

The political Barriers between the Muslim World and the West: Means to Bridge the Two

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The nature of the relation between the West and the Muslim world raises such central questions as Does Islam really threaten the West. Likewise; does the modernized West endangers Islam and its civilization? What should be done to shift the relation between the two sides from confrontation and conflict to cooperation and peaceful co-existence?

Studying the relation between the Muslim world and the West entails examining the relation between Islam and Christianity because the West – ideologically – approaches Islam from a Christian-Judaic perspective. In addition, the West, from a historical point of view, dealt with Islam in a different way from that with other cultures and nations. The relations between the two sides were characterized by interactions as well as conflict and reactions. The Crusades led by the West against the Muslim world is considered as a reaction to Muslim control of Spain (Andalusia) for eight centuries. Also, Orientalism was mainly geared to distort and weaken the Muslim societies in order to pave the way for Western domination. It was aimed at damaging Islamic culture and civilization more than merely endangering the East at large.

The essence of the relationship between the Muslim world and the West nowadays is well manifested in the ideas of Globalization as preached by such theorists as Professor Samuel P. Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations".¹ Huntington warned that the most dangerous of the eight civilizations is Islam. These civilizations threaten the West in not only its material interests but its values as well. This misgiving indicates an implicit confession of the powerful Islamic values and culture against weak Western one.

(I): Background to the relationship between Islam and the West:

When the Westerners deal with Islam, they lean on philosophical thinking. This philosophical and theological thought is a product of three components:² **the Greek philosophy**

which is characterized by its scientific and materialistic nature and heretic trend in explaining the existence; **the Roman heritage** which is famous for creativity in the field of laws, administration, political systems, empirical tradition, and personality (emperor) cult; and finally, **Christianity** and **Judaism** which tried to give them spiritual and divine colour. Christianity – largely – is a pure oriental spiritual heritage. Nevertheless, it is now envisaged as a Western phenomenon.³

However, the West stripped Christianity from its eastern clothing to fit in with the Western thought. Thus, Christianity had to get rid of its oriental clothes and incarnated the Roman and Greek ones. A Muslim scholar has described this situation by saying: Christianity was Romanized, whereas Rome was not Christianized – indicating the distortion of and deviation from the Jesus' message. Thus, the message of Jesus Christ had been reduced to a sacred Church. The theological institutions whose administrative systems were established in accordance with the Roman system.⁴ Odd traditions and practices had been fashioned which have nothing to do with the original religion such as baptism, making Sunday a sacred day, canceling of circumcision, praying without ablution and introducing the tradition of monks and nuns.⁵

A new epoch of history started where religion has been separated from politics, and thought from reality, divine from the natural – producing so many dichotomies; whereas in Islam there converge religion, history, nature, science, the present life and the life after. Islam strikes a balance between all components of life.⁶ Thus Christianity deviated from the monolithic roots and, hence, lost the common ground that brings it closer to Islam. Moreover, the spread of the materialistic philosophy in the West has widened the gap between the Muslim world and the West.⁷ The same concepts, values and perceptions which originated in Europe were taken to the United States of America whose philosophy was built on that European Machiavelli's in an American flavour known as pragmatism. This new philosophy, which was founded by William James and developed by John Dewey, produced 'instrumentalism' – a philosophy of pretexts that explains present US foreign policy and political behaviour in international relations.

Thus the West – whether as represented by the secular-materialistic Europe or pragmatic America – deserted religion, values and ethics. This has widened the gap between the West and other religions particularly Islam. This was the first barrier that emerged between the Muslim world and the West. Also there is another perception held by the modernized West which maintains

that the majority of the modernized Christians, and to some extent western Jews, claim that all civilizations should follow the foot steps of the Western course of history since the renaissance.⁸

II: the Barriers:

The barriers between the West and Islam could be divided into three phases:

1. the old phase: the medieval ages
2. the second phase is renaissance: which includes the Crusades, Orientalism and colonialism.
3. the modern phase: which is the phase of modernization and globalization.

II- (1): Barriers in the medieval ages:

It is notable that the West's 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 - its society and civilization. Open hatred of Islam, both intellectual and theological, really began with the Renaissance, which also deplored its own medieval past. It was during this period that the two sister civilizations parted ways and a new and much more embracing wave of hatred was created against all things Islamic. This resulted 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.⁹

Nonetheless, there are common grounds between the two namely the divine truth. The two civilizations recognize the existence of each other – despite enmities – each has its own system of values, ethics, culture, political institutions and military strength. During the medieval ages, there had been reciprocal impact between the two cultures. Islamic and Christian philosophers influenced each other. St. Thomas Aquinas presents a perfect picture of a philosopher whose works are not only influenced by Greek philosophy but also by Islamic philosophy. He learned much from al-Farabi's logical treatise and borrowed much of Ibn Sina's ontological scheme ... Although he expressed repeatedly that he detested Islam as a religion with the influence of Islamic philosophical thought on much of Aquinas's writings, the picture that emerges is that of a person who, despite vast religious differences with Islam, nevertheless shared with it a sacred universe and a common language.¹⁰

The common sacred and the universe of the Islamic-Christian religious universe broke down following the end of the medieval period in Europe. With the Reformation and the Renaissance, Europe marginalized religion and

thereby determined the social direction toward which Europe would begin its intellectual journey. With the renaissance Europe ended its common language with Islam. This marked a return to the Greek intellectual world in which man is the only measure of things - a reliance on the humanistic secularism of the Greeks.¹¹ It was a deviation from religion (Christianity). So following the Renaissance, the West chose a different intellectual paradigm. It also changed the language with which it had communicated with other civilizations as well as with its own past. Therefore, in the post-Renaissance era, Muslims and Westerners find very little to agree upon, a condition that has produced a great deal of tension, as noted by P. S. Huntington in his article "*The Clash of Civilizations*".¹²

The experiences of Reformation and Renaissance have made the West value-free and, therefore, more accepting of the new "isms" than the Muslim societies. Now the two have taken different directions over the last four centuries. In fact "the modern secular West is not any more capable of having a discourse with its own fundamentalists and defenders of God than it is of having a discourse with Muslims."¹³

II- (2) Orientalism, Crusades and Colonialism:

The second component of hatred and confrontation 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."¹⁴ 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 do. The very existence of the Islamic world, which negates so many assumptions of the post-medieval and modern Western worldviews, such as individualism, secular humanism, appears as a formidable challenge to a West that considers its own historical development as the only acceptable historical 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 pattern of thinking and acting, as do so many Muslim modernists, there would have been no confrontation between the two worlds.¹⁵

So this point of departure constitutes one of the sources of confrontation and conflict between the West and the Muslim world in the post-medieval era (of Renaissance, Reformation, Orientalism and imperialism). 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 dynamism rather on the externally imposed norms that, according to many voices, now threaten the West itself.¹⁶

It is notable that one of the greatest barrier between Islam and the West is a theological one. Despite so many meetings between Christians and Muslims, sometimes 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.¹⁷

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 civilizations must follow the secularizing trajectory of Western history since the Renaissance (as it has been mentioned before). In fact, much of the dialogue carried out between Christians and Muslims today is coloured by the presence of that silent third partner: anti-religion secularism. From 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, who they now call Christa.¹⁸ This change in the most fundamental tenets of the authentic Christian faith made it difficult to understand with whom one is dialoguing.

Another difference is that where only 10% of Christians go to church, Muslims are loyal to their religion and keen on doing Islamic practices. Muslims converge unanimously in the basic tenets of Islam whereas Christians are still arguing over major religious issues such as the controversy over the nature of God.

Another factor that adds to the barriers is the concept prevalent among Christians that Christianity is modern, whereas Islam is medieval. Moreover, the missionary activities which became active in the land of Muslims since Orientalism, then with colonialism and until today. There should be reciprocal recognition of one another that the two religions are global message and that missionary and *Dawa* (preaching) which could be pursued in a suitable manner that is not provocative to the other.

In fact, Orientalism constitutes one of the vital factors that had and still have great impact on the Islamic political thought and philosophy in modern times. Orientalism aimed at explaining the East: its philosophy, culture and sciences to the European West to achieve scientific, religious, political and commercial goals. Actually, Orientalism is responsible for the image created about Islam in the Western mind.¹⁹ It is Orientalism which formulated all western perceptions of and attitude toward Islam. It could be argued that Orientalism constituted the intellectual background of the clash of civilizations.²⁰

Since Orientalism has portrayed a distorted picture about Islam to the West, it could be considered as one of the barriers that should be resisted by counter political intellectual and scientific production to reflect the true picture of Islam. One scholar notes that the European concern about studying non-European societies – especially the Muslim ones, dates back to the direct

interaction between the Muslim *Umma* and Europe through the Arab's arrival in Andalusia as well as the crusades. This vigorous friction prompted each side endeavor to understand the other in order to preserve his identity particularly when that (other) is an enemy who adheres to a belief, which shares with Christianity one source, and tend to overwhelm it and uncovered its deviation and called for rectification. Thus, "it was necessary to protect the European mind from that new invading religion."²¹

When the tide of Islam suffered a setback, Orientalism stepped into a new phase of attacking in form of missionaries and penetration into Eastern societies. This was followed by colonialism in a bid to dominate over the non-European societies, exploit their resources, and plunder their wealth. Despite differences over the date of the emergence of Orientalism, some scholars believe that it started prior to the 10th century with individual efforts of priests and monks to collect information about the new religion. However, later developed into organized scientific activities with its own methodology, scholars and institutions particularly after the Crusades in the 13th century.²² That is to say when the West failed to destroy Islam by military means, it resorted to Orientalism. After the 13th century, Orientalism developed its own theoretical basis.

Among those postulates and axioms crystallized within that theoretical framework, Christianity was considered as basic theological criterion for judging the authenticity of other religions – that any religion should conform to the basic doctrines of Christianity, otherwise it would be considered a deviant one or false. Orientalism considers the European experience as a paradigm to be followed by all other nations. It views the East as a one homogeneous entity whereas in reality the East combines a multiplicity of races, cultures, languages and religions.²³ Orientalists committed methodological mistakes when they adopted a materialistic approach to study the Islamic heritage – an approach which emphasizes the economic factor in historical development denying any role for religion and ethics.²⁴

Although Orientalist studies have had some positive aspects, they are responsible for distorting the image of Islam and Muslims in the West. Moreover, some scholars claim that there is an organic link between orientalism and imperialism in that the Orientalists' studies paved the way for colonialization. Following the Second World War the United States of America used these studies to extend their influence in the Middle East and the east in general. Orientalism still exists in the Middle East in form of adherents or westernized students as well as in form of institutions (e.g. the American university in Cairo, the American university in Beirut and other research centres in the region).²⁶

II- (3) the phase of modernization and globalism:

Some scholars believe that Islam does not threaten the West today as it was the situation during the Cold War between the West and Communism. Now the Muslim world is not in a position to challenge the West militarily, economically and politically. "...Many nations in the West do not only control the most important economic asset of much of the Islamic world – oil – but also want to recover the money they have paid for it, whether through the sale of arms or the creation of safe markets."²⁷ No one in the West - individuals or governments or organizations – is seriously interested in the welfare of the Islamic world unless it serves their own geopolitical and economic goals. This is obvious in the attitude of the West toward democracy or human rights in the Islamic world. They would make it an issue only when it threatens their interests.

The West was confined to the western hemisphere but now it transcends those geographical limits to have broader concept of cultural connotation to include – besides West Europe and the USA – Canada, Australia and New Zealand. so in the new world order there crystallized two distinct cultures: the metropolitan and the peripheries. The metropolitan culture of the USA and West Europe tries to impose its paradigm in the world, whereas the cultures of the peripheries endeavor to resist this cultural imperialism. This resistance sometimes takes political shape and in others, it is violent; and so conflict erupts between the two sides.

Consequently, barriers have grown up between the two specially with Islam which spread culturally and religiously in Western Christian spheres as well as in Russia, Asia minor, the Near East, North Africa and Spain. Tension between Islam and the West was even greater at the peripheries because the West engaged into cultural conflict. Consequently, Islam was annihilated from the Andalusia violently through crusades, colonialization and the planting of Israel as an extension for the strategic security of the West.

Although the 'West' was envisaged through this broader cultural concept, its centre of power rests on the United States of America. It is notable that the US behaviour in the world constitutes the major political barrier between Islam and the West in this era of globalization particularly after the incident of bombing the towers of New York on September 11, 2001. The US administration, thereafter, used to describe

Muslims as terrorists. The then US President George W. Bush went further and identified Islam with Fascism and described their war against Islam as a 'crusade'. The problem does not lie in the form of globalization (or Americanization) but in the values and culture the phenomenon or process endeavours to disseminate and impose world-wide. One American writer (Zbigniew Brzezinski) admitted that under the New World Order the USA deviated from the ideals of liberty, peace and democracy in the world (see his book: *THE CHOICE: America, Leadership or Domination?*).

American generations have been brought up with the principles that also imply the 'Manifest Destiny'. Since then the US elite assimilated this American jingoism: "The United States ranks high in almost all the major sources of national power: population size and education, natural resources, economic development, social cohesion, political stability, military strength, ideological appeal, diplomatic alliances, and technological achievement. At present, no country can mount a multi-dimensional challenge to the United States."²⁸

The American civilization is only two centuries old; but it is an extension to the Anglo-Saxon Protestants. However, it is a hybrid of European Machiavellianism developed into American pragmatism and instrumentalism. This underlies the US political behaviour and explains why America intervenes thousands of miles off its shores under the pretext of vital interests and national security. The USA "stole many cultures and distorted them, it drained the brains from many countries along with plundering wealth and resources from the Third World, African culture and music."²⁹ Hence, through globalization, America is trying to govern the world by the remote control.

American generations who are filled with this feeling of superiority views the Arabs and Muslims at the lowest level of the ladder of inferiority. It envisages itself as the leader of the free world – the champion of freedom anywhere freedom was challenged. In the post-cold war era the USA has become the lonely super power and the "de facto leader of the world."³⁰ Actually the United States considers itself not only a legitimate leader but also more legitimate than the indigenous leaders who did not meet the US definition of freedom-loving behaviour. Washington 'led' people by removing inauthentic leaders – the enemies of freedom ...³¹

Thus, "leader of the free world" came to infect American language and thinking. As the world's only super power, America is told that it must act like "a great nation, which still means defending freedom around the world."³²

Huntington noted that the United States of America has come to be aware that it is the lonely super power in the world in the post-cold war era. It used power against Iraq, Yugoslavia, and targeted 35 states by economic sanctions in the period between 1993 – 1996.³³ One of Japan's most distinguished diplomats, Ambassador Hibachi Odawa, has argued that after World War II, the United States pursued a policy of 'unilateral globalism', providing public goods in the form of security, opposition to communism, an open global economy, aid for economic development, and stronger international institutions. Now it is pursuing a policy of 'global unilateralism', promoting its own particular interests with little reference to those of others.³⁴

This American unilateral globalism increased anti-Americanism world-wide. At a 1997 Harvard conference, scholars reported that the elites of countries comprising at least two-thirds of the world's people – Chinese, Russians, Indians, Arabs, Muslims, and Africans – see the United States as the single greatest external threat to their societies. They do not regard America as a military threat but as a menace to their integrity, autonomy, prosperity, and freedom of action. They view the United States as intrusive, interventionist, exploitative, unilateralist, hegemonic, hypocritical, and applying double standards, engaging in what they label "financial imperialism" and "intellectual colonialism," with a foreign policy driven overwhelmingly by domestic politics.³⁵

Accordingly, the United States sees the Middle East as a region of turmoil and source of global instability that threatens the US national security particularly with the existence of authoritative or undemocratic systems in the Arab countries. These systems, they believe, nourish and support terrorism.³⁶

III- Building Bridges:

III- (1): the Quest for common grounds:

The other side of the coin of eliminating barriers is building bridges. However, to eliminate barriers, we have to formulate a comprehensive strategy for establishing bridges:

First, this entails self-criticism on the one hand, and renewing our discourse through which we could approach the West with a constructive dialogue, on the other.

Second, this, in turn, necessitates starting from the major points of convergence as a common ground with the Christian West. We should recall and remind Christians and Jews that our religions are revealed from one source, and that the three – Jews, Christians and Muslims – belong to one ancestor prophet – Abraham.

Third, all Muslims through dialogue must involve in enlightening the international public opinion that religion is not a part in the political disputes and conflict of interests between the rich arrogant north and the oppressed poor south. In addition, that the methodologies of Islam and Christianity share one spiritual attitude in facing all secular trends which aim at separating the content of faith from the human consciousness. The two religions prohibit injustice and arrogance from whatever source and they both advocate peaceful co-existence.³⁷

Fourth, Muslims know a lot about the characters of Moses and Jesus and the values that they preach – as are mentioned in the Koran. To this end, we should guide the West when dealing with an issue with those who represent the Jewish or Christian cultures. But most Europeans have ignored their religion and a Muslim may stimulate them if he addresses them on the basis of the ideological denominator of the religions of Book because they do not recognize Islam. So it is wise to adopt a gradual discourse in the context of the Abrahamic message for it is the common origin for all other religions. A Muslim may not relate himself to Prophet Muhammad alone, and address them gently through this common religious tradition within this prophetic succession since Abraham.³⁸ that the succession of all prophets is a mere renewal of the orchestrations of the same values and meanings but to different peoples and in different conditions. This is the methodology of Koran in the dialogue between Muslims and people of the Book in Surat al-Baqara where Koran outlined the defects of the religions of the Book and guided them to the basis of the Abrahamic religion that is Islam. Based on this fact, the Islamic discourse should be founded on this one prophetic chain started and spread and did not confine itself to one geographical location or time. It spread all over the Middle East, in Iraq and Palestine where Abraham brought up his sons and disciples who diffused his path (Sunnah); then to Egypt and Mecca where he left his heritage and successors too. Then Abraham, not like other prophets, was the first to extend the heavenly message. By doing so, he started a clear and extensive historical dialogue. In that context, he handed over the message to his sons who became prophets thereafter and followed suit. It is in this scientific context that we can approach the west which is fond 'universality'.³⁹

Fifth, through this common religious denominator we can open their hearts to what we say. We introduce to them the story of prophet Moses who started his message in Egypt then went to other places – the same as Abraham did. Then we introduce the story of Jesus Christ as it is told in Koran to persuade the Christian who may be influenced not only by Judaism but also by Zionism and we say to him: you believe in Moses,

David, Jesus as well as the Torah (the Pentateuch or the Old Testament) and the Bible. However, the circumstances were not favourable enough for him to preserve his book properly because he was politically shaken up by expulsion from that area. Then he returned, and then he was expelled for the second time. Thus, we approach them from the angle of their own historical criticism. The Bible was originally orchestrated from heaven but the various narrations and translations such as the introduction of the story of the life of Moses and the stories of successors and the extinction of the original language by which it was revealed, all these factors have inserted some additional texts to the divine origin.⁴⁰

Then we talk about the development of the Abrahamian heritage, which was renewed by Moses and the prophets who came thereafter as it is mentioned in the Koran and the Bible. Jesus was actually one in the chain of prophets and was followed by Muhammad as one in this prophetic succession. As Jesus came to correct the path and tackle the defects that have overwhelmed the religious heritage, Muhammad came to refine and revive it at a time where people became materialistic in explaining any phenomenon. This is because if religion is not renewed, it may die out in the people's hearts. For this reason, there emerged in Europe the trend of Christian revivalism. Accordingly, there erupted the conflict between Reformism and Catholicism. "We should tell Christians that we do believe in the book of the Jesus Christ, but because of the language in which it was orchestrated, then its translation into Greek and Latin, distorted the original text."⁴¹ However, we approach them by affirming that Muhammad is one in this prophetic chain that communicated the Abrahamian traditions and lived in the similar cultural environment. Muhammad came to correct mistakes accumulated throughout the course of time and to address new problems and new issues.

III- (2): **Strategy of dialogue with the West:**

If we are to design a comprehensive systematic strategy of dialogue with the West, we can adopt the following steps:⁴²

First: Justifications for dialogue:

- a- it is a legitimate necessity: to convey the message and undertake the sacred mission (*al Amana*) because the principle here is the interaction for *dawa* (promulgation and preaching);
- b- practical necessity; imposed by the international reality which is characterized by interaction, communication and interdependence among nations, peoples, groups and movements – a situation that

entails understanding the others and their reality as well as be aware of how to deal with them;

- c- a necessity for building the future of the nation: it implies understanding the goal of religion, embodying the spirit of faithful worshipping which prompts us to incorporate the gist of human experiences.

Second, for the issue of dialogue we have to look back to our history to draw lessons from past relations and contacts with the West. We can derive some experiences from the history of Islamic renaissance and the nature of our political discourse to benefit from the positive aspects particularly with respect to cultural interaction, civilizational interrelation and scientific reciprocal influence.

Moreover, we should also tackle our internal problems especially with regard to intra-Muslim disputes such as sectarianism and conflicts of *Madhahib*, inter-Muslim conflicts like those among the Muslim states, domestic political divisions as well as political instability. It is also significant here to plan for combating – or even eradicating – terrorism which constitutes the greatest obstacle in the dialogue with the West because the Western media portray a negative picture about Muslims today by generalizing this limited terrorist actions as if they are a prevalent phenomenon or common behaviour of all – or the majority – of Muslims.

These internal defects are negative points or weakness that should be addressed to formulate a proper discourse in order to approach the other from a solid ground and involve into constructive dialogue with the West.

We have to be aware of the rapid changes that have taken place in the world particularly those in the West. Now the Western world "is going into a new phase of dilemma. In the past it was engaged by such issues as the economic theories and policies, beset by partisan and class conflict and involved in how to design world policies."⁴³ However, today all that have come to an end, or about to. Such issues as sex, crime, gay and entertainment in which it is lost now beset it. There are many sectors in the west now live in that vacuum which make them feel in a dire need of faith and feel significance of life. Therefore, "we have to plan for a comprehensive dialogue in which all our Muslim society is involved in addressing all classes of western societies."⁴⁴

By so doing we will have a firm ground for dialogue and interaction with all European societies and approach them from various angles: cultural, security, diplomatic, political, and economic. Dialogue should penetrate all relations which we have to employ within a strategic context that serves our ends and constitute an integrated model to entice people by its example and action – not words. This entails that we

should be powerful with a strong reasoning and logical argument so that the other would respect us and be encouraged to engage in dialogue with us.

Conclusion:

To pave the way for a favourable climate for dialogue with the secular west, the West should stop invading the lands of the Muslims, plundering their wealth, effacing their culture, or trying to impose its own. If there is any antagonism or enmity on the side of the Muslims, it is a reaction to the deeds of the west against the Muslim world.

To encourage dialogue the West should be objective and fair in dealing with the Muslim world. On our part, we – the Muslims – should adopt a new objective discourse. The needed discourse is to cope with the contemporary world and to resist those extremists whose deeds would only distort the image of true Islam. In our rhetoric, we should unify the language, attitudes and vision. We also need to revive the positive characteristics of the Islamic civilization that was flexible in that it incorporated different cultures and languages. This interactive and flexible nature of the Islamic civilization endowed it with unique dynamism that has sustained its continuity throughout the course of history. Therefore, it has gained momentum and spread peacefully more than by force. The moderate Muslim scholars have to take the lead to usher in a new phase of dialogue with the West bearing in mind that there are also objective and positive attitudes among the Western elite towards Islam that we can manipulate or boost to foster a constructive dialogue with the West.

In this context, we have three examples: the first one is a scholar of history; Marshall G. S. Hodgson (died 1968). He was one of the pioneers of the Chicago's school of Comprehensive History. His wife and friends published his works in 1974. Among his contributions is a three-volume work on "the venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a world Civilization, (Chicago, 1974). Also essays on "the Great Western Transmutation: Rethinking World History, Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History, edited, with an introduction and conclusion, by Edmund Burke III, 1993. Hodgson read the history of Islam and its civilization from a comprehensive world perspective. He believes that one cannot study the history of European renaissance properly only within the context of the seven centuries of Islam (from the 10th to the 17th centuries) to discover the role of Islam in the world history and

civilization. He criticized the Western historians for neglecting the role of Islam as a major universal civilization.

The second example is the lecture on "Islam and the West" given by H. R. H. the Prince of Wales in the Chelonian Theatre, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies on 27 October, 1993. In his lecture, the Prince of Wales Charles called upon the West to understand Islam properly. He noted that their common attitude to Islam suffers because "the way we understand it has been hijacked by the extreme and superficial."⁴⁵ He spoke about the universality and timelessness of the Sharia law. He explained that some malpractices have distorted Islam. "We need to study its actual application before we make judgments. We must distinguish between systems of justice administered with integrity, and systems of justice as we may see them practiced which have been deformed for political reasons into something no longer Islamic."⁴⁶ He also pointed out the common values (justice, equality, and belief in one God) that link the two religions.

The third example is a Western scholar, Richard W. Bullitt, who came up with an idea of 'Islamic-Christian Civilization'. He published his book in 2004 (N. Y. Columbia University Press). He believes that the two religions, which belong to one (orchestrated) and revealed books, and share a common spiritual background can make one civilization.⁴⁶

He seems to be too optimistic but what could be applicable is a dialogue for a peaceful co-existence between Islam and the West. Of course, there are so many examples of this kind of which I have cited only these three. This reflects a positive aspect that could raise hope for getting into dialogue with the West. If these and other examples are to be generalized and reinforced, barriers could be eliminated and bridges established.

Endnotes

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