Globethics Repository



Interfaith Dialogue

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Book
Authors	Rahman, Fazal
Publisher	Ghainaa Publications
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-03 23:52:57
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/206171

Interfaith Dialogue

Cross-Cultural Views

© **Ghainaa Publications, 2010**
King Fahd National Library Cataloging -in-Publication Data
A Group of Scholars
Interfaith dialogue: Cross Cultural Views / A Group of Scholars. - Riyadh, 2010
197p: 15 × 21Cm
ISBN:978-603-90095-4-2
1-Interfaith religion 2-Dialogue - Religiaus aspects - Islam I-Title
214 dc 1431/1628
L.D. no. 1431/1628
ISBN:978-603-90095-4-2

In cooperation with

Muslim World League (MWL)

First Edition, 2010
Copyright Strictly Reserved for Publisher

To Contact Publisher
ghainaabook@hotmail.com
www.ghainaa.net

In the Name of God
Most Gracious, Most Merciful

The views expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Ghainaa Communication and Studies or the Muslim World League.

Contents

Prelude 7
Prof. Mohammed Al-Bishr

Introduction
Interfaith Dialogue: From Makkah to New York 10
Prof. Abdullah Al-Turki

Islam and Dialogue With The Other 23
The Islamic View of Dialogue With the Other 24
Dr. Salih bin Humaid

Dialogue and Relation With Followers of Religions 49

Dialogue and Co-existence Between Followers of Religions and Cultures 50
Prof. Ezzedine Ibrahim

Jewish- Christian-Muslim Relations in Light of the Saudi Initiative for Dialogue 74
Dr. Edward Kessler

Religious Dialogue in Denmark: A Personal Experience 86
Abdul Wahid Pedersen

Knowledge on Islam and Enhancing Interfaith Dialogue in Japan 96
Dr. Kenta Kasai

Problems That Can be Solved Through Dialogue 109

Lack of Knowledge About Others 110
Dr. John Habib

Differentiating Between Islam and Muslims 132
Dr. Mohammed Al-Sammak

Political Exploitation: The Politics of Fear 150
Prof. William Baker

Dialogue and the Exploitation of Thought 164
Jeff Gates

Index 188

Prelude

Prof. Mohammed Al-Bishr (*)

We, Muslims, believe diversity among people is an established Divine way of Allah, and that differences will continue to prevail until the Day of Resurrection. As decreed by Allah, it is impossible to have a religious unity among all the people of earth.

The holy Quran teaches us this fact. Allah says,

> ***"And if your Lord had so willed, He could surely have made mankind one Ummah [nation or community (following one religion i.e. Islâm)] but they will not cease to disagree." [11:118].***

(*) Head of the Research Team of International Thought Project on Saudi Arabia.

And says,

> ***"Mankind were but one community (i.e. on one religion - Islâmic Monotheism), then they differed (later); and had not it been for a Word that went forth before from your Lord, it would have been settled between them regarding what they differed." [10:19]***

The holy Quran also explains, in more than one verse, the wisdom behind these differences, their causes, and attributes. Most importantly, the holy Quran tells us the diversity of mankind demonstrates truth from falsehood, and purifies good from evil.

The call for dialogue between followers of different religions, as adopted by the Makkah-based Muslim World League (MWL) and supported by Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, is an attempt to have influential personalities across the world meet on the basis of noble values. It is also an attempt to eliminate injustice, faith deviation, and moral decay, as well as to restore good values in society.

These high goals will not, however, bear fruit and attain objectives unless all those involved in, free themselves from political and cultural exploitation. Those participating should have sincere and objective information about others. Honesty should prevail among all participating parties. This book, which tackles interfaith dialogue, includes cross-cultural views about how this proposed dialogue should be conducted. It diagnoses key problems confronting this dialogue in scientific, objective wording.We believe this

publication will be a vital contribution to interfaith dialogue. Our key objective is to meet with others on the bases of truth. We strongly believe that if mankind reaches this truth, the world will live in peace and happiness.

Introduction

Dialogue Between Followers of Religions From Makkah to New York

Prof. Abdullah bin Abul Mohsin Al-Turki (*)

Praise be to God and prayers and peace on the Messenger of God and upon all of His prophets, His representatives of mercy to the world.

At the outset of my remarks, it gives me great pleasure to thank Ghainaa Communication and Studies and my brother, Professor Mohammed bin Saud Al-Bishr for their efforts in promoting dialogue between the followers of different religions and civilizations. They are both in the vanguard of this undertaking.

Not long ago they assembled a group of eminent scholars and researchers that contributed immensely to the repository of human knowledge through their writings on civilized

(*) Secretary General of the Makkah-based Muslim World league (MWL) and member of the Senior Ulema (Muslims scholars) Commission. Former rector of the Riyadh-based Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University and former Minister of Islamic Affairs, Endowment, Call and Guidance and former advisor at the Saudi Royal Court. Chairs a number of Islamic councils in the Muslim world and took part in many Islamic conferences around the world. (Saudi Arabia)

dialogue, thereby providing their readership with what they needed to know in a world increasingly burdened by pain and conflicts. Their research demonstrated the fact that these struggles and these disputes emanated not from the true messages of God or from the culture of enlightenment, but rather from imperialist designs that dressed them in the garb of religion and culture. Their aim in this was expand their own vested interests in selfish conflicts that were propelled by their own peculiar racism and by radical belief in their own superiority.

Out of this odious theory-as the researchers and scholars demonstrated, was born the theory of the Clash of Civilizations to which they brought, in their campaigns to promote this idea, a cultural dimension. They advanced that theory as if it were an absolute reality and thus threatened the future of humanity by generating catastrophes, debacles, pain and suffering and by planting even more seeds of dissension and hatred among the different elements of human society.

We must overcome this through dialogue and by promoting a co-existence characterized by mutual respect.

The call to dialogue emanated from the heart of the Islamic World. It was an expression of the sincere desire of the Muslims to choose dialogue as the strategic option to reduce crises, to overcome the differences that confront our today's life, and to concentrate instead on positive cooperation in the spirit of communality. It was an expression of their desire to provide peoples with the opportunity to know each other and to know each other's cultures and the full extent of their heritage and uniqueness and to distant themselves from past judgments and pains that brought no relief or comfort to them.

In their writings, the researchers absolved Islam from alleged association with terrorism, a phenomenon that is neither the monopoly of any one ideology nor of any one religion. They traced these allegations to the deliberate dissemination of erroneous information that was designed to divert attention from the grief and sadness caused by the imperialists' own international conflicts and international manipulations that have scarred generations upon generations of the innocent. They deliberately made no distinction between religion itself and the exploitation of religion as a pawn in the game of international politics.

As a matter of fact, Islam towers over the calls to struggle and strife. Islam's methodology is anchored unambiguously in its teaching and objectives. Indeed, the Muslims were in the vanguard of peoples who advocated dialogue and cooperated with the different cultural entities. There is no question, either, that their historic translation movement of Greek philosophy into Arabic and their examples of peaceful co-existence are counted among the most Islamic prominent monuments of the opening of one people to another. And all of these Islamic efforts caused neither the spoliation of one civilization or the lost of it individuality or the degradation of one culture at the expense of the other.

The researchers underscored the sincerity of their efforts on behalf of dialogue by bringing a high degree of expertise to the understanding of it by insightful examination of the problem and a cumulative historical knowledge of it based on their evaluation of contemporary realities. All this required determined and intellectually honest positions that confirm noble human values.

The International Conference for Dialogue that the Muslim World League convened in Makkah at the behest of King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, may God protect him and guide him, was not the beginning of the march to dialogue; rather it was a pivotal landmark in the march for dialogue that had been launched in the forties of the past Hijri century. Then the intellectuals of the world were, unfortunately, unable to score even a few successes in their endeavor to create a dialogue between different countries that was sorely needed for the most compelling of reasons, namely, to resolve the most alarming disputes in the world and to address the moral and social challenges that confronted the future of the family and of human society, itself.

The world experienced a big step backward in values and this resulted in grievous errors. These included the diminution of ethical values in human societies, social upheavals, and millions of dead, all victims of the destructive World Wars and of local and regional strife and conflicts.

Even a most cursory look at contemporary history is sufficient to sensitize thinkers to these serious dangers, and to impel them to mobilize their wills to avert these threats, and to save humanity from the havoc of these dangers and thereby produce a better future.

We also have noticed in this century the concern of some world leaders over religious revival; we also note their efforts to block the forward advance of ethical, social and political life among all peoples in the wake of the failed ideologies that were very influential in the last century; they are frightened

by this because some perceive religious revival as a source of increase struggle and dissension. Their attitude is found most notably among those fanatics, here and there, who sow the seeds of evil by calling for the clash of civilizations which they characterize as the end of history.

However, the hopeful among the followers of religion are aware that they possess the capacity of mutually shared values and shared views that makes possible the cooperation of most thinking people to confront and suppress the international threats in a world that, after all, resembles a small village, where what happens to the individual impacts the collective.

We today are called upon to invest in this mutual humanism by fashioning international programs that give concrete form to these mutual views and that are consonant with the perspective of many who face the same threats and similar problems. Although not an end in itself-without doubt-it is however the ideal method to cement relations between peoples, to bridge the chasm that separates them, and to eliminate differences and lack of cooperation in order to surmount the walls of separation that have historically caused most of the problems and conflicts.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, recognized this reality when he initiated his undertaking to open a new page of cooperation wherein society would cooperate in the interest of all humanity.

As a result of his determination to give legitimacy to this bold effort, he convened a group of illustrious Muslim scholars to meet at an International Islamic Conference organized by the Muslim World League (MWL) in Makkah

in June 2009. The objective was to discuss the establishment of a dialogue between followers of difference religions and cultures, to establish objectives, to set priorities, and to study the obstacles that may stand in the way of achieving these desirable goals.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques pointed out during his opening remarks at the conference that the awesome history of the peoples of Islamic world together with their great civilization and profound heritage qualify them to play a key role in dialogue with other countries, to offer salubrious solutions to contemporary crises, and to exemplify the tolerance, justice, and co-existence of Islam for the betterment of all humanity.

He stressed the importance of dialogue as the best example that the Islamic nation can set to solidify understanding and coexistence with members of all religion and difference cultures as a rebuff to the call of others to excesses and fanaticism.

> ***"Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance." [16:125]***

Muslims are a voice of justice, of humanitarian and ethical values. We are a voice for coexistence and for logical dialogue and of justice. We appeal to conscience and dialogue as the best application of the word of Almighty God.

The Makkah Conference for Dialogue that convened within the confines of the Holy Sanctuary gave the world an unambiguous image of the naturalness, the mechanism, the bases and objectives of dialogue; it overcame the previous unsuccessful attempts mentioned above because this time it was more inclusive, and because this time it included followers of positive philosophies and methodologies as well as adherents of subjective thought.

This was consonant with the universality of the message of the Seal of the Prophets, peace and prayers be upon him.

At the opening of the conference, the King acknowledged the existence of other influential tendencies that exist in contemporary life, politically, scientifically, academically, and in the media, among others. Therefore he did not restrict attendance to religious leaders only, but even invited individuals whose views were not favorably disposed to Islam. He did that deliberately to show them the truth, and to correct their erroneous understanding of Islam.

To underscore the sincerity of the Muslims and the unity of their position and viewpoints regarding dialogue, he advised the participants at the conference of the MWLto set up a world Islamic organization for dialogue and to devise a unified strategy to coordinate and to follow up and coordinate its activities with other such organizations.

In recognition of the fact that he is the international symbol of Islam's call to dialogue and in recognition of his generosity and leadership, the conference decided to establish a special center for this purpose and named it "The Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz International Center for

Dialouge with Different Civilizations." The objective of the Center is to spread the culture of dialogue, its growth, and to train experts in it based on precise information.

It also recommended the creation of King Abdullah International Prize for Cultural Dialogue, to be awarded to individuals and world organizations that participate in the development of dialogue and the realization of its objectives.

The participants at the conference presented to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, a list of prominent individuals who were experienced in dialogue and who expressed a desire to participate. They included Muslims, adherents from other divine missions, and representatives of positive and subjective philosophies. They will be briefed on the Islamic viewpoints of dialogue that resulted from the Makkah Conference, as well as agreements on the international nuances of dialogue. They will participate in the resolution of problems that confront humanity today. It also called for the participation of the United Nations and member countries of world organizations, so that it would be a fruitful world project.

This project was realized when the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques invited adherents of different civilizations and religions representing fifty four countries to the Global Interfaith Dialogue that the League organized in Madrid in 2008. There the participants were briefed on the efforts of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques who pointed out that among the most important elements of dialogue are getting to know one another, cooperation, and the exchange

of useful information, in order to achieve the truth and justice that brings happiness to mankind.

They agreed on the fundamental principle of the singleness of the origin and mankind and the equality of peoples; they called for the respect and dignity of humanity and for the concern of human rights regardless of the differences in origin and culture. They called for the preservation of stability and peace, adherence to agreements, and the respect for the cultural particularities of different peoples, as well as their right to security, freedom, and self-determination, and other fundamentals rights that are needed to build good relations with the different peoples, thereby acknowledging differences of religion and positive cultures. They also stressed the importance of humanity returning to the worship of their Sublime Creator, to obedience to Him, and the freedom to worship Him. They emphasized the need to combat crime and corruption, drugs and terror, and the need to protect the family from ethical deviation in as much as it is the foundation for the preservation of societies. And they called for the protection of the environment from the dangers and sordidness that threaten it.

The participants at the conference responded to the concept of the inevitability of a clash of civilizations and cultures by exposing the dangers of these campaigns that seek to deepen differences and to undermine the foundations of peace and coexistence. They called for the reinforcement of mutual human values and cooperation in disseminating them in societies, and to fill the gap where such values are absent; and to spread the culture of tolerance

and understanding so that dialogue will be the measure of international relations.

The conference also decided to create a working group to study the problems that hinder dialogue and to recommend solutions to them. It called for cooperation between the different religious, cultural, educational, and media organizations to establish noble values; and to encourage high social endeavors, and to block trends that break up the family, as well as similar scourges.

The participants called for the UN General Assembly to support the conclusions and to benefit from them by strengthening dialogue between the followers of religions, civilizations, and cultures and by convening a special meeting dedicated to this subject at its regular session.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques took his efforts directly to the General Assembly of the United Nations where he announced, before the leaders of the world that, "The religions that God, the Powerful, the Illustrious, gave for the happiness of humankind must not be the cause of dissension. Humanity is one. Since we share the same planet we are faced with two choices: either to live together in peace and understanding or to bring ruin upon ourselves through misunderstanding, rancor, or hatred".

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques pointed out in his address that the tendency throughout history to concentrate on differences between the followers of different faiths and cultures has led to fanaticism and to destructive wars that have also caused the world to deny the principle of justice and tolerance. He stated that "The time has come for us to learn from the lessons of our grim

past and to come together on the basis of the ethical and high standards in which we all believe." His efforts were echoed internationally as kings and presidents delivered similar message from the podium of the United Nations as did representatives of Non-Governmental Agencies, all supporting the call to dialogue of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

In his speech to the United Nations, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques called for the creation of a committee composed of representatives of the International Madrid Conference on Dialogue: "Permit me to ask the conferees at Madrid to select a committee from among themselves who will bear the responsibility for dialogue in the days and years to come."

The League was happy with this invitation and selected fifty persons to meet in Vienna on 13-14 January 2009 to lay the foundation for the plan that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques laid out.

On 30 September 2009, MWL invited approximately one hundred international figures representing experts in religion and dialogue. The theme was "The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosque Conference and its Influence on the Dissemination of Human Values." The objectives were to increase the reverberations of this historical conference and to strengthen the responsibility that MWL shoulders; and to oversee the implementation and development of this conference in order to achieve the desired hopes and objectives that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz laid down in his address at the Makkah Conference and at Madrid.

May all Muslims and other people of good will stand side by side with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and participate in his noble endeavor as they look forward for more programs that count this endeavor among the most powerful methods to influence cooperation, and understanding in the service of all humanity.

Islam and Dialogue With the Other

The Islamic View of Dialogue With the Other

Dr. Salih bin Abdullah bin Humaid (*)

Introduction

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Bestower of mercy. Praise is to God, the Merciful Who created the human person and taught him to express himself, and peace and blessings be upon Muhammad the seal of the Prophets.

People are different; and there are differences in the sources from which they get information and education. This generates differences among them in their thoughts and opinions, and even in their beliefs. If this is so, there must then be a means by which to bring these diverse thoughts and beliefs together to inspect them and distinguish the good from the bad.

> ***"Then, as for the foam, it passes away as scum upon the banks, while, as for that which is of use to mankind, it remains in the earth." [13:17]***

The ideal way of doing this is dialogue, in the best of

(*) Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council and member of the Senior Ulema (Muslims scholars) Commission. Imam and Khateeb of the Haram Mosque in Makkah. Former President of the Affairs of the Haram Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah and former chairman of the Shoura (Consultative) Council. (Saudi Arabia)

manners. The principle of dialogue is one of the important principles on both the individual and collective level for clarifying the truth, showing the correct way to it or rebutting specious objections raised against it, and so on, without resorting to disparagement or harshness. This is the way of correcting mistakes, straightening crookedness and arriving at the desired truth with the help of competent persons of learning and experience. In this respect the Holy Quran provides us with many examples of different types of dialogue: dialogue with Angels, Prophets, or those lower than them, even with the cursed Devil. The Quran also highlights dialogue between Prophets and their peoples in its stories about them that are full of wisdom.

Dialogue thus becomes a religious requirement when its subject is religious, as in inviting people to Islam or explaining the truth to them. But it is also a human requirement demanded by people's needs and differences. By dialogue humanity becomes more stable and more understanding, especially because of the fact that the world is becoming smaller as a result of the advancement in technology and modern means of communication.

Dialogue in its different styles is mentioned in many places in the Quran. There is for example the dialogue that relates to the rank of the human person among creation:

> ***" And when your Lord said to the angels: 'Verily, I am about to place a viceroy in the earth,' they said, 'Will you place one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we hymn your praise and sanctify You?' He said: 'Surely I know that which you know not." [2:30]***

> ***« And when Allah said: 'O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you say to the people, 'Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah?" He said, 'Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it, then You knew it. You know what is in my inner self, and I know not what is in Yours. Verily, You, only You are the Knower of Things Hidden." [5:116]***

There are the dialogues between Prophets and their peoples to establish the foundations of faith and to rebut the specious arguments they raise against them:

> ***" And We verily sent Noah to his people, and he said, 'O my people! Allah, you have no other god save Him. Will you not ward off (evil)?" [23:23]***

His people replied by saying:

> ***" Verily, we surely see you in foolishness, and verily we deem you of the liars." [7:66]***

They also said:

> ***" You have brought us no clear proof and we are not going to forsake our gods on your (mere) saying, and we are not believers in you." [11:53]***
> ***" Verily, we disbelieve in that with which you have been sent, and verily, we are in grave doubt as to that to which you invite us. Their***

Messengers said, 'What! Can there be a doubt about God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth?" [14:9]

There are many other types of Quranic dialogues, like the one between Abraham and the king who disputed with him about his Lord:

" Have you not thought of the one who had an argument with Abraham about his Lord, (because Allah had given him the kingdom), how, when Abraham said, 'My Lord is He who gives life and causes death,' He answered, 'I give life and cause death.' Abraham said, 'Verily, Allah causes the sun to rise in the East, so do you cause it to come up from the West.' Thus was the disbeliever abashed. And Allah guides not wrong doers." [2:258]

And the Pharaoh who:

"Proclaimed, 'I am your Lord, the Highest." [79:24]
"So Allah seized him (and made him) an example for the after (life) and for the former." [79:25]
"Verily, herein is indeed a lesson for him who fears." 79:26]

And the one who said to his partner:

" I am more than you in wealth, and stronger in respect of men." [18:34]

And:

> "***The saying of her that disputes with you (Muhammad) concerning her husband, and complains to Allah. And Allah hears your colloquy. Verily, Allah is Nearer, Knower." [58:1]***

And Allah's saying:

> " ***And when Abraham said (to his Lord), 'My lord! Show me how You give life to the dead.' He said: 'Do you not believe?' Abraham said, 'Yes, but (I ask) in order that my heart may be at ease.' (His Lord) said: 'Take four of the birds and cause them to incline to you, (then cut them into pieces) then place a part of them on each hill, then call them, they will come to you in haste. And know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.'" [2:260]***

And Allah's saying about Abraham that when:

> ***" His people argued with him, He said, 'Do you dispute with me concerning Allah, when He has guided me? I fear not at all that which you set beside Him.'" [6:80]***

The Quran reports these dialogues to show the relationship between dialogue and the Islamic message and its way of inviting others to the truth in a convincing way. The Faithful are recommended to follow this way when they engage in

dialogue with others; they exchange views with them and argue with them in the best of ways. It is important for them in doing so to abide by the discipline and good manners demanded by this method. It is also important for those who invite people to Islam to explore the wide horizons of the Quranic dialogues and follow their example in carrying the Islamic message of guidance and mercy to all people, warning those who reject it, and giving good tidings to those who accept it.

Explanation of some Arabic Technical Terms

Islamic ***Ru'yah*** (view): What is meant here is intellectual insight and inspection. This Islamic view comprises belief and what is related to it and understood by it regarding its fundamentals or details as we find them in the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

The principle of the universality of Islam is the strong foundation on which a Muslim's relation with people of other faiths is built, and from which originates a Muslim's view in dealing, in a general way, with non-Muslims. Dialogue is thus established as a way of conveying Islam to all people; it is a method of inviting people to God.

The Islamic message sees in the multiplicity laws one of God's established ways of dealing with His creation:

> ***" For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced out way. Had Allah willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He has given you (He has made you as you are). So vie one with another in good works.***

> ***To Allah you will all return, and He will then inform you of that wherein you differ." [5:48]***

He created them to be different and numerous in types. But He set forth signs and proofs that point to the truth. That is why He said:

> ***"People were one community, (but then they differed, so) God sent to them Prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and revealed therewith the Scripture with the truth that it might judge between people concerning that wherein they differed. But those to whom (the Scripture) was sent, due to hatred on one another, differed in the same, after clear proofs had come to them. And God by His will guided those who believed in the truth of that concerning which they differed. God guides whom He wills to a straight path." [2:213]***

Hiwar: Two Arabic words are used in the Quran to convey the meaning of dialogue. The first one, ***hiwar***, by which is meant here any discussion between two or more people that aims at correcting mistakes, putting forth arguments, establishing facts, rebutting specious arguments, or replying to false claims or views.

The other word is ***Jadal***, which has the same general meaning as hiwar, but jadal is used when the intention is to overcome the other party even when the argument against him is not convincing.

These two words describe something that is intrinsic to

human beings: difference of opinions, diverse thoughts and ways of expressing them. It is as if jadal that is based on direct hiwar is a common mental means that Islam regulates so as to express ideas in a way that arouses in the human being an awareness of his message, and that liberates his mind by means of its questions, and by which different and similar views are defined for him to choose from them that which is proven to be true.

Al-Akhar (the other): By the other is meant that which is against the first. It is not confined to the one who differs with the first in religion, but is understood according to the context. Thus the Muslim is opposite to the non-Muslim, the male is opposite to the female, the native is opposite to the foreigner and so on. The relationship with the others can thus be built on one of many ways of dealing with them or coexisting with them as partners concerned with the problems of this world. The basis of the relationship between people is the exchange of benefits, cooperation in building and developing the world, the establishment of truth and the aspiration to realize justice. All this is to be achieved by dialogue and other means of exchange of ideas.

A Required Consideration of the Other

The correct Islamic method of addressing others, and of dealing with Islamic Issues requires that the other be understood and be addressed with a language of pride and confidence in the truth, a language that is not in contradiction with any of the religion's established principles of allegiance (to God) and repudiation (of evil). Prior conviction does not preclude dialogue, and dialogue does not annul it. There is a difference between dealing with others and exchanging benefits with them on the one hand, and of being a victim of spoliation and alienation on the other. The

encountering of problems in dialogue should not be a reason for abolishing it, but rather a reason for the study of those problems. The Quran described the Jews and the Christians as people who worship other than God, but it nevertheless laid down for us Muslims rules and values for dealing with the People of the Book, and for having dialogue with them and coexisting with them. The Prophet (peace be upon him) allowed a delegation of Christians from Najran to enter his mosque so that he may have dialogue with them, as we read in the verse:

> ***"And whoso disputes with you concerning him (Jesus), after the knowledge which has come to you, say (to him), 'Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, then we will pray humbly (to our Lord) and (solemnly) invoke the curse of Allah upon those who lie.'" [3:61]***

There is therefore no contradiction between censuring the anti-Islamic characteristics of the unbelievers and polytheists, but acknowledging at the same time any of their deeds or sayings that are in agreement with Islam and its principles and values, and dealing with them on their bases. The rule for this is Allah's saying:

> ***"So long as they are true to you, be true to them." [9:7]***

This also means that we can cooperate with them in the development of the earth and in the desire of any of them to accept the true religion.

Dialogue and its Fundamentals in Islam

The aim of dialogue is interaction with others of all cultures and civilizations, an interaction that is reflected in reality and whose effects are felt in people's lives, and which thus helps to make them know each other. This mutual knowledge is the basis of people's and nation's dealings with each other since they were all created of one soul.

> ***"O mankind! Verily we have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another." [49:13]***

But the dealings that are driven by feelings of racial superiority, or civilizational supremacy or cultural dominance have nothing to do with proper dialogue. The Islamic nation will never like for its dialogue activity to being an invasion of others or the forced imposition of its religion or culture on them, nor will it ever like for it to be a means of dissolving its own Islamic culture in other nations' cultures.

Understood in this way, dialogue becomes an invitation to consultation to reach useful objectives and to avoid divergence, exploitation or isolation. It is reported that a man called Hatim al-Aasam, (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "I have three qualities by which I overcome my opponent." What are they? He was asked. "I become pleased when my opponent is right and sad when he is wrong. And I restrain myself from treating him foolishly." When this was reported to Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him), he said, "Glory be to Allah. What a wise man he is!"

The history of Islam is full of dialogues of all kinds with all groups and sorts of people in which the Muslims abided by the disciplines and good manners of dialogue.

The Legitimacy of Dialogue

The style of dialogue in the glorious Quran, in more than one discourse between those taking parts in it, shows that dialogue is not an end in itself, but a means of clarifying the truth, displaying it, and planting faith in it in the hearts of people. It also aims at revealing falsehood, rejecting it and cautioning people against it. All this is done as an appreciation of the place of reason, and the rejection of blind following. This is one of the basic principles that guide dialogue.

Dialogue also reveals many other concepts to which the Quran and the Sunnah point. Among these are:

First: That difference among people is an established Divine way of dealing with His creation. It is also an observed reality; people are different in their tongues, their colors, natures, knowledge and understanding.

This apparent difference to which their Creator draws attention is also proof of difference in opinions, attitudes and desires. This is the way that Allah created them and the evidence of His wisdom in doing so.

> ***"And if your Lord had willed, He verily would have made mankind one nation, yet they cease not differing." [11:118]***
> ***"Save him on whom your Lord had mercy; and for that He did create them." [11:119]***

Ar-Razi, one of the commentators on the Quran, says in his explanation of these verses, "What is intended here is the difference among people in religions, conduct and actions" But in spite of this difference there are signs for the truth for those who seek it by means and ways that are known to all rational people.

> ***"And Allah by His will guided those who believed to the truth of that concerning which they differed. Allah guides whom He will to a straight path." [2:21]***

Examples of the practical ways followed by Prophets in inviting their people to their Lord are mentioned in sacred statements of the Quran, not for mere historical recording, but as ideal pioneering ways to be followed as the best ways of dialogue in cases of difference.

Second: Taking the initiative in having dialogue with the other is a useful means of presenting an idea and explaining and defending it. The principle of the universality of Islam is the firm basis on which a Muslim's relationship with People of revealed religions is based, and from it stems his view in dealing with non-Muslims.

> ***"Say (to them, O Muhammad!), 'I exhort you to one thing only: that you stand up, for Allah's sake, by twos and singly, and then reflect: There is no madness in your companion. He is no more than a warner to you in face of a terrific doom.'" [34:46]***
> ***"Say, 'O People of the Scripture. Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe***

> ***no partners to Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah.' And if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (to Him).'" [3:64]***

Muslims have the right to protect their religion from hostile ideas.

Third: The affirmation of one of the established rules of averting corruption on the earth and among its people, the rule of mutual repelling:

> ***"And if Allah had not repelled some men by others the earth would have been corrupted. But Allah is a Lord of Kindness to (His) creatures." [2:251]***

> ***"For had it not been for Allah's repelling some people by means of others, cloisters and churches and oratories and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down." [22:40]***

Being aware of this mutual repelling arouses in the Muslim the spirit of dialogue and makes him feel that it is an important issue of his message. He finds evidence for this in the Quran and discovers how it is clarified by implementation in the life of the Prophet as well as the lives of the Companions of the Prophet and those who followed them who were leaders in war expeditions. They entered in dialogue with them as a religious duty and as a policy of dealing with others.

Fourth: Abiding by the ethics of dialogue, such as

courteous talk, good listening and mutual respect:

> "***Tell My bondmen to speak that which is kindlier." [17:53]***
> "***And speak kindly to mankind." [2:83]***
> ***"And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is the best, save with such of them as do wrong; and say, 'We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we surrender.'" [29:46]***

Fifth: The Sunnah is full of dialogue situations between the Prophet and other people, Muslims and non-Muslims, close and distant, and of the consequences of these dialogues in achieving the desired guidance, or bringing people nearer to it, which is the ultimate goal of dialogue. This is achieved by supporting claims with evidence and by rebutting specious arguments when inviting people to Islam.

> ***"And make of yourselves a nation that invites to goodness." [3:104]***

Sixth: As to the probability that the other party might suffer from weakness caused by his not being aware of diversity of opinion, points of view, and conceptions on the one hand, or because of the aspersions cast upon Islam as not being objective or not being suitable for the times, or of being against reason and freedom of thought on the other hand, dialogue becomes in this case the ideal way

of dealing with the problem. The dialogue that achieves this is the one that is derived from the Islamic manner that leads such dialogue to its desired goal. Followers of this way endeavor to put things right, to follow the way of wisdom and to have in-depth knowledge of the different issues of dialogue.

The Fundamental Principles of Dialogue

First principle: Is that of following rational means. This includes:

1. Giving evidence to prove the truth of the claim or to show the strong probability of its being true.
2. Correctness of reports.

There is a dialogue rule that says, "If you are reporting then be correct, and if you are claiming then give evidence."

God says:

> ***"These are their desires. Say, 'Bring your proof (of what you state) if you are truthful.'" [2:111]***

Second principle: The disputant's speech must not contain any contradictions, since contradictory speech is obviously false. An example of this is Pharaoh's accusation of Moses of being "either a sorcerer or mad" [51:39]. Many disbelievers said the same thing about many Prophets; even the disbelievers of the Age of Ignorance said it about Prophet Muhammad. But one cannot be crazy and sorcerer at the same time; this is an obviously absurd contradiction.

Third principle: The argument must not beg the question because if it does so it will not be giving any evidence but

only repeating the claim in other words; this will only be a prolonging of the debate without any use.

Fourth principle: Assumption of the truth of certain facts either because they are purely rational, and are not therefore a subject of dispute among rational objective people, (like the fact of the goodness of truth, the ugliness of lying, of the goodness of being grateful to the giver of a favor, and the punishment of the wrong doer), or because they are assumed to be true by people of a certain religion.

Fifth principle: Objectivity, seeking the truth, avoiding prejudice and sticking to the ethics of dialogue that lead to a straight path that is immune from prejudice. Imam Shafi'ii is reported to have said, "I have never talked to any one that I did not wish for to be led to the right path and be correct and aided, and be under God's care and protection. And I have never debated with someone and cared whether the truth appeared on his tongue or mine." Al-Ghazzali says, "Cooperation in seeking the truth in religion has conditions and signs, among which is that the person be, in seeking the truth, like someone who is looking for something that he lost, thus not carting whether it is discovered by him or the one who is helping him; and to see his partner as an assistant not an opponent, and thus to thank him when he reveals to him his mistakes and shows him the truth."

The objective of all this is that dialogue be immune from bias and be purely dedicated to the cause of truth.

Sixth principle: Competence. Not everyone is competent to enter into a dialogue that brings good results. Two qualifications are thus required for a dialoguer to be a competent one:

First, educational qualification; he must have knowledge of the issues that he wants to discuss. One should not enter

the arena of dialogue before accomplishing its prerequisites of knowledge and sound reasoning. The person whom God endowed with knowledge should not use it except for useful purposes. Muhammad ibn al-Husayn said, "Know, may God have mercy on you, that among the qualities of a learned wise person whom God endowed with deep knowledge of religion, and made him benefit from it, is that he does not use his knowledge to argue or compete except with one who deserves to be overcome with unequivocal knowledge."(1)

Second, Equality of qualifications. The dialoguers must be approximately equal in education and general knowledge as well as reasoning and comprehension; otherwise it will be the ignorant who wins and truth will be obliterated, and thus not apparent to the dialoguers or to the audience. In this respect Imam Shafi'ii says, "I have never debated with a learned person that I did not defeat, and never debated with an ignorant person that did not defeat me."(2)

Seventh principle: Defining the subject of dialogue and points of difference.

Dialoguers might differ on more than one issue. If the dialogue drifts from one issue to another without settling the first one, dialogue will branch out to subsidiary issues not related to the main one and thus be unnecessarily prolonged and drifting without any direction or control. Since it will not in this way come to any conclusion, it will be a waste of time and energy to allow it to continue.(3) Ar-Rabee' ibn

(1)Etiquettes of the Scholars, Al-Ajjurri, p.56 (Arabic)
(2) Dialogue in the Noble Quran, Muhammad Kamal al-Huwayyil, p.24 (Arabic).
(3) Methodological Fundamentals of Dialogue and its Sublime Characteristics, Ahmad Al-Suwayyan, p.64 (Arabic).

Sulayman (may Allah's mercy be upon him), said, "Shafi'ii used to say to anyone who debated with him on an issue but then digressed to another one, 'Let us finish this one and then go to the one you want.'"[1]

Eighth principle: Relativity and certainty of conclusions.

It is important to remember here that opinion's indication to truth or falsehood is only relative. Only Prophets are infallible in conveying God's message. Others are governed by the rule, "My opinion is right but it may well be incorrect, and the other's opinion is wrong but may well be right." It is therefore not necessary for dialogue to end up with one party accepting the opinion of the other. In confirming this rule Ibn Taymiyyah used to say, "Some of them (meaning the learned people) used to excuse everyone who differed with them in matters of opinion, and not require them to agree with them in their understanding". Dialogue fails if it ends up in quarrel and boycotting.

Ninth principle: Acceptance of the results to which dialoguers come, and being serious in adhering to them, and to what follows from them. If this is not realized, debate becomes a frivolous matter that wise people keep away from. Ibn Aqeel says, "Everyone should accept the evidence of his partner; this makes his worth nobler, and it is extremely helpful in finding the truth and taking the way to it." Imam Shafi'ii says, "I have never debated with someone who accepted my convincing argument that did not become greater in my estimation, and who rejected it that did not lose my respect."

(1) A Reminder to the Listener and Speaker regarding the Etiquettes of the Teacher and the Student, Ibn Jamaa'ah, p.40 (Arabic).

Ethics of Dialogue

1. Adherence to good speech, and avoidance of ways of challenge and dumbfounding. Allah says:

> ***"Tell My bondmen to speak that which is kindlier." [17:53]***
> ***"Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and argue with them in the best of ways." [16:125]***

And He says to His Prophet:

> "***And if they wrangle with you, say, 'Allah is best aware of what you do.'" 22:68]***
>
> ***"Allah will judge between you on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein you used to differ." [22:69]***
>
> ***«Say, 'Verily, we or you assuredly are rightly guided or in error manifest.' « [34:24]***

This last verse was said to them in spite of the fact that the falsity of their position was clear, and that their argument was invalid.

2. To stick to a specified period of time for speech, so that it may not exceed the limits of decency and refined taste. Ibn Aqeel says in his book on dialogue, "They should exchange speech by turns, not by robbing, in the sense that the objector must listen to the claimer until he finishes stating his argument,

and the objector must listen to the claimer until he states his objection; none of them should interrupt the other even if he has understood what he meant by part of what he has said."

3. Good listening and attention and avoidance of interrupting. Al-Hasan bin Ali said to his son, may Allah be pleased with them both, "If you are in the company of learned people be more keen to listen than to talk, and learn how to listen just as you learn how to talk, and do not interrupt someone's talk even if it is prolonged until he finishes." Ibn al-Muqafaa says, "learn how to listen just as you learn how to talk; it is part of good listening that you give the speaker time to finish his speech, that you face him and look at him and comprehend what he says."

4. Respecting the opponent and showing consideration for him.

It is important in sessions of dialogue that the partners respect each other, and that every one is given his right. This leads to the acceptance of the truth and the avoidance of prejudice. Belittling people and accusing them of ignorance is shameful and is a haram (religiously unlawful) act.

5. Confining debates to a limited place. It is said that an evidence for this is God's saying:

> ***"Say (to them, O Muhammad!), 'I exhort you to one thing only: that you stand up, for Allah's sake, by twos and singly, and then reflect: There is no madness in your companion.'" [34:46]:***

It said that the wisdom behind this is that mobbish environments and big crowds obliterate the truth and disturb thought.

6. Sincerity. The dialoguer must train himself and make it

always mentally prepared to be sincere in his relation with God in everything that he does or avoids in the arena of dialogue.

The Culture of Dialogue in Islamic Civilization

The building of the character of a Muslim who holds fast to his Message, and who abides by its rules in his dealings with people around him in society, requires him to develop in himself the culture of dialogue as one of the values of Islamic civilization, a culture that has its roots in the principles of the true religion of Islam and its teachings, so that he may live Islam among people as a faith, a conduct and a passion. This is an expression of the salient quality of the true Muslim personality, the quality of tolerance, not in the sense of backing away, feebleness and defeatism, but in the sense of being above petty matters and grudges and of shunning prejudice and falsehood. In the light of this concept, the rules of dialogue, as far as the Muslim personality is concerned, are three:

The first rule: Is faith in Allah, His Book, and His Prophet, fear of Allah, humility to Him and confidence in His help, and adhering to the truth and being proud of it.

Allah says in the Quran:

> ***"Might belongs to Allah and to His Messenger and the believers; but the hypocrites know not." [63:8]***
> ***"Whoso desires power (should know that) all power belongs to Allah." [35:10]***
> ***"And let not their speech grieve you (O Muhammad!). Verily, power belongs wholly to Allah. He is the Hearer, the Knower." [10:65]***

The second rule:

(a), To abide by Islamic moral directions, and to follow the example of the Prophet and his companions when engaging in dialogue

(b), To address people from the stance of belief in the unity of the human race. The Prophet said, "All of you belong to Adam, and Adam is from dust", and to argue with them in the best of ways. Allah says:

> ***"Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and argue with them in the best of ways." [16:125]***
> ***"And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is the best, save with such of them as do wrong." [29:46]***

The third rule: Seeking truth and hunting for it, and for what is of general interest to people in all possible ways that do not deviate from the straight path of religion. Imam Thahabi said, "The goal of debate is to reveal the truth, and to make it possible for the more intelligent learned person to inform the one who is lesser than him, and to attract the attention of the one who is weaker and is distracted from it."

Conclusion

Dialogue has an intricate nature, but it is nevertheless not a capricious debate, rather, a way of mutual approach and interaction. It is thus one of the conditions of serious and objective dialogue that it be characterized by wisdom and

good admonition. The Quran states that inviting people to God must be with wisdom, fair exhortation, and good argument:

> ***"Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and debating in the best of ways." [16:125]***

This applies perfectly to dialogue. In this sense dialogue is one of the powers and weapons of cultural competition and civilizational contests. It is an effective means for defending the higher interest of the nation, of expounding its issues, of displaying its concerns, and of conveying its message. If dialogue is a firm basis of Islamic civilization, it is also one of the fundamentals of the True Religion; Allah says:

> "***Say: O People of the Scripture. Come to an agreement between us and you: That we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partners to Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah." [3:64]***

This verse is in its deep and essential sense an invitation to refined and purposeful dialogue. Accordingly, the dialogue that we advocate, enter into and adopt, is one that derives from Islam the spirit of moderation. This is because Islamic rulings are governed with the spirit of moderation. Islam shuns the spirit of extremism, as we find this pointed to in many places in the Quran, like the verse that reads:

> ***"Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that you may be witnesses over mankind." [2:143]***

This shows that the dialogue that is in the Islamic religion and Islamic thought is the one that inclines towards moderation and fairness as the Arabic word "Sawa" in the previous verse points to. It is dialogue with refined words and upright ways that thus contributes to deepening a person's awareness, and arouses in him the disposition to convince and be convinced, in a gradual, calm way that gives others the right to think in their own ways. It is on this basis that a balanced society is created that carries others with it to developing the aspects of virtue and common human values, a society that attaches great importance to abidance to moral values so that all shall stand firm on the truth.

May Allah lead us to the right path, and may He bless our Prophet Muhammad and his companions and grant them peace.

Dialogue and Relation With Followers of Religions

Dialogue and Co-existence Amongst the Followers of Various Religions and Cultures

Prof. Ezzedine Ibrahim (*)

From War to the Negotiating Table

After the last two world wars drew to a close, the world heaved a sigh of relief and attempted to extricate itself from a cycle of wars and politico-military conflicts into a state of reconciliation, negotiation and peace by settling all disputes at the negotiating table and building relationships based on understanding between the various nation states and their peoples.

So it was, that a new, civilized, political approach came to be. That of peace negotiations between states allied to each other; either directly or by means of the "League of Nations" initially, and then the United Nations Organization later on.

This trend was further reinforced by or resulted in the

(*) Cultural affairs advisor in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Studied at Cairo and Ein Shams universities and got his PhD in Arts from the University of London. He assumed a number of educational and cultural posts in several Arab countries. Worked as a professor of Arts in King Saud university in Riyadh and Professor of Quaran science in Oxford University and the University of Michigan--Ann Arbor in the US. Concerned with interfaith and civilizations dialogue. (United Arab Emirates)

expression of a number of concepts, phrases and agendas for reconciliation; including terms like 'Détente' and 'Rapprochement,' both French terms accepted by the American President Nixon and his Soviet counterpart Brezhnev or the term 'Coexistence' which was used by the Soviet President Khruschev, with its details subsequently being developed by the Chinese President Deng Xiaoping who coined the term 'One Country – Two Systems' while referring to the territory of Hong Kong after it was returned to Socialist China with its capitalist structure left intact. And lastly, 'Openness and Transparency' which has been called for by the bulk of nations and to which Gorbachev gave final form in the Russian expression 'Glasnost.' It would not be long after that, that the Economic Unions of the West would be established initially, followed by those in the Far East. The most famous of these was the European Economic Community (EEC) which was the predecessor of the EU (European Union) and lead to its establishment. And then, the term ' Globalization' which is still being revised and modified so that the nations of the world can be satisfied with it and so that it results in the coordination of Economic cooperation between them. Thus, by means of the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations Organization, the choice of negotiations and sitting down at the same table has been the alternative of choice, preferred amongst the nations of the world. Moreover, in spite of the fact that these same nations continue to retain weapons for the purpose of deterrence, continue to further develop and enhance military production and keep themselves on a hair trigger, yet, the path of parleys and coexistence remains active and eventful due to the will of their peoples and their hopes that war will not be resorted to.

From the 'Clash of Civilizations' to 'Cultural and Religious Dialogue'

It was but natural with this political inclination towards negotiations rather than war, that there be a similar trend on the religious and cultural plane as well, with a departure from the path of conflict towards dialogue. This trend has since materialized in the form of three primary dialogues or a dialogue taking place on three different levels, that is the Christian Muslim Dialogue, the Dialogue between Civilizations and the Dialogue between the Peoples of all Religions and Cultures. All of these aim at changing the spiritual, intellectual and cultural dynamic and establish peace, understanding and tolerance between humanity as a whole despite the differences in their affiliations and beliefs and the diversity of their cultures.

What we intend by the sphere of Christian Muslim Dialogue is for example the proclamation issued by Pope Paul VI, entitled Ecclesiam Suam, on the 6th of August, 1964, based on what was decreed in the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican which was presided over by Pope John XXIII and which made mention of the Religion of Islam with good words, with respect to its calling to the worship of Allah, the One and Only and with respect to what its teachings comprise of from acts of worship like prayers and fasting to the moral values it affirms. Moreover, the resolutions of this council also called for the forgetting of the history of conflict between Christianity and Islam. This conciliatory proclamation was immediately followed by endorsements and support by the World Council of Churches, Geneva and the Anglican Church in England. Effective systems were set

up to monitor the implementation of this proclamation at the Vatican by the establishment of the Secretariat for Non-Christians and the Department for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies.'(1)

The Islamic world responded to this call and welcomed, in general, the proposed dialogue in it. However, the primary response came from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Libya. Accordingly, the Muslim World League in Saudi Arabia set up a delegation under the supervision of its then secretary general, Shaikh Muhammad Al-Harkaan in conjunction with Dr. Ma'ruf Al-Duwalibi. This delegation toured all of the centres of Christian Muslim Dialogue at the Vatican, Geneva, Paris and Strasbourg where significant and structured dialogue took place. These were then published in Arabic, English and French under the titles of 'Scientific Forums' and 'Conferences on Moslem Doctrine and Human Rights in Islam.' (2) Likewise, Libya organized an extensive conference in Tripoli in 1976 which was attended by several hundred Muslim as well as Christian scholars and researchers. The Vatican put these proceedings on record and released its details in the pronouncement dated October, 1978. This has been followed by the organization of gatherings and conventions for dialogue in several Christian and Muslim cities over the last forty years. The vast majority of these meetings and conferences have been well documented by the Christians due to the mechanisms they had in place for doing so, some of which we have alluded to above; whereas

(1) Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement, World Council of Churches Geneva, 1971.

(2) Conferences on Moslem Doctrine and Human Rights in Islam, Dar al-Kitab al Lubnani, Beirut, 1973.

documentation from the Muslim side has been infrequent with the exception of isolated publications which basically comprised of individual books by some Muslim scholars on the dialogue that took place.

Undoubtedly, the Christian Muslim dialogue was not without its positive as well as negative aspects. I have previously expounded on this in my writings and will suffice here by mentioning only the most important of them. From the benefits that were gained was the breaking down of barriers and the disaffection that had followed the crusades and colonialism, even if only in part, due to factors created by the religious imperative, some of which are the development of personal relationships between the peoples of both sides which helped in the creating of understanding and endurance. Also, the reinforcement of cooperation between Muslims and Christians in affirming common values which are agreed upon between the two religions, the foremost among them, which have already been discussed in intellectual conventions, are: The Importance of Belief, Family Values, refraining from all social evils and moral perversions, guiding Scientific Research to prevent the harming of human beings and protecting human life from unwarranted abortions and natural human form from cloning and the culturing of human organs and last but not least, realizing higher enrolment for future dialogues by purifying our intentions, by displaying realism in our expectations and by omitting those discussions which re-open wounds of old and only add fuel to the fire.

From the negative aspects of this dialogue has been: getting occasionally embroiled in a dialogue that raises doubts as to whether the intent behind it is actually reaching an understanding or if it is merely a cover for missionary work.

Also, the passing of an extraordinarily long period of time without palpable results was what lead me to write a letter of action to one of the conventions for dialogue entitled, 'Forty years of Christian-Muslim dialogue: What use has it been? What future does it have?'(1) and once again, last but not least, the simultaneous occurrence of dialogue and the revival of hostilities due to the backing of Israel by a number of countries especially the United States of America by being biased towards it and ignoring the rights of the Arabs.

However, the major point of weakness associated with this type of dialogue is the lack of a definition which makes it binding upon both sides to not cross certain inviolable limits by engaging in missionary work for example or by interpolating matters into their religion. So much so that a certain Christian researcher, the Norwegian scholar Dr. Hallencreutz was so bold as to write a very widely distributed research paper(2) in which he disclosed that the relationship between Christianity and Islam actually began with an attempt at wholesale evangelization, which became obvious at the Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and in Trivandrum, India in 1938 as well as at various other instances. This was followed by an attempt at a more subtle form of evangelism which can correctly be termed as 'spreading the truth' based on the notion that Christ, 'works from within' with respect to correcting doctrines and beliefs. According to this, Christian beliefs are simply to be presented alongside and against other religious beliefs, including Islamic ones; on the presumption that this encounter will automatically lead to a correction,

(1) Ezzedine Ibrahim, Forty years of Christian-Muslim dialogue: What use has it been? What future does it have? 2nd Ed. Dar al-Fajr, Abu Dhabi, 2006.
(2) Carl F. Hallencreut, Living Faiths, W.C.O.C, PP 57-71, Geneva 1971

modification or some degree of approximation in the beliefs of the other. However, when outright 'evangelization' as well as its more subtle counterpart proved unsuccessful, it was then that the idea of 'Dialogue' was introduced, there being obvious overtones of the two preceding concepts on it. Consequently, at West Tripoli in 1976, the Muslim side of the dialogue strove to frame a definition, which was then accepted by all of the Muslims and Christians present and which called for restricting the dialogue to the exchange of information without touching upon beliefs and treating the other side with love and respect(1). Subsequently, this definition was further improved until it was adopted by the, 'Arab Side of the Christian Muslim Dialogue' based in Beirut, emphasizing the restriction of the Dialogue only to what contributes to 'Mutual Coexistence' between the followers of both religions and nothing more.

Thus it can be said that the course taken by the Christian Muslim Dialogue – which was named according to its initial aims – has contributed in affirming the importance of dialogue between the Christians and Muslims, its status as the primary strategic option as far as relations between the two are concerned and of not regressing into conflict and fighting once again.

Dialogue Between Civilizations

Researchers in the study of Civilizations especially during the last few decades have concentrated on studying world civilizations in terms of their number and types and also

(1) Ezzedine Ibrahim, How can we work towards doing away with the erroneous rulings of the past? P. 19, Al-Zawahir Press, Abu Dhabi, 1977

in terms of their relationships amongst themselves. The foremost amongst such academics is the German scholar Oswald Spengler who states in his book entitled, Der Untergang des Abendlandes (The Decline of the West) that the greatest of the world civilizations are nine: The Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, Chinese, Classical (by which he means the Greek and the Roman), Arab, Mexican, Western and the Russian civilizations; the most important out of these are three, namely the Classical, the Arab and the Western civilizations.

After Spengler, who wrote what he wrote around the year 1918, came other scholars who either increased this number to ten or compacted it to only one civilization on the basis of their belief in the unity of human thought, with the differences being a variation in the expression only. Later on, the Englishman, Arnold Toynbee further expanded upon this and stated that the number of civilizations were twenty one.(1)

As for the mutual relations amongst these civilizations, they range from those of acquaintance to intermingling to that of one complementing the other, either geographically, like the direct proximity of the Greeks and the Romans or the Arabs and the Persians; or through efforts made to achieve that kind of proximity through voyages of discovery and trading caravans or through the transfer of books etc. as has been detailed in the history of civilizations. The Arab Islamic civilization specifically is considered to be a prime example of this close relationship between civilizations by transfer and mutual completion. This has been elaborated upon by the Professor Ahmed Amin in the first volume

(1) Constantine Raziq, The Clash of Civilizations, Beirut, p. 60 onwards

of his book, 'Dawn of Islam.' Thus, between the mutual transfer of information with the Greek, Chinese and Persian civilizations and the blending of this with Arab cultures, emerged the complete expression of the forthcoming Arab Islamic Civilization. Moreover, the Arab Civilization did not preserve this information by its transfer only, but more so by digesting and assimilating it in such a way that the religion of Islam remained preserved and the Arab Islamic identity, distinct. With that exception, anything else offered to us by the civilizations is like an open buffet, we take from it what benefits and leave off what harms. How true was our Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) when he said, 'Wisdom is the goal of the believer, if he finds it then he is most deserving of it from amongst the people.'

The notion of the multiplicity of civilizations and the complementary relationship between them prevailed until the year 1993, after the downfall of the Soviet Union, when Samuel Huntington, a professor of political science in the United States composed the theory of 'The Clash of Civilizations.' Whoever goes through the writings of the aforementioned scholar, before and after he wrote about this theory, will find that the man was overcome by the idea of conflict and confrontation, according to which, he thought human history could be classified, beginning with conflict between various kings, leaders and princes, and then, the clash between nations and peoples and then the clash between ideologies (capitalism and socialism) and lastly the clash of civilizations. As a result, he confined the number of civilizations to eight: Western, Latin American, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox Slavic and African and described the general pattern of confrontation

between these civilizations quite succinctly as, 'The West vs. The Rest.' However, with respect to the immediate theatre of confrontation, he chose the West and the Confucian Civilization (by which he meant China) and the West and Islam; giving priority to the latter over the former. With that, he gave the West a 'new adversary' after the collapse of the Socialist foe and if they wished to expand the list, then China could always be the next candidate.

Huntington's theory is neither reliable nor precise with respect to his classification of civilizations and his emphasis on the inevitability of conflict is equally unfounded. Firstly, he has not based his categorization on any of the aforementioned academic criteria. In fact it would not be far fetched to say that he has simply copied Spengler's classification with the removal of one of the civilizations to bring the number down to eight, the candidate not receiving mention being the Greco-Roman civilization, which in actuality is the very basis of Western civilization. Moreover, he has also taken the liberty to change the terms used to refer to the various civilizations; using the term, 'Confucian' for the Chinese civilization and, 'Orthodox Slavic' for the Russian civilization. By the term 'Confucian' he probably intended to specify the Chinese and exclude the Japanese, despite the fact that the Confucian philosophy along with Buddhism spread in China and Japan concurrently. Finally, by using the term 'Orthodox Slavic,' he probably meant to include along with Russia, other adjoining countries with the same political outlook, as well as the people of the Baltic region. The man thus seems to be driven by a political agenda, as initially, his research was a political

article published in *Foreign Affairs Magazine* after which he brought it out as a book. As for his claims regarding the inevitability of the clash of civilizations, then this has not been stated by any article published in any political affairs periodical, as well as there being no academic justification for this in any standard theoretical textbook on the subject. For if he were to sift through the history of civilizations, then it would undoubtedly be a history of mutual acquaintance, mutual exchange and mutual complementarity and perhaps some competition between the civilizations as well, but definitely not a history of conflict. (Seeing that history does not support his claim) If he would now like to use another criterion other than historical precedent to justify his thesis, then it is up to him to bring it forth and the evidences supporting it.

We can thus conclude that the man is either on the lookout for justifications, history being replete with the likes of him who justified wars like the Crusades in the past and like those who justified the recent war in Iraq later on, or that psychologically, he is an inexorable pessimist who sees enemies lurking behind every corner. In fact, this is what some French scholars have stated, giving Huntington the title of 'Prophete de Malheur' (The prophet of doom) as did the 'Journal of International Affairs' in March, 1996, portraying the theory with terms like, 'Prejudice as a Social Science Theory.' The latter psychological assumption is also strengthened by the fact that Huntington, in one of his later books in 2004 entitled, *Who Are We: The Challenges to America's National Identity,* warned against Latino immigration to the U.S. which would,

'divide Americans, their civilization and their language into two.' We need not say anything else in the face of such obviously bigoted statements.

The negation of this theory of confrontation came form the Muslim world from the 8th Islamic Summit at Tehran, 1998, during the address by President Muhammad Khatami, who called for 'Dialogue and not a clash of civilizations' and reinforced this by holding a 'round robin' in which the Secretary General of the United Nations participated from its headquarters. This was followed by the issuance of the UN General Assembly resolution dated 4th of November, 1998, which called for designating the year 2001 as the year of 'Dialogue between Civilizations.'

Since then, cultural dialogue has continued taking place during the last decade and continues to occur now on a worldwide level under the patronage of UNESCO and at the Muslim level under the auspices of the Arab League and the OIC and especially through its dynamic cultural organ, ISESCO, under the devoted care of Dr. Abdul Aziz Al-Tuwaijri, which has organized about ten conventions, beginning with the International Conference in Al-Qayrawan, the seat of the first University at the basin of the Mediterranean Sea and Europe, subsequently passing through various Muslim and European cities. Some of the titles of these conferences were: Dialogue and Cultural Diversity, Civilizations: From Dialogue to Friendship, Strengthening Cultural Dialogue with Enduring Initiatives, Civilizational Diversity in Light of Complementary Relations, Dialogue for the Purpose of Mutual Understanding, Dialogue for the purpose of Coexistence, Civilizational Dialogue Between Theory

and Practice, Dialogue in a Changing World and so on. In fact, I cannot imagine ISESCO leaving any aspect of improving Inter-civilizational relations except after having thoroughly studied it with representatives of all civilizations and having comprehensively emphasized that, 'Dialogue between Civilizations is the strategic option obligated upon us by the immense challenges faced by the International Community.'(1)

Dialogue Among the Followers of Various Religions and Cultures: The Saudi Initiative

It should be clear from what has preceded that the Muslim World has been involved in the religious dialogue process with sincerity and consistently from its outset in our times to the present day and this has been the case with regards to the Christian Muslim dialogue as well as the Dialogue between civilizations. Moreover, the Muslim World, in a completely separate dialogue that occurred before this one as well as after it, has rejected resorting to violence and terrorism as a means of resolving differences, according to what has been decreed in the correct teachings of their religion. Also, as it has been observed that certain groups of Muslim youth have violated this and have been accused of being involved in terrorist incidents rejected within the Muslim World and outside it, so have the intellectuals and scholars within the Muslim World taken it upon themselves to denounce these actions and clarify how they are against the tenets of the religion. I will suffice here by mentioning two efforts made in this regard. The first

(1) Abdul Aziz al-Tuwaijri, ISESCO Publications on the Civilizational Dialogue, Rabat.

one emanated from the Azhar University in Egypt, which is one of the foremost platforms of Islam in the Muslim World, by the publication of a two volume book entitled, 'A Message to the people from the Azhar University,' which was put into circulation and distributed on a large scale to make certain that any form of Islamic reference to violence was utterly rejected.(1) The second initiative was the taking place of an International Academic Conference with the same objective in Algeria in December, 2004 under the auspices of ISESCO which works under the OIC, of which all Muslim States hold membership.

Alongside these initiatives, the Muslim intellectual elite has never ceased to support this approach in the news media, on television channels, at intellectual conferences and meetings with the youth in universities and youth clubs.

Thus, the problem of terrorism is a human problem and not specific to any particular religion, nation or political agenda. In fact, it is an explosive reaction by the youth occurring in all continents and with a variety of justifications. To thus limit it to the Muslim world only is a very simplistic analysis which is actually cynical and antagonistic in nature, without justification and can rightly be termed as Islamophobic. Similarly, the solution to this problem is also multi-faceted and thus, it is must for all nations to collaborate in studying and implementing it.

As for the role of the Muslim World in dialogue with the Christians, then it has been constructive since the very beginning as mentioned before. In fact, I can claim, having participated in numerous conferences representing this dialogue that the Muslim world has cooperated with its Christian counterpart

(1) The Azhar University, A Message to the people from the Azhar University, Al-Azhar Printing Press, Cairo, 1984

in the refinement of this dialogue when it was not as well structured and despite all the negatives associated with it; so that it is now a dialogue for the exchange of information and for bringing together those positions upon which the followers of both religions can agree, for promoting participation in earnest in the social development of all places and last but not least, supporting world peace and harmony between humanity.

Also, as far as the dialogue between civilizations is concerned, the Muslim World was there first as well as being there later on to follow up matters in a consistent manner. It might also be beneficial for us to add to what has preceded with the fact that the Muslim World has supplemented the crucible of western civilization with contributions whose effects cannot be lost upon the entire world, some of which are: the translation of Hellenic and Greek heritage and its transfer to Europe, offering the west what had been developed by them in terms of scientific discoveries in the field of medicine, astronomy, mathematics and physics, etc., taking the initiative to establish universities and furnishing prototype examples of these at places like Al-Qayrawan in west Africa and Cordoba during the Arab presence there as well as the Azhar Universiy in Egypt long before the establishment of universities like those at Salerno, Bologna, Paris and Oxford in the twelfth century.(1) Now that Europe has gone through the Renaissance period and expanded its culture and universities, it is up to us to benefit from them now, just like we gave to them before. Thus is the dialogue between civilizations mutual, leading to the completion of the other and minimizing discord, rivalry and conflict.

(1) Haskins. The Rise of Universities, translated by Joseph Nasim Yusuf, Alexandria Printing Company, Alexandria, 1971.

Then came the broad initiative from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, striving to incorporate all past efforts into its domain. This initiative was announced from the holy city of Makkah in the year 2008 by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz. It was then consolidated by the Muslim World League by the organization of an international conference in Madrid, the same year, in which representatives from all religions, beliefs and cultures were invited and in which officials and intellectuals from the world over participated. The inauguration and direction of this conference was jointly conducted by King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, whose idea it all was, King Juan Carlos, King of Spain, the host, as well as Spanish Prime Minister Jose Zapatero and it was officially named as the 'Dialogue among the followers of various Religions and Cultures.'

What distinguished this initiative, in the general sense, was it being issued by the King of a conservative Islamic country and that it was open for full participation to all denominations, schools of intellectual thought in all religions, beliefs and cultures and not limited to only a few of them and lastly, because it laid down programmes and mechanisms for future action, guaranteeing a continuity and an endurance for the whole process.

As for it emanating from the King of a conservative Islamic country, this was unique because generally, past initiatives had in essence originated from the Western world, either by a major religious authority in Christianity like the Vatican which is the centre of Catholicism, or by an official cultural organization like UNESCO, all this not ignoring the few that did originate within the Muslim World. Thus, it seemed that the history of dialogue needed a much awaited, natural conclusion by the issuance of an initiative from the

heart of the Islamic world and from the tongue of one of its prominent leaders who would carry both a contemporary as well as a spiritual profile. This longing was fulfilled with this initiative which gave the course that this dialogue was taking, the impetus and sense of completion that it so needed.

As for it being wide in its scope and all inclusive, this is important because confining ourselves to one group from humanity would not serve the purpose at all. Also, from the perspective of the Muslim world, there is no objection in this as long as the religious obligations of any of the participants are not derided, for the Muslim must adhere to his beliefs and is not willing to give it up in any way especially when he reads in the Quran:

> ***'Verily, the only religion with Allah is Islam' [3:19]***

However, at the same time, he lives within this world with others whom he cannot feign ignorance of nor deceive, for the Jews and the Christians are the 'People of the Book' in Islamic terminology and as for the Magians (even though they have almost disappeared), the Hindus and the Buddhists, the Muslim is to treat them according to the statement of the prophet (peace be upon him): 'Treat them as you treat the People of the Book,'[(1)] which means living with them on the basis of justice, fair-dealing, taking part with them in all aspects of life like citizenship and the civic responsibilities associated with it when Muslims live

(1) Shaikh Hasnayn Makhluf, Safwah al-Bayan fi Tafseer al-Qur'an, Surah al-Kaafirun

with non-Muslims as citizen of a single state, as well as the requirements of normal human life from eating, drinking to other affairs which are necessary for life. Moreover, it is well known that Hindus and Buddhists by themselves constitute about 40% of the earth's inhabitants, so how could it be allowed to turn our back on a third of the inhabitants of our planet especially when our lives have become so intertwined due to all the mass migration and travel that takes place?

This broad understanding is supported by three texts within the Quran, the first one being:

> ***'To you be your religion and to me my religion.' [109:6]***

It has been agreed by the authorities in research amongst the scholars that this holy verse is, 'general and cannot be particularized; and clear and precise which thus cannot be abrogated.' This means that its meaning is not restricted to the people it was addressed to (the disbelievers of Quraysh) but it is open in its implication of co-existence with everybody else. Also, its being clear denotes that the ruling derived from it is permanent and abiding, not to be overruled by anything that might oppose it. The second text from the Quran is:

> ***'And Messengers we have not mentioned to you' [4:164]***

This means that our knowledge of the Prophets sent by Allah is limited. Even though the message of the Prophet

Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was the conclusive and prevailing message over all the other previously sent messages, yet that does not prevent us from coexisting with those to whom guidance may have reached via one of these Messengers. The third text from the Quran includes the concluding of a just peace with others as long as they are not involved in harming the Muslims:

> ***'Allah does not forbid you from dealing justly and kindly with those who fought you not on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity.' [60:8]***

Furthermore, the respected Muhammad Rashid Ridha has further elaborated on the topic of coexistence in his 'Tafseer Al-Manar,' Vol. 6, Surah Al-Maaida (Chapter: The Tablespread), verse 5:

> ***'This day, (all) good foods have been made lawful for you and the food of those who were given the scripture is lawful for you…'***

Thus the general guidelines for dealing with Non-Muslims is that there is no compromise as far as Islamic beliefs are concerned as well as there being no argumentation with them over their beliefs, except within the framework of the dialectic, theological dialogue that might take place between scholars and specialists if the situation calls for it. As for peaceful coexistence in a civil manner, then this is a requirement of normal life for which there need not be any reservations.

Considering how sensitive the issue of coexistence is, the Muslim World League is currently preparing a practical document to define what the terms 'coexistence' and 'cooperation' in affairs of mutual interest mean. This will be presented to an international conference in Geneva in the near future.

It is only appropriate at the end of this article, to very briefly bring out some of the central themes that have been mentioned previously with some additions and clarifications for the sake of completion and with the hope that the participants of the abovementioned conference will go through it, strengthening the trend that 'Dialogue between the Followers of Various Religions and Cultures' aims to create.

Factors for the Success of the Dialogue between the followers of Various Religions:

1) In the Religious Sphere

a) Avoiding discussions regarding religious beliefs and restricting them when they are necessary to well grounded scholars and specialists as it is more suitable to avoid sensitivities and areas where the chances of dispute and conflict are increased.

b) Not harming or violating places of worship. The Quran actually calls to this, mentioning the places of worship with their various names and stating that they are the places of the remembrance and glorification of Allah, like:

> ***'For had it not been that Allah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques wherein Allah's name is***

mentioned much would surely have been pulled down.' [22:40]

Moreover, history is witness to the fact that all attempts to change the status of places of worship never resulted in any good, examples being the alteration of a large part of the mosque at Cordoba in Spain into a cathedral in the year 1238 CE and the conversion of the Church of Saint Sofia into a mosque at the hands of Muhammad 'the Conqueror' in Istanbul in the year 1453 CE. What is even more painful is that this erroneous practice did not even spare the places of worship within the same religion due to the presence of differences within the followers of the religion, dividing them into various schools and sects.

c) A rejection of subjecting religion and its intellectual and leading figures to insult and mockery like what occurred due to the publication of crass cartoon caricatures and the writing of narrations and stories which are insulting for the prophets. It is true that freedom of expression and opinion are important but with the condition that this expression be correct and objective, in a manner that is solemn, civilized and sober and that the medium of communication and propagation selected for it not be distasteful.
d) Welcoming the document of 'Mutual Respect amongst Religions,' which was proposed and issued by the Arab side of the Christian Muslim dialogue in Beirut in the year 2008. Moreover, carefully studying this document and considering its endorsement and adoption.

2) With Regards to Shared Values

a) Emphasizing taking care of the family due to it being the fundamental building block of society by encouraging standard marriage practices and discouraging relationships that are either ephemeral or anomalous. Also, protecting the family from break-ups, improving child rearing practices and promoting a culture of devotion and respect towards parents, maintaining family ties as well as taking care of the aged.

e) Condemning violence and terrorism in all its forms, degrees as well as its causes, including whatever is perpetrated by colonizing and occupying powers upon the lands of others as well as what is carried out by individuals. Also, calling upon international organizations to support populations which have been aggressed against and who might be forced to resort to legitimate resistance due to persecution. Finally, supporting peace by solving international disputes with justice and without prejudice and in this regard, there is an obligation to guide upon the followers of religion whose importance and effects must not be neglected.

b) Encouraging the scientific research that is essential for the improvement of life and the development of societies on the condition that this research does not lead to the development of that which may be damaging for humanity itself or be accompanied with dangers or may lead to transgressing upon human life or the perfection in the creation of the human being, like what occurs when unjustified abortions are carried out, due to human cloning or the tampering that occurs with genetic engineering.

3) With Regards to Mutual, Peaceful Coexistence

a) To call upon the followers of all religions, especially when they reside in the same lands to adhere to the obligations of citizenship in the sense that they all enjoy the same legal facilities that are associated with it along with the rights and civil obligations that it entails. Also that they aspire to have a sentiment of national brotherhood with all segments of society. Moreover, in exercising true democracy, equality should be guaranteed in their rights as citizens and the obligations upon them, all the while respecting the specific religious features and the established customs of all societal segments.

b) Supporting social integration at the family level by encouraging participation at work, in jobs and in the affairs of life and livelihood, the avoidance of class discrimination and resolving differences by mutual understanding, dialogue and in a way that is the best for that situation,

c) Raising ourselves above trivialities, mutual occupation with the higher necessities of a noble life and developmental affairs. Also, finding solutions to problems like epidemics, diseases, natural disasters, poverty, social injustice, administrative and monetary corruption, overcoming illiteracy, providing opportunities for obtaining an education to everyone, an interest in maintaining national stability and an avoidance of trying to change the system of government using force and finally doing away with all forms of divisions based on different classes and factions.

d) All that which has preceded are simply references and indicators and cannot be claimed to be comprehensive

in what they refer to. However, they do provide an opportunity for the continuation of study to achieve all the declared objectives from getting the follower of various religions to meet, to come closer to each other, to coexist with each other, to prefer reconciliation over being at odds and to resolve whatever they might face whether it is major or minor, political, legal or social or other than that through dialogue and understanding and not through discord.

Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations in Light of the Saudi Initiative for Dialogue

Dr. Edward Kessler (*)

Remember 16th July 2008. On that historic day, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz opened the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid in the presence of King Juan-Carlos and the Spanish Prime Minister as well as other dignitaries.

The fact that the King opened the conference himself, met each of the 200 attendees personally and was accompanied by most of the senior Saudi ministers demonstrates that he gives interfaith relations a high priority. There have previously been a number of Muslim initiatives in the world of interfaith relations, notably by the Jordanians under the patronage of King Abdullah and the tireless work of Prince Hassan as well as by British Muslims, such as Amineh A. Hoti, Director of the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish

(*) A leading thinker in interfaith relations, primarily contemporary Judaism, Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Muslim Relations. He is Founder of the Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths and Fellow of St. Edmund's College, Cambridge. He is a prolific author, having written or edited 10 books including *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge University Press: 2010) and *What do Jews Believe*? (Granta Publications: 2006). (United Kingdom)

Relations in Cambridge and Musharref Husain, co-Chairman of the Christian-Muslim forum.

However, when the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques calls for dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims, in the face of criticism from some Saudis, we should acknowledge its significance. In his opening address, the King stated that God did not desire that "all mankind should share the same religion" and that it was necessary for all religions to combat the results of extremism which "some adherents of every divinely revealed religion and of every political ideology have been afflicted." These are courageous words.

It was also significant that not only were Jews, Christians and Muslims participating but Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists were also invited. Among certain strands of Islamic theology, the Eastern faiths are not viewed as religions but rather cultures, thus a denial of their spiritual values. However, saffron-robed Swamis and yellow-cloaked Zen Masters mingled among the darker suits of rabbis and priests and the white vestments of sheikhs and turbaned imams. It was a colourful mosaic of religious dress.

Certainly, the Saudi initiative will strengthen Muslims who are already active in dialogue, giving them confidence to take further steps in fostering better relations with non-Muslims; it will also encourage Muslims who have not yet engaged in interfaith dialogue to start.

And this brings us to the heart of the matter. The Saudi Initiative has demonstrated that Muslims, especially in the Middle East, acknowledge the necessity to engage in dialogue, if only, in the words of Dr. Abdullah bin Abdul Mohsin Al-Turki, Secretary General of the Muslim World

League, to "remove suspicions about Islam and followers of Islam." However, for this to happen there needs to be an increase in mutual understanding. This means a two-way process. Having been actively involved in interfaith dialogue as an activist as well as an academic for the past 15 years, I am aware that real dialogue consists of a direct meeting of two people and involves a reciprocal exposing of the full religious consciousness of the one with the "Other." Dialogue speaks to the Other with a full respect of what the Other is and has to say. Such a quest is never easy because it is not merely about the Other, nor where the Other differs from us. Consequently, dialogue entails a respect that takes the other as seriously as one demands to be taken oneself - an immensely difficult exercise.

For Jews, the basis for a theology of dialogue can be found in Leviticus 19:33-34:

"When a stranger lives with you in your land, do not ill-treat him. The stranger who lives with you shall be treated like a native-born. Love him as yourself for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

The importance of loving the stranger is emphasised by the fact it is commanded on 36 separate occasions in the Torah. Understanding the Other is dependent upon embracing the dignity of difference – in other words, there must exist a willingness to understand difference in order to get to know the Other.

It is all too easy to relate to others in a casual way with a lack of concentration on the reality and good of the Other. The basis for Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue is that each faith must be understood on its own terms.

Can Christians and Muslims view Judaism as a valid religion - and vice versa?

The pioneer of modern dialogue was Martin Buber (1878–1965) whose 'I-Thou' formula maintained that a personal relationship with God is only truly personal when there is not only awe and respect on the human side but when we are not overcome and overwhelmed in our relationship with God. This has implications for the human encounter. It means that two people must meet as two valid centres of interest. Thus one should approach the Other with respect and restraint so that the validity of the other centre is in no sense belittled.

Further, not only is the essential being of the other respected but the world of 'faith' is also treated as valid and genuine; not an 'it' to be carelessly set aside but a distinctive value of belief. An I-Thou relationship is a meeting not of religions but of religious people. Note the emphasis on the individual.

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), greatly influenced by Buber, is a more recent Jewish contributor to the dialogue. He argued that the relationship with the Other is not an idyllic relationship of communion, or a sympathy through which we put ourselves in the other's place; the Other resembles us, but is exterior to us. For Levinas, the face of the other necessitates an ethical commitment. According to Levinas

when people look at each other, they see not only two faces but also the faces of other people, the face of humanity.

Jewish-Muslim Dialogue

Because Jews and Muslims share the experience of being minority religious communities in Europe, they have parallel experiences and needs. Yet, the dialogue is overshadowed by the failure of both communities to address the impact of the Middle East conflict on their own communities.

Understanding what lies behind this failure is key to the future success of Jewish-Muslim dialogue but an authentic encounter must allow for sharp differences: for most Jews, the creation of the State of Israel is an ancient promise fulfilled - the ingathering of exiles and the creation of a vibrant nation-state, guaranteeing physical and spiritual security. Yet, for many Muslims, the permanent existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East is a religious and political anomaly. For Jews, the creation of the state of Israel is an act of national liberation following nearly 2,000 years of powerlessness and homelessness. Muslims term the same events "The Disaster," a time when an Islamic society was uprooted and became a minority in a land that was once dar al-Islam. Most Jews do not separate Zionism from its deep religious roots within Judaism.

As important as this is, the most important failing in the dialogue is ignorance. The lack of knowledge among Jews and Muslims provides a seedbed for prejudice. This makes the work of a small number of academic institutes, such as the Cambridge Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations, so important for the pursuit of knowledge and furthering understanding between Muslims and Jews which

will also help overcome antisemitism and Islamophobia.

For example, Muslim scholars from the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations initiated the world's first Letter in modern times from Muslim leaders to the Jewish Community calling for peace and understanding was published and should be viewed as part of the process of reconciliation. The 2008 Letter, composed by Dr. Amineh Ahmed Hoti and Sheikh Michael Mumisa, was 'a call for positive and constructive action that aims to improve Muslim - Jewish relations'. Tariq Ramadan, one of the many eminent signatories, spoke of its significance: 'I really think that this Letter is a signal that we are ready to call for dialogue…We need to get beyond 'tolerance' which is saying that 'I put up with you but I would rather you were not here' to a mutual knowledge and a mutual respect.' He described dialogue with Jews as 'a risk but a necessity.'

The Letter acknowledges the striking commonalities of Islam and Judaism and those historic periods and places of remarkable cooperation and cross-fertilization between the two faith communities, much of which has been overshadowed and even hijacked by modern politics.

How should Jews and Muslims practically progress the dialogue? A foundation of mutual trust and respect is best built step by step, eg., organising reciprocal visits to synagogues and mosques, developing joint strategies on issues such as discrimination, as well as supporting each other's attempt to maintain a distinctive religious identity in a society that promotes conformity to the majority culture.

If the challenges faced by Muslim-Jewish dialogue seem daunting, consider the significant advances in Christian-Jewish relations in the last 100 years. Surely one of the few

pieces of good news in today's encounter between religions, Christian-Jewish dialogue arose despite profound theological differences and many centuries of alienation and distrust. The fact that Jews and Christians have built mutual respect and understanding does not, of course, mean that this model can be wholly applied to Islamic-Jewish relations with the same positive results. Jews and Muslims today carry far different memories and issues than the historical baggage brought to encounters with Christians. While there has been nearly a century of fruitful Christian-Jewish dialogue, building positive Islamic-Jewish relations is in its early stages and represents a new challenge.

We must move towards an encounter, which will take us on the journey from disdain to recognition when we will see the Other as a creature of God and part of God's special design for humanity: a respectful relationship that is called dialogue.

In Britain, several converts to Islam have been instrumental in giving British Muslims a voice, and one example is Shaykh Adbullah also known as Henry William Quilliam, who was instrumental in the foundation of the mosque and organisation of the Muslim community in Liverpool in the 1890s. Today, Tim Winter, also known as Adbul Hakim Murad, a Cambridge University Lecturer in Islamic Studies is an articulate and active Muslim voice in Britain. In a talk to the students at the CMJR in the Cambridge mosque in 2007, he made these observations about the current situation of Muslims in Britain:

- The madrasas (religious schools) teach to various degrees outdated curriculum from the mother countries
- A major problem in the communities is the generational

differences and the transmission of Muslim values and culture to children
- Schisms are related to ethnic identities and not to relations to modernity
- Muslims feel a sense of corporate identity in materialistic and hostile surroundings

These comments are familiar to a Jewish listener. As minority groups, Jews and Muslims have both faced discrimination in British society and experience difficulties in integrating. British Jews and Muslims share a concern for their children's education, for issues related to generational differences and for new or resurfacing racism. They share the same vulnerabilities and concerns and (perhaps for the first time in the history of the world), both Jews and Muslims are minorities in the same country). However, at the moment, Muslims in Britain are more exposed to anti-Muslim comments and behaviour than Jews to anti-Jewish experiences.

Where Jews also have something very much in common with Muslims—and some other minority groups—which still needs working out, is their relationship with Europe. The role they will play as a distinct community (in whichever countries they live) is by no means settled. The European dimension may offer a very productive framework in which Jews and Muslims can find ways of becoming at ease with themselves and their desire for distinctiveness. Tariq Ramadan, for example, sees the forging of a 'European Islam'-which sounds like a 'European Judaism' that some Jews look towards-as a key to the integration of Muslims in European societies in a form that does not involve abandoning fundamental aspects of Islamic identity.

To come more specifically to Jewish views, Jews need to acknowledge the deep ambivalence within the Jewish world about the nature and possibilities of dialogue. To a large extent this is understandable in terms of Jewish experience under Christianity and Islam over the centuries. One need not recount here in detail the fate of Jewish communities at the hands of Christians: pogroms, forced conversions, expulsions, accusations of ritual murder and subsequent destructions of entire communities, ghettoisation, the inquisition, public burnings of Jewish sacred writings, and in the last century the horrors of the Shoah that took place within Christian Europe. All the above were underpinned by deep Christian theological ambivalence about the continued existence of the Jewish people whose religious beliefs should have been long superseded by accepting Jesus Christ as the messiah.

In comparison the treatment of Jews under Islam has been considerably better, though not without destructive experiences under occasional fanatical regimes and the abuse of the Dhimi status.

On the positive side it is also clear that much that is central to Jewish thought and practice arose during these same centuries and was deeply influenced by the Christian and Muslim environments – through a selective absorption of the surrounding ideas and values, but also through contributions to the host culture. Symbiosis and conflict went hand in hand.

Today it is important to note in particular another dimension to Jewish existence that affects the very notion of interfaith dialogue. Judaism is the religion of a particular people and the two elements, ethnic identity and religious faith, interact with each other

For example, it is difficult to separate interfaith dialogue as a purely religious exercise from a whole range of political dimensions. If these tend to be dominated by the Israel-Palestine conflict, there are no less important domestic European social implications as all three 'Abrahamic' faiths seek to find their identity, role and even security in a sometimes aggressively secular society. The spectre of antisemitism continues to haunt Jewish communities in Europe, and Islamophobia, feeding on fears evoked by terrorist acts, puts Muslim communities seriously at risk. In such circumstances interfaith dialogue takes on the added dimension of mutual support and solidarity.

One significant feature of Jewish-Christian relations in recent decades has been the documents and actions of the Christian churches as they have had to come to terms with the Shoah, and the failure of the Church, to take a stand against the Final Solution, not to mention Christian complicity in carrying it out. The landmark change came about with the publication on 28 October 1965 of the Vatican II declaration on non-Christian religions, Nostra Aetate, which effectively reversed the classical 'teaching of contempt' against Jews and Judaism.

Such far reaching re-evaluations of basic Christian teachings about Jews and Judaism are gradually filtering down to local levels in the Church.The work of local and international organizations like the Council of Christians and Jews, alongside other grass-root dialogue projects, often involving also Muslims and other religions outside the 'Abrahamic' three, has led to a gradual lessening of suspicion and a kind of normalization of relationships. In September 2000 *Dabru Emet* was published, which is a reflection on what

Judaism may now say about Christianity, and a response to the Christian statements about Jews and Judaism.

It is essential to initiate more statements and reflections on Muslim-Jewish Relations, like the Call to Dialogue.

Because of its history as a minority faith within both Christian and Muslim societies, Judaism has borrowed from and contributed to both, while retaining its unique identity. One effect of these shared histories and interactions is that it is relatively easy for Jews to enter into dialogue with both faiths separately as considerable common ground can be discovered.

Effectively the Bible provides Jews and Christians with a tool for opening a mutual discussion and debate, as I showed in my book, *Bound by the Bible* (Cambridge University Press, 2004). But beyond this, Jews, like Christians, have gone through the upheaval to religious traditions brought about in the wake of the Enlightenment: the historical-critical challenges addressed to the Biblical and related religious traditions, the loss of power of religious authorities, the secularism and the individualism that characterizes Western society.

Alongside Muslims, Jews share a rich vocabulary because of the similarities between Hebrew and Arabic and the fact that mediaeval Jewish philosophy was developed within an Islamic milieu. Mediaeval Hebrew religious and secular poetry is a direct consequence of exposure to Arabic models. But even more significant is the fact that Judaism in its classical form, like Islam, is based on law, a law that comprehended every aspect of private and public life. Thus religion and politics belonged together as inseparable parts of a total world view, or, as it is commonly expressed, 'Judaism

(and in this sense Islam) is not a 'religion' but a 'way of life'. Thus the approach to day to day issues and concerns, from food laws to marriage and divorce to justifications for warfare, is similar in both traditions, as are the legal methodologies used to address such matters.

In this regard Judaism stands in many ways in a kind of middle ground between the other two, shedding light on each and thereby revealing its own dependence and uniqueness. This middle ground is not unlike the mediating role played by Jews in the Middle Ages when they acted as translators of the philosophical, theological and scientific texts of Islam from Arabic into Hebrew, and thence from Hebrew into Latin. From such a perspective Judaism is ideally placed to act as an intermediary in the difficult dialogue that is so essential today between Christianity and Islam, between the West and East.

Although the Middle East conflict makes the task harder, there remains hope that whilst in the past we have defined ourselves in contradistinction and in opposition to one another, today we have to define ourselves in relationship to one another.

Religious Dialogue in Denmark: A Personal Experience

Abdul Wahid Pedersen (*)

I was born into a Christian family in Denmark. Although my parents were not practicing Christians who went to church every week, as a child I never doubted that I was part of a Christian family. My grandfather was the bell-ringer at a village church, so as a child I often went with him to the bell-tower to ring the bell. Thus, I may be the only Imam in the world – or at least one of very few – who helped ring the church-bell as a child.

At 16, I was strongly questioning my own religious base. This was somehow part of the youth-culture that I was growing up in. I confirmed my Christianity at the tender age of 14, a common tradition in this part of the world. But

(*) Foreign Relations› Manager of Muslim Council of Denmark. Secretary General of Danish Muslim Aid. Co-founder and former principal of three private Muslim schools in Copenhagen, Denmark. Translator of several books about Islam in to Danish. Active in dawah programs in Denmark. Active in the public debate in Denmark and a very frequently spokesperson for the Muslim minorities. Active participant in local, national, regional and international debates on issues relating to religion and peaceful co-existence. Considered one of the 500 most influential Muslims in the World today. (Denmark)

that very act led me to ponder the big, existential questions of life: Where do I come from? Where am I going? How do I go? Is there a God? Is there a meaning with life?

These, and many other questions, eventually led to my resignation from the Danish Church at the age of 16. It was not because of I had a conflict with the church. Rather, I needed to find my own way in life. Religion is not something you can inherit from your parents or society, but is something you must find within yourself.

For a few years I was without any religious binding, and studied numerous books about different religions and philosophies of life. At 21, I set about traveling the world, and spent the better part of four years in Africa and Asia. These travels were part of my inner development. I encountered people from different religions and cultures. Being a typical European from the wealthy part of the world, I was astonished that many people, despite living in utter poverty, seemingly were satisfied with their lives.

That very fact made me realize that the only thing these poor yet satisfied people had was religion. Not religion as a philosophy, but as a way of life. So I decided to start practicing religion, since I too sought that inner sense of contentment. At the time, I believed all religions must be from the same source, and differences were the result of human alteration. In some cases, removing part of the original matter, in other cases adding to it.

And then I became a Hindu. I followed the Hindu way for a few years, part of it spent on pilgrimages to holy places in India, bowing to statues of different kinds. When I eventually returned to Europe and Denmark, I was still Hindu. One day, at the age of 27, I was suddenly struck by an overwhelming feeling that there is only one God. In practicing the Hindu faith, I had been worshipping a number

of "gods and goddesses." But suddenly it was clear as lighting that I was on a wrong track, and had to turn to the one and only unseen God.

About a year later, I ended up staying in a flat in Copenhagen with three Muslims, all of them Europeans – a Dane, a Norwegian, and an Englishman. My first night in their apartment I awoke to the call for prayer at about 3:00 am. I was stunned when I saw these three individuals rise for prayer, and at the same time ashamed. I had long wanted to pray, but I never got myself together to pray much. And normally I would only give God the left-over time, when I had satisfied all my own needs and whims. Yet here I was confronted with people who actually got out of their beds to pray to God, at a time when the bed is at its sweetest.

I prayed with them that morning, and of course we started talking about religion. Soon enough, it was clear that my long search, which had started 12 years earlier, had reached its culmination – I had reached the peak. A few days later I gave the twain pledge to Allah, and my life since has been according to the way of Prophet Muhammad, may the endless blessings and peace of Allah be upon him.

Now why did I tell you this story? To illustrate for you, dear reader, how the life of an individual can in itself be an inter-religious dialogue, even if it starts within a rather mono-religious culture. And since I have had the profound experience of living within two religions before I finally settled on Islam, it would be extremely strange for me not to make use of the vast experience that has shaped my life.

Allah in His endless Wisdom has walked me through three of the great religions of the World. And I still find it intriguing to draw the parallels and lines from one to the other, and see in which ways it is possible for people to find common ground.

Since my early youth I have also been blessed with the opportunity to travel extensively, making friends along the way. Having visited nearly 100 countries, and stayed for lengthy periods of time in many of them, I feel strongly connected not only to my native Denmark, but to the world at large. And having friends from different religions, the world becomes an increasingly richer place to travel from year to year. I have participated in numerous conferences on interfaith dialogue, staged by people from religions small and large, and have always benefited greatly from these encounters. Not only from listening, speaking, and meeting participants, but also being able to take new ideas with me back to Denmark and share our experiences with others.

And as a religious minority in Denmark, it is essential for us to have good and lasting relationships with people of other faiths, especially Christians, as Christianity has the largest following in Denmark.

Most people in Denmark have stopped thinking about whether or not we should have dialogue among the different faiths, because dialogue has been going on for years. The question now is how much we can share.

In 1995, the first steps were taken to establish a joint centre for Muslims and Christians in Copenhagen. I, myself, was one of the founders of the Islamic-Christian Study centre, which is one of the most important institutions in the field of dialogue. This Centre was certainly the first, and thus far only, of its kind in Denmark – possibly in Europe – that was established by both parties in full cooperation. A group of dedicated Christians and Muslims, who had been meeting regularly in a small and informal group, agreed to turn their highly beneficial meetings into a more institutionalized matter.

That was the start of the Islamic-Christian Study centre.

In the first few years of the Centre's existence, it had its own premises at an attractive spot in Copenhagen. Numerous public debates were held at the Centre, but its core focus was on facilitating small discussion groups that met at regular intervals. These groups of about ten people would meet regularly through a number of year, gradually building friendships and confidence between Muslim and Christian participants. Each group would periodically choose their own topics of debate or dialogue.

The point of these dialogue groups was that due to regular interactions, people would grow comfortable with each other and more and more profound topics and issues could be discussed. One interesting observation was that no matter how observant one was of their own faith, common ground could always be found as soon as discussion turned away from the core religious beliefs – such as the concept of Godhood, the Prophets, etc. And the longer we participated in the group, the easier it became to get into more difficult topics, where there was disagreement albeit without upsetting the dialogue.

It became clear to participants that it was the same inner drive which keeps us all on the path of the Lord, regardless of path one chooses. The deep and profound longing to serve the Creator is the same within the hearts of believers of different beliefs. As humans, we share a whole lot more than it appears at a first glance.

After 10 years, it became increasingly difficult for the Islamic-Christian Study centre to remain in its original location. In the meantime, some Muslims established the first Danish centre for Islam, where the teaching and training is conducted in Danish. Even the khutbah on Friday is

conducted in Danish. The Islamic-Christian Study Centre is now actually a tenant at a Muslim centre.

The establishing of the Islamic-Christian Study Centre was not the beginning of the inter-religious dialogue in Denmark, rather it was the first time it became institutionalized. But many of us, who are active in this dialogue, have been involved for much longer. One thing has always been imperative for us: We will in no way start mixing our religions or our rituals. We keep to our faiths. While we may love for others to see the beauty and truth in our own religion, we will not try to proselytize. That is crucial in this kind of activity. We have to be explicit and open about the fact that we are all concerned religious people, and that each of us believes that we, ourselves, hold the truth, and that the other party does not. That is the nature of religion, and the reason religions will never meet. But people will, and indeed must meet and interact.

We also must be open and honest about our love for our own religion. I would consider myself as a bad Muslim if I did not want for others to see and willingly accept its beauty. And I am certain that my Christian friends at the Centre feel the same way as Christians. Christianity is as true to them as Islam is for me. If they did not wish for me to convert to Christianity, it would surely be a sign that they truly did not care for me. So in spite of the fact that we all feel that way, it is easy to keep from falling into the trap of trying to convince each other about our respective truths by focusing instead on the great learning opportunity provided by meeting people with other opinions.

Obviously every Christian, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh or Muslim feels that his or her religion is the truth, and therefore that other religions are not. There is nothing wrong in holding this view, even when we enter into dialogue. Yet in

order to function, there are certain "traffic-rules" that must be observed. First, it is important to understand that dialogue is entirely different from negotiation. In negotiation it is expected that a result will be reached, an agreement or a settlement brokered. In dialogue this is not necessarily expected; dialogue aims at inspiring and enlightening the participant.

I have personally always found it truly inspiring to sit with people from different religions and dig deep into their beliefs – to attempt to see the logic or understanding what they find within their faith and to share with them what I find in my own.

In Denmark Muslims are a small minority, and basically we have no political influence or power. Islam is a frequently discussed topic in the media, but mostly by non-Muslims who regularly criticize or misperceive it. So when Muslims participate in the public debate about Islam, it is usually in defense of it, or in response to what is being said about Muslims or Islam. But as a Muslims, it is my humble opinion that we should also be active participants in the majority-society, taking our part and lifting our share of the load. This is best done when we have strong relations to other faith-communities in society.

There is a small anecdote I would like to share with you. It is about an old Jew by the name of Isac, who lived in Krakow, Poland, 100 years ago. He had a dream in which he saw that he had to travel to the capitol and go near the king's castle. There he would find a treasure under the bridge leading to the castle. So he walked the whole way, and when he arrived he began searching under the bridge.

One of the king's soldiers saw this stranger snooping around under the bridge, so he approached him, and said: "Who are you, and what are you doing here?" Isac said, "I am just a poor man from a distant town. I had a dream in

which I saw that I had to come here and that I would find a treasure under this bridge." The soldier laughed at him and said, "How can anybody believe in dreams. I once dreamed that I had to go to Krakow and visit some old Jew there, and that I would find a treasure under his kitchen-floor. But I am here, because I am not going to chase dreams."

The old man thanked him and went back to his home, where he dug into his kitchen-floor and found a big treasure.

Often we have to go way out of line to see the treasures that we have at home. This way it was with Isac, and personally I have often found that the inter-religious dialogue has just this quality. When a person lives with his religion every day, it may easily become an every-day-matter that we don't appreciate enough. But when you are confronted with a different view, you are challenged, and you have to think about your own religion, defend your viewpoints or beliefs and very often even look into the books to do some research in order to understand or be able to answer to a certain question that has come up.

So when we meet with people of other faiths, they can sometimes be a direct catalyst for our progress in our own religion.

My entire life has in some ways been an internal religious dialogue, at least the first half of it.

Presently I have the great pleasure of being member of several Danish and international bodies focused on dialogue among the religions, such as The Global Network of Religions for Children and the Danish Muslim Christian Dialogue-Forum. And with the Unification Church, I have participated in a number of inter-religious conferences, from Jakarta to New York, and from Jerusalem to Alaska.

Probably what I have enjoyed most has been finding time to sit

with scholars from other religions and dig deeply into the core of their beliefs. In Brussels, I once sat for three hours and talked in-depth with a Japanese Buddhist about the Buddhist and the Muslim perceptions of what happens after death. For me, trying to grasp the Buddhist concept of afterlife (or the stage before the next life, as they see it) was probably as hard as it was for him to grasp the Muslim concept of life being a one-time-chance after which we pass on to the Hereafter. But somewhere deep down and beyond the differences, it is evident that we all have the same obligations in this world. The duty is to be a good, decent, honest human, living a life in the hope of the best result on the other side.

Obviously there are great differences from one religion to the other, but the differences between the followers of the different religions are not vast. We all eat food and sleep at night. At one point, I was addressing a crowd of about 300 people from all world religions in front of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, talking about the importance of the verse in the Quran, in which Allah states that He has created mankind from a single pair of man and woman, and from these two has made us tribes and nations, so we can learn.

If Allah had willed, He could easily have made us all one nation, one tribe with one language and one faith. But He willed it differently, and we must learn from that wisdom. Standing in front of the Wailing Wall, the whole World seemed to be at a standstill for a few precious moments. The people before me had all come to the holy town of Jerusalem only to muster a rally of peace for a few days.

After this event, the delegation went for a brief visit to the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. And there, at the al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the foreign participants took shahadah and became Muslim. A few minutes later a young American

lady took her shahadah at the Dome of the Rock. I named her Miriam, telling her that this would be her Muslim name, since the Holy Mother of Jesus, peace be upon both of them, had walked the same ground. This young woman was so overwhelmed by the occasion that she did not stop crying for two days.

The benefits of religious dialogue are so numerous and consequential that it is hard to see a sensible argument for not having it. What I seem to hear most, when I talk to people who oppose the dialogue – although it is clearly advised in the Quran – is what sounds like a fear that one could somehow lose footing with one's own beliefs. But obviously, for a strong believer this is not even an issue. Dialogue normally strengthens one's own beliefs.

A vast majority of the world's population consists of religious people. At present the voices of religious leaders are rarely heard, since world politics is governed by economic interests. If there was not such reluctance from religious leaders, it would be much easier to set a new agenda in the world – an agenda where moral and ethic issues play a more prominent role than they do today. Since politics are dictated by monetary interests, our present direction is unsurprising. Resources are being exploited, the natural balance is at peril, and the richer grow richer at the expense of the poor. No religion sanctions the way things are going today, but only if we stand together as religious people, without fear of each other, will we be heard.

So from my humble position in Copenhagen, I sincerely urge religious leaders to take each other's hands and find issues of common footing and interest. This will certainly be in the interest of the world and our shared future.

Knowledge on Islam and Enhancing Interfaith Dialogue in Japan

Dr. Kenta Kasai (*)

1. Lack of knowledge?

Since 1990, there has been a steady increase in the number of Muslim immigrants, residents, and visitors to Japan. National immigration statistics show that there are more than 50,000 foreign-born, Muslims living in Japan as permanent residents today. Yet in general, the Japanese public does not understand Islam well. To encourage understanding between Muslims and the Japanese people, it is important to disseminate proper knowledge about Islam. Thus, one must determine the 'what, when, where, and how' information on Islam should be provided to the Japanese.

I will first relate the history of Islamic-Japan interaction,

(*) Ph.D., The University of Tokyo, 1999. Research Fellow of Center for Information on Religion (Tokyo, Japan). His research interest is the study of mutual support association/network. His works include Communality of Sobriety: the people who believe in recovery from alcoholism, Sekai-shisosha, 2007 [Japanese], Keywords for Religious Studies, Yuhikaku, 2006 [Japanese], and "Muslim network in Japan," in Almanacs of Religion and Modern World 2007, Heibonsha, 2007 [Japan].

and contrast the "respect" Japanese people have traditionally held toward Islam and Middle Eastern civilizations with the ambiguous, anti-Muslim anxieties recently formed due to excessive news coverage of conflicts. Secondly, I will argue that the changing role of the Islamic Center Japan – the key symbolic Muslim organization in the country – is symptomatic of the changing relationship between Japanese people and Muslims. I will then show how half-truths and ignorance has led to a biased understanding of Islam – the result of stereotyped media coverage and a school curriculum that insufficiently promotes cultural diversity. In conclusion, I will cite some examples of the involvement of Japan in dialogue with the Islamic world.

2. Beloved History of Islam: Culture and People Among Japanese

Japan has a long history of interaction with Islamic and pre-Islamic cultures, mostly based on its contact with the "Silk Road". The first recorded Japanese encounter with the Middle East was July 16, 660, when a Persian was reported visiting Japan. Shosoin Treasury in Nara, one of the oldest treasuries in Japan, has a vast collection of Persian art items such as glass goblets and pitchers. The Japanese people developed a familiarity with these artifacts and a respect for Middle Eastern civilizations both before and after Islam.

However, the modern history of Muslims in Japan dates to the establishment of the first three mosques – Nagoya (1931), Kobe (1935), and Tokyo (1939) – by Turkish Tatar refugees of the Russian Revolution. Many these refugees were anti-

communists who backed the White armies in the Russian civil war. That there were enough Muslims living in these cities to manage these mosques suggests that these communities developed a warm friendship with local Japanese citizens, entrepreneurs, politicians, and intellectuals.

Throughout the 20th century, Japan maintained a keen interest in the Asian market and resources. Before and during World War II, some prominent Japanese citizens – including Prime Minister Senjuro Hayashi and the scholar Shumei Okawa (the first translator of the whole text of the Qu'ran into Japanese) – also considered the relationship with Islam useful for intelligence purposes. Muslim groups were invaluable in collecting information and developing anti-communist networks in Asia. Japanese converts to Islam included chivalrous people who had a cosmopolitan and nationalistic ideology; they adopted lessons from Islam which contributed toward Japan becoming the leader of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."

After the Japanese defeat in World War II, many of these politicians and scholars were branded war criminals and the Asian connection between Muslims and Japan was lost. However, Japan's post-war economic growth attracted many Muslim students to Japanese universities. One of these students, Dr. Sali M. Samalai – who received a PhD in Agriculture from the University of Tokyo – founded the Muslim Student Association in 1961. This organization preceded both the International Islamic Center (1966) and the Islamic Center Japan (1974). The Islamic Center was established in the midst of the "oil crisis," when Japanese were keen to learn more about Islam, which they saw as the religion of the "oil producing" countries.

The mission of the Islamic Center was to support Japanese converts by promoting Islamic events, translating books on Islam, and establishing a Muslim cemetery. The student members of the Center had excellent language skills – Japanese, Arabic, and their own mother tongues. As intellectuals, they worked to promote mutual understanding and develop friendship between Japanese society and the Islamic world. Therefore, the Center had a history of both facilitating mutual support for Muslims in Japan, and offering publications and information on Islam to the Japanese. The Center also literally bound the Muslims in Japan together. In 1977, the Center collaborated with Chuo University in Japan and the Muslim World League (MWL) in Makkah for a conference on Islamic law.

The Islamic Center remains "the center" for Muslims in Japan. For example, it is responsible for determining the start of the month of Ramadan in Japan. However, since the "9-11," terrorist attacks in 2001, it has become difficult to remit donations to individuals in Islamic countries without being suspected of belonging to, or supporting, a terrorist organization. The Center is now facing financial difficulty; it is staffed by unpaid volunteers.

3. A Turning Point: The 1990s

The Islamic Center of Japan's situation is symptomatic: for Muslims in Japan, the era of focusing on academic enlightenment about Islam seems to be ending. Today, Muslims in Japan are more oriented toward their own local life as Muslims and residents of Japan. Because Muslims are dispersed throughout Japan rather than concentrated in specific cities, they no longer rely on the Muslim network

for religious foods or commodities. They now have local area networks and job networks.

The type of Muslim entering Japan also has changed. At the time of the establishment of the Islamic Center, only the highly qualified intellectual elite, who had a global outlook and could bridge the two cultures, were able to visit and stay in Japan. However, in the 1980's Japanese society experienced historical economic prosperity and a wider variety of Muslims came to Japan in pursuit of business opportunities. Although Islam emphasizes mutual support with one's neighbors, a majority of Muslims are more oriented toward local life, mingling with Japanese people who do not have any particular interest in trade with Middle Eastern countries. These Japanese live alongside the local Muslim community as neighbors, with little interest in learning about Islam.

The beginning of the 1990's was a turning point for Muslims in Japan, considering two key developments:

(1) In 1989, the Japanese Ministry of Law and Justice cancelled Pakistan's visa waiver, at which time many Pakistanis decided to stay in Japan; and,

(2) In 1992, Pakistani Muslims established the Ichinowari mosque, possibly the first built primarily with donations from the local Muslim community.

Prior to the Ichinowari mosque, there were only four places of worship in Tokyo. Today there are more than 13, including small meeting rooms in offices or old, refurbished buildings such as the Otsuka mosque.

The story of scouting out the sites for new mosques is impressive and demonstrates the Muslims' practical intention to maintain harmony with their Japanese neighbors. Most Muslims are now very conscious of Japanese customs and

rules. Muslim leaders are (and should be) very careful (and nervous) about choosing the conditions surrounding the locations of their mosques. They make every effort not to cause any inconvenience to their neighbors. They shut the windows of the mosque when they start adhân – the calling for prayer. Some mosques around Tokyo are located along main roads or the railroad, where people are not so sensitive to noise. Ichinowari mosque, built in 1992, is one such example.

Those who established these new mosques differ somewhat from the earlier Muslim residents of Japan. They are not academics or engineers, and are not politically active. Most are traders or laborers working to support their families, who typically live in Japan with them.

4. More Knowledge, More Misunderstanding?

By now, most Japanese people have experienced numerous encounters with Muslims in urban areas – public transportations, shopping centers, neighborhood, or in the workplace. Yet the Japanese public generally has little knowledge about Islam. On the hand, Muslims do not know much about the customs of the Japanese community. Thus, there is a need to develop mutual understanding. Scholars of Islamic Studies try to enlighten the Japanese people about Islam, and information about the history, teaching, and peaceful nature of Muslims is widely available. However, the Japanese public still maintains a negative impression of Islam. Why? And what can be done, for example, in education?

In 2003, Takaaki Matsumoto, a Japanese high-school teacher, conducted a survey among high-school students on their understanding or misunderstanding of Islam. The

questionnaire, which was sent out to 23 schools (returned by 1,670 students), revealed an interesting correlation between knowledge about Islam and negative impressions of it. A student with limited knowledge generally stays apathetic and unconcerned, and does not develop negative impressions about Islam. Conversely, a student who is more knowledgeable tends to form a more negative image of Islam primarily through the continuous media focus on radical and violent Muslim activists.

We should further identify the "knowledgeable" students who consider Muslim radical and violent. Matsumoto, a world history teacher, tried to filter out students with an interest in Islam by asking three elementary questions, namely, Islam's most sacred place, its founder, and its sacred text. Six hundred and forty-eight students answered all three questions correctly. He considered these 648 students to be interested in, and knowledgeable about, Islam. These "knowledgeable" students tended to have correct answers to most of the questions, such as the practice of Ramadan, abstinence from liquor, and the potential to have four wives.

However, the "knowledgeable" student group tended to answer incorrectly when asked questions such as, "Are most Muslims Arab?", "Do Muslims share a God with Jews and Christians?", and "Are Muslims obliged to cover their whole body in black?" This shows bias among the "knowledgeable" student group.

Matsumoto itemizes the students' general impressions into four concerns. Students tend to think that,

(1) Islam is a rigorous religion. It has many precepts or commandments, and less freedom than other religions.

(2) Islam is a strange, hard to understand, or incomprehensible religion.
(3) Muslims are intolerant, aggressive people.
(4) Muslims are bearded men from the desert who admit gender discrimination.

Matsumoto assumes that the reason for these negative concerns is the flood of negative news about Muslims, such as terrorist activities and suicide bombers. He has devoted considerable time to establish a more balanced impression of Islam, but has been unable to accomplish much due to the limited hours assigned to Islamic culture in the world history curriculum. Students also claim that in preparation for college entrance exams, they need to focus primarily on general world history – not Islam. In ethics classes, teachers refer to the "mutual-support philosophy" of Prophet Muhammad as one of the founder of world religions along with Buddha, Confucius and Christ, but there are significant limitations in curriculum.

In addition to considering students' concerns, information on Islam must be relevant to the needs of students. Considering the recent increase of interest in Asia, the traditional policy to prefer general coverage in social studies needs adjustment. For instance, we should imagine where and how the students are likely to encounter Muslims, and clarify the diversity among Muslims. It is not rational to see the global Muslim community as monolithic; Muslims differ in nationality, culture, economic orientation, and educational background. Our efforts towards enlightenment about Islam in Japan should be colorfully oriented in diverse ways through the diversity of these people. Students need to know radicals are far not representative of Islamic society.

5. Japan and Interfaith Dialogue

From the previous pages it has been demonstrated that though Muslims maintain good relations among Japanese and that the Japanese people hold some kind of respect towards Middle Eastern civilizations, still lack of knowledge on Islam hinders further understanding of the religion. This reality requires an in-depth and continuing dialogue.

It is known that dialogue requires trust, and building trust across boundaries is necessary precondition. Interfaith dialogue can lead participants to build new partnerships and take on new challenges together as a community.

It seems that Japanese are eager for dialogue with the Islamic world. For instance, former Japanese foreign minister Yohei Kono, while addressing the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in September 1994 referred to "dialogue among civilizations" with the Islamic world as one of the areas that his country wants to involve in through a form of concrete cooperation.

It is worth noting that Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz has first announced his call for dialogue among divine religions when he met delegates attending a cultural dialogue between Japan and the Muslim world in Riyadh in April 2008. At that meeting the Saudi monarch said, "I want to call for conferences between the religions to protect humanity from folly." He referred to his groundbreaking talks in Rome in November 2007 with Pope Benedict XVI, saying, "I wanted to visit the Vatican and I did, and I thank him. He met me in a meeting I will not forget, a meeting of one human being with another. I suggested this idea."

Professor Yuzo Itagaki, chairman of the Islamic-Japanese Dialogue Forum, has attended the fourth interfaith conference, which was opened in Geneva on 30 September 2009. The event was organized by the Makkah-based Muslim World League (MWL). Professor Itagaki chaired one of the conference's sessions. The event was also attended from Japan by Kuniaki Kuni, president of the Association of Shinto Shrines in Japan.

Addressing the fourth seminar of the dialogues among civilizations between Japan and the Islamic world held in Tunis 13-14 of January 2006, Professor Itagaki emphasized the importance of overcoming the limitations that may face participants during these talks. He believes that we can't change the world in two days, but this seminar should be a good stepping stone for future meetings. He pointed out that in Japan they have thousands of young and talented specialists in Middle Eastern and Islamic studies that are eager to learn more about the Islamic world. Unfortunately, he can't find that many scholars or specialists in the Islamic world that study Japan, the situation is rather imbalanced. He added, "to overcome obstacles to successful dialogues we need to encourage these kinds of gatherings and discussions". "Continuing dialogue is the key to our success."

The Seminar on The Dialogue among Civilizations: The Islamic World and Japan, co-sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, was held on 12 and 13 March, 2002 in Bahrain. One of the key objectives of this meeting is to,

1- Take into account the importance of dialogue with Islam as a part of the attempt to promote dialogue with

various civilizations, with commencement of "UN Year of the Dialogue among Civilizations" in 2001 and,

2- Widen bases for dialogue with Islamic civilizations through enhancing understanding of Islam, alongside with enhanced understanding of Japan abroad, and through enhancing exchange of scholars and intellectuals, by such measures as the holding of symposia in Islamic countries.

These facts and others prove the importance Japan's officials and scholars, attach to interfaith dialogue. It seems that there is some kind of general conviction among Japanese involved in interfaith dialogue that dialogue with Islam is important for promoting dialogue with others religions, civilizations and cultures.

Bibliography

- Emiko Okada, Tonari no Iran jin (Iranian in the next door), Heibon-sha, 1998 [Japanese].
- Fujio Komura, Nihon Islam Shi (History of Japanese Muslims), VIC: Tokyo, 1988 [Japanese].
- Hideaki Sugita, Nihon-jin no Chuto Hakken (The Japanese Discovery of the Middle East), University of Tokyo Press, 1995 [Japanese].
- Immigration Bureau of Japan, Shutsunyukoku Kanri Tokei Nenpo (Annual Report of Statistics on Legal Migrants), The Ministry of Justice, 2001, 2006 [Japanese].
- Japan Immigration Association, Zairyu Gaikokujin Tokei (Statistics on the Foreigners Registered in Japan), Japan Immigration Association, 2001, 2006 [Japanese].
- Japanese Association for Religious Studies, Journal of Religious

Studies special issue: Islam and religious studies, Japanese Association for Religious Studies, 78 (2), no. 341, 2004 [Japanese].

- Keiko Sakurai, Nihon no Muslim Shakai (Muslim Society in Japan), Chikuma Shobo, 2003 [Japanese].
- Kiyomi Terada, Kyosei Shakai to Minority he no Shien: Nihon jin Muslima no Shakai teki Taioh kara (A Symbiotic Society and Support for Minorities), Toshindo, 2003 [Japanese].
- Kokusei Chosa Hokoku (The Report of the Population Census), Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2006 [Japanese].
- Matsumoto, Takaaki, "Nihon Zaiju Muslim to Nihon-jin tono Kyosei ni Muketa Islam Rikai: Kokosei he no Ankeito Chosa wo Itoguchi to shite (Understanding Islam to foster Symbiotic Relationship between Muslims and Japanese: Through Questionnaires to High School Students)," Master Paper for the Graduate School of Chuo University, 2004 [Japanese].
- Morimoto, Abu Bakr, Islam in Japan: Its past, present and future, Islamic Center Japan, 1980.
- Nazir Ahmed Barlas Dahlavi, "Islam and Japan: a glimpse in History," in Assalam, 70, 1996 [Japanese].
- Sakamoto, Tsutomu, "A History of Tokyo Mosque," in Asia Yugaku (Intriguing Asia) 30, Bensei Shuppan, 2001 [Japanese].
- Takushoku University Centennial History Editorial Department, Tanaka Ippei – Islam Nippon no Senku (Ippei Tanaka -- forerunner of Islamic Japan), 2002 [Japanese].
- Tazawa, Takuya, Muslim Nippon (Muslim Japan), Shogakukan, 1998 [Japanese].

Problems That Can be Solved Through Dialogue

The Lack of Knowledge About Others

Dr. John Habib (*)

The Saudi King's invitation for interfaith dialogue between representatives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam has, understandably, won the endorsement of the overwhelming majority of the international community. No reasonable person would contest the premise that mutual respect and understanding among adherents of these religions are necessary conditions for a better world. And no reasonable person would deny that the lack of knowledge about others, most notably in the realm of religion, has spawned conflicts that have had disastrous consequences.

Perhaps at no time in history has the need for mutual understanding and knowledge about others been so critical.

Here I discuss some problems that arise from the lack of knowledge about others and cite examples from my own

(*) PhD, History, University of Michigan. Currently visiting scholar, James Madison College, Muslim Studies Program, Michigan State University. Former US diplomat. He retired as full professor from the University of Maryland, European Division, Heidelberg and taught at the University of Washington, Seattle, at Al-Akhawayn University, Sale and Mohammed V University, Rabat Morocco as visiting professor. He has published two books on Saudi Arabia. (United States)

experience to make the point. I also suggest that the King's call to dialogue creates an unprecedented opportunity to narrow the gap in our lack of knowledge of one another, that it could be the forum to alleviate the pent up anger and frustration generated by past conflicts, and to obviate future ones.

It remains to be seen if the political and religious leaders of the international community can rise to the occasion and exploit the potential that a new dialogue offers.

At a time when interaction among peoples of different cultures and religions was less common than it is today, lack of knowledge of others caused relatively few significant problems because most people rarely traveled far from their homes. However, the revolutions in mass transportation and communication technology changed all that. People who had little knowledge of each other's cultures suddenly found themselves involuntarily thrust together in the workplace, in hotels, in restaurants, and on planes, for example, and were often unprepared to deal with frictions that often resulted. These problems were manageable and limited in scope. But when international crises broke out these prejudices, these misconceptions, this lack of knowledge took on completely different dimensions with devastating consequences.

There are two basic aspects of lack of knowledge of others; in the first instance it occurs where there is an absence of knowledge pure and simple. That problem is resolved by undertaking research and coming up with the best information possible under the circumstances. The assumption is that research for this particular knowledge would be an ongoing matter. In the second it occurs when there is the presence of knowledge but that knowledge is flawed. The problem here is that the flawed information is already

in the public domain; it has already influenced those who have had access to it one way or other. Identifying and purging the flaws are something not easily done.

Flawed information ultimately enters the mainstream of general knowledge and becomes one with it as the cumulative norm of societal values.

I suspect that anyone reading this paper can identify in his or her own culture attitudes against a given, race, religion or ideology that are known to be intellectually untenable but that remain part of the folklore nonetheless. This totality reflects the collective values of any given society regardless of its level of sophistication. It cuts a swathe through social status, economic class, education level, and religion.

Democratic leaders use it to gain the support of the masses in times of crises, real and imagined. And tyrants do too. They may not share power with the people but they use their shared cultural and social values to win over their support.

The potential danger in the lack of knowledge or in flawed knowledge is awesome. It can be and has been destructive.

Perhaps nothing exemplified this situation of lack of knowledge of others more than the cry "why do they hate us" that echoed throughout the United States in the wake of attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11. "They", of course, being Muslims. Overnight Americans and also Europeans who felt equally threatened by the assaults in New York and Washington, D.C. were compelled but unprepared to deal with Islam. And the little that they did know was not flattering and much of that came from Hollywood.

There may be an exception or two, but I cannot recall one film where Hollywood cast Arabs as hardworking, decent, normal people that led wholesome and constructive lives.

I never saw a depiction of a home similar to that of my family, my aunts and uncles, and their. friends. Instead for decades the movie industry depicted Arab men as lechers that absconded with innocent damsels, and Arab women in a perpetual state of belly dancing; even when their men folk were running off with the damsels. And when not portrayed as rakes Arab men were cast in the roles of shifty-eyed, untrustworthy, sword wielding villains, while their women, of course, kept on dancing.

Allow me this hyperbole to make a legitimate point.

In casting Arabs as they had learned to perceive them, the filmmakers' intent was simply to make money; and in those days political correctness was unknown.

When we were kids our friends teased about this, but by the time we were teenagers we had developed thick skins, amassed an arsenal of retaliatory ethnic barbs of our own, and became adept at delivering them. It was only childish antics back then.

But the events of 9/11 changed all that.

To many people Hollywood's depiction was true: Arabs were villains, were violent, and had no respect for life and property. These characteristics were given more credibility by derogatory comments and statements of American politicians and representatives of the media that painted Muslims and Islam as enemies of the Christian West in general and the United States in particular.

Is it any wonder that in the aftermath of 9/11 the American people supported unjust and even illegal policies that led them to approve the incarceration, torture, and inhuman treatment of Arabs and Muslims as the world watched in silent approval?

Fortunately the events of 9/11 had the unexpected but salubrious

effect of arousing interest among Americans in learning about Islam and to a certain extent about Judaism, given the U.S. close relationship with Israel. As a result much progress has been made in bridging the virtual dichotomy that separated adherents of these different faiths. Gone are the days, immediately following 9/11 when Muslims and Islam were systematically associated with terrorism in the print and visual media, on talk shows, and in deliberately ambiguous official declarations. Today Muslims and Islam are treated, for the most part, with consideration, respect, and in some cases with admiration. The unobtrusive role of government can be credited for much of this change. Hollywood's depiction of Arabs and Muslims is only a small reflection of a long history of anti-Islamic anti-Arab literature that can be traced to European writers from the dawn of the Islamic era. In the 19th and 20th century some such accounts were written not by individuals who could be characterized as fanatics or as racists but by respected historical icons such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Winston Churchill both of whom brought the full weight of their influence and credibility in degrading Muslims and Arabs.

In pursuing our discussion about the lack of knowledge of others, then, we not only must ask "Is there a lack of knowledge about others?" But also "Is there an existing body of literature that perpetuates pejorative knowledge of others? And what should and what can be done about it?

These questions speak to the justification for a new call to dialogue, because if no lack exists then to what purpose another dialogue? And if a lack does exist, how would the new dialogue fill the gap?

Let us examine some facts.

Tri-faith dialogue is nothing new. It began and flourished in the courts of Muslim caliphs and sultans from the first

centuries of the Islamic era down through the Middle Ages and beyond. For centuries, Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars, most notably in the legendary courts and schools of Muslim Spain debated the merits of their respective doctrines and the uniqueness of their own book of divine revelation, based purely on exegesis or through pure reason and logic. This tradition of dialogue thrives at universities and institutes throughout the world.

I experienced that first hand. When I was a young American Fulbright scholar in Cairo reading Islamic philosophy under the tutelage of an Al-Azhar sheikh, one could find George Shehata Anawati, an Egyptian Dominican Catholic priest together with his Muslim peers examining a graduate student at Al-Azhar University in the nuances and casuistry of Islamic thought; and Louis Massignon, the eminent French Catholic Islamic scholar, poring over Islamic manuscripts at the Dominican Institute of Oriental Studies, and Protestant Dr. Edward Eliot Cleverly translating Islamic treatises at the American University.(1) Both Father Anawati and Dr. Cleverly encouraged my studies. They were role models. They helped me overcome misconceptions about Islam that I had picked up in high school and at college as an undergraduate.

These scholars and all the others throughout the world passed on a legacy of mutual understanding and respect for the faith of others and bequeathed a repository of original research that nurtured those who followed them. David Burrell, the contemporary English scholar, is one. Broadening scholarly cooperation beyond dialogue, he asserts that the Abrahamic religions are indebted to each other for the understanding of their own religions.(2)

(1) The Muslim World ,Volume 61 Issue 3, Pages 155 – 158
(2) Burrel, David, Faith and Freedom: and Interfaith Perspective (Blackwell

Given the evidence that there is no dearth of interfaith dialogue and that the research and conclusions of scholars are available to those who would seek it, one would have to conclude that a new call to dialogue is prima facie patently redundant.(1)

A critical need for a new dialogue definitely exists, one that addresses the real problem which is not our lack of knowledge about others but rather that this extensive repository of information is confined to the domain of scholars and virtually inaccessible

to the masses. The solution is to create a venue wherein this knowledge is made available and disseminated to them.

Scholars have neither the financial resources nor the political wherewithal to do this. This task is the responsibility of the political leadership. To provide the people with correct knowledge of others is not a luxury that nations can ill afford but a vital and redeeming necessity that is ignored only at unacceptable risks to our mutual national security.

For proof we need look no farther than to the disastrous war in Iraq, the inchoate conflict in Afghanistan, and the plight of Pakistan as it continues to disintegrate right before our eyes.

Had the citizens of the Coalition of the Willing been better informed it is doubtful that they would have acquiesced in the flawed policies that sent their loved ones and those of others off to war. It was not happenstance that the people of Germany and France opposed the US led invasion of Iraq and that their leaders acted accordingly. It was not happenstance that leaders that supported the war in the face of massive opposition of their own citizenry were unceremoniously

Publishing Company, November 2004)

(1) The 19th century Hungarian Jewish scholar Ignaz Goldziher is credited as being the father of Islamic Studies in Europe

voted out of office, Spain being one such example.

The lesson to be drawn here is that a well informed citizenry does make a difference on how their respective governments respond to international crises.

Far from being redundant, then, King Abdullah's call for interfaith dialogue is an extraordinary opportunity for the international community to create a unique environment where scholars and political leaders can work together to craft programs specifically designed to close the gap in our lack of knowledge of other cultures and religion, and to promote understanding and toleration. Concurrently it can be a forum where the unhealed wounds born of previous conflicts are treated, especially those where unscrupulous politicians used religion as an engine to drive purely political and questionable objectives.

Dr.Ismat Abdul Maguid in his article "Combating Terror in the World"[1] provides powerful arguments for the creation of such a forum.

King Abdullah has the credentials to lead this new dialogue.

First, as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques he wields immense credibility unmatched arguable by any living Islamic leader.

Second, as an adherent of the ultra-conservative Hanbali school of Islam as taught by Muhammad bin Abdel Wahhab his call to interfaith dialogue evokes a particular poignancy.

Third, as King of Saudi Arabia, he is a recognized world leader whose counsel is sought and respected by international leaders throughout the world.

(1) Abdul Maguid, Ismat, "Combating Terror in the World", in Saudis and Terror-Cross-Cultural Views, Ghainaa Publications, Riyadh 1426/2005, First Edition, PP. 152-162.

It remains to be seen if the international leadership especially those of the most wealthy and developed countries will seize this opportunity, act on it, raise it to the level of importance that it deserves, and provide the support and encouragement to make it a reality.

As a practical matter the desirability of a broader dialogue to increase understanding among the three faiths is a moot question unless it can be shown that religion is a relevant medium of governing human relationships and that it substantively impacts public and foreign policy today.

Let us examine that thought.

The evidence available today demonstrates that the masses of the people embrace religion even in our current consumer oriented materialistic world as a worthy refuge from the political and economic uncertainties of the day. Consider the almost immediate public resurgence of Christianity in Russia and in the East Bloc countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union despite their regimes' concerted efforts over eight decades to eradicate it; consider the growing trend among Islamic peoples, notably the young, to assert their identity by adopting Islamic dress, and seeking answer to the vagaries of life in traditional Islamic practices; consider the unstinting support of Israel by Jews, religious and secular alike, throughout the world as an affirmation of their past identity and future aspirations. Attendance at religious services in the United States is at an all time high and even in West European countries where regular attendance is the exception rather than the rule, Christians still visit the church at least three times in their lives to baptize their newborn, marry their young, and bury their dead.

The relevance of religion in the political arena is even more telling. It fuels irredentist claims and nurtures festering

sores born of past conflicts.(1) Several examples from the modern era come to mind. Today almost one hundred years later, Armenians demand recognition of their claim that the Ottoman Government brutalized and expelled them from their homeland during World War I. The Government of Turkey rejects this allegation out of hand.

Britain and France reconfigured the contemporary Middle East after World War I by creating several autonomous sectarian states within an independent Syria, by forming an independent republic in Lebanon based on sectarian representation, and by expediting the immigration of European Jews to Palestine. These policies ignored the legitimate aspirations of the majority of the indigenous people and deferred instead to special interests, both colonial and local. They are the genesis of the endemic turmoil and violence that pervades the region today.

The Catholic-Protestant conflict in Northern Ireland, the Greek-Turkish struggle in Cyprus, the intra-Christian and separate Muslim struggles for independent states following the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Christian-Muslim conflicts in Indonesia and the Philippines and the Sunni-Shiah confrontations in Iraq all attest to the powerful impact of religion on contemporary society. Need we point out that the Algerian struggle for independence from France was conceived in the womb of its Islamic identity; or that Iran is now virtually a theocracy? Or that Lebanon's Hizballah and Palestine's Hamas both pursue political objectives under the banner of Islam?. Or that at the domestic level religious activists use violent means to advance their cause for or against abortion, animal rights, and same gender relationships?

(1) Ibid

The complexities of these problems were unquestionably compounded by the general population's lack of knowledge, a condition frequently perpetuated by the colonial powers themselves and abetted by indigenous political and religious leaders. While better knowledge may not have moved them from their rigid positions, a greater mutual understanding of their nemeses could have engendered solutions other than the recourse to violence, recrimination and revenge.

The overwhelming majority of our planet's population adheres to one creed or another; it is irresponsible, then, for political leadership to ignore this fact when they formulate public and foreign policy. Religion will remain a powerful dynamic force for the foreseeable future. The political leadership must deal with that reality effectively. The alternative is to abandon it by default to the extremists with the tragic consequences that we know only too well.

A first step in the eradication of problems that results from the lack of knowledge of others is to educate the masses in the meaning and practice of tolerance, a concept very often misunderstood. It is unreasonable to expect that people would be inclined to be civil to their neighbors if they do not know how to live with them peacefully and accord them a modicum of respect in the first place.

Tolerance is not a complimentary expression. Rather it means putting up with a condition or with peoples, cultures and religions, for example, that one may find unpleasant, troublesome, and even repugnant.

Medical doctors speak of a patient's pain tolerance, the ability to put up with and endure suffering. While there are exceptions, people generally do not "tolerate" their parents, their siblings, their children, their spouses. Instead they love

them; they embrace them; they identify with them as an extension of themselves.

In biblical times tolerance was a commodity in short supply. The Old Testament vividly describes the devastation that the Hebrews inflicted on the indigenous inhabitants as they sought to conquer and colonize Palestine. And the New Testament records the violent crucifixion of Christ allegedly at the instigation of the Jews, which provided Christians in later centuries a pretext to visit unspeakable atrocities upon them in Europe.

The Christian era was no better. Christians were persecuted by other Christians. Christian nations waged war against other Christian nations. Catholic crusaders diverted their attention from liberating the Holy Land just long enough to massacre Orthodox Christians and expel the Jews from Jerusalem.

Religious tolerance came of age in Europe and North America only in the late 19th century and even then it was not universal. Well into the 20th century Catholics and Jews in America were victims of religious discrimination. They were denied membership in specific organizations and barred by enforceable legal covenants from purchasing homes in certain areas. Anti-Catholic prejudice became an issue when candidate John F. Kennedy campaigned to win the presidency of the United States. The argument against him was that he would take orders from the pope. And Barack Obama became the target of anti-Muslim prejudice in his campaign for the presidency in 2008. There the allegation was that he was a crypto-Muslim, his insistence that he was a practicing Christian, notwithstanding.

Tolerance was the Islamic response to religious persecution. It was revolutionary in concept and universal

in application. It came into a world where religious intolerance and persecution reigned.

Islam required its adherents to tolerate Jews and Christians pure and simple. Not to love them, not even to socialize with them. They were obliged, to use the vernacular, "to put up with them; to leave them to their own doings."

Given that some doctrines of both religions were abhorrent to Muslims, it is a wonder that they had the self discipline to tolerate them. The Jews' rejection of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, for example, is an injury that has never fully healed to this day, and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is a direct affront to the fundamental Islamic belief in the Oneness of God. Nonetheless Islam tolerated them as "People of the Book" and allowed them to live as protected, autonomous communities governed in religious matters by their own religious authorities. Except for a few exceptions when Muslims were also the victims, Christians and Jews were never systematically persecuted.

Compare this with the intolerance of sophisticated societies of the 20th century when communist regimes purged capitalists and transformed them into virtually "non persons" and when capitalist regimes instituted witch hunts to identify and neutralize communists. Even when communists and capitalists posed no threat to their own societies they were punished for their beliefs. And those who socialized with them and befriended them were guilty by association and were ostracized. Some lost their jobs; some were jailed.

It is no secret that professional anti-Muslim naysayers belittle the idea that Muslims were tolerant and point to Islamic restrictions imposed on Jews and Christians, which, incidentally, were not universally implemented

and rarely enforced. I suspect, however, that the Orthodox Christian and Jewish victims of the Crusades, and the Jews and Muslim victims of the Christian re-conquest of Spain, and the millions of black African slaves who were bought and sold as chattel, and the Jews victimized by the Nazis would all have gladly preferred to be tolerated rather than be subjected to the humiliation, torture and death that was often their lot. Jews and Christians suffered no such fate under Islamic governance.

As a practical matter, the masses of Muslims, Christians, and Jews living under Islamic rule treated each other with civility and respect. Most probably they never quite knew, understood or dwelled on their mutual differences; the rigors of daily life were difficult enough without going there.

In America blacks and whites suffered from an endemic lack of knowledge of each other. Even in officially non-segregated states they lived in self-segregated communities, their lives rarely touching at the social level. Each race harbored unfounded mutual fears that often turned violent in the form of race riots. I witnessed several such outbreaks myself.

Happily things changed. In my lifetime the United States evolved from a nation where southern states rigidly enforced the legal separation of their black and the white populations, to the abolition of segregation altogether, to the election of a black president. This was the result in no small measure of state and federal efforts to break down the barriers of separation. There is still a long way to go but the progress already achieved is something that Americans, black and white would not have believed possible only a few decades ago.

The task of helping Jews, Christians and Muslims narrow the gap in their lack of each other is not as daunting as it is

in Europe and the United States. For centuries in the Middle East, these communities lived side by side, intermingled, intermarried, became partners in enterprises, celebrated each others weddings, and mourned each other's dead, and rejoiced at the birth of each other's children. Their shared racial attributes, language, and social customs created an interlocking cultural affinity that made it virtually impossible to tell them apart. And when members of these communities immigrated to Europe and the United States they brought this spirit with them. The task there is to build on this strong cultural and religious foundation.

To be sure periodic clashes between Arab Christians and Muslims on the one hand and with Jews on the other in the cities of Europe most notably Paris are not uncommon, but they are linked to the political aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian problem not to religion.

Not so in Western and Eastern Europe or the United States, where mutual lack of knowledge between the various religious communities is rampant and contributes to tensions and to outbreaks of violence known as "hate crimes."

The spread of tolerance is only one step toward dismantling the barriers that have perpetuated a condition of mutual lack of knowledge. It is not the solution but a necessary first step on the road to eliminating prejudices altogether.

I know of no forum dedicated exclusively to assuaging the festering resentment and anger born of past conflicts, and that are nourished and passed on from one generation to another. Even though the international community knows that these sentiments lay latent for generations and are likely to re-emerge in a more violent and uncompromising form, it acts only when a crisis flares up and returns to inaction after

the problem is resolved temporarily. Creating a forum as an integral part of the new dialogue to deal with these problems definitively would be a major step toward alleviating world tensions. Of course not all problems are conducive to consideration in such a forum, but resolving those that can, would be a major step forward.

Let us put this idea in the context of the Armenian-Turkish issue over a disputed historical event that occurred almost a century ago.

When I was a diplomat assigned to the American embassy in Paris, a Turkish diplomat recited to me in detail and with no emotion the simultaneous horror and incredulity that he experienced as he saw the flash from the gun that his would be assassin used to shoot him several times before leaving him for dead.

Neither the would-be Armenian assassin nor the Turkish diplomat victim knew the other personally; neither held a personal grudge against the other; and neither had anything to do with the controversial episode that transpired decades before either was born.

I was still in Paris when Armenian-Turkish violence erupted again. This time the target was an Armenian Club housed in a building once removed from the building where I lived. It was bombed. It caused the death of a kind, older Portuguese concierge whom I greeted almost daily on my way to work. He was scheduled to retire that week and return to Portugal to live out the rest of his days. He was returned home in a box. He too was not a party to the dispute.

This mutual violence between these two parties continued while I was in Paris. It solved nothing. Although the violence has stopped, the rancor lingers.

Nations that have the obligation to act responsibly to obviate this kind of violence do not, and this for reasons that have little to do with the weight of the evidence and much to do with their self interests of the moment.

Let me elaborate. The body of evidence in support of or against the allegations of each party in the Armenian-Turkish dispute is a matter of record. No need to elaborate further on that point. Nonetheless, different countries adopt positions vis a vis the problem that are clearly unrelated to the evidence, and instead that are based on purely parochial considerations. The United States, for example, has adopted the position of cautious ambiguity in deference to the sensitivities of its Turkish NATO ally. Israel unequivocally supports Turkey despite similar horrific experiences of some of its own citizens, in deference to Turkey's traditional friendship for it. France dramatically supports the Armenian position in deference to French public opinion. These countries ignore the merits of the issues; they form policies based on their transient needs today although they may pay for these policies tomorrow with the inflationary coin of future and more costly outbreaks.Perhaps no contemporary crisis reflects more than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I am not alone in suggesting that a new call to dialogue would be more effective if it were broadened to include the task of resolving past conflicts that have led to so much bitterness among the adherents of different faiths. In his article "Ground Rules for Muslim-Christian Conversation." [(1)] Edwin McGlynn Gaffney, Jr. in a rather tongue-in-cheek but no less

(1) Gaffney Jr., Edward McGlynn, "Ground Rules for Muslim-Christian Conversation, The Christian Century, October 31, 2006, pp. 24-26

insightful manner states that a meaningful dialogue cannot be achieved without bringing an array of grievances to the table for objective consideration and resolution. While not holding Jews and Muslims free from wrong doing, he clearly expects that the representatives of the Western Christian world would have much more to explain and for which to apologize than the others. He cites, as examples, the assault of the Catholic crusaders on the Orthodox Christians and their expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem, who incidentally were allowed to return and live there only after Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyoubi re-conquered it; and for the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290, from France in1306, from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1497 among others.

Lack of knowledge about each other is not the only and perhaps not even the most important cause of intolerance among adherents of different faiths and the discrimination, tension, and violence that it breeds.

Misinformation, deliberate or otherwise is no less harmful. And it is particularly pernicious when propagated by influential and powerful individuals.

Two particularly egregious examples come to mind. That of the influential and highly respected French intellectual, Alexis de Tocqueville, who is well known for his support of democratic government and less so for his anti-Islamic, anti-black African prejudice, and that of Winston Churchill.

This is what De Tocquville had to say about Islam:

"I studied the Koran a great deal. I came away from that study with the conviction there havebeen few religions in the world as deadly to men as that of Muhammad. So

far as I can see, it is the principal cause of the decadence so visible today in the Muslim world and, though less absurd than the polytheism of old, its social and political tendencies are in my opinion to be feared, and I therefore regard it as a form of decadence rather than a form of progress in relation to paganism itself."

This gives cause to believe that much of the apparent anti-Islamic attitudes found among the French people today may be attributed in part to De Tocqueville because of his writings.

This is what he had to say about Black Africans:

"You may set the Negro free, but you cannot make him otherwise than an alien to the European. nor is this all, we scarcely acknowledge the common features of humanity in this stranger whom slavery has brought among us. His physiognomy is to our eyes hideous, his understanding weak, his tastes low; and we are almost inclined to look upon himas a being intermediate between man and the brutes(italics mine)."(1)

De Tocqueville was no kinder to the Muslim Algerians. Around 1837 shortly after the French had conquered Algeria, but before the country had been pacified he wrote:

"I have often heard men whom I respect, but with whom

(1) Historical Quotes on Islam : http://home.comcast.net/~vincep312/islam.html

I do not agree, find it wrong that we burn harvests, that we empty silos, and finally that we seize unarmed men, women, and children'… 'These, in my view, are unfortunate necessities, but ones to which any people who want to wage war on the Arabs (italics mine) are obliged to submit."

Based on these remarks we can justifiably assume that his views about the Arabs and Muslims significantly influenced French political and military attitudes towards them as they expanded their conquests to other parts of North Africa, to Lebanon and Syria. And perhaps Israel's strategy to cleanse Palestine of its Arab population as well?

As a member of British aristocracy, as Prime Minister of England during World War II and as a prolific writer and renowned historian, Winston Churchill was, without doubt, the most influential Englishman of his time. Like those of De Tocqueville, his works were translated into dozens of language and were read by and influenced millions of people.

This is what he had to say about Islam:

"How dreadful are the curses which Mohammedanism lays on its votaries! Besides the fanatical frenzy, which is as dangerous in a man as hydrophobia in a dog, there is this fearful fatalistic apathy. The effects are apparent in many countries. Improvident habits, slovenly systems of agriculture, sluggish methods of commerce, and insecurity of property exist wherever the followers of the Prophet rule or live. A degraded sensualism deprives this life of its grace and refinement; the next of its dignity and sanctity. The fact that in Mohammedan

law every woman must belong to some man as his absolute property - either as a child, a wife, or a concubine - must delay the final extinction of slavery until the faith of Islam has ceased to be a great power among men. Thousands become the brave and loyal soldiers of the Queen: all know how to die but the influence of the religion paralyses the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in the world. Far from being moribund, Mohammedanism is a militant and proselytizing faith. It has already spread throughout Central Africa, raising fearless warriors at every step; and were it not that Christianity is sheltered in the strong arms of science, the science against which it had vainly struggled, the civilisation of modern Europe might fall, as fell the civilisation of ancient Rome."[1]

These quotes go a long way to understanding how British and French politicians dismissed out of hand Arab and Muslim rights in their own lands, and drew artificial borders that separated them in order to serve their own colonial and imperial interests. Perhaps no writer summed this disregard better than Muhammad Jalal Kishk: "French and British imperialism in Egypt, in Syria and Iraq" he wrote "traded cities and provinces as if they were shares on the stock exchange."[2]

Even after Britain and France granted nominal independence to the countries that they created, they still governed them

(1) Churchill, Winston, The River War The River War, First edition, Vol. II (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1899), pp. 248-250
(2) Kishk, Muhammad Jalal, Saudia wal Hal Al-Islami,, (Moody Graphics & Trans.Centre Ld. London, (1961) p. 20

behind closed doors, Iraq being a case in point until its July 14, 1958 revolution. Today these erstwhile colonial and imperial powers and their allies attribute the region's problems to alleged Arab-Muslim lack of democracy, to their squabbling, to their inability to govern, to Islamic fundamentalism, the litany of reasons that they advance is endless. They, themselves, disclaim any accountability for creating the environment of instability in the Middle East and no forum exists to hold them accountable for it.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the only country in the Middle East that has remained consistently stable and free from domestic upheavals since World War I and that is because its founder, Abdel Al-Aziz bin Abdel Rahman Al Saud foiled all British attempts to take control of the Arabian Peninsula prior to and after World War I and install regimes that they could manipulate. Instead Abdel Aziz established a state based on traditional Arab and Islamic values and it remains such a state to this day.

The story may be apocryphal but it is strikingly credible: When his private secretary asked Winston Churchill what Great Britain was going to do now that it had lost its empire, he replied "Not to worry son, we've left them enough problems for the next hundred years." Effective dialogue requires the dissemination of valid information to narrow the gap in our lack of knowledge of others; it also requires that patently pejorative information be subjected to severe scrutiny and dealt with accordingly, and that the truth be transmitted to the masses.

De Tocqueville's and Churchill's writings are as good a place to start as any.

Differentiating Between Islam and Muslims

Dr. Muhammad Al-Sammak (*)

Today, the world is faced with cultural, political, and economic changes that impose new challenges on nations and peoples of different cultures and interests, and the Islamic World is no different in this respect.

However, Muslims throughout the four corners of the globe are concerned with these changes. They will encounter, understand and adapt to these developments as Islam is a call to God through wisdom and beautiful preaching and one that is open to all people until the Day of Judgment.

Islam is the universal religion sent to all mankind not only to the Arabs. Islam does not deny that Christianity and Judaism are two religions from God. In the religious concept "Islam" means total submission to the Will of Allah. ***"He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation)"*** until Mohammed, and through Moses, Jesus, Isaac, Jacob

(*) Secretary General of the National Committee of Islamic Christian Dialogue in Lebanon. Specialized in Islamic Christian dialogue and Zionist ideologies. Participated in many conferences on interfaith dialogue. Member of a number of Islamic, thought and media committees. Author of a number of books; including: *An Introduction to Islamic-Christian Dialogue*, *Exploitation of Religion in Political Conflicts* and *Christian Zionism*. (Lebanon)

and all other prophets. Religious universalism in Islam is clearly indicated in the Holy Quran which is the source of Islamic legislation. I mention three of them as follows:

The first is included in the first verse of chapter four of the Holy Quran. This verse says:

> ***"Oh mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person." (4:1).***

This is a confirmation of equality between all people regardless of their ethnicity, color, religion and doctrines, as people, without an exception are created from a single person.

The second reference is in verse 70 of chapter 17 of the Holy Quran. God says:

> ***"We have honored the sons of Adam."***

Honoring the sons of Adam means honoring all people regardless of their ethnic, religious or national background, and also regardless of the nature, form, and pillars of this background. Man is honored for his humanity and not for his nationality or his faith.

The third reference is reflected in verse 107 of chapter 21 of the Holy Quran. In this verse God addresses Prophet Mohammed saying,

> ***"We sent thee not but as a Mercy for all creatures."***

This means for all people in the whole world and not for your people, the Arabs only.

This universalism of Islam's call derives its bases from full equality between all people who were created from a single person. It also derives its bases form God's honoring the sons of Adam who were made heirs to the land, having them as successors on earth, and conferred on them special favors, over a great part of his creation, even the angels.

In this historic stage, Islam is facing much distortion and abuse. This is not caused by the enemies of Islam whose ignorance of the religion makes them hostile to it. A small group of Muslims are responsible for this distortion by projecting a negative image about Islam. Ignorance of Islam, coupled with the behavior of some

Muslims lead to the crystallization of antipathy formulated in attitudes, stances and beliefs. This in turn leads to the spread of the culture of hatred for Islam and Muslims to the extent of the so-called "Islamphobia."

Thus there is confusion between Islam as a religion of mercy and guidance for mankind and Islam distorted by some Muslims with attitudes that contradict what we are saying about the noble values of Islam. The behavior of some Muslims makes Islam bear the consequences of what they say and do. Islam is innocent of that because its discourse is based firmly on holding to the pillars of belief. This is underlined by many verses in the Holy Quran

I will refer to two examples only.

> ***"O Ye who believe! Fear God, and (always) say a word directed to the right: That he may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive you your sins: He that obeys God and His Apostle, has already attained the highest achievement" [33.70-71].***

Saying good not only leads to the forgiveness of sins, but to making all conducts whole and sound. Whenever the Islamic discourse strays from the right path the conditions of Muslims will thus remain far from good and sound conduct and vice-versa.

The second example consists of these verses:

> ***"Seest thou not how God sets forth a parable?-A goodly word like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens,-of its Lord. So God sets forth parables for men, in order that they may receive admonition. It brings forth its fruit at all times, by the leave of the Lord. So God sets forth parables for men, in order that they may receive admonition. And the parable of an evil Word is that of an evil tree: It is torn up by the root from the surface of the earth; it has no stability. [14:24, 25, 26].***

A good word produces good results as Allah the Almighty is good and accepts only that which is good. And an evil word lacks divine mercy as this evil word brings only bad and rotten consequences.

The extremist, deviationist discourse which rejects, denounces and antagonizes those that are different contradicts the principles of Islamic eminence. It also runs contrary to the rule of faith underlined by the Holy Quran that makes God the only One who judges people on the Day of Judgment in matters in which they differ.

Describing Reality

Matters tend to be more complicated and more inclined to explosion when a specific group identifies itself according to the religion in which it believes, or when others view this group from the angle of this identification. This belief forms the collective memory and the collective loyalty. This matter is clear in Islam as in other heavenly messages. In his book, *Islamic Political Thought,* British thinker Montgomery Watt said:

If we look more generally at the relation between religion and politics, it is helpful to consider first the place of religion in the life of an individual. In the case of a person to whom religion means something and is not a merely nominal adherence, two points my be emphasized: First, the ideas of his religion constitute the intellectual framework within which he sees all his activity taking place. It is from this relationship to a wider context that his activities gain their significance, and a consideration of this relationship may influence his general plan for his life I particular ways. Secondly, because religion brings an awareness of this wider context in which the possible aims for a man's life are set, it may often generate the motives for his activity; in deed without the motives given by religion some activities cannot be carried out."

Because of this, religion is often involved in disputes between people even if these disputes originate in interests that have nothing to do with religion. A study conducted by a group of experts and published in 2003 noted:

"The history of mankind did not only witness short periods of time where there were no wars and conflicts. In the twentieth century only around one hundred million persons were killed in global wars."

Thus when acute crises arise, such as those at the present time where many communities suffer severe consequences, it is only natural and logical that people turn to high values in search of solutions and remedies. If values such as these are stated in international conventions like the United Nations Charter, The universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Geneva Conventions and others, they are certainly well demonstrated in the divine laws revealed by God to His prophets for the reform of people's conditions in this life and in the hereafter. After the prophets, religious establishments assume this high moral responsibility. This is clearly stated in the hadith: "The ulema' are the heirs of the Prophets" meaning that they inherited from them their role in daawa (call) for good, love and peace among people.

When the spirit of the text conforms to the convictions and concepts of the religious establishments, the latter play their constructive role in solving crises. But, unfortunately, this conformity does not always occur and this poses an obstacle in the way of the performance of this role.

Most probably the inconsistency between the religious text and the position of a scholar of religion is a problem in itself which results in religion unfairly bearing some of the consequences and at times all of them.

Inconsistency between the text and the bias of the religious establishment can be attributed to a number causes, such as:

a) Misunderstanding of the interpreted text and then its misuse.
b) Misinterpretation of the text.
c) Accumulation of negative stereotypical images about the religious and cultural differences of the other party.

d) Lack of the means of dialogue and communication which leads to the lack of knowledge obtained through understanding.
e) The spread of the culture of the monopoly of knowledge and the culture of the monopoly of absolute right.

The following questions impose themselves:

Why are most wars and bloody conflicts taking place in today's world those of a religious nature? Is it by coincidence that religion is accused of being behind tensions between different people and nations? Why has dialogue between the followers of religion not succeeded in preventing these wars, conflicts and tensions? Was the problem one of religion or was religion being employed in political crises?

Fortunately these matters are not constant. They are the other side of reality which attracts attention due to its negative rather than to its positive nature.

From here emerged the Islamic responsibility in staging the firm base of the bridge of mutual understanding and respect. Commitment to this responsibility often clashes with interwoven difficulties. We should acknowledge this and then work to find answers to them. These difficulties can be summarized as follows:

a) The rise of fundamentalism (this does not mean going back to the origins but it means the monopoly of truth that describes as infidels those outside this circle of monopoly.
b) Mixing the religious and the political in the crises confronting the Islamic World and its relations with other countries.

c) The non-distinction in the media, culture, and political practice between the War on Terror and what seems to be the War on Islam.
d) The spread of the culture of collective punishment in Muslim communities in some Western countries as a result of terrorist acts perpetrated by individuals or groups in the name of Islam.

Muslims are aware of the current negative and distorted image of Islam. An effort to correct this distorted image has materialized in the initiative adopted by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz. The first round of this initiative was the Makkah conference for Muslim scholars, followed by the Madrid Conference where delegates representing followers of religions have met. The United Nations then adopted the initiative of the Saudi monarch and called its members states to promote and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including religious beliefs.

The difference between the image of Islam as being negative or distorted is that the negativity of this image has been made by Muslims and the distortion has been made by non-Muslims. Some distortion is deliberate, others based on hatred, and still others due to ignorance and miscalculation. Three factors have contributed to this distortion:

First: Absence of a central senior Islamic opinion-forming body.

Second: Chaos and contradiction in the issuance of fatwas.

Third: Inappropriate conduct and the excessive reaction of some Muslim.

Muslims have also realized that the gap between the Islamic

world and the other world is widening, a matter that poses a danger that not only affects the conditions and interests of Muslims but that of global security and stability as well. Muslims, like Christians, live all over the world and a third of them reside in non-Muslim countries and communities. This causes their intimidation or their feeling that they are being intimidated to evoke religious unrest that quickly turns into conflicts.

Muslims are also aware that Islamphobia, the dread or hatred of Islam, is increasing in the Western culture as a result of campaigns launched by the international media. Muslims in the West are facing choices to either encapsulate or integrate in their new societies. They are also facing a situation wherein they are being forced either to belong to the new cultural and social identity or to adhere to their Islamic values derived from their Islamic culture, customs and traditions and thereby clash with the new society in which they live.

The misunderstanding about Islam on the one hand and its misrepresentation due to the behavior of some Muslims on the other hand provide the ground for more actions and instances that hurt Muslims' relations with others as action or hostility would be based on misunderstanding. In this case the reaction made in the name of Islam would be based on a misinterpretation of the Islamic bases and principles. This again would make accusations and counter-accusation lack wisdom and logic and thus deepen mutual mistrust.

As a result of all of this, there has been a need for a global initiative emanating from a principle that builds the relationship on a mutually humane basis between Islam and people of other faiths.

Thus comes King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz's initiative.

This initiative has demonstrated to the people of other faiths and cultures that Islam is based on:

a) Values of love not violence.
b) Moderation not extremism.

The initiative has highlighted the culture of accepting and respecting differences, including religious differences, and rejection of concepts that monopolize the way to Allah and having faith in Him and establishing cooperation and peaceful relations with people of other faiths.

The initiative has also endeavored to correct the image of Islam through the following:

a) Avoidance of the use of religion for political purposes.
b) Demonstrating Islamic religious values that conform to high humanitarian values.
c) Engaging in dialogue and cooperation not struggle and conflict.
d) Endeavor to crystallize an image to that world that is based on the integration of civilizations and not on quarrel and offense. The Holy Quran says: "My servants the righteous shall inherent the earth."

Politicization of Religion

In 1856 the French diplomat, Blanche, who was then his country's consul in Beirut sent a report to the French Foreign Ministry in which he said:

"The most significant fact revealed when studying these countries is the position occupied b religious thought in

peoples' minds and the high authority that formulate their lives. Relgion can be seen everywhere. It is the most recognizable thing in Eastern society. It can be seen in moral, language, literature and institutions. Its effect can be felt in every corner. An Eastern person does not belong to the country where he was born. The concept of a homeland does not exist in the mind of a person of the East. He is attached to his religion as we are attached to our homelands. The nation of the East is the group of people who believe in the same religious s doctrine and who exercise that same ritual. Any other person is alien to him."

It does not seem that anything in this social structure has changed between 1856 and 2008.

Today's world is witnessing an increase in the spread of religiosity. This phenomenon is reflected in the following figures. In 1900 the number of those who believed in a faith (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism) represented 67% of the world population. In 2005 the rate jumped to 73% and is expected to reach 80% in 2050.

This phenomenon coincides with that of extremism. As religiosity is a constructive phenomenon extremism is a destructive one. This fact can be seeing in the increasing conflicts between religion and politics as in Hinduism in India, Buddhism in Thailand, Judaism in Israel, Anglicanism in America and Islam in some Muslim countries.

In the Third World countries, particularly in Asia and Africa, Christianity has also expanded. For instance in 1900 more than 80% of Christians were in Europe and North America. Today, however, Christians live in the third World where Islam is settled. This means Christianity does not

remain the religion of the white man, the religion of rich people or the religion of colonizers.

Dr. Andrew Walls of the University of Edinburgh said that the events are shaping 21st century Christianity are occurring in Africa and Asia and that Europe could best be described as post-Christian society. Islam, which was alien to Europe, North and South America and Australia, has become the religion of millions and part of the daily life of these regions.

These two things have put Islam and Christianity in constant touch, either co-existence or clash. In Nigeria, for instance, a Muslim tribe and a Christian one may live side by side. If they become at odds over pastures or land irrigation, their differences turn into a religious, tribal conflict.

Conflicts between people often arise over interests that can be settled. But if conflicts are base on faith then settlement would be at the expense of principles thus any compromise would seem to be a comprise on the first principles of faith and no one wants to be responsible for such a decision and no one would dare the bear the consequences of such a decision.

Thus the longest, most complicated and most fierce conflicts in history were ones of a religious nature.

Islam and Dispute

Islam recognizes differences between people as being natural and so treats it accordingly. Allah Says

> ***"Oh mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)." [49.13]***

Together with the differences in tongues and colors, the differences of religion and approaches are the nature of the mercy of God. This was emphasized by the following verse:

> ***"To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God. It is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute." (5.48). And "If they Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people: but they will not cease to dispute. Except those on whom they Lord bestowed His Mercy and for this did He create them." [11:118-119]***

The Holy Quran has established clear bases for recognizing others through direct dialogue where each party would freely state his opinion and views. There are numerous and rich examples in the Holy Quran for such dialogues. There is the dialogue between God and Satan as stated in verses 10-24 of chapter 7 and verses 15-40 of chapter 49 of the Holy Quran. There was also the dialogue between God and the prophets (First verse of Chapter 58), the dialogue between prophets and people (first verse of chapter 58) and people to people dialogue (verse 34 of chapter 18 of the Holy Quran.

A kind of cooperation between the believers and the People of the Book was established in Medina during the reign of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).The prophet's document has left people of different religions to their own religion and guaranteed their protection.

The Prophet entered into dialogue with the delegation of Christians from Najran who visited the prophet in Medina. He received them with great hospitality and he had no problem allowing them to perform their prayer services. Faith in Islam is a choice and not imposed by force.

From the example of the first Islamic state in Medina, it is clear that Islam does not feel constrained by the differences of religions and it does not take into account ethnic purity. (An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab except by piety and good action). As diversity is the nature of communities, dialogue is the only way that leads to reciprocal respect, understanding and peaceful life. An alternative to dialogue is hostility, suspiciousness and aggression.

Diversity itself is one of the signs of God and a feature of His greatness. The Holy Quran refers to this in several verses. For instance, verse 22 of sura (chapter) 30 says:

> ***"And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors: verily in that are Signs for those who know." (30.22.***

Verse 99 of sura 10 states:

> ***"If it had been they Lord's will, they would have all believed,-all who are on earth! Wilt though then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!" (10:99).***

The unity of sex, color, or language is not a necessary precondition for communication. So in order to establish relations based on love and respect and to engage in a dialogue on the differences created by God and wants them to remain. Science has discovered that these differences even exist in the genes, which is the basic unit of heredity in a living organism.

In any multi-religious society constant and open dialogue remains one of the pillars of its unity and stability. Dialogue is often with the "other." And this "other" with whom we enter into dialogue is different. The first principle of dialogue is to accept both diversity and difference. This acceptance is one of the features of Islamic fiqh (jurisprudence). The Holy Quran says,

> ***"If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people: but they will not cease to dispute." [11:118]***

Islam addresses the mind with respect and relies upon logic and debated to nullify the beliefs of polytheists and liberate man from worshiping idols. Islam does not ask Muslims to carry the sword in order to force people to embrace it, as the call to God is made through wisdom and beautiful preaching. It resorts to the word to defend itself and faith. Defense is the principle on which jihad is based.

Conclusion

Islam establishes firm bases for peoples' relations In the vanguard of these relations are the following:

First: Man is not accountable for an error or a sin that he did not commit.

> ***"Every soul draws the meed of its act on none but itself, no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another." (6:164). "Who goeth astray doth so to his own loss: No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another." [17:15]***

Second: Man is the vicegerent of God on earth. This vicegerency is the highest level of God's honor to man. ""Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: ***'I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said:***

> ***"Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?-whilst we do celebrate they praises and glorify thy holy (name)? He said: "I know what ye know not."[2:30]***

Third: As man is the vicegerent of God, He has subjected to his use and benefit all things in the heavens and on earth.

> ***"It is God who hath created the heavens and the earth and sendeth down rain from the skies, and with it bringeth out fruits wherewith to feed you; it is He who hath made the ships subject to you, that they may sail through the sea by His Command; and the rivers (also) hath He made subject to you. And He hath made subject to you the sun and the moon, both diligently pursuing their courses; and the night and the day hath He (also) made subject to you. and He giveth you all of that ye ask for. But if ye count the favours of God, never will ye be able***

to number them. Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude." [14:32-34]

This means that God has created the laws of nature and subjected them to man in order to perform the duty of vicegerency of God by settling on earth and building it.

"It is He who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein." [11:61]

Among the pillars of God's vicegerency is to build earth for the service of humanity and not to corrupt and destroy life.

Fourth: God's vicegerency on earth is a trust and a trust is a big responsibility.

"We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof; but man undertook it;-He was indeed unjust and foolish." [33:72]

Fifth: God has created Man with the ability to discover and absorb all sciences.

"***And He taught Adam the nature of all things." (2:31).***

For this reason God has urged Man to contemplate in his creation and in the universe around him in order to realize

that whatever discoveries and inventions he made, there are still more and he should work hard o do that.

> ***"But over all enbued with knowledge is one, the All-Knowing." [12.76]***

Sixth: God has created man in the best of molds and has made him in beautiful shapes.

> ***"We have honoured the sons of Adam, provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure." (17:70).***

God's honoring is the highest kind of degree between God the Creator and Man as a created creature.
Respecting these heavenly honors and abiding by them would halt conflicts which violate human rights and would also establish a genuine peace deriving from its pillars from this heavenly honor.
If a few Muslims behave in away that runs contrary to these Islamic values this is not because of Islam and it is illogical to hold Islam responsible for this behavior.
Thus the importance of dialogue between Muslims and people of other cultures and faiths. It is also important to differentiate between Islam as a religion of high values and between individual attitudes and behaviors which contradict this religion.

Political Exploitation: The Politics of Fear

Prof. William Baker (*)

Oxford world dictionary and thesaurus defines the term "exploitation" as follows:

"The unfair treatment or use; unfair treatment or use of somebody, or something, usually for personal gain."

"Misuse, abuse, mistreatment, taking advantage, manipulation, corruption."

Within authentic history, war has claimed the lives of twenty thousand million human beings! One of the bloodiest centuries thus far was the recently concluded twentieth century, when 100 million of our fellow citizens perished as a direct result of warfare traceable to the immoral but ever present political forms of governments based upon nationalism, materialism, and imperialism.

One factor more than any other stands out as the primary

(*) Founder and director of C.A.M.P., Christians and Muslims for peace, an outreach organization dedicated to promoting peace and understanding between members of the two largest religions in the world. Author of a number of books. Has appeared on hundreds of national and international radio and television programs, including CNN, ABC, BBC, Al-Jazeera, etc. conducted over 500 lectures, presentations, seminars, and conferences across America and throughout the world. (United States)

facilitator of these dangerous governments and nations, and that factor is the consistent implementation of political exploitation.

Ancient history is replete with clear examples of the rise of magnificent empires which dominated their known world, only to perish and find their legacy lies in the dustbin of history.

The Roman Empire is considered by many historians as the epitome of a civilized nation and people, attaining world prominence and domination. The Roman Empire is credited with gifting the world with the language of Latin, the basis of nearly all Western and European languages. It was ancient Rome which instituted the basis of Western and European systems of law. Roman architecture remains impressive and in some categories, unequalled by any other ancient or modern civilization or society. Yet, the legacy of this "advanced" civilization of law, knowledge, and government is remembered more for its unending efforts to conquer, occupy, and rule the rest of the world by means of an army skilled in the art of combat, displaying no mercy or quarter towards both those they encountered defending their countries, or those who simply wished to save their families and the innocent.

The Roman Coliseum stands as mute testimony to the inhumanity and unparallel savagery of what this "super power" considered "sport and entertainment." Men, women, children and entire families were torn to pieces by wild, starving animals brought from the African continent.

Rome dominated the world for 400 years, but suffered total destruction and ruin from internal corruption and moral degeneration.

Ancient Greece likewise contributed to civilization the discipline of philosophy and the importance of the human mind and knowledge. Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch are among many other Greek intellectuals whose writings continue to be taught around the world in circles of higher learning and the pursuit of academic excellence. The Grecian Empire was the unchallenged ruler of their massive empire. But, like Rome, Greece suffered from the same moral and spiritual degeneration which brought about their demise as a world power and advanced civil society. In the succeeding centuries other empires have come and gone, and others are in the process of decline including imperialism and colonialism.

The Politics of Fear: A New Paradigm for a New Century

The Greek philosophers left the world with many human truths, and one of them has become a maxim of modern psychology which is, simply stated, men fear what they do not know or understand. And it is this paradigm of fear which is the mechanism used for the political exploitation of many cultures, religions, and nations. For exploitation to occur and successfully justify interference and, in many cases, illegal and immoral occupation and aggression against an innocent people, nation, or religion, a culture of fear must be inculcated within the population of the aggressing country. This is accomplished through constant repetition of the threats posed by the supposed entity, thus gaining justification and support for intervention and, if necessary, warfare and occupation which often includes the seizure and control of a nation's wealth and natural resources.

As a young man growing up in America during what was

termed as "the Cold War" during which the United States and the Soviet Union vied for dominance and influence for the rest of the world nations, and although I never met a Russian citizen, I feared them and thought they and their country were a very real threat to America and my way of life. I recall clearly the survival drills in our elementary grade schools when we were trained to get under our desks in order to survive an atomic bomb blast, which we fearfully believed could occur at any given moment.

Fear was ever present in the reporting of world events involving both countries, opening the gates for seemingly never ending political exploitation by both governments and politicians. Although the relationship of our two countries has vastly improved, the politics of fear, and the activity of political exploitation continues unabated.

Political Exploitation of Islam, the New Enemy of Peace

As economic and political goals changed for both countries in intervening years, and assurance of mutual mass destruction by nuclear weapons became a politically accepted reality, the world military industrial complex was in need of a "new enemy," preferably one which could be made to appear to threaten both Super Powers and their allies, and therefore "world peace and stability."Thus began the campaign to demonize the great religion of Islam, the fastest growing religion in the world. A popular movie in the United States during the Cold War was titled "The Russians Are Coming." But since there now exists a rapprochement between the two old adversaries, a new slogan has arisen: "the Muslims are coming!"

Once again the professional propagandists are busy fomenting fear of Islam and Muslim followers, and the exercise of political exploitation once again plays its role in supporting political policies Which include warfare, occupation, and the seizing of foreign wealth in the form of natural resources and treasure.

"The Islamic community has a cancer growing inside it, which hates Jews, hates freedom and hates western society. The disease of Islam must be rectified. It's kill or be killed." (Shawn Steel, former chairman of the California Republican Party, April 8, 2003).

"Islam is not compatible with our Western civilization or democracy, nor will it ever be, because Islam does't want to coexist, it wants to submit and set the entire agenda.

Islam means submission from Muslims over non-muslims-kafirs- like you and me, so there cannot be any mistake about its goal. Islam's end goal, for all time, is to dominate and once again establish a world ruled by Islam."

(Gert Wilders, speaking in California, USA. April 7, 2009.)

These are but two of the many quotes and citations I have documented and included in some of my other lectures, papers, and presentations.

Many professional propagandists and promoters of hatred and fear maintain a constant steady stream of lies and deception, all of these efforts lending the necessary pillars of support to continue the paradigm of fear, and enable continued political exploitation. Men fear what they do not know or understand. My fear of Islam and the Arab people quickly dissipated when I spent time as a young archaeology student living and excavating in Palestine, primarily in the West Bank. Two events which occurred and served to cause

me to question all the attacks against Islam and the Arab people involved my meeting and working side by side with Palestinian Muslims as well as Christians.

The first occurred at a site called Tekoa, an ancient site located several miles from Bethlehem, the city of the birth of Jesus Christ. While working in a tomb at this desolate site, I heard the bells affixed to the tails of sheep, and climbing out of the tomb I had been working in alone for the past several days, I observed a Palestinian shepherd preparing for noon prayers known as *Asr,* the third prayer. Transfixed, I watched this Bedouin fall to his knees, and in the intense heat of the afternoon sun, touching his temple to the rugged rocks, continued his prayers aloud, oblivious to the world around him. Having studied and learned Arabic, as a Christian I was deeply moved by his sincerity, and his prayer of thanksgiving and praise for the Creator, and all the blessings he had received from God. This man and I became close friends, as he brought me hot tea every day and even came down into the tomb to fellowship. This was not a prayer for power or world domination, and most certainly was not the prayer of a terrorist, or hater of the West, its culture or its religions.

The second event took place while participating in a major excavation at the southwestern wall of the Temple Mount, or Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. Hearing the *adhan* call to afternoon prayers, all of my fellow Palestinian workers stopped their work and attended prayer in the Golden Dome of the Rock. This time, they invited me to join them which I immediately accepted. Not one prayer or comment was encouraging violence or terrorism against any other nation, religion, or people. From these and many other experiences,

I began to practice my Arabic by reading the Quran along with discussions with many other Islamic and Christian leaders and clerics.

As I learned more about what Islam truly teaches and advocates, I was freed from the power of fear that had been so carefully conveyed in the Western circles of education and politically correct prevailing attitudes concerning Islam and the Arab nations and people.

In 1982 I wrote my first book concerning the Palestinian and Israeli conflict titled, *Theft of a Nation,* which examines the history of the region prior to the creation of the Israeli state, identifies the original inhabitants, examines Biblical teachings misinterpreted to support the creation and continuation of the Israeli state and the seizure of Palestinian lands and properties, and presents what I consider to be the real and lasting actions which could bring an end to what has become one of the major factors blocking any forward movement towards peace, reconciliation, and justice in the Middle East and a large portion of the modern world.

In 1983 I was invited to Damascus, Syria and met with both religious and political leaders. One particular meeting had such a profound impact upon my life that I have focused my remaining years writing, speaking, and exposing the distortions and political exploitation of Islam and writing books emphasizing the common ground shared between the two largest religions on earth comprising more than half the world population, Islam and Christianity.

While in Damascus, I was invited to meet and visit with one of the most beloved and well traveled Muslim cleric in the world, wearing the title grand mufti, which simply means qualified Islamic teacher. His Excellency, sheikh

Ahmad kuftaro, a longtime advocate of world peace, a friend of Pope John Paul the second and recognized author and scholar throughout the world. He received me at his farm a few miles from the city, and after a few moments experiencing the usual Arabic customs of serving tea and fruit, we began a discussion about our two faiths, Islam and Christianity. The large room was filled with men and women, clerics, local community leaders, and university professors and administrators. Our exchange lasted eight hours into the early morning hours.

No subject was off limits, and both the Bible and the Quran were the focus of the conversation. Each time I brought up the areas in which we differed in our faiths, he responded with another example of what we had in common. Nearing the end of our session, I made this statement:

"I guess the real difference between us grand mufti, is that you don't revere or love Jesus Christ as do we Christians."

Placing his hand on my shoulder and looking deep into my eyes he said:

"My dear brother, it is impossible to be a true Muslim if you don't love and revere Jesus."

As he walked me to my car he once again embraced me, his white beard brushing my face and with the usual twinkle in his eye said:

"My brother, we are in the same camp."

That afternoon I boarded an airline for a flight to Beirut,

Lebanon. During the flight, I wrote on a notepad "We are in the same camp", and then wrote the acronym c.a.m.p., which spelled the phrase Christians and Muslims for peace and thus was born my organization of camp (campintl.org or .com)

We remained close friends and confidants until his death. As a direct result of that meeting and conversation, I have entered areas of conflict between Muslims and Christians, appealing to both sides to focus on their common ground, and the need to end the fighting, work together to help those in greater need within their community.

Camp chapters were created in the Philippines, Africa, Europe, with other camp chapters under development as of this writing.

Political exploitation of innocent nations, peoples, and religions can be minimized when the paradigm of fear is attacked and purged from every nation, culture, and race. It is fear which furnishes the lifeblood of hate, prejudice, racism, and the insecurity leading to armed conflict. Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan; Kashmir, Bosnia and Chechnya are but a few examples of the unending bloodshed and suffering of our fellow world citizens who have become victims of what I choose to call the world-wide military industrial complex. Simply stated, there is so much monetary profit to be made by the continuation of the current conflicts and the creation of new ones through the application of political exploitation that it would be accurate for one to accept that our world will always suffer perpetual wars, for perpetual peace, guaranteeing perpetual profit.

Ignorance is the enemy of truth.The second "partner" used to attain political exploitation along with fear, is ignorance! Fear and ignorance are the dual weapons which, when combined, make political exploitation possible. As previously stated, the lack of correct and current knowledge of Eastern Europe, especially the soviet union, made the fifty-five years of the "Cold War" possible.

Likewise, ignorance of the true tenets of Islam among both Muslims and non-Muslims, permits those seeking justification for violence, terror, hate, and warfare against another nation, people, or religion to gain adherents and fellow propagators of fear and support for the inevitable application of political exploitation.

As a visiting speaker in the London School of Economics, my topic was: Islam and Christianity; Collision or Coalition. I pointed out that I, as a Christian American, had written several books about the suffering of innocent Muslims under military occupation, the Palestinian and Kashmir people. (Book title: *Kashmir: Happy Valley, Valley of Death*).

I informed them about the threats of death not only towards me, but my family as well and actual attempts upon my life. why? All because I dared to write books with documentation, exposing the true terrorists to be the occupiers, Israel and India, and not the predominantly Muslim citizens of both countries. four Asian students quickly stood to interrupt my presentation, stating that Islam and the umma had no need for an American Christian to defend them. When I responded and asked them all to tell the audience what are the factors behind the current occupations, and what are the existing conditions under which both Palestinians and Kashmiris are attempting to live? Their answer: Silence! These young men displayed not only their ignorance about both occupations, but the very tenets of Islam pertaining to attitudes towards Christians:

> ***"And dispute not with the people of the Book except with means better than mere disputation, unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong and injury;***

but say, 'We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is one, and it is to him we bow in Islam." [29:46]

"Nearest among them in love to the believers you will find those who say, 'We are Christians,' because among these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the World, and they are not arrogant." [5:82]

"Not all of them are alike; of the people of the Book are a portion that stand for the right; they rehearse the signs of Allah all night long and they prostrate themselves in adoration. They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten in emulation in all good works; they are in the ranks of the righteous. Of the good that they do, nothing will be rejected of them; for Allah knows well those who do right." [3: 113-115]

Sadly, it is the faces and voices of terrorists who do not know what Islam truly teaches, but are influenced by politically motivated false teachers and leaders. it is their faces and their voices that are seen and heard throughout the non-Muslim world. Likewise, many who claim to be leaders of Christianity, remain ignorant of the primary teachings of the *Injeel* or Gospel, wherein Christians are to love, respect, honor, and greet every person, in every village, with a greeting of peace.

> ***"And into whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and abide there until you go away. And as you enter the house, give it your greeting. and if the house is worthy . Let your greeting of peace come upon it." [Matthew 10: 11-13]***

> ***"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness." [James 3:17]***

True, obedient Christians are to be peacemakers! There is no scripture or Biblical text blessing or glorifying or supporting war, occupation, or the use of political exploitation! So once again, many Christians, like their Muslim brothers and sisters, are guilty of not learning and following the true teachings of Christianity.

The Saudi Initiative for Peace and Dialogue

I am convinced the launch of the Saudi initiative for religious dialogue will prove to be one of the most important initiatives to come into existence in the twenty-first century. Bringing divergent cultures and citizens of the world together, to inform, to exchange, and to acquire knowledge of each other will go far towards the goal of eliminating the two primary pillars providing the underpinnings of political exploitation, those pillars being fear and ignorance.

Ten years have passed since the world welcomed a new century, with most of our fellow world citizens hoping that this

new century will witness the end of wars, occupations, hate and intolerance. Yet, it seems the world has not learned the real lessons of war from our past history of waging war against one another. Politicians and the world military complex pursue new targets of opportunity, focusing upon even the smallest and non-threatening countries because of their abundance of various forms of energy including oil, natural gas, uranium and precious metals.

Super Powers and those of lesser capability, race to develop ever more lethal nuclear weapons; they compete to achieve technological superiority in space believing that the world can be controlled by the threat of attack or even annihilation from the new, terrifying weapons of death.

The Saudi initiative for dialogue is needed now!

The call for all sincere religious leaders, all academics, and all politicians who look past the imagined power of domination, wealth, occupation and materialism, this is the call for finding the pathway to live in peace, with mutual respect and supporting justice and freedom for all their fellow citizens of the one world, the one single globe, spinning in the vast universe called earth.

The Saudi initiative for dialogue is a call for people and nations to meet together, to recognize their differences and perhaps even their disputes, but seeking more than anything else, the common ground they share as global partners. An old proverb states: "War leaves a country with three armies; cripples, mourners, and thieves."

"The first casualty of war is the truth." Sir Winston Churchill.

Religious leaders, not unlike their political leaders, must eschew manipulating political exploitation in an effort to eliminate other faiths and religions; they must cease placing their emphasis on conversion, but rather on coalition.

I have a dream

A dream that positive believers of all religions will find each other, and once finding each other, helping each other to write a new history, a new legacy for the world, from collision to coalition, , from Combatibility to Compatibility, from intolerance to tolerance, positive believers becoming partners in peace.

Dialogue and the Exploitation of Thought

Jeff Gates (*)

To combat political exploitation requires that those exploited gain the tools to see for themselves how this abuse of the public trust proceeds in full view. Until the methods of exploitation are made transparent and the common source apparent, peace, security and stability will remain beyond reach.

Interfaith dialogue can help solve this problem provided dialogue clarifies how thought is targeted to manipulate behavior. This chapter describes how this mental exploitation operates in plain sight, offers examples from topical events and suggests a path of resolution.

(*) An author, attorney, investment banker, educator and consultant to government, corporate and union leaders worldwide. An adviser to policy-makers in 35 countries, he served seven years as counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance. He is also the author of numerous articles and books including his latest, *Guilt by Association: How Deception and Self-Deceit Took America to War.* His previous books include *Democracy at Risk: Rescuing Main Street From Wall Street* and *The Ownership Solution: Toward a Shared Capitalism for the 21st Century.* (United States)

Redefining the Battlefield

The battlefield of the 21st Century is the shared field of consciousness. The relevant theater of operations is the realm where consensus opinions reside and generally accepted truths are shaped and sustained. It is there in that intangible domain where facts are displaced with the false beliefs—that targeted populations can be deceived.

With the help of mass media, political exploiters target the public's mindset. That shared mental environment provides the game board for those skilled at inducing people to freely embrace the very forces that jeopardize their freedom.

Until such psychological operations (psy-ops) become apparent in real time, induced beliefs will continue to be deployed for political goals. The manipulation of faith to influence behavior dates from antiquity. Modernity provides the technological means to manipulate on a massive scale.

The use of deception to induce conflict offers a classic example of how thought can be exploited to displace facts in plain sight. In the duplicity leading up to the invasion of Iraq, we Americans were deceived to believe in Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, Iraqi meetings in Prague with Al Qaeda, Iraqi mobile biological weapons laboratories, Iraqi high-level contacts with Al Qaeda, and Iraqi purchases of yellowcake uranium from Niger.

Though all were false, only the last claim was conceded as other than factual prior to this phony intelligence dominating the political dialogue that induced the March 2003 invasion.

Emotions also play a role in this mental manipulation. The emotionally wrenching mass murder of September 11, 2001 was broadcast nationwide. Americans were shocked, grief-

stricken and enraged. As with the extreme emotions that accompany extreme beliefs, those intense emotions helped displace facts with plausible fictions that we now know were pre-staged years beforehand.

In response to a murderous provocation, this combination of external and internal forces-fixed intelligence and emotional turmoil-served as a force-multiplier to shape decision-making inconsistent with the facts. For specialists in political exploitation, reality is only an inconvenience to overcome.

The quality of political decision-making is no better than the quality of the information on which decision makers rely. Thus the inducement of false beliefs has long been a primary means of political exploitation. That is also why mass media plays a central belief-shaping role in this mental and emotional manipulation. For interfaith dialogue to wield real influence in shaping a humane and compassionate future, the "how" of such psy-ops must be understood, acknowledged and broadly communicated.

The serial wars and ongoing conflicts catalyzed by such duplicity imperil the transition to the Knowledge Society. Yet knowledge and dialogue can also be deployed as a counter-offensive to protect decision-making from this exploitation. If interfaith dialogue can provide the tools for a deceived public to see for themselves this mental and emotional manipulation, dialogue could become a means to expose this abuse and hold the perpetrators accountable.

Today's Ancient Warfare

Facts are the foundation on which the rule of law relies. Displace facts with beliefs and governance reverts to the pre-Enlightenment era when fact-based dialogue and scientific

knowledge were unavailable to counter the manipulations of faith. At present, peace is endangered by a nuclear-armed superpower (the U.S.) that could again be induced with false beliefs to invade a nation that poses no threat. If the results of such political exploitation (bloodshed, death, widespread suffering, etc.) are not a relic of the Dark Ages, what is?

Such treachery succeeds in the post-Enlightenment era by exploiting the very freedoms meant to protect freedom, including freedom of the press, assembly, speech and religion. When a seamless web of duplicity permeates the political process, misinformed dialogue only serves to advance a predetermined agenda. Such manipulation of the public's shared mindset is a modern-day form of tyranny that succeeds through the exploitation of thought.

The advantage in such psy-ops warfare flows to those best positioned to wield influence over the mental environment. Thus the strategic role in this deceit played by undisclosed bias in mainstream media. The undisclosed bias of U.S. Defense Department personnel fueled an "echo effect" by providing disinformation to decision-makers. That deception ensured decisions were shaped by a combination of false intelligence and phony news reports while policy makers were coping with an emotionally wrenching post 9/11 environment.

Those who focused on dominating media, as in the U.S, did so with strategic foresight. Their motivation is captured in a phrase coined by U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates in October 2007. Referring to the most problematic combatants when waging "unconventional warfare," this former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency described today's most challenging enemy as "the people in between."

In the Information Age, exploiters of the shared mental

environment position their thought-manipulating operations between a targeted populace and the facts required for their informed consent. A survey of media ownership in key coalition nations confirms what this analysis suggests: industry-wide dominance by pro-Israelis.

In addition to media, other in-between domains also play a role, including popular culture, academia, think tanks and politics. Each is briefly addressed below. The examples draw on Israeli and pro-Israeli conduct to chronicle how the informed dialogue essential to reasoned political decision-making can be corrupted from the shadows by an "enemy within."

The facts confirm it was not the U.S. government that took Americans to war in the Middle East but a foreign government imbedded inside the tattered remnants of what remains of our representative government. When your numbers are few and your ambitions vast -as with Jewish nationalists- sustained political exploitation is critical to geopolitical success. The manipulation of thought offers these few-within-the-few a powerful force-multiplier.

Popular Culture: In the 1950s, Ed Gottlieb, a New York public relations specialist, commissioned novelist Leon Uris to write Exodus, a romanticized tale about the founding of Israel. Its publication helped obscure a dark reality after Jewish terrorists ethnically cleansed 400-plus Palestinian villages. That fact, if widely known by Americans, risked creating ill will with the U.S., an essential ally for the fledgling Zionist experiment.

Moderate Jews had by then taken a strong stance against the terrorist policies used by Jewish extremists to drive Palestinians from their lands. In a December 1948 letter to

The New York Times, Albert Einstein and other concerned Jews were candid in their appraisal: "This is the unmistakable stamp of a Fascist party for whom terrorism (against Jews, Arabs, and British alike), and misrepresentation are means, and a 'Leader State' is the goal."

In addition to its history of terrorism, fanaticism and deceit, Israel had just played a key role in inducing the Suez Crisis of 1956. That "tripartite aggression" involved a conflict staged by Israeli, French and British forces. An outraged Dwight Eisenhower was forced to make a televised presidential appeal directly to the American public when he realized the control that the Israel lobby exerted-even then-over the U.S. Congress.

That political problem prompted the translation of Exodus into 50 languages. With film rights pre-sold, this public relations campaign included a widely promoted movie starring Paul Newman and Eva Marie Saint. The supporting cast featured Sal Mineo, a popular Italian singer who received an Academy Award nomination for his role as a Jewish émigré.

In combination, a best-selling novel and a blockbuster film successfully promoted an impression of Jews as sympathetic and honest heroes while Arabs were portrayed as conniving villains and dastardly evil doers, with the only good Arab a dead Arab.

To displace facts with fiction requires a period of preparing the public's mindset to accept fabrications as genuine. Or, as with Exodus, the blending of fact and fiction in such a manner that a populace can be persuaded to embrace policies inconsistent with reality. In political parlance, mass media and popular culture are deployed to "advance the narrative."

As with a movie script, political exploitation must include a plausible storyline.

President Barack Obama's much anticipated June 2009 speech in Cairo was meant to impress on the Muslim world a change in U.S. foreign relations, including hope for settlement of the six-decade Israel-Palestine conflict. Yet he flew directly from Egypt to Germany for a Holocaust photo opportunity at the Buchenwald death camp.

In the impressionistic domain where media and popular culture shape geopolitical perceptions, which image had the greater impact? Which narrative was better advanced? Based on his post-Cairo performance in failing to hold Israel accountable for its expansion of settlements, which storyline gained opinion-shaping traction in the shared mental environment that comprises geopolitics?

Academia: The framing of dialogue begins with education where generally accepted truths are drilled into the minds of impressionable students by authority figures. Akin to the merger of church and state in the 4th Century Roman Empire, anyone daring to challenge generally accepted truths risks condemnation as a modern-day heretic and an enemy of the state or at least a foe of the widely shared mental state known as consensus opinion.

Consensus opinions often trace both their origins and their durability to academic doctrine. Over the past half-century, for example, universities in the non-communist world taught their students to believe that financial freedom is an appropriate proxy for personal freedom. Academic dialogue was framed around how money can be enabled to freely seek its best return. That shared faith in the infallibility of financial markets became-and remains-a consensus. At its

doctrinal core, that widely shared belief remains an article of faith.

Yet the facts confirm that unfettered financial forces were certain to create oligarchies by concentrating wealth and income worldwide, undermining both democracies and markets all under the rubric of freedom. As this "Chicago School" mindset was expanded to global scale, it was rebranded as the "Washington" consensus. The widely shared belief that decision-making should revolve around values denominated in money systematically hollowed out the U.S. economy. That narrow perspective also discredited the U.S. as American academics insisted on the globalization of this One True Faith.

The dialogue around development remains framed by this viewpoint. As oligarchies emerged worldwide, poverty became more intractable. The middle class shrank while this fixation on financial values steadily displaced those values essential to healthy communities-civil cohesion, stability, fiscal foresight, environmental sustainability, etc.

As these systemic dysfunctions deepened, dialogue became futile as policy-makers sought to solve problems downstream of a money-myopic mindset without questioning the validity of those upstream beliefs. To suggest that the consensus mindset is the source of the problem risked portrayal of the critic as a heretic.

Think Tanks: When waging war in the mental environment, think tanks also play a key role by shaping issues, framing debate and providing topical commentary. Professor Samuel Huntington's theme-setting book, *The Clash of Civilizations*, first appeared in 1993 in *Foreign Affairs*, an influential opinion-shaping journal published by the Council on Foreign

Relations. By the time this article appeared in book format in 1996, more than 100 non-governmental organizations-including dozens of think tanks-were prepared to create a new consensus by promoting its conflict-of-opposites thesis.

As political dialogue segued seamlessly from the Cold War to the Global War on Terrorism, several well-placed Jewish-Americans published in 1996 a strategy paper for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu titled, *A Clean Break – A New Strategy for Securing the Realm* (i.e., Israel). Lead author Richard Perle, a member of the U.S. Defense Policy Advisory Board, was named chairman of that Board in 2001. A central theme of A Clean Break: the removal of Iraq's Saddam Hussein as a key barrier to Zionism's expansionist agenda.

A hidden bias permeating the think tank community was revealed when Adbusters editor Kalle Lasn published in March 2004 a survey of the 50 top neoconservative advocates for the invasion of Iraq. Though the population of the U.S. is less than two percent Jewish (1.7%), 26 of the most senior "neocons" (52%) were Jewish. As an Estonian and formerly a New York advertising executive, Lasn understood how the mental environment can be manipulated to sell policies, politicians or consumer products. His article presented the facts as a question: "Why Won't Anyone Say They are Jewish?" For asking that question, he was attacked as an "anti-Semite."

Politics:. Both democracies and markets are dialogues across generations. Thus the deference granted legal precedents and commercial contracts as foundations for the rule of law. Democratic self-governance, in turn, relies on a field-based premise that all of us are smarter than any of us, therefore let us resolve to reason together. Thus the enduring respect granted those venues

dedicated to public dialogue that date from pre-Roman times. As representative governments emerged as proxies for voting populations, the motivation grew to manipulate the mindsets of policy-makers as a force-multiplying "people in between."

By framing debate (as with the "consensus") and shaping the narrative, those skilled at "upstream" political exploitation can operate outside the realm of reasoned analysis and above the chain of command-as proven when the U.S. military was ordered to lead the invasion of Iraq on false premises.

In similar upstream fashion, the U.S. Congress engaged in a vigorous 2009 debate on health care. Yet the dialogue was framed not around health care but around "the uninsured." The unspoken ("upstream") consensus assumption: a national health care problem is best solved by increasing the amount of funds under management. That framing is certain to worsen the systemic dysfunctions that accompany the consensus model more financial fuel is added to the forces already concentrating wealth and income at a record pace.

Shaping the Post-WWII Dialogue

After World War II, the U.S. was home to 50% of the world's productive power. That financial strength ensured that U.S. bonds would remain globally dominant for decades. In May 1948, President Harry Truman extended nation-state recognition to an extremist enclave of Jewish nationalists over the objections of Secretary of State George Marshall, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Central Intelligence Agency and the bulk of the U.S. diplomatic corps.

By 1962, Senator J. William Fulbright, chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, became sufficiently concerned about the role of Israel in U.S. politics that he

sought to force the Israel lobby to register as what it was and remains: a foreign agent. Fulbright and Attorney General Robert Kennedy failed in that task.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy sought to force Israel to submit its Dimona nuclear reactor facility to international inspections. After the murder of JFK in November 1963, Vice President Lyndon Johnson was less concerned that Tel Aviv's nuclear arsenal could eventually catalyze a nuclear arms race in the region.

When Robert Kennedy sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 1968, it was unclear if he would follow in his brother's footsteps and seek to shut down Israel's nuclear arsenal. It was also uncertain whether he would again join forces with Fulbright to insist that the Israel lobby register as a foreign agent. His murder at the hands of a Palestinian émigré cleared the way to the presidency for Richard Nixon.

Lobbied by Golda Meir, Nixon agreed in 1969 to extend to Israel an "ambiguous" status that allowed Zionists to remain nuclear-armed without acknowledging their arsenal. Those events from the 1960s continue to shape geopolitical dialogue with ongoing consequences for peace, security and stability in the Middle East and beyond.

The Math of Political Exploitation

The science of political exploitation traces its enduring success to math and physics. Both must be understood in order to identify the source that enables manipulation of the mindset in full view. Evidence of faith-based political exploitation across generations suggests that this deception remains systemic and will not change absent a broader

understanding of the costs in blood and treasure of this duplicitous modus operandi.

Conspiracies are typically exposed when someone sells their account to a media outlet. Likewise cartels have proven difficult to sustain over an extended period. So how are the same methods of political exploitation sustained across generations? How does such deceit operate openly yet, to date, with legal impunity? With a grasp of the underlying math and physics, interfaith dialogue can make the "how" of this deceit transparent, its motives evident and the perpetrators apparent.

In brief, exploiters rely on game theory mathematical models to anticipate the response to staged provocations. Reactions become foreseeable in the sense that they are predictable within an acceptable range of probabilities. While outcomes remain uncertain, the results become "probabilistic" and mathematically model-able.

Israeli mathematician and game theory economist Robert J. Aumann received the 2005 Nobel Prize in Economic Science. Co-founder of the Center for Rationality at Hebrew University, this Jerusalem resident conceded that "the entire school of thought that we have developed here in Israel" has turned "Israel into the leading authority in this field." From the perspective of statistical probabilities, how difficult would it be for a mathematical model to foresee that the U.S. would deploy its military in response to the emotionally wrenching provocation of a mass murder on U.S. soil?

With pre-staged intelligence fixed around a preset outcome, how difficult would it be to anticipate that the U.S. response could be redirected to invade a nation that played no role in the attack? What would be the impact on predictability

if a complicit media also promoted the invasion of a nation (Iraq) key to "securing the realm"?

The math of political exploitation also involves the use of "correspondence theory" to convey a false perception of relationships. When waging war in the shared field of consciousness, the power of association is one of the most potent weapons that can be deployed. Thus, for instance, Secretary of State Colin Powell was dispatched to the United Nations Security Council in February 2003 to associate his credibility as a military leader with false intelligence that Iraq possessed mobile biological weapons laboratories ready for Baghdad to deploy on a moment's notice as a weapon of mass destruction.

Correspondence can be used either to accredit (as with Powell's testimony) or discredit. Note throughout the role of "the people in between" when deploying associative impressions as a means to manipulate decision-making. Geopolitical dialogue on the legitimacy of the March 2003 invasion was shaped by Powell's U.N. appearance. Though he has since conceded that he was deceived, that associative ploy achieved its political purpose. Only by revealing the "how" of such deceit can the true perpetrators be held accountable.

Associative impressions ("correspondence") can be deployed from the personal to the geopolitical level. When facts inconsistent with the desired narrative pose a risk to political exploitation, an attempt is typically made to associate the fact-finder with disreputable or salacious behavior. Thus the routine deployment of the toxic charge of "anti-Semitism" as an associative weapon in order to exclude such facts and analyses from the "field."

Power-of-association strategies can do irreparable harm even to the strongest nation by inducing its leaders to pursue a path inconsistent with that nation's interests and contrary to its values. Geopolitically, the U.S. has been discredited by its entangled alliance with Israel and the "rationality" deployed by its game theory war planners. Because the U.S. is identified with the behavior of Jewish extremists, by correspondence the U.S. is guilty-by association.

The Physics of Political Exploitation

When considering the physics component of political exploitation, Israeli manipulation again offers useful examples. Tel Aviv's intelligence and foreign operations branch (the Mossad) has long been known for its game-theory mastery at waging war "by way of deception." Consider, for example, the strategically well-timed entropy strategy deployed by Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in June 1963.

President Kennedy's June 15th letter to Ben-Gurion was anything but friendly. The words chosen were drawn not from diplomacy but from the judicial standard for criminal culpability. In that brusque letter, a U.S. Commander In Chief insisted that this purported ally demonstrate "beyond a reasonable doubt" that the Zionist enterprise was not developing nuclear weapons. The day after that letter was cabled to Tel Aviv for delivery by the U.S. ambassador, Ben-Gurion abruptly resigned citing undisclosed personal reasons.

His resignation was announced before the letter could be physically delivered. Jewish authors claim that JFK's message failed to reach Ben-Gurion. That interpretative

gloss ignores what has long been known about Israeli operations inside serial U.S. presidencies and about Tel Aviv's routine intercept of White House communications. With that strategically well-timed resignation, Kennedy was denied an opportunity for dialogue to negotiate an early end to today's nuclear arms race in the region. The possibility of any future dialogue ended with his assassination five months later.

In July 2008, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert deployed a similar entropy strategy. When the agreed-to "Road Map" posed the threat of a final settlement, he resigned. That political entropy stymied negotiations while Benjamin Netanyahu was returned to office as Prime Minister. This Likud Party stalwart disavowed the Road Map, shifted negotiations away from peace with the Palestinians and focused attention on war with Iran. Predictably, the peace process stalled marking another victory for an entropy strategy.

In practical effect, U.S.-Israeli relations are dominated by the most fanatical elements in Israeli society. If U.S. policy-makers want an Israeli government with which to negotiate, they must please the most extreme parties in a coalition government led by extremists. Otherwise, yet another government will dissolve and, with entropy, the dialogue required to resolve this six-decade occupation will again be deferred. Even the possibility of another entropy maneuver affects negotiations in Tel Aviv's favor.

Thus Benjamin Netanyahu's success in persuading yet another U.S. administration not to press Israel on the settlements issue for fear that the most fanatical members of his Likud Party coalition may withdraw, collapsing yet another government. The extremist-driven, force-

multiplying dynamics at work in this entangled alliance are little known outside the ranks of game theory war planners.

Should those skilled at game theory warfare detect any possibility of a final settlement on the horizon, look for the collapse of yet another coalition government. Absent the capacity of this agent provocateur to catalyze serial crises and sustain regional conflicts, the expansionist goals of Colonial Zionism risk becoming transparent and unattainable. The motivation remains high to defer settlement by shifting attention elsewhere-to Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan-as a means to obscure the common source of this trans-generational treachery.

These examples of "field-based" warfare illustrate the perilous allure of interfaith dialogue when one party harbors a nontransparent agenda that progresses behind a veil of duplicity supported by an arsenal of state-sponsored exploitative techniques.

To point out the duplicitous skills of Jewish war strategists is sensible not "anti-Semitic." At the core of such strategic deceit is found those skilled at the manipulation of entire populations through the manipulation of beliefs. As Judaism, Christianity and Islam share the same three prophets, it should come as no surprise that the oldest of these three faith traditions features those with the greatest proficiency at the craft of duplicity.

Assault on the Self

In combination, these manipulative techniques can also be deployed to undermine the self-confidence essential to self-governance. The target includes the confidence of the

governed in their government a particularly pernicious form of entropy. For example, the 1991 movie JFK was released to critical acclaim garnering eight Academy Award nominations. The storyline was taken directly from specious Kennedy assassination conspiracy charges filed in the 1960s by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison.

Garrison received funds from the New Orleans City Council to prosecute alleged conspirator Clay Shaw who, after a 1969 trial, was quickly acquitted. The initial funds required to commence this high profile case were provided by stock swindler Louis Wolfson for whom radio announcer Lawrence Zeiger couriered cash to Garrison. On his release from jail, Wolfson unsuccessfully sought the recovery of funds that Zeiger misappropriated. Zeiger - rebranded as Larry King - has since become a high-paid television personality specializing in celebrity interviews on Cable News Network.

Like Exodus, the JFK film injected into the "field" (the public's shared field of consciousness) a beguiling fiction, a superficially plausible narrative that a targeted populace could be induced to believe as part of a far broader political manipulation.

One of the movie's two Oscars was awarded to Jim Corwin for film editing. An editor of television commercials, Corwin had never worked on a feature-length film when he exercised great influence over how this fictitious storyline was conveyed. Within a year of the film's release, more than 70% of Americans believed that their government (including the Central Intelligence Agency) murdered their popular young president.

Even now, many Americans distrust their government due in part to a film whose executive producer, Israeli Arnon Milchan, served as an arms procurer and intelligence operative for Tel Aviv. While the U.S. worked to end apartheid in South Africa, Milchan acquired media outlets to improve the image of its white supremacist government.

Americans' lack of trust in their leadership retains its potency as a latent form of entropy corrosive of the social cohesion and the good faith dialogue essential to restore our national security. That distrust was reinforced by the fixed intelligence that took us to war in the Middle East on false pretenses in pursuit of an undisclosed agenda for Greater Israel. Polls confirm that with each passing year, fewer Americans trust their government.

Serial Conflicts of Opposites: This chapter describes the "interoperability" of the mindset-manipulative weaponry deployed to displace facts with what a targeted populace can be deceived to believe. Political exploitation draws on multiple components from this arsenal, including fixed intelligence, mass media, pop culture, academia, think tanks and politics.

Any one of these can undermine informed political dialogue. In combination, they can render dialogue impossible or even counter-productive when dialogue relies on flawed information and false beliefs to guide discussion and debate. Therein lies the danger of interfaith dialogue unless this belief-based manipulation is understood and acknowledged by dialogue participants.

In the aftermath of the mass murder of 9/11, the U.S. benefited from a global outpouring of sympathy and goodwill. As others shared our grief, the barriers that divided

us became a climate of compassion and concern that united us. In light of what is now known about the recurring use of well-timed crises to exploit political decision-making, one must ask: is this latest conflict-of-opposites (the global war on terrorism) yet another mental manipulation orchestrated by those chronicled in this account?

Dialogue and the Conflict of Opposites

In the abstract, interfaith dialogue offers a promising means for those of diverse religions, ethnicities, nationalities and cultures to know and understand each other, transcending the clash thesis that presently frames geopolitical debate. Yet that understanding faces a real-world challenge traceable to the ongoing duplicity of "the people in between." Rather than confront this systemic treachery head-on, interfaith dialogue can create a parallel system of engagement to expose and counter this deceit.

The repetitive nature of this duplicity suggests an urgent need to focus dialogue on "how" political exploitation has been sustained across time, place and distance. The oft-recurring displacement of facts with beliefs suggests a strategic role for the faith traditions to examine how faith has been hijacked by those masterful at manipulating shared mindsets-regardless of faith.

Akin to the production of a film, serial conflicts-of-opposites featuring a series of requisite Evil Doers have successfully sustained warfare over generations while laying waste to the resources required to create the shared prosperity essential for peace, security and stability.

If, as suggested by the repetitiveness of the fact patterns, such conflicts are often the product of those skilled at

manipulating thought and emotion, then the source of exploitation must be made apparent so that those complicit can be held accountable under the rule of law for crimes against humanity. Should this source trace to a nation state, the legitimacy of that state must be reappraised consistent with the moral tenets common to the faith traditions.

With a sustained focus on the "how" component of this systemic duplicity, interfaith dialogue may yet succeed in enabling mankind to free itself from the Dark Age that we are now experiencing at the advent of the Information Age. With the good faith and friendly dialogue required to address this deceit, progress can be made in accelerating the transition to the Knowledge Society. Absent that focus, international relations are presently on a path to more devastation and human suffering.

Interfaith dialogue without real-world results will only deepen the despair that people feel as poverty expands in the midst of a consensus model-induced global recession during which the world's largest economy continues to dig itself deeper into debt to wage wars based on false premises. People worldwide seek security and yearn for some indication that their aspirations for a better life can be realized for them and their descendants. Thus this chapter closes with a "heretical" suggestion for a shared prosperity demonstration project.

Outlined in brief below is a proposal for re-framing dialogue around education and health care in ways consistent with the Knowledge Society and sustainable communities. By imbedding dialogue in the process by which money is created ("monetization"), this proposal offers a practical means for funding those two critical services while also setting a precedent able to identify, expose and displace "the people in between."

Education and Technology Transfer: The Path to Preemptive Conflict Resolution

Education and health comprise the two largest budgets for communities worldwide. In the consensus model, those essential services must be funded with money issued by a central bank. That framing of the challenge ensures that such services are the first to feel the fiscal squeeze, particularly during economic downturns catalyzed by globalization of this flawed mindset. Yet meeting those needs remains critical for the sustainable health and stability of communities worldwide-particularly in downturns.

With the use of technology transfer, many of the costs for education and health care could be met with local currencies created to catalyze purchasing power in targeted communities. The consensus model of development assumes that all money must originate with debt, all money must be the same ("one size fits all") and all currencies must be issued by a central bank.

Until this One True Faith prescription is challenged with practical demonstration models, that consensus diagnosis will continue to fuel today's widespread systemic dysfunctions. Worldwide experience confirms that complementary currencies can be designed to stimulate purchasing power that responds to local needs and reflects local values. The purchasing power provided by these currencies, in turn, can be secured by the physical capital essential to healthy and sustainable communities.

Currencies need not, as now, be secured solely with debt. They can also be secured, for instance, with the future electricity generated by local hydrogen reformers. With

a development strategy focused on technology transfer, hydrocarbon-producing nations could accelerate the transition to the Hydrogen Economy while also hastening the transition to a Knowledge Society.

While meeting critical needs for education and health care (and affordable clean energy), the hydrocarbon-producing economies would also be well positioned to prosper in the Hydrogen Economy. At the same time, that strategy could catalyze the growth of two key sectors that employ women. For example, women in Saudi Arabia account for 84% of education sector jobs, 40% of doctors and 61% of the 2008 graduates in higher education.

This strategy has the advantage of considerable precedent and now the information technology is available to make such "monetization" strategies highly practical, widely adaptable and genuinely sustainable. For example, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, more than 5,000 different "monies" facilitated local exchange by matching unmet needs to underemployed people who lacked access to the national currency. By reframing the problem as an information challenge, local solutions were adapted to local needs.

Those "currencies" were often secured by physical capital ranging from livestock to lumber. Estimates put today's worldwide figure at approximately 5,000 diverse systems of complementary exchange. Many of those community-attuned systems address the needs of education and health care with the support of widely available information technologies.

Practical development requires a combination of both "hard" and "soft" technologies. The hard technologies, such as education facilities, health clinics and clean energy sources, provide the physical foundation to support healthy

and sustainable communities. The soft "operating system" technologies include the educational, vocational and institutional support required to launch and administer such complementary systems of exchange.

Interfaith dialogue can play a key role in catalyzing practical, locale-sensitive solutions. Real-world progress requires education and technology transfer as a means to complement and gradually displace the consensus development model. With a sustained focus on the key components required for healthy communities, future conflicts can be anticipated and resolved in an anticipatory fashion.

The most direct path forward is for hydrocarbon-producing nations to calculate the present value of their combined reserves of natural resources. Each nation could then pledge a portion of that value to locale-attuned development. This development model would most usefully operate parallel with the consensus model-to catalyze local purchasing power for local services. With an initial focus on education and health care-two key job-generating services essential to healthy communities-a complementary development model could address those areas where consensus development is most clearly deficient.

By catalyzing a parallel form of monetization, demonstration models could also begin the essential process of displacing the "people in between" in the financial sector. That displacement includes the manipulators of debt who have long been-and remain-a recurring source of geopolitical exploitation.

By this process, Islamic nations could also take the lead in purging economic development of the fixed interest component (riba) that accompanies consensus monetization methods. Since antiquity, the "people in between" have extracted this levy from societies (also known as "the pound

of flesh"). In the transition from the Information Age to the Knowledge Society, complementary systems of monetization provide a means to liberate societies from this burden and from "the people in between."

Needed: An Interfaith Design Solution

The hydrocarbon-producing economies have an opportunity to become a beacon of peace, hope and trans-cultural reconciliation. Their great reserves of physical and financial resources suggest an obligation-grounded in faith-to steward those assets to the greater good of community. The need is great for a design solution that anticipates and preempts the sources of conflict that accompany consensus-model development-including the widening divides in wealth and income.

The means for achieving success are known, viable and available. Finance is a matter of design, as is the possibility of a stable and secure future. The barrier to progress is the ill-founded faith in a development model that-predictably-created the dysfunctional results we now see emerging worldwide. Today's mathematically foreseeable outcomes were certain to undermine the shared prosperity essential for justice, peace, stability and sustainability.

As the financial "in-between" domain is - by design-gradually freed from this political exploitation, the shared prosperity essential to healthy communities can emerge through focused and sustained dialogue. With guidance from the wisdom traditions, this systemic challenge can be met and that hopeful future attained. Prodded by interfaith dialogue, the practical means can be designed to create a genuinely sustainable foundation for peace, security and stability.

Index

9/11 112, 113, 114, 167, 182

A

Abdul Aziz Al-Tuwaijri 61
Abdel Aziz bin Abdel Rahman Al Saud, 131
Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques 8, 14, 65
Abdullah, King of Jordan 74
Abraham 27, 28
Afghanistan 116, 158, 179
African 58, 123, 127, 151
Alaska 93
Albert Einstein 169
Alexis de Tocqueville 114, 127
Al-Ghazzali 39
Allah 7, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 52, 58, 66, 67, 67, 68, 69, 88, 94, 132, 135, 141, 143, 160
Al-Hassan bin Ali 43
Al Qaeda 165
Al-Qayrawan 61, 64
Amineh A. Hoti 74, 79
Ancient Greece 152
Andrew Walls 143
Anglican Church 52
Arab League 61
Arab 50, 56, 57, 58, 60, 64, 70, 102, 113, 114, 124, 129, 130, 131, 145, 154, 155, 169
Arnold Toynbee 57
Ar-Razi 35
Aristotle 152
Asia 87, 98, 103, 107, 142, 143
Azhar University 63, 115

B

Babylonian 57
Barack Obama, President 121, 170
Beirut 53, 56, 57, 70, 141, 157
David Ben- Gurion 177
Benjamin Netanyahu 172, 178
Bethlehem 155
Bible 84, 157
Bosnia, 158
Brezhnev, President 51
Britain 80, 81, 119, 130, 131
Buddhist 91, 94

C

Cable News Network 180
Cambridge 74,75,78,80,84
Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations 74, 78, 79
Central Intelligence Agency 167, 173, 180
Chechnya, 158
China 51, 59
Clash of Civilizations 52, 57, 58, 171
Christians 32, 53, 54, 56, 63, 66, 75, 77, 80, 82, 83, 84, 86, 86, 91, 102, 118, 121, 122, 123, 124, 127, 140, 142, 145, 150, 155, 158, 159, 160, 161,
Christian Muslim Dialogue 52, 53, 56
Chuo University 99, 107
Colin Powell 176
Confucian Civilization 59
Cold War 153, 158, 172
Copenhagen 68, 88, 89, 90, 95
Cordoba 64, 70
Council of Christians and Jews, 83
Cultural and Religious Dialogue 52
Cyprus 119

D

Dabru Emet 83
Damascus 156
Danish church 86, 87, 90, 91, 93
Danish Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum 93
Dark Age 183
David Burrel 115, 177
Day of Judgment, 135
Day of Resurrection 7, 42
Deng Xiaoping, President 51
Denmark 86, 87, 89, 91, 92
Dialogue, 8, 11, 16, 17, 24, 31, 36, 42, 44, 52, 62, 75, 80, 88, 89, 91, 93,114, 115, 132, 166,170, 188
Dimona 174
Dwight Eisenhower, 169
Domnican Institute of Oriental Studies 115

E

Ed Gottlieb 168
Edward Eliot Cleverly 115
Edwin McGlynn Gaffney, Jr. 126
Egypt 50, 63, 64, 46, 130, 170
Ehud Olmert 178
Emanuel Levinas 77
European Economic Community 51
Eva Marie Saint 169
Exodus 168, 169, 180

F

Foreign Affairs Magazine 60, 171
France 116, 119, 126, 127, 130

G

General Assembly 19, 51, 61
Geneva 52, 53,55, 69, 105, 137
George Marshall 173

George Shehata Anawati 115
Ghainaa Communication and Studies 10
Glasnost 51
Global War on Terrorism 172
Global Network of religions for Children 93
God 10, 11, 13, 15, 19, 24, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 46, 75, 77, 80, 87, 88, 102, 122, 132, 133, 134, 135, 134, 135, 137, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 155, 160
Golda Meir 174
Gorbachev, President 51
Gospel, 160
Great Depression 185
Greek 12, 57, 58, 64, 119, 152

H

Hallencreutz, Norwegian scholar 55
Hamas, 119
Harry Truman, President, 174
Hebrew 84, 85, 175
Hebrew University 175
Henry William Quilliam 80
Hollywood 112, 113, 115
Huntington, Samuel 58, 59, 60, 171
Hindu 58, 87, 91
Hizallah, 119
Holocaust, 170
Hong Kong 51
Human Rights 53, 137

I

Ichinowari mosque 100, 101
Indian 57
Interfaith Dialogue 17, 96, 104, 166
International Community 62
International Islamic Centre 14, 98
Iraq 60, 116, 119, 130, 131, 158, 165, 172, 173, 176
Isaac, 132
ISESCO 61, 62, 63

Islam 12, 15, 16, 23, 25, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 44, 46, 52, 53, 55, 58, 59, 63, 66, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 110, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117, 119, 122, 127, 128, 129, 130, 132, 133, 134, 136, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 146, 149, 153, 154, 156, 157, 159, 160, 179
Islamic Center Japan 97
Islamic-Christian Study Centre, 91
Islamphobia 134, 140
Ismat Abdul Maguid 117
Istanbul 70

J

J. William Fulbright, Senator 173
Jacob, 132
Jakarta 93
Japan 59, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107,
Jerusalem 93, 94, 121, 127, 155, 175,
Jesus Christ 82, 155, 157
Jews 32, 66, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 102, 118, 119, 121, 122, 123, 124, 127, 154, 169,
Jim Garrison 180
John F. Kennedy, President 121, 174
Jordanians 74
Jose Zapatero 65
Juan Carlos, King 65

K

Kalle Lasn 172
Kashmir 158, 159
Khruschev, 51
Kobe 97

L

Larry King 180
Lawrence Zeiger 180
Lebanon 119, 129, 132, 157, 158
Libya 53

Likud party 178,
London School of Economics, 159
Louis Wolfson 180

M

Martin Buber 77
Ma'ruf Al-Duwalibi 53
Madrid 17, 20, 65, 74, 139
Makkah 8, 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 24, 65, 99, 105
Middle East 75, 78, 85, 97, 106, 119, 124, 131, 156, 158, 168, 174, 181
Montgomery Watt 136
Moses, 132
Mossad 177
Muhammad, Prophet 37, 38, 68, 88, 103, 122, 144
Muhammad Al-Harkan, 53
Muhammad bin Abdel Wahhab 117
Muhammad Jala Kishk, 130
Muhammad Khatami, President 61
Musharref Husain 75
Muslims 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 21, 24, 29, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 50, 54, 56, 66, 67, 68, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 88, 89, 90, 92, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 106, 107, 112, 113, 114, 122, 123, 124, 127, 19, 132, 134, 135, 139, 140, 146, 149, 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 159
Muslim World League 8, 13, 14, 53, 65, 69, 76, 99, 105

N

Nagoya 97
Najran 32, 145
Nara 97
NATO 126
New York 10, 93, 112, 168, 169, 172
Niger 166
Nixon, President 51, 174
Noble Prize 175
Northern Irland, 119
Nostra Aetate 83

O

OIC 61, 63
Orthodox 58, 59, 121, 123, 127
Oswald Spengler, German scholar 57

P

Pakistan 100, 116, 179
Palestine 83, 119, 121, 129, 154, 158, 170
Paris 53, 64, 124, 125
Paul Newman 169
Pentagon 112
Persian 58, 97
Philippines 119, 158
Plato 152
Plutarch 152
Poland 92
Political expolitation, 181
Pope John Paul the second 157
Pope John VI 52
Pope John XXIII 52
Pope Benedic XVI 104
Prague 165

Q

Quraysh 67
Quran 7, 8, 25, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, 40, 44, 46, 66, 67, 68, 69, 94, 95, 133, 134, 135, 141, 144, 145, 146, 156, 157

R

Ramadan 79, 81, 99, 102
Religious 52, 69, 86, 96, 106, 121, 133, 162
Republican Party 154
Richard Nixon 174
Richard Perle 172
Road Map 178

Robert J. Aumann 175
Robert Gates, 167
Robert Kennedy 174
Roman 57, 59, 151, 170, 173
Russian 51, 57, 59, 97, 98, 153

S

Saddam Hussein 172
Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyoubi 127
Sal Mineo 169
Sali M. Samalai 98
Saudi Arabia 7, 10, 24, 53, 65, 110, 117, 131, 185
Second Ecumenical Council of Churches 52
Security Council 51, 176
Senjuro Hayashi, Prime Minister 98
sheikh Ahmad kuftaro 157
Shaikh Muhammad Al-Harkan 63
Shawn Steel 154
Sheikh Michael Mumisa 79
Shosoin Treasury 97
Shumei Okawa 98
Sikhs 75
South Africa 181
Spain 65, 70, 115, 117, 123, 127
Strasbourg 53
Suez Crisis 169
Sunnah 29, 34, 37

T

Takaaki Matsumoto 101
Tel Aviv 174, 177, 178, 181
The New York Times 169
Tim Winter (aka Abdul Hakim Murad), 80
Tokyo 96, 97, 98, 100, 101, 106, 107
Tripartite aggression 169
Tripoli 53, 56
Turkish 97, 119, 125, 126

U

UNESCO 61, 65
United Nations 17, 19, 20, 50, 51, 137, 139, 176
United States (U.S.) 55, 58, 60, 110, 112, 113, 114, 118, 121, 123, 124, 126, 150, 153, 164, 167,168, 169, 170,171, 172, 173, 175, 177, 178, 181
Universal Declaration of Human Rights 137
University of Edinburgh 143
U.S. Congress 169,173

V

Vatican 52, 53, 65, 83, 104
Vienna 20

W

Washington D.C. 112
White House 178
Winston Churchill 114, 127, 129, 130, 131, 162
World Council of Churches 52, 53
World Trade Center 112
World War I, 119
World War II 98, 129, 173

Y

Yohei Kono, Former Japanese foreign minister 104
Yuzo Itagaki, Professor 105

Z

Zen Masters 57
Zionist 132, 168, 177