“Adventists and Muslims share perspectives about God’s cosmic plan for justice and peace as portrayed in the Holy Books”

(Velda Cox/Global Centre for Adventist Muslim Relations, 25 April 2006)

On April 23, 2006 Adventists and Muslims met together at the Islamic Centre of England, to share their particular perspectives on last day events, which included the second coming of Jesus and the final establishment of God’s rule of peace and justice. This was a joint venture between the Global Centre for Adventist-Muslim Relations, Newbold College, UK, and the Shia Muslim community, whose main centre is located in Maida Vale, London, UK. Between 40 and 50 Adventists from Newbold College and the South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists attended the event.

Dr. Jerald Whitehouse, director of the Global Centre for Adventist Muslim Relations, was the main speaker on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Sheikh Bahmanpour, head of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Department of Islamic Studies, at the Islamic College, Willsden, London, UK, was the main Muslim speaker on behalf of the Islamic Centre of England. Oscar Osindo, of the Global Centre for Adventist Muslim Relations, and Sheikh Ali Al Hakim, researcher for the Islamic Centre of England, also presented on the topic.

Dr. Whitehouse started his presentation with the entry of sin into the world, outlining how man lost the privilege of close association with God and yet at that time God laid his plan for the restoration of that lost relationship and the establishment of both peace and justice in the future. Dr. Whitehouse illustrated how God planned to restore his relationship with man through his promise to Abraham through the descendants of both Ishmael and Isaac. However, he said, “Satan has fought through the ages to prevent the restoration of the relations between God and his people. This has resulted in a controversy that has led to injustice and conflict in our world down through the ages.”

Dr. Whitehouse then went on to show how God, through sending Jesus to this earth, demonstrated his self-sacrificing love for all of humankind, and through this his desire to restore the peace and harmony lost in the garden. “God’s plan for personal peace is offered to all men by giving a ‘new heart’ experience to all those who seek him,” he said. “Those
that have this ‘new heart’ need not fear the judgment and can look forward to spending eternity with God.” Utilizing the image of Daniel 2, Dr. Whitehouse showed how God planned to re-establish his kingdom, his rule of justice and peace, and how Seventh-day Adventists believe that God’s plan for restoration, promised through Abraham, is for all peoples of the earth who believe in him.

Oscar Osindo followed with a presentation on the second coming of Jesus, showing that both Adventists and Muslims look forward to his coming and see it as the time when peace and justice will be restored. He noted that although the world has tried to bring about peace in so many ways, they have not succeeded. “When Jesus left this earth he promised to leave peace with those who were left behind,” Mr. Osindo said, “Not the kind that the world offers, but God’s peace, the kind of peace which brings about true justice. When Jesus began his ministry on earth he focused on the human heart, for the kind of peace that Jesus brings, begins with a new heart experience.” He then went on to examine the details of the second coming of Jesus, the judgment which will take place at the end of time, and the final restoration of God’s peace and justice on earth.

Sheikh Bahmanpour started his presentation by noting the similar perspectives that Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims have on end-time events, and how both share in common the hope of the restoration of peace and justice at the second coming of Jesus. Sheikh Bahmanpour went on to say that you cannot think
of peace without justice. “Those whose hearts are not with God, will never find internal peace” he said. “True peace should be inside the heart. That is where justice comes from. If there is no justice in society, then there is no peace of heart.” He then went on to say that the peace and justice that we experience on this earth is only a shadow of the real experience that we will have later, when God establishes true peace and justice for all humankind at the end of time. Sheikh Bahmanpour continued to outline how the second coming of Jesus and the coming of the Mahdi (a Messianic figure that will emerge out of Mecca who will work in co-operation with Jesus at the end of time) will bring about true peace and justice for all humankind.

Sheikh Ali Al Hakim spoke on how justice can be arrived at while on earth through study and application of Shariah Law.

“This was a very challenging evening,” said Dr. Pedersen of the Department of Theological Studies at Newbold College, who attended the dialogue. “In a world in which there is often confrontation rather than peace between communities of faith, it is refreshing to see people working together to build bridges of understanding,” added Velda Cox, who worked with the Islamic Centre of England to bring about the event. Gerald Whitehouse stated that he hopes many more similar events will take place between Adventists and Muslims in the future. “Such events need to stand out as a voice against the too prevalent militant rhetoric that only increases tension and misunderstanding between faith traditions.”