

## Muslim Issues - The Question of Identity

### Imam Yasin Dwyer

- Intention is the foundation of every action and each intention should be to please Allah (s.w.t)
- We are who we are. So the question of whether you are a Muslim before being a Canadian or a Canadian first before being a Muslim is a false question; it a trick question. We have multiple identities. It depends on the context, which decides who you are first.
- We grew up from different environments with different personalities– from different parents, different nationalities and different cultures.
- Many people from African decent have gravitated to Islam as their ancestors were Muslims such as those that come from West Africa. They go to Islam as a reclamation of their roots
- Part of our memories make us who we are
- So the question is: “Are we Muslim first or Canadian first?”- We are neither. Different situations lead to different identities. For example when voting, you will do it as a Canadian citizen to exercise your right to vote because you want the best governance that will meet your needs
- Days with metaphysical significance such as marriage, spirituality- we become Muslims as the inner image/ the soul has to be connected to the unseen. So our metaphysical is also very important.
- Balance is needed between the body's needs and what the soul's needs.
- Nafs which means the soul and Ruh which means the spirit and it is a gift from Allah (s.w.t). In order for this light to be brought into the Nafs we need to have the heart purified and to be spiritual. So our purpose is to work on our hearts to bring the light (Ruh) into the Nafs
- We are made to think about ourselves the same way the Jewish people were treated in the past; in medieval Europe they were persecuted. It explains some of the tribalism in Jewish communities. They were asked who they were loyal to (they had their own law that they followed) they were looked upon as if they had dual identity. Same questions are passed to the Muslim today- being asked about Sharia- in order to be put in an intellectual ghetto.
- We should understand people’s fears and learn from history.
- We are little different; our context in Canada is very unique- many of our neighbors have such good will. We have a living miracle where the people are still reverting to Islam- granting the benefit of the doubt- they still search about Islam despite the abuse about Islam.
- The problem that we are facing is that we are not teaching people about the Prophet; they do not know and understand him. In our testimony- we say he is the messenger of Allah (s.w.t)- so we have to teach them that he is the messenger of Allah (s.w.t). He was sent as the warner, servant of Allah (s.w.t). He was the embodiment of politeness and manners; he has exalted character and his action was complete conformity with his heart/ faith.
- To blacks in America- Islam became a religion that was owned by them- they appropriated it to themselves. They weren’t integrated into it, they brought it to themselves such as Malcolm X

- We should call ourselves as Canadian Muslims (not Muslims in Canada)- as this begins to appropriate Islam into Canada
- We have to be patient and be comfortable with the question of identity and be careful not conform to their arbitrary comments.