abandon religion on the grounds that religion has portrayed a truthful and honest view of the world. Though this claim made be made on the foundation that we ought to pursue the truth, it often fails short of that, because religion has universally been the opponent to investigation and inquiry. There have been times and eras where the church had

It is so commonly believed today that religion is a source of goodness and charity for so many people. It is also believed that to oppose religion is also to oppose the goodness and charity stipulated to be with it. When I ask others to abandon religion, they will reply, "Why would you want to abandon something that has produced so many helpful things?" But I am not asking people to give up the affectionate and tender ways, laced with gentleness and humanity. I am not asking that they give up mercy or justice, things which are just as easily attainable without religion, if not easier. I am asking people to give up their fear of hell and daemons, their belief in a soul and ghosts, their hope of an afterlife and a god, the creeds founded on the credulous superstitions of their ancestors. I am not asking the human species to relinquish the things that are good and accompany every warm heart -- I am asking the human species to ameliorate the ideology that a god exists that will punish nonbelievers and reward believers, that will smile at the sufferings of the damned and fortunes of the saved. I am asking others to abandon religion, which has been a never-ending source of intolerance for those who have harnessed any sort of bigotry.

disallowed the public from reading or writing, and had made it punishable by death to be found with a Bible written in local languages.



Is Religion a Source of Goodness or a Myth to keep Humanity Sane?

In 391, Christians burned down one of the world's greatest libraries in Alexandra, said to have housed 700,000 scrolls. [The New Columbia Encyclopedia, 61, and Eisler, The Chalice and the Blade.] The tale of Galileo should not need repeating, but perhaps the tale of Giordano Bruno or Francisco Ferrer need repeating. Though Galileo was only threatened with death for his claims, Giordano Bruno was burned to death for his ideas in 1600 and Francisco Ferrer was shot to death for his beliefs in 1909 -- both executed by the Roman Catholic Church. Giordano Bruno, the great thinker, and Francisco Ferrer, the great educator; a day does not go by where their grave loss is mourned by Rationalists and Humanitarians world wide. Gregory the Great had the library of Palatine Apollo burned "lest its secular literature distract the faithful men from the contemplation of heaven." [Barbara G. Walker, The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983) 208.] The history of Christianity and organized religion runs parallel to the history of oppression and slavery. Examination and inquiry have been restrained, and this can be found in the evidences that every historian ought to be well aware of. Even today, we find the same radical fanatics, burning Harry Potter books, and on the same exact claim that it will deprive children of the religion of Christianity. We also find Christian fanatics working to ban books in public libraries, including works by Mark Twain, J. D. Salinger., and Maya Angelou, sometimes on the exact claim that these works are "unChristian." But asside from the fact that religion tends to disallow Freethought and investigation, inquiry and science, can it at all be permitted to call itself truth? As well as having a long history of suppressing honest and sincere attempts at sciennce and truth, religion is also founded on superstition and myth. When man did not understand the origin of the rainbow, he postulated that it had divine origin. When man did not understand the origin of the human female, he made the same claim. When man did not understand anything that was of natural phenomena, he often times ran to the easy and simple belief that it was created from a god or a spirit or a ghost. Even beyond that, though, the evidences and claims of religion are synonymous with many cultural myths.

Santa Claus and god both have a remarkable amount of similarities: both are mystical beings, both live far away, both have no evidence, both are only believed because they are taught by community and elders, both have not been demonstrated, both have supernatural powers, among an enormous amount of other similarities. But if one is not content to believe that a man exists who delivers billions of presents to children on one night of the year, then why would one be content to believe that a man exists who delivers billions of souls to heaven or hell?

Upon the hundreds and hundreds of fallacies and errors, we find that religion itself is something deprived of both merit and science. It has, for ages, worked against the instruments of truth, often times denying the population the right to think and believe as they wish. We also find that the foundation for the belief in religion is identical to the foundation for the belief in many cultural myths which have also been abandoned. There is little truth to be found in religion, once an open-minded investigation has been allowed to examine its institutes. Instead of finding a realistic and open-minded viewpoint of the world, we find flaws, oppression, ignorance, and a sizable amount of cruelty.

Only a small investigation into the real world would allow us to discover that many individuals put much stock into the institute of religion. If we were a free and intelligent people, without the tyranny of a Capitalist class and government defending them, people would put less concentration into the things unseen and put such focus onto the real, materialistic world. Instead of investing in prayers, people would be offering their kindest and warmest affections to those around them. We would not build churches, but homes -- we would not ask the gods for forgiveness for our actions, but those we harmed -- we would not pray for things to happen, but make them happen -- we would not rely on the superstitious myths that have guided so many to bigotry, or rely on the unseen to do what we must do for ourselves, or praise anything that was nothing more than an idol representing cruelty and misguided violence. If a man reserves his love for a god and for angels, he simultaneously deprives love from those around him. By giving our kindness and affection, our sincerest dreams and hopes, desires and aspirations, to this being without evidence, we are losing focus of the one thing that we do know: our lives. And by losing focus on our lives, and those around us, we are ignoring the one thing that we know for sure: that we, as material beings, do exist, and that we are capable of feeling joy and suffering. To ignore this is the greatest of ignorances, and the most grave of all follies.

Tolerance and Acceptance

If there was a god, I would make only one prayer to him: That his followers would follow truth over scripture, benevolence over cruelty, science over myth; to ask his followers to be more focused and concentrated on the things that exist -- their lovers, their family, their children, their friends -- to uphold truth as beautiful, and kindness as sincerity. There is no other prayer I could give to such a deity ruling over our Universe. If I were to make such a prayer, though, it may very well be that such a god would ask him followers to turn against him. That would only be so, however, only if the god that exists was the one of a popular Monotheistic religion. Such gods tend to be described by their scripture as vicious and unrelenting in their pursuits to control mankind to devious ends.

Religion and its followers have embraced intolerance and have called it duty and reverence to their lord. Though the disciples of the cross have managed to do everything in their power to destroy liberty and happiness, I would be the last man on this Earth to say that nobody should be allowed to be a disciple of the cross, or a follower of any religion. It has been the custom of religion to oppose freedom of thought, but I certainly cannot oppose this freedom in any form. Whether a man desires to be a Christian or an Atheist, a Buddhist or a Hindu, it is their own decision. It is their actions, and not their beliefs, that ought to be monitored. My belief that everyone should be entitled to their belief (as well as beliefs about beliefs) is not derived from the idea that we should not be like those we oppose. Rather, it is formed from the idea that everyone deserves the right to believe as they wish, to consider and investigate for themselves, that power lies within the individual, and even more deeper, because I believe in humane and fair treatment, I believe in justice and compassion. Those are the reasons that are behind my belief in the right to think and believe as one wishes.

There are some Christians who I have heard say, "I will not speak to that man or deal with that man unless he is a Christian." There are also many Christians who speak of myself as though I am the first Atheist to walk this planet. But as well as speaking of me with that harsh, grave tone, they have systematically made up lies about myself, claiming that I hate all who claim to be Christians. It seems impossible to some of the followers of the divine for Atheists or Agnostics, or any infidel or heretic, to hold charity and mercy as good values. It may sometimes even be considered unfulfilling to aid an nonbeliever in any way, to offer them any sort of affection or kindness, to give them the fruits of a warm heart.

But whether someone believes that a god exists or not, or in any religion, there will be one fact about that person that will not waver my humane treatment of them: that they are a conscious being, that they can feel pain and suffering or joy and happiness, that touching their skin gently will produce feelings and emotions of security and happiness. This is something that will not be erased, no matter what creeds an individual professes to believe, no matter what ideologies an individual follows.

The Purpose of a Rationalist Humanitarian

My purpose is not to turn every man an woman into an Atheist or an Agnostic. Such a proposal would be impractical and difficult to obtain, at best. My purpose is to offer humane and rational solutions in comparison to the brutal and dogmatic solutions offered by others. I would like to convince the clergy and the ministry to teach their youth how to respect each other, and not how to respect god. I would like to convince those who believe in religion that there is no hell. I would like to convince religionists that there is no need to cry in fear of god's punishment, that if there is a god, he is merciful and just. Offering all of the kindness and affection that can be mustered from a sincere heart, I would like to offer the world all I can to make it a better place for everyone to live. To maximize happiness, to teach people how to treat each other warmly and thoughtfully, to teach them how to think rationally and logically, to teach them tolerance and acceptance, beauty and love, duty and kindness... This is my purpose as a Rationalist and a Humanitarian.



DIFFERENT RELIGION SAME PURPOSE

Sabrina Azhar

To you is your religion and to me is mine
Thus, for us to believe in, we all got a sign
From the Lord above,
Worthy of eternal love
So the truth we must all not decline

All religions promote peace and humanity
Whether Islam, Buddhism, Hindu or Christianity
The beliefs may vary
Not really unnecessary
But we all got to deal with pure sanity

No religion promotes terrorism

Nor any acts of barbarism

Unity is priority

Against diversity

That may lead to radical criticism

We may belong to a different cast or creed
But it's the same air, we all breathe
It's in our feelings
And in our dealings
Where we compete one another and pay heed

God is All-Powerful, All-Aware
He is Just and deals fair and square
Fear Him and obey
Without any delay
And when you need Him, He's always there

Believe in God's Words, trust and hope
And with faith, hold on to your rope
Pray together
Help one another
In life, you will find it easy to cope

LIFE OF A MU'MIN

Heba Afuwardeen

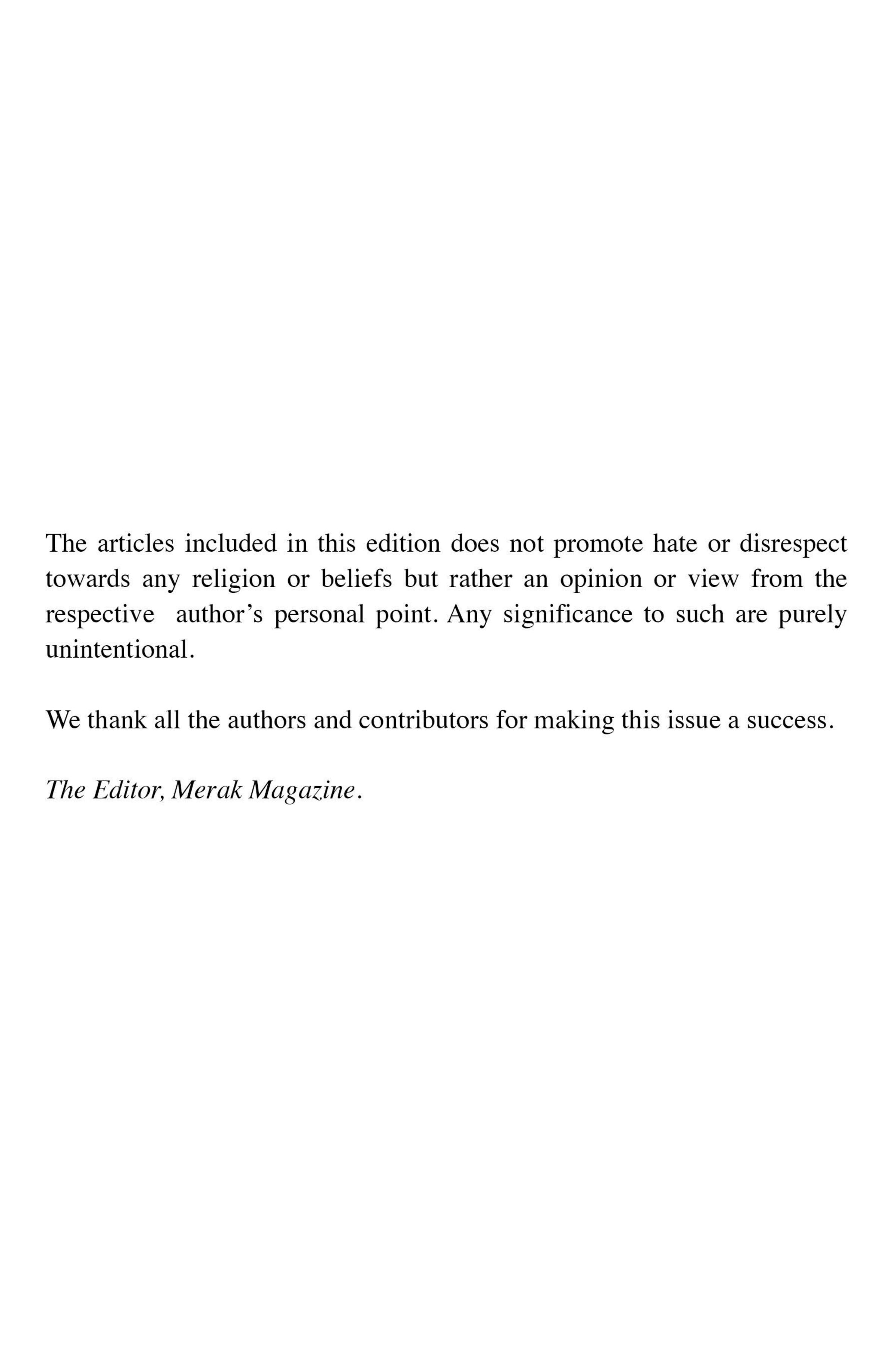
Oh you who have pledged your troth,
Upon the Shahada, the sacred oath,
Mind your actions and do what is to be done as a believer,
Verily, a true believer is a true achiever.

Oh you who have pledged your troth,
Upon the Shahada, the sacred oath,
Believe in the articles of faith which cannot be seen,
For it is what truly completes your Deen.

Oh you who have pledged your troth,
Upon the Shahada, the sacred oath,
Bear in mind this is just a test,
To see who will be submissive until the end of the quest,
But fear not, for you Allah has prepared only the best.

Oh you who have pledged your troth,
Upon the Shahada, the sacred oath,
Be humble and charitable in character,
For every word that you utter and mutter
Will be recalled in the hereafter.

Oh you who have pledged your troth,
Upon the Shahada, the sacred oath,
Allah does not appraise you
Based on your education or the colour of your skin,
But rather how you live your life as a Mu'min.



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