

ISLAM AND THE WEST YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

When discussing this most important and timely issue, before anything else and beyond all current passions and prejudices, one must pause and ask what we mean by the two terms Islam and the West: Which Islam and which West are we considering? Is it traditional Islam as practised by the majority of Muslims, the Islam of pious men and women who seek to live in the light of God's teachings as revealed in the Quran and in surrender to His Will? Or is it modernist interpretations which seek to interpret the Islamic tradition in view of currently prevalent Western ideas and fashions of thought? Or yet, is it the extreme forms of politically active Islam, which in exasperation, before dominance by non-Islamic forces both outside and inside the borders of most Islamic countries, take recourse to ideas and methods of certain strands of recent Western political history, including in some cases terrorism which is against Islamic Law, but which was not invented by them?

Nor is the reality of the West homogeneous in any way. In fact, practically the only political unity observed in the West these days appears in the hatred against Islam as shown in the case of Bosnia and Chechnya where one observes, with very few exceptions, the uniformity of silence, indifference, and inaction by various voices in the West in the face of the worst kind of human atrocities. Otherwise, the position of forces and diversity of what is usually called the West is so blatant as to hardly need being mentioned. But since it is ignored in many quarters which speak of global order based on what they call Western values, it must be asked if the West is characterized by Trappist and Carthusian monks or European and American agnostic or atheistic "intellectuals" on university campuses or in the media. One wonders if the Westerners are those who still make pilgrimage to Lourdes in the thousands, or those who journey, also in the thousands, to Las Vegas or the birthplace of Elvis Presley. This diversity and even confrontation, within the West is of the greatest importance not only for those in Europe and America who speak of confrontation with the Islamic world on the basis of the idea that there is an at least relatively unified

West, but also for the Muslims, at least some of whom are in general fully aware of deep divisions not likely to be integrated into unity soon but in fact on the verge of creating disorder and chaos within the very fabric of Western societies.

Nor is the diversity in the two worlds of the same degree. The vast Majority of the Islamic world still lives within the Islamic world-view. Everyone considers the Quran as the Word of God, the Prophet ‘as His messenger, and the reality of God, His Names and Attributes as unquestioned realities. In contrast, in the West, beyond common commercial interests of various nations and groups which unify them, there is much greater division, concerning the most fundamental issues such as the reality or denial of the reality of God, the origin of man, the nature and origin of ethic, and even the sacredness and the origin of life itself over which some people are willing to kill those whom they consider to be participating in murder by terminating the life of a foetus. Muslims might be fighting on the question of political authority and the types of laws which should govern Islamic society, but very few differ concerning the belief that God is still sitting on “His Throne” (al-’arsh) and is the ruler of the universe. On the contrary in the West there is less political fighting today after several centuries of bloody revolutions and upheavals, but there is also the deepest struggle and almost revolution on the question of values and ethics, not to speak of theology itself. On both sides of the debate concerning Islam and the West, it is important to remember these and many other dimensions and forms of diversity, although in this essay it is not possible to deal in depth with them, Lest one forgets, it must be recalled that even on the question of the nature of the Bible and its meaning, there is more difference between people of the Bible belt and many sceptical and deconstructionist professors in universities in that very region than there is between the views of the former and what Muslims consider the Bible to be throughout the whole of the Islamic world.

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Such was not the case in days past, especially during the European Middle Ages when the West faced the Islamic world for the first time. First of all, this was a period in which the West and the Islamic world shared the most important of all principles, namely the acceptance of the Divine Reality

beyond all worldly concerns and principles, beyond individualism and an earth-bound humanism. Secondly, the two civilizations, respected each other even if enmity existed between them on a certain plane. The two made their own arms and were more or less evenly matched on the military and political planes in sharp contrast to what is observable today. If the West called Muslims heathens, it nevertheless respected Islamic civilization to the extent of emulating much of its science and philosophy, art and 'architecture, literature, and mystical symbols as well as some of its major institutions such as colleges of education. Even the medieval blue mantles of the Holy Virgin bear pseudo-Arabic epigraphy as ornamentation which looks like Arabic without actually being so, A Dante would incorporate' the structure of the Islamic spiritual universe into the architecture of that most Christian of poems, The Divine Comedy, which recapitulates the whole vision and experience of medieval European man, and a Roger Bacon would wear Islamic dress once a year at Oxford when he was lecturing on Islamic illuminationist doctrines. Despite theological anathema cast against Islam and the Crusades which caused great death and destruction, medieval Europe; looked with respect upon the only "other" it knew, that is, Islam and its society and civilization.

The open hatred against Islam, both intellectual and theological, really began with the Renaissance which also deplored its own medieval past. The writings of such major figures as Petrarch, which were central in the formation of the world-view of the Renaissance, show a venom and hatred against Islam and Islamic learning not to be found in any major medieval authors. This was the period of humanism in the non-religious sense of the term, anthropomorphism, opposition to the certitude brought about by faith, individualism based upon rebellion against all higher authority and also Eurocentrism all of which have characterised the Western world-view ever since. Now, these ideas stood not only against the West's religious heritage, but even more so against Islam which has always severely opposed any titanic and Promethean view of man and has emphasised this humble state before the grandeur and majesty of the Divine, seeing man at once as the servant of God ('abd Allah) and His vice-gerent (khalifat Allah) on earth.

It was during this period that the two sister civilizations parted ways and, based upon the religious opposition to Islam in the Middle Ages, a new and

much more embracing wave of hatred was created against all things Islamic, resulting in an attitude of detestation, an air of superiority as well as apprehension which have survived sometimes even consciously in the mainstream Western attitude toward Islam to this day when there is no comparison between the military and material might of the West and that of the Islamic world. Therefore, although the opposition to Islam in the West begins in the period of crystallization of Western civilization in the Middle Ages when Islam was the only “other” for the West, the seeds of the deep hatred and air of superiority of recent centuries must be traced to the Renaissance and its aftermath, to a period of history when the West set upon an path of secularizations, worldly power and unprecedented commercialism and’ cultivated a new image of man which was diametrically opposed to all that for which Islam stood and still stands.

This period provided the basis from which the modern West looked upon the Islamic world during the colonial period which in a sense still continues in new ways in many places to this day, at, least economically, technologically and even culturally. In modern times however, a anew element entered upon the scene. Instead of simply casting anathemas upon Islam as a Christian heresy, new analyses of Islam began on the basis of either missionary prejudices or secular rationalism which had developed in the West and which, combined with superior military power, became a formidable instrument for the dissection and ultimate strangulation of religions and religious cultures in the name of a supposedly universal science. The Muslims could not study and present their teachings and views concerning Christianity anywhere in the West, whereas Westerners took it upon themselves not only to analyse and criticize Islam as they willed, but even to force their teachings upon Muslims themselves through schools created for either Christian or Western secularist education and supported by Western economic and political power. The Quran was and continues to be analysed and criticized in the West not as the verbatim Word of God, as Muslim believe, but as simply a human compilation to be rent asunder by rationalistic and historicists methods. It is as if Muslims were to search for the DNA of Christ’s blood and try, God forbid, to match it with the blood of Joseph and then come up with all kinds of theories which they would teach in exclusive schools in the West, supported by oil money, in which the

most intelligent Western students would study in order to qualify for the best jobs.

It is in the light of this whole lack of parallelisms and complete inequality on the material plane, in which the West dictates, more or less, the agendas of the Islamic countries and judges them only on the basis of the extent to which they accept passing Western norms, now called euphemistically global, that the present relation between Islam and the West must be viewed. Many new elements have arisen of late, including the revival of Islam within the Islamic world and the pressure of the West for complete cultural domination while the Renaissance paradigm, which has dictated the modern Western view of things, is itself falling apart along with ever increasing social chaos. Still, the historical background of the relation between Islam and the West in the medieval, Renaissance and the more recent modern period must always be kept in mind because they constitute a depository of historical memories to which interested parties and groups can always appeal to fan the fire of hatred and to create a false image of a powerful enemy as if Islam today had the comparative power vis-a-vis the West as did the Umayyads or the Ottomans.

It is in the light of the historic past that one must pose the question as to what constitute the real problems today as far as the relation between Islam and the West is concerned. If in this analysis we address mostly the Western rather than Islamic components of this confrontation which one hopes will become more and more a dialogue, it is because we are obviously addressing a Western audience here and also because there is not common measure between the threats that the modern West poses for the whole existence of Islam and its civilization and the threats, in reality and not as propaganda carried out by some of the media, which Islam poses for the West.

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The basic reality underlying the relation of Islam and the West is the fact that, in contrast to earlier Western expectations, the Islamic religion is still fully vibrant and Islamic civilization still alive even if greatly weakened. In contrast to all those late nineteenth and early twentieth century Western students of Islam, especially missionaries, who predicted the imminent demise of Islam, the religion shows much more vitality today than many

others. The very existence of the Islamic world which negates so many assumptions of the post-medieval and modern Western world-view such as individualism, secularist humanism, the superiority of human rights over divine rights and humanly devised laws over Divine Law, appears as a formidable challenge to a West which considers its own historical development as the only acceptable path to follow for all other peoples on the globe. Otherwise, they are branded as medieval, backwards and identified with all kinds of other pejorative connotations prevalent in the modern world. Were Islam to have simply surrendered to Western patterns of thinking and acting, as do so many Muslim modernists, there would have been no confrontation between the two worlds. The reason for the conflict is the very reality of another civilization which wishes to follow its own principles and develop according to its own inner life and dynamic rather than on the basis of externally imposed norms which, according to many voices, now threaten the West itself. Today, the situation is not like the period of the Cold War when the West and the Communist worlds were threatening each other's very existence, for the Islamic world cannot and does not threaten the West militarily, politically or even economically in any conceivable way. On the contrary, the West; controls the most vital economic resources of Muslim nations and benefits from all conflicts in that world through the sale of vast quantities of arms and practically dictates its wishes in many parts of the Islamic world.

Rarely in debates about the threat of the Islamic world do the Western media present the real issues of basic importance in Muslim eyes such as the loss of Muslim lands, especially in Palestine, on the basis of exclusive historic claims, denying the claims of the other side. These historical claims are in fact of such a nature that were they to be pursued elsewhere they would; through the same logic, require non-native Americans to return to its original inhabitants much of the land many of them captured only a century or two ago through one of the most successful conquests in human history of the type that some now call "ethnic cleansing". How tragic it is in fact that Jews and Muslims could have lived in harmony with each other in days of old but cannot do so in the future if one accepts this exclusivist logic without considering the views of the other side of the confrontation. other issues include the fact that many nations in the West not only control the most important economic asset of much of the Islamic world, namely: oil, but also

want in a thousand and one ways to recover the money they have paid for the oil, whether it be through the sale of arms or the creation of safe markets.

Nor is the West, in the sense of Western governments and of course not well-meaning individuals and organisations, seriously interested in the welfare of the Islamic world, unless it coincides as is to be expected with its own geopolitical and economic interests as seen so clearly in the attitude of the West towards democracy in the Islamic world or the unbelievably hypocritical manner in which concerns for human rights are applied whenever it is to the interest of this or that power but never when it goes against the commercial interests of those powers. How many people who keep talking about Islamic terrorist threats ever bother to ask why a twenty = year old person should, at the prime of his youth, give up his life so easily and so voluntarily. What is lacking that causes such extreme actions? Terrorism of any kind, whether committed by Muslims, Christians or Jews, is heinous and against the teachings of all three religions. When it does occur, it is necessary not only to condemn it, which one must, but also to go behind the immediate events and ask why such acts are being or have been carried out. Today, as far as the Islamic world is concerned, the causes behind such terrible acts are the loss of hope, unbearable pressures often supported directly or indirectly by the West, and desperation before forces which are destroying one's religion and civilization. Hatred is a fire that consumes and annihilates but the fire cannot be put out unless one enquires about its causes. Otherwise, as soon as one fire is put out another is ignited.

There is no possibility of creating understanding between the West and the Islamic world until on the Western side people realise that the very absolutisation of the West's particular world-view at a particular moment in time combined with powerful economic "interests", which are usually against the interests of others, bring about impatience with and even hatred of other world-view. This has happened to such an extent that today many people in the West who are opposed to friendship' with the Islamic world, because of their own political or economic agendas, are against any mention of the harmony and peace which dominated over most of the life of Jews and Christians within the Islamic world before modern times. They even seek to arouse Christian and Jewish enmity against Islam while many of them are not themselves for the most part serious followers of either religion.

As for Muslims, they must stop identifying the aggressively secularist forces and crass commercial interests of the West with the whole of the West and remember that although the West is predominantly secularist, there has survived in the West to this day important Christian and also Jewish elements whose world-views, despite transient worldly interests in some quarters, are close to that of Islam. Between the Islamic world and the secularist West there cannot be a deep harmony and accord, because there are no common transcendent principles between them no more than there are between Hindus and Confucians or Buddhists and the secularistic world-view. There can only be peace based upon mutual respect on the human level. Needless to say, this respect is not given by many Westerners to any Muslims who, rather than emulating a West lost to an even greater degree in the maze of its own errors, seek to live Islamically in a serious manner. Nor are they given by most Muslims to Westerners with spiritual principles with the major difference, however, that Islam is not a threat to the Western way of life: but only to Western interests within the Islamic world itself. Tapes of the Quran are not about to invade the airwaves of Europe and America as the crudest products of Western pop culture are invading the East while Western secularism is seeking in a virulently aggressive manner to impose not only its technology but also its half-dying world-view, through that technology, upon the non-Western world, especially the Islamic.

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It is here that, for people of good faith on both sides of this divide, and also for Christians living in the Islamic world and Muslims living in the West, a more profound question, as far as its long term impact is concerned, arises. It is the question of understanding and accord between Islam and Christianity, and to the extent possible Judaism, both across the frontiers of the West and the Islamic world and also within their borders. The Muslims whom the Serbs are massacring in the name of Christianity have a lot more in common with the Serbs as far as religion is concerned as exemplified by such Orthodox masters as St. Maximums the Confessor and St. Gregory of Palmamas than do the Serbs with many not only secularised Westerners but also completely modernised Christians some of whom admit freely that they do not even believe in the virginal birth of Christ or his historical authenticity to which Muslims cling as truths revealed in the Noble Quran. To talk of the

West and Islam and to identify characteristically the modern West with Christianity, which it has enfeebled to the degree observable today, is to gloss over a cleavage which would make all serious mutual understanding well-nigh impossible.

It is true that modernism has marginalised Christianity to an even greater degree since the Renaissance. Yet, Christianity, as well as Judaism in the West, continue to survive as living realities and if one looks at the situation in depth, one sees that they have great deal more in common with Muslims who believe in God, accept the moral injunctions of the Ten Commandments, and seek to live a life centred upon prayer and the reality of the other world to which Christ referred in that most forgotten of his utterances: “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God,” than with people whose mother tongue is English, French, German, or some other European language but who share nothing of the Christian world-view whether it be of this world or the next. If a new awareness be created of this truth in the context of the present anti-Islamic current in the West, which speaks sometimes as if we were living at the time of St. Bernard of Clairvaux rather than of deconstructionism, relativism and a general hatred for serious religion which is tolerated only if completely divorced from public life, there would be a greater possibility of serious accord between most of the Islamic world and at least a West if not what is called the West defined by economic and geopolitical interests which are pursued at all costs whether these “interests” also accord with the interests of other or not. The achievement of this awareness is so laudable that it must be pursued fully by all people of good faith on both sides despite many obstacles on the way.

On the Christian side the first important consideration is of course a theological one. Despite so many ecumenical meetings since the Second World War between Christians and Muslims sometimes in the accompaniment of Jews, few Christians accept Islam as an authentic religion or revelation and the Prophet as the receiver of a major message from Heaven coming after Christ. There is much diplomatic courtesy but little theological acceptance especially by the more traditional and conservative elements of Christianity who are in fact closest to Muslims and best understand the meaning c.f. Sacred Scripture which is immutable and of Divine Origin and of ethical laws which, coming from God, are not meant

to evolve with “the times” but to determine “the times” whenever and wherever they might be. This tragic paradox is similar to the case of the environment where the conservative Christians, who emphasise more than others the sanctity of human life from its conception in the mothers’ womb, are much more indifferent to forces which are destroying the whole natural environment and the web of life that supports also human life, than many of those who would have difficulty with the very notion of the sacred. Granted that accepting the authenticity of Islam is more difficult for Christianity than the acceptance of the authenticity of Christianity is for Islam, which, while denying the Trinity and Incarnation, accepts the Divine Origin of the Christic message and considers Christ as the supreme prophet of inwardness preceding the Prophet of Islam; nevertheless, the question of mutual acceptance must be faced squarely: The greatest support in the world today for traditional Christian and also Jewish beliefs comes from Islam and in fact throughout the ages Islam has permitted its Jewish and Christian minority in its midst to practise their religion freely as witnessed by the depth of piety and authenticity of eastern Christianity and Oriental Judaism today.

The task that lies ahead is for religious leaders of the three religions to realise and have the courage to assert these truths: despite the tragic problems of Palestine which has cast such a shadow upon Muslim-Jewish relations and a triumphalism in certain quarters which would still seek to prove the glory of Christianity through the fact that it was the religion of a civilization which became the most powerful but at the same time most secularised civilization in the world. From the Islamic point of view how tragic it is that while Muslims protected the Jewish people throughout most of their history and provided a haven for them after their expulsion from Spain after the Reconquest, they have had to pay so dearly for the barbaric atrocities of Hitler. Likewise, how sad it is to observe that while even at the height of their power, and before the modern colonial period, the Muslims never performed “ethnic cleansing” against the many Christian minorities in their midst, they now have to suffer a new wave of ethnic cleansing similar to that of Spain after 1492 while the official modern West, and of course not the many concerned Westerners, the West which declares loudly to be the champion of human rights, looks on without taking a single serious step because those being cleansed in Bosnia or massacred in Chechnya are precisely Muslims and not Christians and Jews. Despite these tragedies which

have darkened the scene, the attempt must nevertheless be made by Christian and Jewish leaders on one side and Islamic leaders on the other to reach a profound accord not on the basis of a secularistic humanism which has already demonstrated its poverty, nor of simple political niceties carried out for the sake of expediency, but on the foundation of the certitude that the followers of these religions are all the children of Abraham and pray to the same God. Muslim leaders, as well as Jewish and Christian ones, bear the deep responsibility of using every effort possible in this direction. More specifically, Muslims, often wary of ecumenical discourse because of their subsequent results and effects, must realise how difficult the task of the acceptance of Islam as an authentic revelation is for a serious Christian theologian and not to simply castigate the Christian because he or she cannot accept the authenticity of the Islamic revelation as easily as can Islam the revelations of Judaism and Christianity.

A second major obstacle which affects the whole of the modern West and even much of modernised Christianity and to some extent Western Judaism is the assumption that all civilization must follow the secularizing trajectory of Western history since the Renaissance. In fact, much of the dialogue carried out between Christians and Muslims today is coloured by the presence of that silent third partner which is anti-religious secularism. The debate is not like the one in which Nicholas of Cusa participated at the end of the fifteenth century. How easier would it have been, in fact, if a Ghazzali, a Maimonides, and a St. Thomas were to carry out religious dialogue! From the Islamic point of view what is difficult is to understand how various tenets of Christianity are changing so rapidly to the extent that some want to change the name and gender of Christ whom they now call Christa. When modernism began, Christianity, especially in its Catholic form, stood as the critic and opponent of modernism, whereas now many voices in the churches have become accomplices to the spread of the very ideas which have opposed the most fundamental tenets of the authentic Christian faith. The result is the constant change of even basic elements of the faith so that it is difficult to understand with whom one is dialoguing. On the one hand Christianity presents itself to Islam as a powerful spiritual force which in reality still dominates the West and its value-system, and on the other hand much of Christian theology is changing with incredible rapidity and what has

survived of Christian ethics in Western society is disappearing with an unprecedented speed.

The present situation is one in which Islam still sees God as sitting upon “His Throne” (al-’arsh) ruling over the universe and Islamic society as one in which the practice of religion is so intense as to incorporate the whole of life and where the vast majority of Muslims still perform their daily prayers, fast and perform other rites promulgated by the Divine Law (al-Shari’ah). In the West in contrast many question the very nature and function of God and in many European countries only about 10% of the people attend church at least once a week. Rarely is this great difference of actual practice of religion taken into account in current inter-religious dialogue and the agenda is carried out in which many Christians simply identify themselves with the West as if the case of religion in the two worlds were the same. It is as if a country in Africa or Asia were to carry out trade talks with the United States without any attention paid to the present disparity in economic activities in the two countries.

As in the case of trade, so in the case of religion, the actual religious situation must be considered and such baseless slogans as Islam being medieval and Christianity modern put aside at least by serious Christian thinkers. When France was medieval, it was called the elder daughter of the Church and, produced great theologians, Christian art and deep piety whereas today only 11% of French people even go to church while St. Thomas Aquinas has been succeeded at the Sorbonne by men such as Derrida and Foucault and the Notre Dame has been ‘superseded’ by the Centre Pompadour Christian thinkers, at least Catholic and orthodox ones, should be the last to try to look upon Islam in a pejorative and degrading manner by calling it medieval or expecting Islam to undergo a so-called from which would simply follow the path of the West ending up with an officially Lutheran Sweden in which church attendance a few years ago was less than 5%. A new appreciation of the eternal values of religion and the sapience which lie at its heart must be cultivated to allow serious dialogue to take place with Islam, one which would also strengthen what remains of traditional religions in the Occident.

Finally, a third major obstacle to be confronted is missionary activity, not as it was practiced in the days of old, but as it has been practiced by

Western Christian missionaries since the colonial period and continues to be practiced today. Both Christianity and Islam are travelling religions with claim to bear global message and neither religion can demand from the other to discontinue “preaching unto the nations.” In the days of old, the material power behind the religious message of the two religions was more or less the same in total contrast to what one observes today where Western Christian missionary activity in the Islamic world is accompanied often, but not always, by enticement of the most worldly kind, usually relying upon the products of the very civilization which has marginalised Christianity. There is usually the Bible in one hand and syringes or sacks of rice in the other along with a schooling system that is more successful in secularising than Christianising its students. There are of course remarkable exceptions but not all the missionaries are a Pere Foucault who, living in poverty, went into North African desert to be a witness of Christ among Muslims. Rather, in many areas missionary activity continues to be the instrument of Western secular interests as it was during the colonial period. Almost everywhere in Africa and Asia converted populations are as much protagonists of the secularised modern West as they are of the message of Christ, which they often understand in an already secularised form.

It is interesting to note in this context that eastern Christians, whose aggressive missionary spirit is not due only to Christianity but also to the Graeco-Roman civilizations for which everyone other than Christian and Jewish heresy which was Marxism and Communism and continues to be seen in the zeal with which secular humanists, no longer defending Christianity, go about with the same missionary zeal within the Islamic world to convert the Muslims to the secularist perspective. These several types of missionary activity in fact meet in some places such as in American and European institutions of learning in the Islamic world, many of which started as Christian missionary schools and are now supposedly bastions of secularist education.

To understand how great an obstacle is the missionary issue in the context of its being wed to the modern West and its being supported by great wealth created by means of modern finance and technology which, to put it mildly, have little to do with Christian poverty, one should look for a moment at the situation if roles were reversed. How would devout Christians

feel, if Islam carried out missionary activity not from the position of worldly weakness as it does now as Christians did in the Roman Empire, but from the position of incomparable economic strength. How would they react, if Muslims invited Christians to dialogue while promising anyone who embraced Islam free oil for their cars, free hospital care and access to an educational system which would guarantee them high positions in their countries whose governments were so much under the influence of the Islamic world that they could not stop such types of aggressive missionary activity.

There is no doubt that these obstacles exist but from both the Western Christian and Muslim side there must be an attempt to overcome them if there is to be any real accord and peace between the two sides. The Muslims, especially, while acting from the background of much greater weakness politically, economically and militarily, must nevertheless open all the doors possible to genuine dialogue and understanding with those Christians who put the kingdom of God above that of Caesar. How sad it is that many of the devoutest Muslims are distrustful of even well-intentioned Christians whom they identify simply with the modern West concerning which they have the right to be suspicious; and how tragic that in the West the more conservative and traditional a Christian, the more he or she is likely to be ignorant of Islam while some leaders of such groups describe Islam in terms of the anti-Christ: Ecumenism then often remains in the hands of those who are willing to change the very foundations of their faith to being about worldly understanding with followers of other religions or one might say these who would readily sacrifice that peace “which passeth all understanding”, that is, peace with God and in God, for a worldly peace which God does not allow anyway under these conditions for there can never be peace on Earth without harmony and peace with Heaven.

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In conclusion, it is necessary to assert once again that for those seriously concerned with the future of humanity, and not simply with passing exigencies, egotistical calculations and short term “interests”, the question of Islam and the West must be cast in a new mould. Both sides must understand that their cannot be an integration of two diametrically opposed world-views, that is, Islam and modern secularism, but, as mentioned, at best

mutual and not simply one sided respect on the human level and the creation of a modus vivendi based upon lack of aggression of one side against the other which includes refraining from plundering the wealth and the land and seeking to demolish the culture of the other side. But both Islam and the West must also understand that there can be and in fact needs to be a true meeting of minds and hearts between Christians, Jews and Muslims who after all share many fundamental principles of there respective world-views and who all face a much greater danger of a mortal threat form Western secularist culture including its outposts in the Islamic world than they do from each other.

To accomplish this end the atmosphere must be cleared through earnest effort on all sides and such terms as fundamentalism, extremism, radicalism, etc. be again studied and defined not in the light of immediate political interests but of the truth. The practice of first anathematising and demonising a word and then simply using it against whomever one does not like at the moment is hardly the way of achieving any understanding or accord. What is needed is indeed the truth of which Christ spoke as being immanent to this nature, and Muslims identify as one of the Names of God. It is only the shining of the light of truth upon the dark clouds of today's horizon that can make possible an accord between the people of faith in both worlds. Furthermore, one hopes on the-basis of such and accord that a way of living and acting between Islam and the West would come about based upon mutual respect rather than greed parading as human concern or hatred passing itself as religious righteousness. In any case, as Christians know well, what God has united should not and cannot be rent asunder by human beings. The destinies of the West and especially the Christian West, as well as Judaism, and Islam are intertwined and connected by profound bonds which cannot be severed in the long run and can only be temporarily loosened only at great cost to all. Let us hope that the current situation will provide the opportunity for people of good intentions on both sides to pursue the vital issue of the relation between Islam and the West in the light of permanent truths and not transient whims and fancies based upon the desire for power, greed and self-assertion.