

Reflection

Islam and the West: Yesterday and Today

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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 practiced 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 Qur'an and in surrender to His will? Or is it modernist interpretations that 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 that, in exasperation, before dominance by non-Islamic forces both outside and inside the borders of most Islamic countries, takes recourse in ideas and methods of certain strands of recent Western political history, including, in some cases, terrorism, which is against Islamic law and which was not invented by them?

Nor is the reality of the West in any way homogeneous. In fact, practically the only political unity observed in the West these days appears in its hatred of Islam, as shown in the case of Bosnia and Chechnya, where one has observed, 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 opposition of forces and diversity of what is usually called the West is so blatant as to hardly need mention. But since it is ignored in many quarters that 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 the United States 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 which are in fact on the verge of creating disorder and chaos within the very fabric of Western societies.

Also, religiously speaking, the diversity in the two worlds is not of the same degree. The vast majority of the Islamic world still lives within the Islamic worldview. Everyone considers the Qur'an 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 that unify them, there is a much greater division concerning the most fundamental issues, such as the reality or denial of the reality of God, the origin of humanity, the nature and origin of ethics, 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 fetus. Muslims might be fighting over the question of political authority and the types of laws that 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 forget, 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 skeptical and deconstructionist professors in universities in that very region than there is between the view of the former and what Muslims consider the Bible to be throughout the whole of the Islamic world.

The Historical Background

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. Second, the two civilizations respected each other, even if enmity existed among 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 epigraphy as ornamentation that looks like Arabic without actually being so. 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 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 that caused great death and destruction, medieval Europe looked with respect upon the only "other" it knew, that is, Islam and its society and civilization.

Open hatred of 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 worldview of the Renaissance, show a venom and hatred of Islam and Islamic learning not to be found in any major medieval authors. This was the period of humanism in the nonreligious 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 characterized the Western worldview ever since. These ideas stood not only against the West's religious heritage, but even more so against Islam, which has always opposed severely any titanic and Promethean view of humanity and has emphasized man's humble state before the grandeur and majesty of the Divine, seeing him at once as the servant of God (*'abd Allāh*) and His vicegerent (*khalīfat Allāh*) 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 and apprehension, which have survived sometimes even unconsciously in mainstream Western attitude toward Islam to this day, although there is no comparison between the military and material might of the West and that of the Islamic world today. Therefore, although opposition to Islam in the West begins in the period of crystallization of Western civilization during 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 a path of secularization, worldly power, and unprecedented commercialism and cultivated a new image of humanity that 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, an attitude 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 new element entered upon the scene. Instead of simply casting anathemas upon Islam as a Christian heresy, new analyses of Islam became based on either missionary prejudice or secular rationalism, which had developed in the West and, when combined with superior military power, became a formidable instrument for the dissection and ultimate strangulation of reli-

gions and religious cultures in the name of a supposedly universal science. 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 analyze 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 Qur'an was and continues to be analyzed and criticized in the West not as the verbatim Word of God, as Muslims believe, but as simply a human compilation to be rent asunder by rationalistic and historicist 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 light of this whole lack of parallelism 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 periods 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-à-vis the West as did the Umayyads or the Ottomans.

It is in light of the historical past that one must pose the question as to what constitutes 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 obviously are addressing a Western audience here and also because there is no 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, that Islam poses for the West.

The Elements of Conflict Today

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 is 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 postmedieval and modern Western worldview, such as individualism, secular humanism, and the superiority of human rights over divine rights and humanly devised laws over Divine Law, appears as a formidable challenge to a West that 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 and backward and are 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 that 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 that, 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, 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.

In debates about the threat of the Islamic world, rarely 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 that deny 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 nonnative Americans to return to its original inhabitants much of the land 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 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—oil—but also want in a thousand and one ways to recover the money they have paid for it, whether 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 organizations, 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 toward 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/her 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 that are destroying one's religion and civilization. Hatred is a fire that consumes and annihilates, but the fire cannot be put out unless one inquires 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 realize that the very absolutization of the West's particular worldview at a particular moment in time, when combined with powerful economic "interests" that are usually against the interest of others, bring about impatience with and even hatred of other worldviews. 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, also oppose any mention of the harmony and peace that dominated 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, although 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 force and crass commercial interests of the West with the whole of the West and remember that, although the West is predominantly secular, there has survived in the West to this day important Christian and also Jewish elements whose worldviews, despite transient worldly interests in some quarters, are close to that of Islam. Between the Islamic world and the secularist West there can be no deep harmony and accord, for there are no common transcendent principles between them, just as there are none between Hindus and Confucians or Buddhists and the secularist worldview. 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 Qur'an are not about to invade the airwaves of Europe

and the United States 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 worldview, through that technology, upon the non-Western world, especially the Islamic.

To Overcome Obstacles to Understanding

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 were massacring until recently 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. Maximus the Confessor and St. Gregory of Palamas, than do the Serbs with many not only secularized Westerners but also completely modernized Christians, some of whom admit freely that they do not even believe in the virgin birth of Christ or his historical authenticity, to which Muslims cling as truths revealed in the Qur'an. 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 that would make all serious mutual understanding well-nigh impossible.

It is true that modernism has marginalized Christianity to an ever-greater degree since the Renaissance. Yet Christianity, as well as Judaism in the West, continue to survive as living realities. If one looks at the situation in depth, one sees that they have a 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 centered 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 worldview, whether it be of this world or the next. If a new awareness of this truth is to be created 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 for a serious accord between most of the Islamic world and, at least, a West if not what is called *the* West as defined by economic and geopolitical interests that are pursued at all costs, whether these "interests" also accord with the interests of others 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 along with 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 more traditional and conservative elements of Christianity, who are, in fact, closest to Muslims and best understand the meaning of a sacred scripture that is immutable and of divine origin and of ethical laws that, 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, in which conservative Christians, who emphasize more than others the sanctity of human life from its conception in the mother’s womb, are much more indifferent to forces that 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, 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 Jewish beliefs comes from Islam and, in fact, throughout the ages Islam has permitted its Jewish and Christian minorities in its midst to practice 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 realize and have the courage to assert these truths, despite the tragic problems of Palestine that have cast such a shadow upon Muslim–Jewish relations and a triumphalism in certain quarters that would still seek to prove the glory of Christianity through the fact that it was the religion of a civilization that became the most powerful—but at the same time the most secularized—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, even at the height of their power and before the modern colonial period, Muslims never practiced “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 that 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 Muslims and not Christians or Jews.

Despite these tragedies that 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 secular humanism that 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 undertaking every effort possible in this direction. More specifically, Muslims, often wary of ecumenical discussions because of their subsequent results and effects, must realize how difficult the task of the acceptance of Islam as an authentic revelation is for a serious Christian theologian and not simply castigate the Christian because he/she cannot accept the authenticity of the Islamic revelation as easily as can Islam the revelations of Judaism and Christianity.

A second major obstacle that affects the whole of the modern West, much of modernized 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 colored by the presence of that silent third partner: antireligious 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 Ghazzālī, a Maimonides, and a St. Thomas were to carry out religious dialogue! From the Islamic point of view, what is difficult to understand is 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 that 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 that, 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 (*Shari'ah*). In the West, in contrast, many question the very nature and

function of God, and in many European countries only about 10 percent 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 interreligious 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 paying any attention 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 being modern must be 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 percent of French people even go to church. St. Thomas Aquinas has been succeeded at the Sorbonne by such men as Derrida and Foucault, and Notre Dame has been "superseded" by the Centre Pompidou! 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 reform that 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 percent. A new appreciation of the eternal values of religion and the sapience that lies 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 to this day. Both Christianity and Islam are traveling religions that claim to bear global message, and neither religion can demand from the other that it 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 Christianity 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 that has marginalized 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 secularizing than Christianizing its students. There are, of course, remarkable exceptions, but not all the missionaries are a Père Foucault who, living in poverty, went into the 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 secularized modern West as they are of the message of Christ, which they often understand in an already secularized form.

It is interesting to note in this context that Eastern Christians have not usually displayed such zeal as Western Christians, whose aggressive missionary spirit is due not only to Christianity but also to the Graeco-Roman civilizations, for which everyone other than themselves was a barbarian. This fact was also demonstrated in that Christian and Jewish heresy, 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 that, 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 that would guarantee them high position 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. 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 most devout 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. How tragic that in the West the more conservative and traditional a Christian, the more he/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 bring about worldly understanding with followers of other religions, or one might say those who would readily sacrifice that peace "which passeth all understanding," that is, peace with God and in God, for a worldly peace that God does not allow anyway under these conditions, for there can never be peace on earth without harmony and peace with Heaven.

Concluding Remarks

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 in addition to egotistical calculations and short-term "interests," the question of Islam and the West must be cast in a new mold. Both sides must understand that there cannot be an integration of two diametrically opposed worldviews, 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 their respective worldviews and who all face a much greater danger of a mortal threat from 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*, and *radicalism* must be restudied and defined not in the light of immediate political interests but of the truth. The practice of first anathematizing and demonizing 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 that peace that Christ spoke of as being immanent to his nature and that 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 an 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 well know, what God has united should not and cannot be rent asunder by human beings. The destiny of the West, and especially the Christian West, as well as Judaism, and Islam are intertwined and connected by profound bonds that cannot be severed in the long run and can only be loosened temporarily and 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 relations 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.