

Islam and the West

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Islam: A Universal Religion

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) though universal intellect, was too engrossed in the vicissitudes of social, economic and political activity to serve as the model for spiritual life and it is precisely this aspect of his being that caused masses, to come to Islam and accept it. Prophet (S.A.W.) in his philosophy put much emphasis on virtue, piety, knowledge, ethics and equality.

What Prophet (S.A.W.) preached, practiced it himself. The nobility and generosity of Prophet's (S.A.W.) character, moved the masses and brought them within the fold of Islam - the religion of compassion, love and surrender to ultimate authority of Allah.

Characteristics of Prophet (S.A.W.), i.e. Nobility, strength, serenity, generosity, and spirituality influenced people in such a way that by 641 A.D. Mesopotamia had embraced the Prophet's (S.A.W.) message, and by 651 A.D. Persian Empire had removed the Islamic flag and by 720 A.D. Iran, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Sicily and France opened their arms to emulate the Divine system of Government. Islam abhors nationalism and doesn't recognize the boundaries. Instead, it advocated common destiny, common records of deeds, a common consciousness, understanding, sensibility and common conduct, which in Islamic terminology has been summed up in word "Ummah".

Western hostility to Islam

The westerners considered Islam as a totalized unity of communities and forces and considered it hostile to the west and thus the Muslims were considered as enemies. It is probably because in medieval Europe; people's views of nature, man and God were so dominated by Biblical conceptions that they could

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not conceive that there could be alternative ways of expressing these views. The Medieval Christian writers created an image of Islam that was in many respects derogatory and unfortunately all this was done with a specific purpose. Muslims believe that the revelations made to prophets from Adam (A.S.) to Muhammad (S.A.W.) all fall under the fold of Islam. The fundamentals were same and suitable changes in *shair'ah* were necessitated by times. Thus followers of Ibrahim (A.S.), Moses (A.S.) or Jesus (A.S.) would be actually called Muslims if they followed the dictates of God in the real spirit. Since Islam differed from Christianity, and Judaism Torah and Bible had been amended, Christians considered it false. Christianity denies the Prophethood of Muhammad (S.A.W.) and validity of Quran¹. The Christians of the medieval times were unable to reconcile to the fact that Islam existed as an independent religion alongside Christianity. It can also be said that whenever people are confronted with a new ideology, they resist it; however, progressive it may be and try to prove it wrong. The Christians could not reconcile to the alternative way of expressing their views. Some Christians thought that all what Mohammad PBUH brought forth was a fiction composed to suit the immediate needs and desires of Muhammad (S.A.W.) and his companions.² The criticism had started soon after Prophet Mohammad PBUH started his mission. The followers of Islam were called 'Saracens'³ 'Moors' 'Tatars' or by other ethnic names and later came to be known as Mohammedans, which was a misinterpretation and the term was coined to equate Christianity with Islam, although Muslims declare five times a day Muhammad (S.A.W.) as 'servant of God' (Abduho). The general tone of European thought on this matter can be illustrated by a passage from St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Contra Gentiles. In the second chapter he sets his aim to try to clarify the catholic faith. He wishes to take recourse to natural reason against Muslims, but at the same time accepts that all the

Christian doctrines including the doctrine of trinity cannot be substantiated by reason. The aim of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* is thus the apologetic one of defending the Christian faith against objections and criticisms, without presupposing that the opponents accept the Bible. In this way the form of the work is determined, or at least moulded, by the existence of Islam as a problem for western European; and Christianity is presented as superior to Islam and also to the beliefs of philosophers like Avicenna and Averroes⁴.

Europeans turned to Aristotle, not for inherent qualities of his philosophy, but by the fact that he belonged in a sense to their own European tradition. The assignment of Aristotle of a central position in philosophy and science is partly to be understood as one aspect of the European assertion of distinction from Islam. The purely negative activity of turning from Islam, especially when so much was being learnt from Arab science and philosophy, and it was replaced by the appeal to Europe's classical (Greek and Roman) past.

Dante takes the lead and illustrates one stage of the process by which Europe distinguished itself from the Islamic world and identified itself with its classical heritage. Some of the main conceptions of the *Divine Comedy* probably came from Islamic sources; and Dante was aware of Europe's debt to Arabic philosophical writers. Yet what is noteworthy in his great work is the relative neglect of Islam⁵. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) has been portrayed in bad light-less has been said about Prophet (S.A.W.) in the great work of Dante than about the classical hero Ulysses. The contribution of Arabic philosophers is acknowledged by placing Avicenna and Averroes in Limbo; but they are only two in number, while there are a dozen Greeks and Romans, and in the 'Philosophical family' Aristotle is 'the master of those who know'. On the positive side the whole work is full of classical references, and it is Virgil who is Dante's guide.

A further stage of the process can be observed as the Renaissance gets under way. Now the former admiration for things in Arabic is replaced by revulsion. The Italian scholar, Pico della Mirandola (1463-94), who himself was well versed in Arabic, Aramaic and Hebrew, says at the beginning of one of his works, 'Leave to us in Heaven's name Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, and keep your Omar, your Alchabitius, your Abenzoar, your Abenragel'. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there had been provision for a Professor of Arabic in Salamanca (as well as at Bologna, Oxford , Paris and Rome); but in 1532, when a scholar from the low countries asked Salamanca about instruction in Arabic, a distinguished Spaniard said to him, ' what concern have you with this barbaric language in Arabic? It is sufficient to know Latin and Greek. In my youth I was as foolish as you and took up Hebrew and Arabic; but I have long since given up these two and devote myself entirely to Greek. Let me advise you to do the same.'⁶

Reasons for hostility

The feeling of inferiority with which Western Europe confronted Islamic civilization had various facets, Islamic technology was superior to European at many points and more luxuries were available to wealthy Muslims; but this was probably a minor factor. Militarily the Saracens had been feared in the past, but now the Norman knights were proving a match for them. The extent of Islamic rule, however, was formidable. In the early twelfth century men regarded the world as consisting of three parts, Asia, Africa and Europe. The largest of these, Asia, was thought to be almost entirely Muslim, and so was much of Africa, while not the whole of Europe was Christian. In this way it was supposed that nearly two-thirds of the world was Muslim. For any Christian who had come in contact with Muslims, too, their unshakable sense of superiority must have been disturbing. In general the feelings of western Europeans over against Islam

were not unlike those of an underprivileged class in a great state. Like the under privileged class they turned to religion in their effort to assert themselves against the privileged group.

Christians felt that after the Muslim conquests they were tolerated as inferior citizens and were excluded from the confidence of their rulers. They always felt at disadvantage for their uncertain future. Thus Christians condemned Islam and its belief about God and Christ⁷. This created animosity among Muslims and Christians in the middle ages and they lived more like enemies than friends.

The distortion of the image of Islam among Europeans was necessary to compensate them for this sense of inferiority. One of the chief contributions to the new image was that of Peter the Venerable, both by commissioning the Toledan collection and by himself composing the Summary of Islamic doctrine and the Refutation of it. This was shortly before the middle of the twelfth century, at a date when the assimilation of Arab science and philosophy had not proceeded very far. Thus European intellectual dependence on Islam had probably little to do with the sense of inferiority, though it is worth remembering that two of Peter's translators, Hermann of Dalmatia and Robert of Ketton, had been studying astronomy before he induced them to accept his commission. It follows that Peter the Venerable must have had some awareness of the new learning being taken over from the Saracens and may unconsciously have had a sense of inferiority with regard to it. The image of Islam created at this time by the Christian scholars enabled other Christians to feel that, when they fought against Muslims, they were fighting for light against darkness. The Muslims might be strong, but the Christians were given to understand that in religion they were superior.

When one keeps hold of all the facets of the medieval confrontation of Christianity and Islam, it is clear that the influence of Islam on western Christendom is greater than as is

usually realized. Not merely did Islam share with Western Europe many material products and technological discoveries; not merely did it stimulate Europe intellectually in the fields of science and philosophy; but it provoked Europe into forming a new image of itself. Because Europe was reacting against Islam, it belittled the influence of the Saracens and exaggerated its dependence on its Greek and Roman heritage. So today an important task for the western Europeans is to correct the false emphasis and acknowledge fully the debt to the Arab and Islamic world.

In the beginning the only interest in the study of Islam by Christian monks or priests was for the purpose of protecting Christians from conversion into Islam. They created a literature concerning the Prophet PBUH and the Book which they branded was blasphemous and thought it would help to discourage the Christians from entering the fold of Islam. Right from the advent of Islam in the 7th century till 1683(siege of Vienna) the Christianity in Europe was under threat of Islamic conquest and conversion. A number of Arabic speaking Uniate Christians from Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere traveled to Europe and became teachers in Arabic Studies.

Allegations and Clarifications

St. Thomas Aquinas or John of Damascus has left no stone unturned to try to prove Islam to be a false religion. John of Damascus⁸ in his chapter **De Heresibus** levels certain false allegations to defame Islam and its Prophet PBUH. He takes a severe attitude in condemning whatever a Muslim believes, including the whole of what he believes about God and about Christ, although some of that is true according to the Christian faith⁹. He without having regard for the sentiments of Muslims called Mohammad PBUH as a false Prophet, who was exposed to an Arian Monk and formed a heresy of his own.

There are various allegations leveled against Islam and Muhammad (S.A.W.) by Damascus and others and following clarifications can be given:

1. The person mentioned by Damascus is not an Arab¹⁰ and thus could not teach prophet (S.A.W.).
2. *Quran* clarifies it in the following manner:

We know that indeed they say, "It is a man that teaches him" the tongue of him they wickedly point to is notably foreign while this is Arabic, pure and clear. (Quran16: 103)

The *Quran* makes it clear that it not only confirms, but corrects, the Laws of the Gospel Bible and the Pentateuch Torah. The Jews and the Christians misrepresent the revelations entrusted to them. In so far as the Biblical text now known to us is inconsistent with the *Quran*. Muslims believe, that the latter abrogates the earlier revelations, some times that Christians and Jews understand the Text perversely and sometimes that the existing text does not faithfully represent the revelations actually made to Jews and Christians in turn. The genuineness of the Bible has been universally questioned¹¹. These books were committed to human care, without being verbally guaranteed as the *Quran* was. This corruption of the written text by omitting, in particular, prophecies about the coming of Muhammad PBUH, was called *tahrif*. It was of the allegation of *tahrif* that Christian writers took greatest and most detailed notice.

Damascus criticizes the various fundamentals of Islam without any basis. As per Islam, 'There exists one God who was neither begotten nor has He begotten¹²' Since this belief goes against the very basis of Christian faith reducing the Christ from son of God to the servant of God, Damascus lashes on Islam and Muslims and calls these ideas as worthy of laughter.

3. Similarly, Benedict of Alignan, who derived his ideas of Islam at third hand, thought that God sent no prophet without prior verification in earlier scriptures.¹³ Abdu'l Ahad Dawud, a former

Bishop of Urmiah named Rev. David Benjamin Keldani, B.D, who converted to Islam in his book entitled '**Muhammad in the Bible**' shows that in Muhammad (S.A.W.) alone are all the prophecies in the Old Testament fulfilled. Prof. Ahad quotes from the revised version of the book of Deuteronomy Chapter XVIII Verse 18 published by British & Foreign Bible Society 'I will raise them up a prophet from amongst their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth.'¹⁴ These words according to Dawud apply to Prophet Mohammad pbuh or else they remain still unfulfilled, as the first coming of Jesus was not the advent of the prophet like unto thee and the Second Advent can hardly fulfill the words.

Who the heavens must receive until the time of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Acts III 21). For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. (Acts III 22).

The difference between the Jesus and the promised one is that the first will appear as a judge and the later has to come with "fiery law in his right hand".

This is substantiated by the prophecy of Moses, who speaks of the shining of the God from Paran, the Mekka Mountain. The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousand of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them.¹⁵

None of the Israelites or Jesus had anything to do with Paran. It is Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.), who traces his decent from Ismael, who appeared as a prophet (S.A.W.) in the wilderness of Paran and reentered Mecca with ten thousand saints and gave a fiery law to his people, which reduce all other laws to ashes. When Makkah was conquered by the prophet (S.A.W.), he

came with 10000 followers from Medina and re entered the house of glory thus fulfilling the prophecy to its letter.¹⁶

4. The other objection to Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) is that there is no witness as in the case of Moses, who received the law by the Mount Sinai in presence of all the people, when God appeared in cloud, fire, storm and darkness. Witness is said to be necessary as in the case of marriage. It is argued that the scriptures have come down to prophet (S.A.W.) while he was asleep. Against this Islamic position there is a good deal of material available to prove it wrong. *Quran* very clearly clarifies this misconception in the following manner:

Can they be compared to those who possess a clear proof from their Lord, followed up by a witness from Him, preceded by the Book of Moses, as a guide and a mercy? (*Quran*, 11:17)

The guidance was sent by God to every nation through its Apostle. (*Quran* 13: 7). The Prophet PBUH came merely to warn. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) is clearly a sign from God and Imam Ali AS is a witness to Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.), as in the case of Abraham (A.S.), who fulfilled the God's wish, purified the house of God, built a sacred refuge in Kaaba, sacrificed his will to the will of God. Thus he was promised the leadership of the world and he pleaded for his progeny. His prayer was granted, with the limitation that the God's promise did not reach the evil doers. (*Quran* 2: 124). Ali was also appointed as Imam by the will of God. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) brought signs and credentials as did other prophets.

5. Damascus also pleads that Muslims adore the stone at Kaaba by kissing it. He believes that Abraham (A.S.) had intercourse on it and tied the camel around it, when he was preparing to sacrifice Ismail. Stone he feels is the head of Aphrodite, whom they used to venerate and whom they called Haber. The foundation of the

Kaaba, the house of God, goes back by Arab tradition to Abraham pbuh having a fourfold character:

- a) It was a centre to which all the Arab tribes resorted to for trade, for poetic contests and for worship;
- b) It was sacred territory by friends and foes alike. All fighting was and is forbidden within its limits and arms are not allowed to be carried neither a game or any other allowed to be killed like the city of refuge under the Mosiac Dispensation;
- c) It was a place of prayer: even today there is station of Abraham within the enclosure, where Abraham is supposed to have prayed;
- d) It must be held sacred and pure for all purposes.

Quran clarifies it further

Remember, We made the house a place of pilgrimage for men, and a place of security, and take ye the station of Abraham as a place of prayer; and we covenanted with Abraham and Ismail that they should sanctify my house for those who compass it round or use it as a retreat or bow or prostrate themselves. (*Quran* 2: 125)

6. Again a wrong story has been carried about Zaid and his wife Zainab and it is very much clear in *Qur'an*.

As faithful believers we must not put our own wisdom in competition with God's wisdom. We must accept it loyally and thus help in our own way to carry it out. We must make our will consonant to the universal will. Thus Zaid son of Haritha was one of the first to accept the faith of Islam. He was a slave, whom Prophet Mohammad PBUH loved like a son and freed him. Prophet Mohammad PBUH married his own cousin Zainab daughter of Jahsh. This marriage, however, turned out to be unhappy. Zainab looked down upon Zaid and he wished to divorce her, but the Prophet PBUH asked him to hold his hand and he obeyed. The broken marriage would cause ruin to the reputation of Zainab. The marriage of Zainab with Prophet Mohammad pbuh after divorce made two things clear:

When the marriage is unhappy, Islam permits and expects the bond to be dissolved, provided all interests are safeguarded. Zainab had to be considered and she obtained the dearest wish of her heart in being raised to be a Mother of the Believers, in all dignity and responsibility of that position.

The Pagan superstition and taboo about adopted sons had to be destroyed. Adoption is actually not allowed in Muslim law and thus to break this notion God commanded: Nor has he made your adopted sons your sons.(33:4)

It is the wives of your own sons that you are prohibited to marry and not your adopted sons: Wives of your sons proceeding from your loins are within the prohibited degree of marriage (*Qur'an* 23:33). But this does not apply to adopted sons. Before Islam freemen were often called after their master's name and their fathers name were lost altogether.

7. Damascus has also distorted what happened to Tamud. Questions are raised to belittle prophet Salih (A.S.) and Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and the *Qur'an*. The existence of camel is questioned. They also would like to trace its geneology. Salih, one of the brothers of Tamud was sent as a messenger of God at the age of 16 years and continued till the age of 120 years, but his people did not agree to worship God. Salih offered to provide them anything they asked for by praying to God for it. 70 people from them agreed if Salih would fulfill their wish and promised him that all others will also follow. They demanded that he should accompany them up to the mountain and demanded a she camel to emerge from the mountain. She should be red in colour with long hair and pregnant of 10 months. All the conditions were fulfilled when Salih prayed to God. They also wanted the calf to

be born and that condition was also fulfilled after Salih prayed to God. Even after all this only six out of 70 who bore witness to the miracle obeyed Salih and all others joined those, who refused. The camel, which had come to them as a sign from the lord, should have been left alone to graze on God's earth. They were warned of punishment, if any harm was given to her (Quran-vii-73. There was scarcity of water and the arrogant or privileged classes tried to prevent the access to the poor or their cattle to the springs, while Salih intervened on their behalf and *Quran* dictated; 'She camel has a right of watering and the people have a right of watering on an appointed day'(Quran 36: 55). They themselves asked for a sign which their prophet should put forward as a test case. Would they, through that symbol respect the law of equality by which all people had rights in water and gifts of nature. They refused to respect that law and committed sacrilege by killing she-camel. They themselves came to an evil end, Which Salih had predicted day by day.

The believers were humble and oppressors were arrogant, who selfishly kept back nature's gifts from the people. They did not follow the dictates of justice and kindness. Salih took to the side of unprivileged and was therefore, himself attacked.

So the earthquake took them unawares and they lay prostrate in their homes in the morning (*Quran* 7:78)

Quran clearly declares, "God best knows where (and how) to carry out his mission." (*Quran* 51.124), whom He shall appoint for His Messenger and He does not bestow the gift of prophecy on a person on account of his nobility, riches, or even piety, but for His own pleasure. The faith and all works of piety, meditations, spiritual exercises, prayers, fasting, and divine knowledge may raise a novice to become a spiritual guide, or to the rank of a saint, but never to the status of a Prophet; for prophecy is not procured by effort, but is a gift of God. Even among the Prophets there are only a few who were Apostles or Messengers favoured with a

special book and commissioned to direct a certain people or with a particular mission.

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) established the religion of Islam which has united many nations into one real brotherhood, many nations and peoples, who associate no being with the Almighty. All Muslim peoples obey the Apostle of Allah, love and revere him as the founder of their religion, but never worship him or give him divine honour and attributes.

Muhammad (S.A.W.), before he was called by God to preach the religion of Islam and to abolish the idolatry which he successfully accomplished, was the most quiet and truthful man in Mecca; he was neither a warrior nor a legislator; but it was after he assumed the prophetic mission that he became the most eloquent speaker and the best valiant Arab. He fought with the infidels' sword in hand, not for his own personal interests, but for the glory of Allah and for the cause of His religion-Al-Islam. He was shown by God the keys of the treasures of the earth, but he did not accept them, and when he passed to next world he had no worldly possessions. No other servant of God, whether a king or a Prophet, has rendered such an admirably great and precious service to God and to man as Muhammad (S.A.W.) has done: to God in eradicating the idolatry from a large part of the globe, and to man by having given the most perfect religion and the best laws for his guidance and security.

Muslim Concept and Christianity

Each act of God displays a divine emanation as His manifestation and particular attribute, but it is not His Essence or Being. God is Creator because He created in the beginning of time, and always creates. God spoke in the beginning of time just as He speaks in His own way always. But as His creation is not eternal or divine person, so His word cannot be considered eternal and divine person. The Christians proceed further and make the creator a divine father and His Word a divine son;¹⁷ and also

because He breathed life into His creatures, He is named divine spirit, forgetting that logically He could not be father before creation, nor "son" before He spoke, and neither "Holy Ghost" before He gave life. I can conceive the attributes of God through His works at manifestations a posteriori, but of his eternal and a priori attributes I possess no conception whatever, nor do I imagine any human intelligence to be able to comprehend the nature of an eternal attribute and its relationship to the essence of God. In fact, God has not revealed to us the nature of His Being in the Holy Scriptures nor in the human intellect.

The attributes of God are not to be considered as distinct and separate divine entities or personalities, otherwise we shall have, not one trinity of persons in the Godhead, but several dozen of trinities.

Jesus occupies a very high position as a prophet in the eyes of Muslims. It is noteworthy that the name of 'Isa (A.S.) has occurred in the *Quran* 25 times and the name of Masih (A.S.) recurs 36 times in the *Quran*. And the circumstances of his birth and his way of preaching and his ascension are repeatedly narrated in the *Qur'an*. Imam 'Ali (A.S.) has narrated the ascetic style of the life of Christ in one of his sermons, given under No. 160, in *Nahj al-Balaghah*. After him, in the 2nd century A.H. Imam al-Sadiq (A.S.) has quoted the preaching of Christ (A.S.), as found exactly in the Bible of Mathew, While delivering his advice to 'Abdullah bin Jandab in New Testament, book of Mathew, chapter 6, sentences 2,3,6,7,16, and 18:

In the sermon 159 in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, 'Ali (A.S.) While highlighting the piety of great prophets, writes about Christ:

Hadrat Masih AS laid his head on a stone, put on dress made of coarse material, took tough food. His main diet was hunger, at night the moon provided him only light; during winter he slept under the sun at times when it shone or set down; his fruit and vegetable was none other than what the earth grows for animals. He neither had wife that could instigate him to do follies nor did have a child that could make him sorrowful with

concern; nor had any property which might have taken away from him; nor had he any kind of greed (for worldly things) that could cause him humiliation. He had no means of moving except his own feet, his servants were his own hands.

On another occasion addressing one of his companions, Nuf Bukali, Hadrat 'Ali (A.S.), says:

"Blessing be on those pious persons who have turned away from the worldly attachments like Christ."

Christians repudiate the dogma that he was God or son of God or anything more than a man. He was born without a human father like Adam. In fact Adam was born without human father or mother. The Christianity has changed the scripture, made a God out of their prophet (S.A.W.) and from one God three Gods. For Muslims Jesus is a prophet of God and not a son and saying so is blasphemy according to *Quran* "Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of God and have been advised to desist say trinity¹⁸. (*Quran* 4: 171) and the *Quran* is very clear in saying that all those are in blasphemy that say that god is Christ the son of Mary (*Quran* 5:19). Jesus is called son of Marry to emphasize that he is no more than a man. His birth was miraculous and had no human father and God gave him spiritual strength.

Behold! I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the book and the wisdom, and the Gospel. And Behold! Thou Makest out of clay, as it were the figure of a bird by my leave...¹⁹ (*Quran* 4 : 113)

The similitude of Jesus before God is that of Adam. He created him from Dust. Then said to him: 'Be' and he was. (*Quran* 3: 59)

Our physical bodies are mere dust. So for God, Jesus was just like Adam or any other human being. The greatness of Jesus arose from divine command; "Be" that rose him from dust and became a great spiritual leader and teacher. Adam was also not born of human father like Jesus. Muslim denial of Trinity was the

basic point of difference between Christianity and Islam. Although Jesus according to *Quran* is son of Mary, confirming the law that had come before him, the Gospel: therein was the guidance and light and the confirmation of law that had come before him (*Quran* 5: 49). Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O children of Israel! I am the Apostle of God (sent) to you confirming the law (which came) before me, and giving glad tidings of and apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad (*Quran* 61:6).

We sent the scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before and guarding it. In safety; so judge between them by what God hath revealed and follow not the vain desires²⁰(5: 51). To proclaim three personal beings in the Deity and to confess that the Eternal Almighty was conceived and born of the Virgin Mary is the greatest insult to the Law of God and the grossest idolatry. To make a golden or wooden image for worship is abominable enough, but to make a mortal an object of worship, declare him God(!), and even adore the bread and the wine of the Eucharist as "the body and blood of God," is an impious blasphemy.

Islam is a religion of peace and in order to avoid confrontation the Prophet PBUH of Islam migrated to Medina on Sept 24, 622AD. Six years later ambassadors were sent to the court of the Chinese emperor Tiatsung and got permission to build a mosque there. The *Quran* instructs Muslims to show respect to Holy men of previous traditions and says "amongst those are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant." (5:82). The *Quran* promised Jews and Christians that "If only they had stood fast by the law, the Gospel and all the revelation that was sent to them from their Lord, they would have enjoyed happiness from every side..." (5:66)

The *Quran* negates any sense of religious superiority by declaring that reward is not exclusively domain of Muslims. It clearly states, "Verily, those who have attained to faith, as well as

those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christian, and the Sabians- all who believe in God and the last day and do righteous deeds, shall have their reward with their sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve".(2:62, 5:69) meaning they will dwell in heaven.

Reconciliation

The Prophet (S.A.W.), tried to reconcile with the Christians of Najaran in the year of deputation 10th of Hijra, when a Christian emissary from Najaran came (towards Yemen), about 150 miles north of Sana'a. They were much impressed hearing the passage of the *Quran* explaining the true position of Christ, and they entered into tributary relations with the Muslim state. Ingrained habits and customs prevented them from accepting Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) firm in his faith proposed a Mubahila i.e. a solemn meeting in which both sides should summon not only their men, but their women and children, earnestly pray to God and invoke the curse of God on those who should lie. Those, who had a pure and sincere faith, would not hesitate. This was in accordance with the Quranic decree:

If one disputes in this matter with thee, Now after full knowledge has come to thee,

Say: Come: Let us gather together, our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our selves and yourselves: Then let us earnestly pray, And invoke the curse of God on those who lie.(*Quran* 3:59- 62)

The Christians after seeing the family of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) declined to pray, as they had understood that the curse of God will befall them. They were told and understood that if the family of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) would pray that the mountain move and it would. The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) dismissed them in spirit of tolerance with a promise of protection from the state in return for tribute. Since Christians were not obliged to pay taxes like Zakat²¹ etc and were

thus levied a tax as levied to non Muslims, who do not pay Zakat. This is in return for the protection provided to men and material of the non Muslim citizens.

The conflict continues

The research in the real knowledge and thought of Islam is of great interest today as Muslims and Christians, Europeans and Arabs must live in 'one world' with one another.

The memories of the past medieval times particularly, what then might have been called two new forms of Christian belief, namely the cult of Saint James of Compostela and the Crusading movement get reborn in each period in history? The pilgrimage to Compostela and the enthusiasms for the Crusade to Jerusalem the twin foci of a popular religious movement remind Europeans of conflict that used to be and thus renew it afresh.

Europeans and Americans defame Islam and call it a religion of sword and fire. In this respect the European image of Islam is far from the truth. The choice between Islam and the sword was not imposed on Jews, Christians, and members of other recognized religions, but was restricted to idol-worshippers and was little heard of outside Arabia. The military activities of the Muslims, of which the histories are full, led only to political expansion; conversion to Islam came about through preaching or social pressure.

It is being propounded that Islam is a religion of violence in contrasting image of Christianity as a religion of peace which is said to have spread by persuasion. It is strange that men engaged in crusades should believe that their own religion was one of peace, while that of their opponents was one of violence. Some writers realized that the conception of a religion of peace was an ideal rather than an actuality, and argued that the failure of bad Christians to observe the ideal was no objection to Christianity.

The attitude of Americans and Europeans of 21st century is the same as it was during the past 1000 years. The repetition of the

Muslim declaration that (Mohammad is a prophet PBUH and the Quran is the word of God) reminds them of the conflict that took place long long ago. According to Samuel Huntington the twenty first century is the century of terrorism and civilizational conflict²². The war of civilizations is fought very vehemently by Americans. In violation of the normal doctrines which calls for the deployment abroad of one brigade in three, twenty one of the Army's thirty three combat brigades were overseas in summer 2003, though law enforcement in Iraq was outsourced to DynCorp for a \$50 million²³. His holiness the Pope Benedict XVI joined the race of clash of civilizations. In his lecture at a German University, he described what he sees as a huge difference between Christianity and Islam: According to Him, Christianity is based on reason, Islam denies it. While Christians see the logic of God's action, Muslims deny that there is any such logic in the actions of Allah. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) ordered his followers to spread their religion by the sword. While Quran diverts attention of man towards the signs of the universe at various places in Quran and reminds him of the signs of God to humble him. And He has made subservient to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, all from Himself, most surely there are signs in this for those who reflect (45:13). While we reflect we understand the real meaning, but the Christianity wishes to be at logger heads with Islam. Of all the people the Pope quoted a Byzantine Emperor belonging to the Competing Eastern Church who had a debate at the end of 14th century (its occurrence is in doubt) with an unnamed Persian Muslim scholar and in the heat of the argument the emperor flung following words at his adversary:

"Show me what Muhammad (S.A.W.) brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached"

When the emperor wrote his treatise, he was the head of a dying empire and his empire fell to the Turks a few years after his death. During his reign the emperor made round of the capitals of Europe in an attempt to drum support. He wrote religious treaties to incite the Christian countries against Turks and convince them to start a new crusade. This was to serve politics, as the present Pope tries to serve George Bush II. He wishes to unite Christian world against the Muslims, whom he calls "Axis of Evil."

To answer the Pope it must be said that there are of course people in Europe, whose opinion is diametrically opposite to Manuel II Paleologus- Sir Thomas Arnold, Voltaire and Goethe to name a few. Quranic views would be the best answer to the Pope and what *Quran* says about the issue has been said here already.

Draconian laws are enacted in various states to contain political dissent and wage a war against the innocent people around the world. This campaign is furthered in the aftermath of 9/11 all over the world passed legislations and are in a race to take a lead to be "with us" at the cost of the fundamental liberties of their own citizens. Laws that give member states of EU access to telephone and Internet communication of the people.²⁴ The House of Representative passed the Patriot Act, allowing the FBI to install carnivore on any Internet service provider to monitor all e-mail messages and keep track of the web-surfing of the people suspected of having contacts with the foreign power²⁵.

European combat forces, aircrafts and ships were committed to support the US strike on Afghanistan²⁶. NATO forces were deployed spending millions of dollars to act as proxy in an inhospitable land. The indiscriminate use of bombs in Afghanistan killing innocent civilians, women and children would

not have happened if Soviet, British and US had not interfered in the politics of Afghanistan. The country would have developed into a democratic set up given its tribal past and the people would not have been repressed by Taliban. At the time Soviet Union sought to bring political and social modernization to the country US supported Jihads to push the Soviets out. Now US want to appear as the liberator of the Afghan people from the Taliban for whose creation it is solely responsible.

It is CIA, that supported Osama bin Laden and other extreme Mujahideen groups in Afghanistan from 1984 and made terrorist that he is²⁷. CIA supported building of training complex and weapons storage tunnels in the Afghan city of Khost, where 35,000 Islamic militants from 40 countries were trained and equipped for battle against the Soviet Union. Bin Laden turned against America when U.S. walked away from Afghanistan after a lot of damage was caused. It was after he attacked American Embassy in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998 that president Bill Clinton ordered to hit Khost complex on August 20, 1998²⁸

Reagan administration supported Saddam Hussain, the president of Iraq so long as he was at war with Khomeini's Iran. He was listed as an asset in the secret computers of CIA²⁹.

Later during the gulf war people of Iraq were killed with the rain of bombs, which destroyed their country. The infra structure was taken apart, resulting in the deaths of at least half a million Iraqis. This is the Wilsonian project of reshaping the region and redrawing the map of the Middle East. The next move could be Central Asia, where Caspian basin oil and gas reserves are regarded very vast. The situation in Iraq is still very fluid and there is no idea about the follow up security plans. Most of the plans since the fall of Bagdad have failed.³⁰

The US and the EU 3 (Britain, France and Germany) have taken an aggressive stance claiming that Iran is concealing its nuclear activities and they are not satisfied about the Iran's claim

that the nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purpose.³² Iran has been suggested to abandon the nuclear program which the Iranian Government did not agree and the sanctions followed. It is a fact that US is responsible for concealment if any as after the fall of Shah they have repeatedly attempted to block any Iranian nuclear programs, peaceful or not.³³ In a speech at the UN on September 17, 2005, Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad condemned what he termed the development system of "nuclear apartheid" and "deny access to other states".³⁴

In an interview in *Der Spiegel* with Professor Chalmers Johnson reiterated the points he made in his book, which looks at American foreign policy in Asia. Chalmers stated that terrorism is the weapon of the weak and that a lot of people hate America with their whole heart and with motive as the US extends its power to all corners of the earth and forces the US economy on all people with concern for the damage it does. As in the cold war, the US acts as a protectorate, with troops in sixty-five other lands. Chalmers calls it a form of imperialism.

I wish to end with the words of Ms Arundhati Roy that terrorism is only the privatization of war. Terrorists are the free marketers of war and the legitimate use of violence is not the sole prerogative of the State.³⁵

References and End Notes

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2. Daniel, Norman, *Islam in European Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991 Introduction.
3. Lewis, Bernard, *Islam and the West*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford 1993. p 133-4
4. Montgomery Watt M.U: *The influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1972, P:79
5. *Ibid*
6. *Ibid* p 80
7. Daniel, Norman, *Islam and the west*, Edinburgh, The University Press, 1958: p3
8. Born about fifty years after Hijrah.
9. Daniel, Norman: *Islam and the west* P 3
10. Any possible human teaching they could think of would be poor in Arabic speech if he had all the knowledge that the *Quran* reveals of previous revelations apart from that, even the most eloquent Arab could not and cannot produce anything of the eloquence, width and depth of quranic teaching, as is evident from any verse of the book.. From the person actually they meant Abu Takia Mula Ibn Hazri, who was a foreigner and belonged to the people of the faith (Ahl I Kitab) and he later converted to Islam and it was Queish, who had spread the rumour that he was teaching Prophet pbuh in his own language.
11. Dawud: Prof. 'Abdu'l 'Ahad: *Mohammad in the Bible*, Adam Publications and Distributors. New Delhi 2007. P 12
12. II Sura CXII-3
13. Daniel P 53
14. Dawud P 12
15. *Book of Deuteronomy* , Chapter xxxiii, Verse 2

¹⁶ Deuteronomy xxxiii.

¹⁷ "O Mary: God give thee glad tidings of a word from him.....(*Quran* 3:45)

¹⁸. Jesus is a spirit proceeding from God and not God. Muslims pay equal honour to him as a man of God. The doctrine of Trinity, equality and sonship are repudiated as blasphemies. God is independent of all needs and has no need of a son to manage His affairs.

¹⁹. Jesus is no more than a man. It is against reason and revelation to call him God or son of God. He is called son of Mary to emphasize this.

²⁰. After the corruption of the older revelation, the *Quran* comes with a two fold purpose. 1. to confirm the true and original message , and 2. to guard it or check its interpretations.

²¹. A portion of the net saving from the income of the year is paid as tax paid to the Islamic state

²² Samuel P Huntington: *The Clash of Civilizations*. *Foreign Affairs* ,72/3 (Summer1993).P22

²³Shankar,T:Official Debate whether to Seek a Bigger Military. *New York Times Magazine*, July 21, 2003

²⁴ White, Aidan, *Journalism and the War on Terrorism: Final Report on the Aftermath of September 11 and the Implications for Journalism and Civil Liberties* International Federation of Journalists. Sept 3,2002.p 7

²⁵ Ibid p.30

²⁶ Ibid p.6

²⁷ Professor Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback, 'The costs and Consequences of American Empire'*, The Times Werner Publication, Great Britain, January 2001, Preface

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ John Burns quoting Lt. Gen. Raymond T Odierno in War could take 3 more years. *Times of India*. January 9, 2007 p19.

³¹ www.wsws.org.p1

³² Ibid p2

³³ Roy, Arundhati, *Peace and the New Corporate Liberation Theology*, Sydney Peace Prize Lecture at the Seymour Theatre Centre. University of Sydney. 2004 p7