

TOWARDS REDEFINING ISLAM-WEST RELATIONS



Spahic Omer



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Islam-West Relations

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To my wife and children.

Contents

Introduction	1
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Chapters

1. Muslims Will Never Be Loved for Who They Are.....	10
2. Constant Lies Against Islam a Proof That Islam Is Truth	22
3. Muslims Were Neither Conquerors nor Empire Builders.....	31
4. A Lesson from Gaza and Bosnia: Trust Only Yourself and Your Nag.....	40
5. Who Says Nothing Can Be Done to Save Gaza?	48
6. When Synagogues Embraced Islamic Architecture: A Forgotten Legacy	63
7. Was Prophet Ibrāhīm's Destruction of Idols an Act of Religious Fanaticism?	77
8. The Dark Side of the Olympic Games	84
9. What They Don't Say About Christmas: Paganism, Fabrications and Genocides.....	95
10. Islamophobia in Leopold Ranke's History of Serbia and Bosnia.....	106

11. Prophet Muḥammad Was the Savior: The Idea of the Messiah is a Fabrication	117
12. When Prophets Muḥammad and Mūsā (Moses) Met in Heaven.....	132
13. What Does Surah al-Najm Teach Us About Distinguishing Truth from Falsehood?	143
14. Calls for Sustainable Development Prove We Got It All Wrong	152
15. Reasons for Muslims to Study Western Civilization	161
16. Religion and the Dark Arts of Controlling the Masses	170
17. What Is <i>Jihad</i> and Why Is It Controversial and Rarely Taught?	184
18. Battling Islamophobia: A Response to Thomas Aquinas' Prejudices Against Islam	197
19. From Sacrifice (<i>Qurban</i>) to Self-Worship and Food Obsession.....	221
20. Islam Does Not Prohibit Music, Only Its Distortions.....	232
21. Say "No" to Inappropriate Music: Protect Your Heart and <i>Iman</i>	250
22. Surah al-Ḥajj: Synergy Between <i>Hajj</i> , Truth and Humanity's Destiny	259
23. Ramadan and Meaning of Freedom	268
24. Islam as the Only Defender of Truth.....	274
25. Islamophobia Prevents Western Compassion for Bosnia and Gaza	283
26. The Curse of the Middle East	293
27. Gaza and the Silence of Judeo-Christian Morality	304
28. Albert Einstein, Zionism and the Creation of Israel.....	315

Contents

29. No Islam, No Tomorrow: The Crisis of Muslim Identity.....	335
30. Muslims and the Governments That Fail Them	342
31. Jinn as Jews: Debunking Myths of the Chosen People and the Promised Land.....	349
32. The Role of Devils in Distorting Judaism	358
33. Israel as the Rod of the Wrath of God	374
34. The West and Israel: Architects of Deceit, Masters of Manipulation	382
35. Unity Through Tawhid, Beauty Through Diversity	392
36. Islam and Building Churches	400
37. The Eclipse of God: Man's Descent into Self-Worship	414
Conclusion	419
Index.....	423

Introduction

*T*he ongoing genocide in Gaza, carried out by the criminal Zionists and their equally criminal institutionalized Western benefactors, reveals that the West is not what it appears to be and that its so-called civilization is not what is most aggressively promoted worldwide. The truth is that the West and its cultural tendencies, while originating in Greek humanist faithlessness and self-worship on one hand, and in Roman insatiable desire for hegemony and violence on the other, never shed their fundamental ethos. On the contrary, they continued to cultivate it from one level of might and intensity to another, discreetly disguising their true identity under the pretentious and seemingly attractive ideas of civilization, democracy, freedom and progress.

As appealing as they may seem at first glance, those fancy ideas never operated or existed for their own intrinsic good. Instead, they were either essential parts or inseparable tools of the Western crusades around the world. Although they appeared innocent and potentially valuable, they were all used to serve harmful purposes. The small amount of good provided in the name of civilizational development, liberal democracy and scientific progress pales in comparison to the damage caused when these efforts were

combined with malicious agendas. That little good is akin to a poisoned chalice.

For this reason, everything Western can be described as imperialist, expansionist, colonialist and authoritative. Having truly mastered the dark arts of hypocrisy and deception, little of the Western goodness trickles down to others, leaving only scraps, junk and substandard commodities available. The West can thus be likened to a criminal who, while committing an illicit act, recites poetry to those he has wronged. The question arises: will this criminal persist in his identity as an evildoer, or will he rise to the status of a poet? He may see himself as a poet, but he should never be viewed that way by his victims.

There are ample proofs for these claims, the most striking and straightforward being that the 20th and early 21st centuries, often celebrated as the height of Western so-called civilization with misleading cliches like “the end of history,” “the end of evolution” and “the last man,” were actually the most violent, bloody and destructive periods for both people and the natural environment. Consequently, the whole world, along with the planet, has been brought to the brink of extinction, likely to be preceded by events of apocalyptic proportions.

Whatever wholesome and beneficial the West may have bosomed in the name of civilization was destroyed once and for all in the raped, defrauded and bankrupted colonies, through the entrenched institutions of racism, slavery, antisemitism and Islamophobia, inside the trenches of World War I, on the battlegrounds and killing fields of World War II, inside the clandestine but equally destructive spheres of the Cold (World) War, during the 1992-1995 aggression against Bosnia committed by Serbian-Montenegrin and Croat monsters and sanctioned as well as facilitated by their European partners, culminating in the unprecedented Srebrenica genocide, and finally during the

Introduction

Holocaust—as a result of the West’s persistent and deep-seated Jew-hatred or Judeophobia—which ultimately led to the creation of the illegitimate state of Israel, which, with the West’s blessings and unwavering support, resulted in a series of anti-Palestinian genocidal campaigns.

The issues of antisemitism and Israel, from one perspective, and Islamophobia and Palestine, from another, act as clear evidence that the West is not only irrationally cruel but also fundamentally unwell. Losing all its ideological and ethical bearings, it acts with extreme irrationality and foolishness. Like any senseless individual or unreasonable institution, its behavior swings between one extreme and another. Its harmful actions are unpredictable. Through the extensive authority it has appropriated and the armaments it has developed for its nefarious ends, the West has emerged as the most significant threat to survival, overshadowing the perils of previous times.

All in all, the only thing the West has mastered is the power and means of manipulation, subjugation, oppression and violence. It has evolved into an authoritarian and killing machine. The majority of its sciences and technologies are military first and civilian second. The civilian technology of today was military technology several years earlier, and the current often top-secret military technology of today will be the civilian technology of tomorrow. However one looks at the subject, one cannot help but conclude that the so-called Western civilization is a failed experiment, and that today’s global problems are merely the hazardous effects of such failure—similar to what happens with each disastrous experiment or test inside a lab or outside in an open field.

The Gaza tragedy epitomizes these crises and functions as a clear indication that as long as the West, with its mix of arrogance, ignorance and depravity, controls the direction of human civilization, we are likely to continue on a downward path. There is

little hope for a better future. The hope and prospects that are steadily vanishing in Gaza for its unfortunate but steadfast people reflect a troubling global fate. In a fundamental sense, the entire world may soon be transformed into a Gaza by the same villains and their destructive strategies. Each day may bring us closer to an apocalypse.

The overwhelming body of historical and present facts demonstrate that Muslims and the Muslim world signify the most important target for the West. The reason is Muslims' vast resources and favorable geographical whereabouts. Muslims also pose a threat due to the strength of their faith, historical background and cultural heritage. Having set out to destroy and trample over virtually all religions, sanctities and values, the West thought it had its ways. However, it proved that Islam and its values are indestructible, and as long as that is the case, its followers can easily become a formidable opponent. Fair enough, despite the infinite resources invested and efforts undertaken, Muslims are still standing tall, defying the onslaughts and demanding the purge of socio-political tyrannies and religio-moral iniquities. They are the last standard-bearers of spiritual integrity and moral virtue.

Because of all this, it is incumbent upon Muslims to learn about the West, its history and its so-called civilization. It is imperative to know who exactly they are dealing with in order to develop adequate tactics and policies. There should be no more room for unpleasant surprises, treachery and the probability of making pacts with the devil. The behavior of the West, both as an established bully and a smooth operator, should be the main factor defining the terms of engagement. Accordingly, the relationships between the two orbs ought to be just, unprejudiced and reciprocal. The colonizer-colonized dynamics and the superiority-inferiority complex approaches and their rhetoric must end. They are anachronist legacies and can only hinder progress. Muslims certainly have what it takes to affirm their aptitudes and

Introduction

sovereignty. Their long history and rich civilizational curve are filled with mighty challenges they have faced and ultimately overcome. The challenge of the West is just another obstacle. However, the overall internal and external circumstances are such that before triumphing over the West Muslims must first triumph over themselves.

Nevertheless, one must not get the impression that this is a sign of in-built Muslim antagonism towards the West. By no means is that the case. Islam and Muslims are intrinsically against nobody; they are only against—and perpetually as well as unyieldingly so—injustice, oppression and wickedness wherever they may occur, in both Muslim and non-Muslim contexts, and by whomever they may be committed, whether by Muslims or non-Muslims. The truth and nothing but the truth is the chief preoccupation of Islam and those who adhere to its divine worldview and teachings. It was the same truth and its well-being that guided Muslims in their interactions with the rest of the world, including the West, and that drives their determination to resist the many forms of falsehood that continue to arise.

Given that the West has proudly positioned itself as the preeminent authority in moral decay, sin and untruth, it is only logical that Islam and its adherents appear particularly inclined to oppose such trends, resulting in an ongoing discord between Islamic values and Western ideologies. But again, nobody is against the West *per se*, but rather against the unmistakable and boasted-about wrongdoings of the West. The West should be treated and advertised only as it actually is, without adding to or subtracting from the real situation, as both options would be wrong. It is indeed a fact that the truth can occasionally cause pain and discomfort, yet ultimately, when all is said and done, there is nothing that can produce as much positive and beneficial impact as the unvarnished truth. Neither embellishments nor omissions can do the trick.

For example, if people misjudge and, as a result, mishandle electricity, fire, medicine, diet, dangerous animals, etc., they could be harmed. Without a doubt, these are necessary components of life and its gratifying benefits, whose advantages should be embraced and maximized, while disadvantages must be suppressed and carefully controlled. Whether they are good or bad is beyond question. They are what they are: unavoidable existential realities. However, their practical benefits, or lack thereof, depend on how they are perceived and dealt with. They have the potential for both outcomes, so it is up to those who handle them. The same analogy should be applied to the case of the West as far as Muslims are concerned. The West should be studied primarily through the lens of Islamic standards to capitalize on its advantages and mitigate its disadvantages, without ever compromising Islamic ideals and identity, even in the slightest.

Islam only seeks to diagnose problems and prescribe remedies that aim to create the right conditions for the benefit of humanity and our terrestrial abode. If Islam's goal is simply to convey the truth and make it known and accessible to everyone, while creating free milieus where people can freely accept or reject it, and if, on the other hand, the West aims to conquer, control, "civilize," westernize, democratize and "modernize" the members of the "other" globally, by hook or by crook and by any open or covert means, it is then more than obvious where the majority of the blame lies for misunderstandings and conflicts between Islam and the West.

Surely, the bigotry, belligerence, rigidity and myopia of the West are the main culprits. It is an Islamic tenet to constantly seek ways to engage in dialogue and peacefully coexist with all members of the family of the Children of Adam, regardless of their differences. The aim is to understand ourselves better and learn from each other, as it reflects Allah's profound wisdom that people are different and cannot all fit into one mold. Whereas it is a

Introduction

Western institutionalized credo that the West is superior to the rest of humanity, and that dialogue and coexistence with the “other” can only be considered if they serve Western interests and well-being. “You are either with us—on our terms—or against us” is the mantra that best describes the Western outlook.

How inhumane the West-centric principles of survival of the fittest, social Darwinism and that might is right appear when contrasted with the noble principles of Islam, which state that there is no compulsion in religion, that the only criterion for differentiating between people is piety, that humans are Almighty Allah’s representatives on earth and, therefore, its guardians, and that humanity is a single family with a unified origin, purpose and destiny. In any case, the spirit of egalitarianism must permeate the relations between Islam and the West, promoting equity, parity, mutuality and optimism. Even if the West is slow to recognize the need for this and is hesitant to act, Muslims should take the initiative and lead the way. They owe it to Islam, humanity, human history and themselves. Only they, with their Islam, possess the necessary qualities—though currently dormant—to change the painful global status quo.

Frankly speaking, the above are the major problems associated not only with the West but also with all other aspirants to the throne of world leadership and the titles of world-makers and world-shakers. Such is the contagious influence of the Western paradigm. The prevailing mindset and regulations of the West, regrettably, resemble those of a primal wilderness, rendering existence comparable to that of a savage environment. This has led to a loss of respect for human life, life in general and the civilizational destiny of the world. The main obsession for most people is the struggle for mere survival, just to be rather than to live and become a productive and creative force. All ontological meaning, sense, beauty and reverence have been lost.

In hindsight, Muslims should realize that nothing truly works for them—and by extension, for the rest of the world—except Islam. The last couple of centuries saw a series of civilizational alternatives proposed and implemented, only to fade away and become buried under the rubble of history as soon as they emerged and were called to function. Misled, Muslims were often among the first to try these deceptive alternatives. Now, after about a century and a half of flirting with the flawed systems of life from both the East and the West, and after numerous catastrophic—sometimes embarrassing—failures, what evidence can be presented to show success? The answer is either “nothing” or “extremely little.”

Nowadays, when many Muslims genuinely seek to turn the corner and start inscribing new chapters for themselves and their civilizational route, it is critical to remember that old mistakes must not be repeated. At the core of any real progress is the need to redefine Islam-West relations in line with the principles of justice and righteousness, while also attending to the worldly and religious interests of Muslims. Any interactions with the West, in any area of civilizational development, must be on equal footing. Muslims and the West should be viewed as equal stakeholders, with both expected to give and receive fairly.

Needless to say, to achieve such a respectable status, Muslims must recalibrate their educational systems, which are currently West-oriented and only serve to maintain the current hopeless state of affairs. They need to decolonize their minds and liberate their souls, create a more favorable political landscape, invigorate the economy, and—most importantly—return to their Islam, both personally and institutionally, as the ultimate source of bona fide wisdom, progress, virtue and happiness. Muslims cannot continue doing the same things over and over again and expect different outcomes. Some sages even consider that an unmistakable sign of stupidity.

Introduction

This book aims to raise awareness about the importance of redefining Islam-West relations. It attempts to contribute to generating a conceptual framework within which this critical undertaking can be properly understood and prepared for implementation. The book consists of thirty-seven thought-provoking chapters, ranging from the realms of ideas and moral considerations to those of real-world concerns and experiences. The unfolding tragedy in Gaza is often used as a reference point for two reasons: first, to highlight the spectacular failure of the Western civilizational experiment; and second, to encourage Muslims to awaken from their slumber, which has been protracted by the West's cultural and intellectual anesthesia, and to perceive reality as it truly is. This awareness can help them develop responses that reflect their honorable status as vicegerents of Almighty Allah on earth.

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Conclusion

*T*he theme of Islam-West relations is an intriguing one. For Islam and Muslims, the West is simply another geopolitical entity and ideological complexity. It represents neither more nor less than the rest of the world. On one hand, it is seen as a target for the honest communication of Islamic truth, after which people are free to choose or reject it. On the other hand, it is viewed as the subject of inevitable cultural and civilizational interactions that are meant to benefit both sides.

Indeed, in the dealings between Islam and the West, Muslims see themselves as productive and beneficial partners, bringing good news and fortune. The West is viewed positively, as a potential ally. Its nature is neither good nor bad; it depends on how it positions itself and responds to the overtures of Islam, its people, and its civilization. This perspective stems from the Islamic principles of equality, justice, and benevolence, which are universal and apply to all aspects of life and communities. People should not be judged based on their circumstances, but rather on their choices and actions. They are considered innocent until they prove otherwise.

However, with regard to the West and its dispositions, the case is totally different. Having been established on questionable

religious and ideological grounds—such as the tense and unforgiving relationships between Judaism and Christianity, where each side continuously discredited and undermined the legitimacy of the other, ultimately leading to religiophobia and outright atheism disguised as modernity, development, and scientism—the West has always viewed Islam, in its capacity as the final revelation and last Testament to humanity that seeks to clean up the mess generated by the Judaism-Christianity controversies, as a threat and Muslims as potential enemies.

Hence, the West's religiophobia transformed into Islamophobia, while tensions between Judaism and Christianity were initially muted and later somewhat smoothed over. This was done to focus all confrontational efforts against the perceived hazards of Islam and Muslims. Which in turn led to unfortunate and shameful historical chapters and measures, such as the Crusades, colonialism, the mission to civilize, Christianization, and the pseudoscience of Orientalism, which sought to distort Islam and Islamic civilization, creating a narrative suitable for Western audiences. More recently, the strategy has included the war on terror and the “democratization” of the Muslim world.

The ongoing genocide in Gaza has revealed the true nature of the West, highlighting its hypocrisy towards others and its deep-seated animosity towards Islam and Muslims. One cannot help but feel that enough is enough. The truth must be spoken plainly, and a spade must be called a spade. The honorable and brave people of Gaza and Palestine have made it clear that the emperor has no clothes. This, in passing, is not an attack on the West and its people, but rather a critique of their ongoing institutional wrongdoings, which Muslims must recognize and be ready to address.

The predicament has gone on long enough and needs to stop. It is time for Muslims to sort out their internal matters and get their house in order, rather than presenting themselves as gullible and,

Conclusion

consequently, victimized by the vultures of the West. Muslims must realize that no one will help them unless they start helping themselves. The world has become so volatile that everyone is left to their own devices. It is not an exaggeration to say that the West and its (un)civilization have turned the global socio-political landscape into a truly wild West.

This book is envisioned to be a step in the above-suggested right direction. It seeks to uncover important aspects of the West and its civilizational trajectory, highlighting where these aspects both align with and differ from the principles of Islam and its own civilizational trends. The topics discussed vary widely, covering not only abstract ideas and ethical dilemmas but also practical issues and real-life experiences faced by individuals and organized communities in both the West and the Islamic world in their daily private and institutional lives.

The topics may initially seem standalone and even disjointed, but there is an invisible thread that connects them and holds them together: the avant-garde spirit of both Islam and the West, which influences their values and actions. These two domains of mutual interest create an Islam-West axis along which many interactions, and unfortunately most confrontations, occur. For this reason, the subjects of epistemology, sustainability, Islamophobia, *jihad*, conquest, peaceful coexistence, religious certainty, the Gaza tragedy, historical revisionism, theology, ethics, civilizational productivity, and others stand alongside each other, subtly generating a mosaic of complementary ideas and a tapestry of intertwined concerns.

It cannot be stressed enough—in conclusion—that the ultimate goal is to show that Islam and the West, despite their many differences, can create a common platform to work together for the betterment of the world. Misunderstandings must be reduced, prejudices addressed, and confrontational attitudes and behaviors

controlled. Initiatives and engagements should be reciprocal, with both sides acting and contributing as equal partners. The era of (neo)colonialist bullying and one-sided Orientalist narratives must end. A future based on respect, dialogue, tolerance, coexistence, and cooperation is the solution. The content of the book should serve as an eye-opener and a stimulus for affirmative action, in addition to providing an educational boost that could permeate and act as the driving force of the former.

Index

A

Abbasid Caliphate, 299
 Abdulaziz b. Al Saud, King, 296, 298
 Abdullah b. Salam, 120
 Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas, 126
 Abrahamic, 74, 123, 137, 139, 263, 312
 Abu Dharr, 62
 Abu Jahl, 26
 Abu Lahab, 217
 Abu Mūsā, 245
adhan, 245, 257
 Age of Enlightenment, 69, 165, 226
 Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah, al-, 35, 112
 Ahl al-Kitab, 401
 Al Laney, 92
al-amin, 145
 Alhambra, 64, 65, 66
 Ali Bey el Abbasi, 296
 Alighieri, Dante, 111
 Allenby, Field Marshal, 202
amanah, 145
 Amir Chakhmaq Mosque, 66
 Andalusia, 199, 394
 Andrew Archibald Paton, 113
 Andrić, Ivo, 109

angels, 23, 131, 149, 276, 301, 372, 373
 anti-Islamic, 27, 29
 anti-Semitic, 2, 3, 72, 75, 76, 91, 291,
 315, 316, 319, 323, 327, 383
 Aqsa mosque, 202
 Aquinas, Thomas, 193, 197, 198, 199,
 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 208,
 210, 212, 214, 215, 217
 Arab League, 40
 arabesques, 63
 Aristotle, 88, 199
asabiyyah, 302
 Assyrians, 358
 Augustus, 99
awjuh al-balaghah, 247
 Aws, 126
ayat, 167

B

Babylon, 359, 368, 369, 370, 372
 Babylonian Talmud, 309, 310
 Bacon, Roger, 200
 Badr, Battle of, 41, 271, 280, 281, 339
 Baghawi, al-, 353
 Balfour Declaration, 56, 76, 331

Towards Redefining Islam-West Relations

- Balkan region, 107
 Balkans, 38, 108, 285
 Banu
 al-Nadir, 125, 126
 Qaynuqa', 125
 Salamah, 126
 Qurayzah, 125
barakah, 268, 294
 Baydawi, al-, 353
 Beethoven, Ludwig van, 239, 254
 Begin, Menachem, 328, 329
 Bethlehem, 98, 104
 Bible, 130, 204, 206, 207, 208, 305, 370, 409
 Bishr bin Al-Bara', 126
 Bosnia, 2, 17, 40, 42, 43, 67, 68, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 114, 115, 283, 284, 286, 287, 288, 395
 Bosnian army, 43
 Brahma, 129
 Brandeis, Louis, 382, 385
 BRICS, 60
 Buber, Martin, 382, 384, 385
 Buddha, Gautama, 129
 Buddhism, 129, 131, 224
 Burton, Sir Richard, 37
 Byzantine, 65
- ### C
- Calvary, 224
 Children of Israel, 120, 121, 123, 124, 131, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 206, 275, 308, 353, 354, 355, 356, 361, 362, 367, 373
 China, 17
 Christmas, 95, 96, 97, 100, 101, 102, 104
 Christophobia, 103
 Chronicles, 368
 Constantine, Emperor, 409, 410
 Croat, 2, 42, 109, 110
- Crusades, 16, 201, 202, 205, 420
 West-Israel, 44
- ### D
- d'Holbach, Baron, 417
 Dark Ages, 210, 225, 406
 Darke, Diana, 71
 Darwinism, 7, 106
 Davidic, 124
 de Coubertin, Baron, 90
 de Penafort, Raymond, 203
 Deir Yassin, 327, 329
 Democritus, 88
 Descartes, 417
 Deuteronomy, 123, 354
dhikr, 245, 257
din al-yahudiyyah, 353
 domes, 63, 394
 Dresden synagogue, 64
- ### E
- Egypt, 135, 136, 299, 306
 Einstein, Albert, 71, 315-337, 340, 342-344, 382, 386, 416
 Emmanuel-Augustin-Dieudonne Las Cases, 213
 Encyclopedia Britannica, 69
 Enlightenment, 69, 85, 103, 156, 163, 210, 213, 226, 228, 407, 416, 417
 Erdogan, 57
 European Renaissance, 165
 Eve, 16, 20, 216
 Ezra, 369
- ### F
- Fairuz, 96
 Farabi, al-, 35, 200
fath, 34, 35, 36, 38, 281, 402
 Makkah, 36
 Fatimid Caliphate, 299
fatwas, 97, 232

Index

First Serbian Uprising, 109
fitrah, 246, 399, 405, 412, 413
 Folsing, Albrecht, 318, 325
 France, 17, 93, 94, 213, 284, 294, 295,
 298, 299
furqan, 168, 339, 340, 341
futuhah, 36, 395

G

Gandhi, Mahatma, 385
 Gaza, 1, 3, 9, 14, 20-21, 27, 40-41, 43-
 46, 48-51, 53-61, 76, 93, 99, 102,
 104, 127, 139, 195, 278-279, 283,
 288-289, 303-307, 312-313, 328,
 330, 333, 375, 379, 381, 387-390,
 420, 421
 Germany, 64, 91, 315, 316, 330, 334
ghayb, 365, 372
 Ghazali, Abu Hamid al-, 199, 200, 235,
 238
 Golden Age, 71, 72, 73
 of Muslim Spain, 71, 73
 Golgotha, 224, 389
 Gospel, 98, 121, 356, 375
 Matthew, 98, 151, 382
 Granada, 64
 Great Mosque of Cordoba, 66
 Greek, 1, 84, 85, 88, 89, 103, 152, 199,
 210, 225, 226, 248, 416

H

Hajj, 122, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264,
 267
handasah al-sawt, 248
haram, 237, 250, 251
 Hashemite dynasty, 299
 Haykal, Husayn, 202
 Hebrew, 63, 64, 311, 320, 321, 322, 384,
 385
 Hellpach, Willy, 334
 Herald Tribune, 92

Herzegovina, 42, 43, 114
 Herzl, Theodor, 289, 290, 291, 292,
 315, 326, 331, 332, 382, 383, 384
hijab, 93
hijrah, 280
hikmah, 413
 Hinduism, 129, 131, 224
 Hira, Cave, 145, 146
 Hitler, Adolf, 91, 315, 329
 Holocaust, 3, 306, 320
 Huxley, Thomas, 417

I

Ibn al-Athir, 278
 Ibn al-Haytham, 234, 235
 Ibn al-Jawzi, 353
 Ibn Kathir, 126, 278
 Ibn Khaldun, 37, 277
 Ibn Rushd, 199, 200
 Ibn Sina, 199, 200, 234, 235, 247
ijtihad, 37
imam, 123
 India, 17, 112, 319, 386
 Industrial Revolution, 69, 165
 International Court of Justice, 40
 Isfahan, 394
 Islamic
 architecture, 63, 64, 65, 69, 395
 civilization, 16, 27, 31, 34, 38, 41,
 73, 111, 119, 137, 139, 159, 162,
 163, 164, 165, 168, 189, 192, 212,
 251, 337, 338, 341, 404, 412, 420
 community, 37
 heritage, 73
 identity, 11, 42, 195
 monotheism, 34
 Neo-Moorish, 63
 states, 35, 37
 Islamophobia, 2, 3, 12, 27, 38, 54, 106,
 108, 109, 112, 114, 162, 193, 197,

Towards Redefining Islam-West Relations

205, 211, 213, 215, 226, 283, 284,
285, 288, 289, 291, 406, 420, 421

Islam-West relations, 8, 9, 419

Israel, 3, 16-17, 27, 43, 48, 58, 75-76,
93, 102-103, 124, 135, 139, 202, 278,
288-289, 292, 296, 306, 308, 310-
312, 315, 325-329, 332-333, 353,
358-359, 374-375, 377-378, 380-
388, 391

Izetbegović, Alija, 283

J

jahiliyyah, 36, 302

Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, 168, 252

Jannah, 16, 170, 172, 173, 184, 185,
216, 252, 253, 355, 380

Jawaharlal Nehru, 319, 326, 386

Jelen, Emily, 70, 73

Jeremiah, 369

Jerusalem, 202, 203, 224, 320, 322, 323,
327, 356, 358, 368, 370, 402, 410

Jewish,

culture, 73, 291

nationalist movement, 15

Jibril, 144, 145, 146, 270

jiḥād, 58, 184, 188, 190, 191, 192, 193,
194, 195, 196, 303, 338, 380, 381,
421

John, 13, 99, 193, 198, 224, 296, 306,
329

John of Damascus, 13, 193, 198

John the Baptist, 99, 224, 306

Judaism, 15, 16, 73, 75, 108, 125, 131,
138, 224, 263, 280, 305, 307, 313,
314, 320, 332, 333, 353, 355, 358,
361, 362, 368, 386, 401, 406, 408,
420

Judea, 98

Judeo-Christian, 14, 15, 27, 275, 304,
306, 307

K

Ka'bah, 26, 83, 120, 263, 264, 276, 281
kafir, 33

Kalki Avatar, 129, 130

Kant, Emanuel, 163

Kant, Immanuel, 228, 417

Karadorde, Đorđe Petrović, 109, 113

Karadžić, Vuk Stefanović, 108, 109

Kenny, Joseph, 199, 200, 203

Khazraj, 126

khilafah, 294, 296, 355

khilafah islamiyyah, 294, 296

Kings, 359, 369

Kosovo, 17

Krinsky, Carol, 64, 65

L

lahw al-hadith, 237, 238, 241, 254

Lawrence of Arabia, 297

League of Nations, 335

Likud, 328

M

MacMullen, Ramsay, 101

Madinah, 35, 37, 125, 126, 190, 280,
298, 349, 356, 395

Magnus, Albertus, 200

Mahdi, al-, 128

Makkah, 26, 27, 36, 37, 120, 122, 125,
140, 190, 259, 260, 263, 280, 281,
298, 349, 350, 356

mamalik al-Islamiyyah, al-, 37

maqasid al-Shari'ah, 37

Martin Luther, 13, 111, 193, 374, 375,
377

Marx, Karl, 175, 176

Maryam, 83, 217, 275

Maududi, al-, 238, 310, 356, 371

Mawardi, al-, 35, 112

Mehmed al-Fatih, Sultan, 36, 403

Index

merlon, 63
 Mesopotamian, 78, 82
 Messiah, 117, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129,
 333, 411
mihrab, 63, 66
 Milo of Croton, 88
minarets, 63, 65, 66, 394
 Mishary bin Rashid Alafasy, 96
 Mogulesque, 63
 Montagu, Edwin, 75, 76, 383
 Mosaic, Advancing Jewish Thought,
 311
mubah, 250
 Muhammad Asad, 144, 238
 muhaymin, 122
 mujahid, 50
 Muqaddimah, 37
 muqarnas, 63
 Musnad Ahmad, 397
 Myanmar, 17

N

Nakhlah, 349, 350
 Napoleon, 14, 213, 214, 296
 nas, al-, 260
 Nasrid, 63
 Nazi, 91, 316, 328, 330
 regime, 316
 Nehemiah, 369
 Neo-Mamluk, 67
 Neo-Moorish, 63, 65, 67, 70, 71, 72, 73,
 74
 synagogues, 74
 Netanyahu, Benjamin, 17, 328, 387
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 228, 239, 254
 Nimrud, 24, 25, 26, 78, 81, 177, 181,
 182
 Nordau, Max, 326

O

Obrenović, Miloš, 114

Octavian, 99
 OIC, 40, 60, 390
 Olympic Games, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89,
 90, 91, 92, 93, 94
 Omerdić, Muharem, 110
 Organization of Islamic Cooperation,
 40, 60, 390
 Orientalism, 15, 16, 27, 31, 70, 111,
 205, 420
 Ottoman, 36, 37, 38, 107, 108, 109, 110,
 111, 112, 113, 114, 285, 286, 294,
 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 301, 374,
 389, 403
 Ottoman caliphate, 37
 Ottomanophobia, 108, 109

P

Palestine, 3, 17, 44-45, 49, 55, 73-74,
 76, 98, 102, 104, 201, 202, 204, 288,
 290-292, 294, 296, 299, 305, 312,
 315, 318-328, 330-331, 333, 355,
 375-376, 382-386, 420
 Perelman, Marc, 92
 Pharaoh, 24, 25, 26, 135, 136, 177, 178,
 179, 181, 182, 217, 362
 Philby, John, 296
 Philippines, 17
 Plato, 88
 Pope Urban II, 193
 Portugal, 38, 39
 Prague, 63, 65, 66
 Promised Land, 136, 137, 305, 306,
 310, 349, 354, 355, 356
 Prophet
 ‘Īsā, 98-105, 120-121, 124-125, 127-
 129, 131, 138, 151, 198, 202, 205-
 207, 209, 214, 217-220, 224, 275-
 276, 280, 306, 309, 314, 353, 382,
 401, 406-410, 412, 413

Towards Redefining Islam-West Relations

- Adam, 6, 16, 20, 117, 123, 129, 130, 170, 171, 185, 216, 222, 259, 263, 360, 400, 414
- Hārūn, 177, 178, 362
- Hūd, 122
- Ibrāhīm, 25, 26, 47, 77, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 120, 123, 124, 149, 174, 177, 217, 263, 267, 276, 354, 360
- Ishaq, 217
- Lut, 217
- Muḥammad, 11, 13, 26, 28, 33, 41, 47, 59, 60, 81, 83, 101, 104, 117-128, 130-133, 137-140, 142-145, 150, 171, 189-190, 193, 197-198, 200, 202, 204-205, 208, 212-213, 216, 222, 241, 247, 252, 259-260, 262, 264-266, 276-277, 280, 339, 349-350, 352-354, 356-357, 361, 366, 393, 400, 402, 405-406, 413
- Mūsā, 24, 123, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 177, 178, 179, 339, 350, 352, 353, 354, 356, 357, 360, 362
- Nūḥ, 130, 173, 217, 360
- Sulaymān, 65, 186, 358, 359, 360, 361, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 370, 371, 372
- Şāliḥ, 122
- Yahya, 99, 217
- Zakariyya, 99, 217
- Pythagoras, 88
- Q**
- Qaradawi, Yusuf al-, 244
- qawm*, 133, 134, 135, 140, 357
- Quraysh, 24, 26, 27, 83, 140, 141
- qurban*, 221, 222, 223
- Qurtubi, al-, 353
- Qusayy, 26
- R**
- Rajab, 268
- Ramadan, 268, 269, 270, 271, 273
- Ranke, Leopold, 106, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 285
- Rashidun, al-, 299
- rawashin, 394
- Razi, Abu Bakr Muḥammad al-, 247, 353
- Razi, Fakhruddin al-, 144
- Rehoboam, 358, 367
- religiophobia, 38, 103, 211, 226, 406, 420
- Renaissance, 85, 89, 103, 210, 226, 407, 415, 416
- Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, 13, 111, 193, 203, 204, 205
- Robert of Ketton, 13, 111, 193, 198
- Roman, 1, 87, 88, 89, 90, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 179, 180, 181, 182, 207, 210, 225, 226, 240, 275, 276, 279, 280, 403, 406, 408, 409, 410, 415
- architect, 88
- Empire, 89, 99, 102, 179, 180, 225, 280, 406, 409
- Republic, 99, 179
- Romanticism, 69
- Rosenthal, Franz, 37
- Russia, 17, 295
- Ruther, Eldon, 296
- S**
- sahibah*, 215, 218, 219, 220
- Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 61, 62, 252, 367
- Şaḥīḥ Muslim, 60, 62, 145, 246, 301, 302
- Said, Edward, 70
- salam*, 245, 257
- salawat*, 245, 257
- Saoshyant, 129
- Sarah, 217, 260

Index

- Sarajevo Synagogue, 67, 68
 Sartre, Jean-Paul, 228
 Saudi Arabia, 296, 298
 Schaap, Jeremy, 91
 Semitic tree, 73
 Sephardic Jews, 71
 Serb, 42, 109, 284, 286
 nationalism, 42
 Serbia, 13, 17, 42, 106, 108, 109, 110,
 111, 113, 114, 115, 284, 285, 288
 Serbian-Montenegrin, 2, 110
 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 163, 164
Sharī'ah, 37, 118, 195, 338, 378
 Shawkani, al-, 353
 Shiva, 129
siyasah al-shar'iyyah, al-, 37
 Spanish Synagogue, 65, 66
 St. Augustine, 219
 Sunan Abi Dāwūd, 81, 128, 302
 Sunan al-Nasā'ī, 245
 Sunan Ibn Mājah, 124
 Sunnah, 37, 121, 122, 195, 241, 251,
 257, 300, 339, 379, 398
 Surah
 Āl 'Imrān, 11, 18, 45, 60, 142, 245,
 281, 356, 362, 411
 al-'Ankabūt, 19
 al-A'rāf, 121, 179
 al-Ahqaf, 349, 350, 352, 362
 al-Aḥzāb, 118
 al-An'ām, 26, 80, 140, 215
 al-Anbiyā', 77, 360, 363
 al-Anfāl, 11, 20, 42, 58, 281, 339
 al-Balad, 184
 al-Baqarah, 11, 18, 19, 26, 45, 78,
 118, 120, 127, 142, 172, 253, 302,
 305, 360, 370, 371, 373, 380, 402
 al-Burūj, 24
 al-Furqān, 140, 190, 272
 al-Hadid, 209
 al-Ḥajj, 41, 58, 59, 259, 260, 261,
 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 405
 al-Hujurat, 396
 al-Isrā', 11, 18, 24, 45, 47, 60, 239,
 281, 367
 al-Jāthiyah, 227
 al-Jinn, 350, 351, 361
 al-Kahf, 33, 135
 al-Ma'arij, 220
 al-Mā'idah, 137, 222, 308, 380
 al-Mulk, 37, 245, 398
 al-Mumtaḥanah, 20
 al-Naḥl, 19, 83
 al-Najm, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147,
 148, 149, 150, 151
 al-Naml, 25, 186, 360
 al-Nisā', 140
 al-Ra'd, 41, 57, 59
 al-Rum, 397
 al-Ṣaff, 121, 135, 353
 al-Ṣāffāt, 81
 al-Shu'arā', 25, 136, 178, 179
 Ibrāhīm, 47, 149, 174
 Luqmān, 237, 241, 254
 Maryam, 83, 217, 275
 Muḥammad, 41, 59
 Nūḥ, 173
 Ṣad, 367
 Ṭā Hā, 16, 172
 Yā Sīn, 141
 Sustainable Development Goals, 159
 Suyuti, al-, 353
 Sveti Sava, 13
 Sykes, Sir Mark, 298
 Sykes-Picot agreement, 299
- ## T
- Tabari, al-, 277, 353, 357
 Tafsir Ibn Kathir, 25
takbir, 245, 257
talbiyah, 245, 257

Towards Redefining Islam-West Relations

- taqwa*, 339, 340, 397
 Tarbitz, 311
tawhid, 37, 219, 365, 401, 408
tawhidic, 303, 365, 394
 Temple, Isaac M. Wise, 66, 67
 Testament
 New, 198, 204, 206, 207, 359
 Old, 125, 206, 305, 308, 359, 368
 Theodosius I, 89
 Thomism, 197
 Tirmidhi, al-, 117
 Torah, 121, 224, 339, 352, 353, 355,
 356, 357, 362, 369, 370
 trinity, 15, 16, 163, 406
 Trump, Donald, 48
- U**
- udhiyah, 221
 Umar ibn al-Khattab, 120, 402
 Umayyad Caliphate, 299
Ummah, 37, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 61, 83,
 96, 120, 127, 133, 134, 135, 137, 138,
 139, 140, 141, 142, 167, 293, 303,
 336, 341, 377, 389, 393, 394
 United Kingdom, 14, 43, 278
 United Nation, 40, 43, 154, 284, 335
 United Nations, 18, 40, 42, 43
 Urbach, Ephraim, 311
 USA, 14, 43, 48, 99, 278, 307, 323, 330
- V**
- Ved Prakash Upaddhay, Dr, 130
 Vienna War, 110
 Vishnu, 129
 Vitruvius, 88
 Voltaire, 111, 213, 214
- W**
- Weizmann, Chaim Azriel, 332, 382
- Western
 benefactors, 1
 civilization, 3, 9, 49, 69, 70, 87, 108,
 152, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166,
 167, 168, 169, 288, 336, 337, 338,
 341
 colonialism, 37
 colonization, 16
 crusades, 1
 governments, 42, 45
 imperialism, 47
 interests, 7, 45, 383
 inventions, 16
 leaderships, 49
 nationalism, 15, 16, 54, 329
 neocolonial powers, 17
 neo-colonialist, 55, 56
 outlook, 7
 protagonists, 16
 pro-Zionist, 18
 world, 42, 71, 289, 297, 336
 West-Zionism, 45, 46, 54, 327
 World War I, 2, 93, 165
 World War II, 2, 43, 93, 165
 World War III, 93
- Y**
- Yugoslav People's Army, 42
- Z**
- zawjah*, 215, 216, 217, 220
 Zeus, 84, 248
 Zionism, 15, 16, 27, 42, 47, 54, 56, 74,
 75, 103, 104, 105, 137, 138, 279, 289,
 304, 307, 312, 314, 315, 317, 318,
 319, 320, 321, 325, 326, 327, 330,
 331, 332, 333, 334, 383, 384, 386,
 387
 Zoroastrianism, 129, 131

At a time when Muslims seek renewal and the courage to inscribe new civilizational chapters, it is vital to avoid repeating old mistakes. True progress demands a redefinition of Islam–West relations on the basis of justice, equality, and dignity. This book argues that Muslims must decolonize their minds, reform education, invigorate politics and economy, and return to Islam as the ultimate source of wisdom, virtue, and happiness. Only then can interactions with the West be conducted on equal footing, as between genuine stakeholders in the human story.

Through thirty-seven thought-provoking chapters, the book offers a conceptual framework for awakening—moving from ideas and moral considerations to real-world concerns and experiences. The unfolding tragedy in Gaza stands as both a warning of the failure of the Western civilizational experiment and a call for Muslims to rise from cultural anesthesia, reclaim their honorable status as vicegerents of Almighty Allah, and respond with clarity, dignity, and strength.

Dr. Spahic Omer, an award-winning author, teaches at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). He pursued his studies in Bosnia, Egypt, and Malaysia, gaining a rich cross-cultural perspective. His research focuses on Islamic history, culture, and civilization, with particular emphasis on the history and theory of the Islamic built environment.



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