**MR. J. ABDUL BARI FROM NEW YORK CHOSE ISLAM IN PLACE OF CHRISTIANITY AS IT PROMOTES A CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE IN WHICH VALUES OF LIFE MOST DEAR TO AMERICANS LIKE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION, EQUALITY BEFORE LAW AND INDIVIDUAL SECURITY ARE ENSURED. HE SAYS :**

*On several occasions, I have been asked the question, "How could you turn your back on American traditions and heritage and adopt something which is completely foreign to your way of life?" "Christianity is the basis for our culture, it is what makes America so great..", so goes their line of reasoning.*

*First, it must be understood that Islam is a religion, and like the other major religions in the world it claims followers from every nationality and race. I believe that when someone thinks that I as an American have turned my back on American culture and traditions for something which seems to be "foreign" in their mind, that they are associating Islam with Arabia and the Arab world. It is true that the majority of the Arabs are Muslims, but there are only 80 million Arabs in the world and there are 500 million Muslims, so you see that the Arabs don't even make up a fifth of the Muslim population of the world. Also many Arabs are Christians, and a certain sect of Egyptian Christians claim to be the "first and true" Christians. Yet, it is not accepted that Arab culture is Christian culture.*

*It is not necessary that when one accepts Islam he should go by a tent and roam across the waste lands of Death Valley in order to "prove" to the world that he has become a Muslim. Neither does he has to replace the flag of the United States with that of Saudi Arabia. Nor to go around speaking in a foreign tongue. There are certain prayers which should be said in Arabic. but many church services in America are conducted in Latin.*

*In fact, Islam teaches us to obey the legal government of the country in which we live. Any changes which we wish must be carried out in a non-violent manner and by democratic means. Therefore, I am an American and I am compelled by my religious belief, Islam, to obey and uphold the laws of America, and if I should find it impossible, then I should leave and move to another country.*

*The foundation of America is the Constitution of the United States. Let us look at it for a few minutes and see if I as a Muslim can be an American.*

*The first amendment to the Constitution establishes freedom of religion, speech, press and peaceable assembly. The Quran, the Holy Book of Islam, states, "there is no compulsion in religion." God has made his religion clear and plain for all to accept or reject. A Muslim would never deny another person his right to his religion or to express his view as an individual or as a group.*

*The second amendment states that a well-regulated militia shall be maintained. The teaching of the Quran makes it the duty of a state to maintain an army for the security and protection of its citizens.*

*The third amendment brings out that in time of peace no soldier shall be quartered in any house, without consent of the owner. When Khalid Bin al-Walid, a famous Muslim General, conquered Damascus in the seventh century he made this statement, "their city will not be demolished, neither shall any Muslim be quartered in their houses."*

*The fourth amendment gives the people the right to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures. Islam teaches us that we must always go to the front door of a house and wait permission before we enter.*

*The fifth, sixth and seventh amendments to the Constitution of the United States of America provide the right to private property and to fair trial by jury in which both sides of an issue will be judged on equal terms, and that any person suspected of a crime shall be innocent until proven otherwise. Islam teaches us to refrain from speaking wrongly of someone unless we have proof to support our claims. The right to own property is repeated several times in the Quran and illustrated by the teachings and actions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah).*

*As far as the eighth amendment is concerned, Islam provides that punishment shall never exceed the crime that has been committed.*

*The thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments made slavery unlawful in the American Nation, and guarantees for all citizens equal rights before the law of the land regardless of race, religion, or creed, or of any former status of servitude. The Quran and the teachings of the Holy Prophet laid a pattern by which nearly all the slaves in Arabia were freed as Islam began to spread. It can be said that the Muslims were much more successful in their attempts to free the slaves as they were soon absorbed into society and many worked their way up to the top of the social, political. and economic ladder. Unfortunately, we in America haven't been able to do this and still thousands of Americans of African descent remain as a sort of "second class" citizens.*

*The sixteenth amendment deals with income tax and needs no comment except that it could be stated here that a Muslim is required to give two and one half per cent of his yearly net product for the welfare of the poor.*

*The eighteenth and twenty-first amendments deal with prohibition, the making and selling of intoxicating drinks and their repeal. Muslims do not drink intoxicating beverages but at the same time no Muslim would take it upon himself to pass judgment upon those that do, for God is the Judge of all mankind.*

*Upon the passage of the nineteenth amendment, women were given the right to vote. It should be noted here that Islam established women as equals with men in all rights, political, economic etc., nearly 1,400 years before the passage of the nineteenth amendment to the Constitution. But at the same time Islam places the principal duties of a woman in the home, which brings stronger family union and most modern sociologists agree that the family is the backbone of all civilization.*

*I have failed to mention the ninth, tenth, eleventh, seventeenth, twentieth and twenty-second amendments only because they deal with the political set-up of our government and need no comment in this analysis.*

*Islam laid down the basic rights of human beings over a thousand years before they were recognized and set out in the Constitution by our Founding Fathers. And as you see from the above, in order to believe in the teachings of Islam I must believe in the very principles that Jefferson, Hamilton, Jay Franklin and Lincoln believed in when they gave birth to our nation and nourished it to its hours of greatness. What could be more in the American tradition than a religion that recognizes and establishes the rights of man as guaranteed in the Constitution of America?*