



**Muslims, Christians and Jews Today,  
Neighbourhood and Neighbourliness  
in the Age of Globalization**

*Prof. Enes Karić*

***Selected Papers***

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## ABSTRACT

Humankind is diverse, and religious humankind is especially so. Different languages, faiths, customs, views, thoughts and opinions are all to be taken into consideration when one wants to talk about neighbourhood and neighbourliness today. Indeed, what does neighbourhood and neighbourliness mean today, and what it means to live in neighbourhood with others in the period labelled as globalization? My paper discusses the task of modern day affirmation of the institution of neighbourhood among Muslims, Christians and Jews. I consider that task the most important today, since symbols, ideas, and religious representations of Muslims, Christians and Jews have been somehow in a neighbourhood for a very long time. How to preserve and save such a neighbourhood and neighbourliness? How to project a neighbourhood of human lives and fates from a neighbourhood of symbols, representations and ideas? This paper will try to give answers to these questions.

## Preliminary Remarks

Contemporary Western societies are facing the task of a new discovery of the values of neighbourhood of various religions and their believers in an age they call globalisation. The number of humans on earth is increasing; there should be more of neighbourhood (and neighbourliness) around. But, stated briefly, what is neighbourhood? In our view, a true neighbourhood means the following: "Live and let others live in dignity!" For humankind, neighbourhood of all religions is highly important, especially for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. And for the present day West, it is of crucial importance to make peace with Islam, to accept it as a proud heir of humankind's monotheistic traditions, as a great neighbour of Judaism and Christianity, and as their great interlocutor.

The writer of this essay would like to draw the reader's attention to the fact that he is well-acquainted with much of what has been written in Europe and

in the West about Muslims as the other in the past three centuries. Nor is he unaware of Immanuel Kant's idea of "universal hospitality";<sup>1</sup> he is equally familiar with Kant's call for hospitality to be placed "in the field of rights".<sup>2</sup> Also, the writer gladly recalls Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's statements about tolerance or lenience towards the other and the different. As Goethe says: "Tolerance should be a transitional position. Tolerance must lead to acceptance. The mere tolerating is a form of insult." (*Toleranz sollte eigentlich nur eine vorübergehende Gesinnung sein: sie muss zur Anerkennung führen. Dulden heisst beleidigen*).<sup>3</sup> Equally welcoming are Jacques Derrida's attempts to adapt contemporary Europe to others, so that Europe may become "A Europe of Hope".<sup>4</sup> Also, the writer of these lines managed to muster sufficient courage to read to the final page of "Neighbours" by Jan T. Gross.<sup>5</sup> The book sends shivers down every man's spine. It is good to know about these and hundreds of other, here unmen-

tioned, authors; it is good to reflect, together with them, over the question of "neighbourhood" today, the meaning of "today's borders" and many other issues: who is "the other"; why is there "the other"; who is "the stranger"; what is "cosmopolitanism" today; what is meant by "openness to others" today; who is "our neighbour" today, etc.

However, in this essay the writer does not intend to tire himself or the reader with academic discussions, which, of course, are useful. Rather, the intention is to dedicate the essay primarily to the topic of neighbourhood among believers today, especially among Jews, Christians and Muslims in the West, the West which likes to flatter itself for constituting the secular side of the world.

Therefore, the intention is to awaken an interest - the writer's as much as of those who may read this essay - by addressing the questions to follow.

These immediate questions are: are we being pessimists in saying that today's world, in a way that is similar to not so distant a time that mankind experienced in the 19th and 20th centuries, but especially since the last three decades, is marked by an age of an increasingly pronounced crisis of neighbourhood, particularly between West and Islam? Are we right in saying that there is a deepening crisis in the relations and in coming to an understanding among religions in general?<sup>6</sup> Have that religious other and the different really become strangers in many parts of the world?<sup>7</sup> Would it be true to say that in many parts of the world the voting majority has been electing political representatives who deliberately and systematically undermine relations with the man of another religion, with people of differing (religious) worldviews? Lastly, can today's communication technologies encourage and facilitate various ways of reaching understanding among religions? Or, do we find ourselves much more in an age of the ever more strongly networked communication technologies in the service of atavisms, which aim at spreading hatred among religions, especially towards Islam?<sup>8</sup> Another pertinent question is this: who has been more tolerant and open to other faiths and religions, the ancient archaic people and

the primordial Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities, or us, the modern, contemporary people? Are we spreading groundless pessimism if we say that the present day economic crisis is essentially a moral crisis? Does this crisis, under the guise of economic bankruptcy of entire states, definitely undermines all the hopes we used to pin on a better humanity following the fall of Communism at the eve of the Third Millennium? Furthermore, is the world seeing an increase in wars? If so, which centres of power are abetting them and is it actually possible to detect incitement to religious wars?<sup>9</sup> Is it a fact that multiplication of wars today is accompanied by a multiplication of the other as a target, a side that should be degraded or exterminated?<sup>10</sup> Are the recent verdicts issued by the International War Crimes Tribunals in the Hague for genocide in Bosnia and in Rwanda by themselves the gravest sign of an increasing failure of any possibility of neighbourhood - let alone of neighbourliness - of religions, cultures and civilizations? Have we become so frightened of the modern world we live in that in the terrible moments of pessimism we even think that we are living through an age in which the final days are running out, as Slavoj Žižek declares grudgingly in his work entitled *Living in the End Times*?

Finally, to conclude these introductory remarks: Is the present age of ours not only pregnant with, but has actually begun to give birth to, various false yet powerful and popularly read prophets of the clash of civilizations,<sup>11</sup> clash of cultures?<sup>12</sup> Do the present-day theoreticians who speak of various clashes, in fact, doubt from the outset the possibility of being in neighbourhood with the other and different from us today?

I. A few words about neighbourhood of traditional religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) in the past.

Today, when we are hearing, far and wide, the media noise about "Judaeo-Christian civilization", and when the very notion of Islam and Muslims constituting the third, equal member of that civilization is being rejected ("Judaeo-Christian-Muslim civilization"), Muslims come to feel deprived of taking part in the

building of a concept of neighbourhood in modern times.

Nevertheless, in the past Muslims knew what the high culture of neighbourhood, was, and they know it still today.

The author of this essay would not like to speak of the "golden age" of any religion, culture and civilization. He is aware that this expression, the "golden age", is highly ensnaring and seductive. He is also aware that the "golden age" is no more than a mere construct, or a projection of our wishful thinking born by the difficult present we are living in into a distant, bygone past with which we have "romantically" fallen in love.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, when we speak of a "golden age" in any culture and civilization, it is necessary to do so with great reservations.

All reservations notwithstanding, including those born by a romantic attitude towards the past, it is still necessary to speak of the existence of a certain harmony and neighbourhood of Muslims, Christians and Jews over many periods of peace in the past. In their works the great historians have recognized that harmony. For example, Bernard Lewis, to us Muslims not so favourably disposed scholar, nevertheless admits: "Islamic civilization, in contrast [of previous civilizations], was the first that can be called universal, in the sense that it comprised people of many different races and cultures, on three different continents. It was European, having flourished for a long time in Spain and southern Italy, on the Russian steppes, and in the Balkan Peninsula. It was self-evidently Asian and also African. It included people who were white, black, brown, and yellow."<sup>14</sup> For his part, Marshall G. S. Hodgson affirms that "...the roots of Islamicate civilization are largely the same as those of Occidental civilization: the urban commercial tradition of the ancient Fertile Crescent, the Hebrew religious challenge, the classical Greek philosophical and scientific culture. Hence, for Westerners (and for all who at least partly share now in the Occidental heritage), the Islamicate forms a sister civilization..."<sup>15</sup>

One could go on citing similar views held by authoritative Western scholars who confirm the high culture

of the Muslim concept of neighbourhood and of Muslims' giving home to different peoples and religions within their own spiritual orbit.

The fact is that during the main course of their history Muslims have shown to be more than capable of being good and moral neighbours. We, the Muslims in the West, can be proud of that heritage.

That neighbourhood of these three religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) has been recognized in many parts of the world. At the very least, one can speak of that neighbourhood with the view to some historically significant periods. For example, for centuries the so-called Islamic Spain was homeland to a harmonious neighbourhood of Muslims, Jews and Christians.<sup>16</sup> One can say the same for the Nile Valley, the lifeline of Egypt. The same applies to long stretches of history of Syria, Palestine, present day Iraq, Lebanon, Anatolia, the Balkans, etc.

"The People of the Book" (Jews and Christians) were incorporated into great Muslim caliphates. They were not cast out from them, the way Muslim today are cast out from the West, from the so-called "Judaean-Christian civilization", in which Muslims are not meant to be accorded recognition of being the third member of that civilization any time soon.

In this regard, we Muslims are becoming worried by the silence of traditional Jews and Christians today. It is the traditional Jews and Christians who should raise their voice for the recognition of Islam and for inaugurating a "Judaean-Christian-Muslim civilization" as a future neighbourhood of peace, recognition, tolerance and coexistence. For, the "Judaean-Christian-Muslim civilization" would infuse the secular project of globalization with a positive spirit and make it more humane.

Furthermore, in doing so Christians and Jews would give back a kind of debt they owe Muslims. When it comes to Christians, they ought to know that in bringing glory to "Islamic East", Muslims did not destroy "Christian East". Nor is it unknown that Jews thrived within Muslim caliphates, in whose cultural centres they developed almost all their theology.

Thus, the tradition of Kabbala appeared during the great periods of peace among Jews, Christians and Muslims. Philosopher Maimonides wrote his works during such an age, etc. On this topic, the work of Adam Mez is highly recommended.<sup>17</sup>

Even when Muslims were conquerors, they were aware of the institution of neighbourhood and its significance. In the words of Seyyed Hossein Nasr: "Spain and Anatolia changed hands between Islam and Christianity about the same time. In Spain all the Muslims were killed, forcibly converted or driven off and no Muslims remain there today, whereas the seat of the Orthodox Church is still located in Turkey."<sup>18</sup>

In several of his book the great historian Halil Inalcik, the long serving professor of history at the University of Chicago, argues that after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, more than 20 states emerged, many of them with Christian majority. Not only did those Christian peoples survived under the Ottoman Empire, but they have preserved their religion, language and tradition.<sup>19</sup> It is clear that such a development would not have been possible if the Ottoman Empire did not know of the traditional patterns of neighbourhood. One is, of course, aware that millet system not perfect, but in itself it offered a visible prospect for survival and for the preservation of one's religion and tradition.

Today it is necessary to talk about these bygone times, when Muslims, Christians and Jews recognized each other as neighbours. It is particularly important to speak of them in the West, after the horrors of two world wars in the 20th century, during which Europe's Jewish population was almost wiped out; or when, between 1992 and 1999, Muslim population of the Balkans was on the way to extinction.<sup>20</sup>

Of course, it is impossible to bring back the past, just as it is impossible to return the once milked milk back into the udder. But it is quite significant to remind the present generation of the "past encounters" between Muslims, Christians and Jews.<sup>21</sup> In this regard many Muslim authors speak of an "encounter

between Islam and other religions."<sup>22</sup>

The past neighbourhood and neighbourliness of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, the practical neighbourhood and neighbourliness of Muslim, Christians and Jews, was based on several principles. First, on a living trust in God as the Creator of all people. Of course, Muslims, Christians and Jews did not recognize each other dogmatically, but they did recognize God as their Creator. Second, they recognized the institution of neighbourhood.

Thanks to this, millions survived (in the 20th century millions were killed, be it on European soil (Jews), or in anti-colonial wars (Algerian Muslims, for instance).

Neighbourhood and neighbourliness of Muslims, Christians and Jews today implies some sort of recognition. A minimum of recognition. For example, a recognition that our neighbour is a fellow human being like ourselves, having the same human origins as ourselves, that he was created by the one Creator just like us, etc, etc. Our fellow neighbours who are unbelievers and agnostics also deserve our recognition, because we bestow peace on them, and they should bestow peace on us. The celebrated rector of Al-Azhar University Mahmud Shaltut came up with the expression "brotherhood in humanity" (*al-ukhuwwah fi l-insāniyyah*). He says that Muslims and non-Muslims are brothers, and the only condition for that brotherhood is mutual upholding of peace and peaceful coexistence.<sup>23</sup>

According to Jack Goody, Muslims "have had a lot to offer" to Europe and the West: "After having been largely repulsed, after many centuries Muslims have returned in mass no longer as invaders but as immigrants. In both capacities, they have had a lot to offer. Formerly they acted as a spur to the intellectual and scientific life, to the Renaissance itself. Now they provide an increasing part of the labour force that Europe needs to replenish its diminishing population. Both in the past and in the present Islam cannot be construed simply as the Other. Even in Asia, Muslim traditions are close to Christian and Jewish traditions. Muslims are very much part of the European scene."<sup>24</sup>

## II. Neighbourhood in the Realm of Ideologies and Machines, and the Emergence of a Human, an All Too Human, World

Nevertheless, today there is a palpable crisis of neighbourhood among religions. Just as there is a crisis of neighbourhood between man and nature. Two world wars, the First (1914-1918) and the Second (1939-1945), almost coincided with the world guerrilla warfare waged by humankind against nature and environment. Ecologists will probably agree on this point.

That crisis of neighbourhood has been going on for a long time. In this author's view, it has its deeper roots. This is something that needs to be discussed if we wish to strengthen chances not only for reaching an inter-religious understanding in the today's world, but for affirming other types of understanding, too.

When speaking of neighbourhood and of neighbourliness among Muslims, Christians and Jews, as well as about positive cooperation among all the secular branches of these three religions, it is necessary to recall that in the course of the last three centuries the whole of mankind has undergone great spiritual changes.<sup>25</sup>

This means that any talk of neighbourhood today cannot, nor it should, ignore the new "tradition" and the visible results of dark side of Modern Age, and the consequences of the triumph of quantitative science and its multifaceted applications.

Ever since the end of the 18th century various secular "isms" and scientism in particular have been pushing the traditional worlds of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism to the margins. Especially during the 19th and 20th centuries these "isms" took for their slogans, programs and platforms numerous

revolutions, nationalisms, socialism, humanisms, communisms, fascisms, etc. The world of the 18th, 19th and 20th century became a world in which human masses entered history. Those masses needed

to be entertained and animated with ideology. As a result, deep changes, with a highly negative impact on traditional patterns of neighbourhood of religions, took place.

In the critique and self-critique offered by the present day social sciences one notes a general agreement that since the 18th century the traditional religions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, and their moral systems, have been more or less, on the defensive, in retreat, sometimes in a complete disarray and close to disappearance. It is not rare to find authors who label the contemporary age "the Age of Disbelief"<sup>26</sup>

Since the 18th century the world which came to be known as the West has experienced many triumphalist ideologies and quantitative sciences, all of which offered explanation for the universe and man. Each ideology glorified "its own" man, whether at the expense of God or other people, other cultures and civilizations. Scientific theories which appeared since the 18th century have interpreted the world within numerous, mutually competing "isms." What is Evolutionism than a glorification of man at the expense of other living organisms?! What is Biologism if not glorification of certain human races over others, or one type of living beings over the others?! All this had a highly negative impact on the traditional patterns of neighbourhood.

Those scientific theories of Modern History represented, and still do, a consistent, practical application of the dark sides of the Modern Age ideologies and their triumphalist spirit in the West. Moreover, in their application, those scientific theories endangered the neighbourhood of man and animals (Evolutionism), and the neighbourhood of man and fellow man (Biologism).

But the main expression of the practical application of the scientific theories of Modern Age represents the advent of the age in which a profusion of machines have been made.

Even before mankind was familiar with certain gadgets and machines, but only during Modern

Age machines were invented to give man awesome power over other men and Nature. Modern machines increasingly became "close friends" of the modern man and mankind generally. Machines were produced as the most visible aspect of an alliance between ideologies and scientific theories of the Modern Age. Thus there came about a firm triumvirate of ideology, science and machine, and in its wake, of the crisis of neighbourhood among religions, followed by the great ecological crisis<sup>27</sup> With the ecological crisis there came about the undermining of neighbourhood of man and natural environment (but this subject lies beyond the scope of the present essay).

Whatever happened immediately after the end of the 18th century, when this human, an all too human world, emerges; whatever happened to that traditional neighbourhood of Muslims, Christians and Jews; whatever has remained of that neighbourhood in the age of this grand triumvirate of ideology, science and the machine?

The triumph of ideology, science and the machine led to the weakening, marginalization or complete neglect of traditional religious and moral systems of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The roused and enthusiastic man of the Modern Age no longer built foundations for neighbourhood with others on the basis of faith and an awareness of the existence of God, or on the basis of principles revealed by God.

To be more clear: in the eyes of the ugly and rigid side of the Modern Age, its rigid ideologies, of which Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer<sup>28</sup> were so critical, our neighbour was no longer God's creature, and nor were we.

After all, our neighbour, like us, was an outcome of blind workings of evolution. Two world wars of the 20th century are, of course, highly complex and terrible events which cannot be explained in simple terms, but it is quite certain that the ideologies behind them carried within themselves an echo of the grand, triumphalist views of the Modern Age and its main scientific theories: Evolutionism and Biologism.

Never was neighbourhood of human beings and religions destroyed to such a high degree as during the world wars in the 20th century. It needs to be stressed once again: at the end of the Second World War, the Jews almost disappeared from the European soil, millions of them having been killed. Traditional neighbourhood of Jews and Christians, built through centuries in Europe, almost disappeared. As Graham E. Fuller put it, even today's "complex Palestinian problem.... after all, had its roots not in Islam, but in Western persecution and butchery of European Jews."<sup>29</sup>

Among the consequences of the Second World War one can also count the sufferings of Muslims in the Balkans from the 1990s onwards. In many ways those sufferings remind one of the sufferings of Jews in Europe during Second World War. World wars had terrible consequences for neighbourhood in the Near and Middle East. Using the words "Christians", "Jews" and "Muslims" in this text covers not only those three (traditional) types of believers, but their secular offshoots, too. However, those secular offshoots have not grown totally cold to their traditions. They still emanate – in some way – cultural, traditional and civilization meanings and rays derived from Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Therefore, keeping in mind the weakening of traditional patterns of neighbourhood after the Second World War, one should frankly ask: Who is "the Other", in a derogatory sense of the word, today? When speaking of "the Other" in Europe and in the West today, what is most commonly implied is that it is not desirable for having it as a neighbour.

As already indicated, in many cases that Other is understood in a scornful sense of the word. Of course, answers to the question of why this is so may vary from place to place. In Israel those "others" are Muslims and Christians. In the Muslim-majority countries of the Middle East, it is Christians and Jews who are the "other", even though Lebanon and Egypt can be seen as a positive exception when it comes to the attitude towards Christians. As for Europe, Jews and Muslims are "the Other" there. Even the Balkans as a whole, for several decades, have seen the

reduction of Muslims to the status of the despised "others." At times reducing someone to the status of the despised "Other" was accompanied with much bloodshed.<sup>30</sup>

For the purposes of the present essay it will be useful to quote from some studies about why Muslims have, speaking broadly, since the end of the 18th century, felt like the "Other". And why they have been "fashioned" and "made" into the despised other.

There are quite a few works addressing this question. In his highly acclaimed *Islam and the West* Norman Daniel writes about the making of an image of Muslims.<sup>31</sup> On the other side, Bernard Lewis penned a book under the same title (*Islam and the West*), but with goals quite different from those of Norman Daniel. In the main, Bernard Lewis strives to present Islam as a force which does not want to have connection with the worlds around it.<sup>32</sup> The writer seeks to show that Muslims are the "other" thanks to themselves.

There are numerous works written in terms of confrontation of one geopolitical side of the world, i.e. the West,<sup>33</sup> on the one hand and Islam, on the other. The other side, the Islamic side, is today's "other."<sup>34</sup>

Namely, in the works describing the "West" as coming face to face with the other, "West" is everything, an uber-civilisation, Demiurg, the epitome of secularism, prosperity, the very summit of everything human! In these confrontations between "West" and „Islam“, Islam is accorded the status of a guinea-pig which bleats feeling lost, speaking incoherently some holy words.<sup>35</sup> Also, in such literature Islam is denied the right to neighbourhood until it is cloned in accordance with the West's own model. The numerous articles and books written along the lines of "moderate Islam" speak enough of the sort of "Islam-cloning" in operation.<sup>36</sup> These "Islam-cooking" projects provoke particular anxiety in the hearts of traditional Muslim intellectuals. In the past 15 to 20 years we have seen how the so-called "moderate Islam" is prepared the way the "fast food" is.

A review of chief examples of such literature about Islam provides descriptions of Islam as the "other", and, in a way, offers a blueprint of a history in which Islam became the "other." Whenever "Islam and the West" figure in a title, then Islam can mean just about anything. For Bernard Lewis, Islam equals Egyptian fellahin, modern Turkish Republic, Iranian Revolution, former Arab Socialist and Baathist regimes, the smell of čevapčići, etc. All along a supposedly anti-Western agenda of all those Islams is projected, with a clear aim of getting the reader to conclude that Islam is a bloc, a monolith, a dangerous and undesirable "other", an Islam that does not know about neighbourhood. There are many things on offer in such literature which portrays Islam as the "other", in which it is engaged and is "cooked" as the other. When it comes to the Balkans, Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* is highly instructive.<sup>37</sup>

It was Maria Todorova who acutely noted a major stream in Western thought in which Islam is denied neighbourhood. Those who subscribe to such an opinion, i.e. that Islam and Muslims cannot be neighbours, have for a long time been trying to push Islam out of the cultural-civilization orbit of the contemporary world. This intellectual operation is particularly discernable in denying Islam that third place in the expression "Judaean-Christian-Muslim civilization." They do not want Islam for a neighbour. Nevertheless, Todorova hopes for the time when one will speak of the "Judaean-Christian-Muslim roots of European culture." She says: "Gone are the days when even Russian liberals convincingly "bolstered Russia's claim to 'Europeanness' by contrasting it to the barbarous Turk". This is already unacceptable for the new generation, which has to show it has overcome Christian prejudice and which, in a move to overcome the legacy of anti-Semitism, has added and internalized the new attribute to the roots of Western culture: Judeo-Christian. One wonders how long it will take before we begin speaking about the Judeo-Christian-Muslim tradition and roots of European culture."<sup>38</sup>

Do Islam and Muslims stand a chance of acquiring a status of a neighbour and experiencing the atmosphere of neighbourliness in Europe and in the West

today? When looking for an answer to this question, one should bear in mind the following: up until the downfall of Communism (1990) and the fall of the Berlin Wall, right-wing political parties in Europe – in their political projects, ideological constructs and media appearances - painted in negative colours Muslim immigrants at home and the Islamic world internationally. One could detect various direct consequences of this approach in the European Union countries. When it comes to the Muslim immigrants and workers, those consequences are visible, among other things, in the following ways: A) a high levels of anti-Muslim prejudice, B) Job discrimination, C) Despised image of Muslims in the media, D) Instances of abuse and violence, E) Undermining the emergence of Muslim elite which would defend the rights of Muslims with European legal means, F) Undermining civic integration of Muslims into EU, G) marginalizing Muslims in education, art, science, and politics, etc.<sup>39</sup>

### III. What is Neighbourhood of Believers and Religions in Today's Age of Globalization?

Here, we mainly refer to the neighbourhood of believers, and of religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam - in the past and today. But let's first try to say at least a few words about what the neighbourhood of different believers is. I trust that the following passages will be of some use to our friends in the West.

In the broadest sense, neighbourhood constitutes a friendly atmosphere of encounter which fills the space between two or more instances of human goodness and magnanimity. This is why neighbourhood displays itself in human kindness and compassion. Neighbourhood is not something "scientific", similar to some "scientific fact" which has the date of discovery on it. Thus, neighbourhood cannot be defined the way a chemical formula can. Neighbourhood is not an object or a concept, prepared somewhere in offices of an institute before being placed in front of us as an object. Neighbourhood is above all providing other people and creatures with spiritual tranquillity and physical safety which to inhabit, to live in. Neighbourhood embraces us more than we can embrace it. Therefore, neighbourhood

is a spiritual, psychological and physical space that appears out of a whole spectrum of moral relations among people. Between us and our neighbour there stands the moral institution of neighbourhood. As neighbours, we mutually present each other with the gift of neighbourhood. Neighbourhood is around us, like air, or like the ground under our feet. Neighbourhood dwells in pious freedom of a personal decision to live in peace with other people. Therefore: neighbourhood is not a dictate of law, similar to the dictate of modern parliamentary laws. In the institution of neighbourhood there is no a "stronger" and a "weaker" party. Neighbours endow the institution of neighbourhood with their goodness and thus make it noble. For this reason neighbourhood is not primarily a rational project the way, e.g. construction of a hydroelectric plant is! Neighbourhood is a spiritual institution which lays foundation to itself, provided that moral people give it a chance. Neighbourhood is not guided or "moderated" by any one of those who participate in it. Furthermore, neighbourhood is a result of moral courtesy, moral upbringing. Our upbringing and morality protect and shield others from us. Moreover, neighbourhood is similar to a free and dignified conversation. Dignified conversation guides itself. If a collocutor starts dominating conversation, such conversation turns into something of a police questioning. Of course, neighbourhood can be close, but it is not kinship, i.e., our neighbour is not necessarily our cousin. Neighbourhood is not a material benefit or business either, because true neighbourhood does not fatten up anyone's bank account. But, true neighbourhood contributes to many prosperities, including the material ones, of course. Although neighbourhood has nothing against "house rules", it represents much more.

Neighbourhood is a moral characteristic of the neighbour, and neighbour is like someone who is "planted on Earth" right where we - his neighbours - are planted, too. Neighbour is someone who lives within our proximity, in the same street, in the same city, country and homeland. Furthermore, neighbourhood is a moral responsibility. Neighbour is there to be met, to exchange greetings with, and to shake hands, to talk, sometimes to have a meal with,

and to exchange views on world and life. Through conversation with us, our neighbour gently walks into our time, our language, steps into our spiritual mood, enters "our space." We do the same to his time, language, spiritual mood, "his space." But, this partaking in space and spirit of neighbourhood does not constitute taking over. On the contrary, neighbourhood is participating without taking away, without depriving, just as a billion fish partake in a single ocean, but it is impossible for a fish to appropriate the entire ocean. Besides, over the years, neighbours have come face to face with certain "man's border situations", as Karl Jaspers would put it. Neighbours rejoice, celebrate their different religious festivals, and congratulate each other. Neighbours get sick, die and bid farewell to each other to the other world, etc. Neighbours partake in human destiny, in the quiet flow of time, in the silent shifts of day and night. Thus, neighbourhood arises as a spiritual and interest-free institution, not dictated by pragmatic concerns, except by elementary morality, so precious, honing us into respecting the human dignity of the other. Stated briefly, neighbourhood means: "Live a dignified life, and let others live a dignified life!"

The haughty West of today ought to know that the neighbourhood which developed in the traditional worlds of pious Jews, Christians and Muslims was marked by high respect for human differences and beliefs. Neighbour's house next to ours was not a "courtyard broken down" which one could step into brazenly and inconsiderately, whenever one deems fit. Neighbourhood is also a neighbourhood of many considerations, appreciation and respect. A neighbour's daughter is also our daughter. She has the place of our child. Her honour is our daughter's honour, too. Besides, neighbourhood does not amount to levelling and erasing separate identities. On the contrary, traditional neighbourhoods developed a high regard for different gazes upon the heavenly blue, towards manifold aspects of privacy of the man of another faith, of another or different worldview.

Neighbourhood means also that we cannot ask our neighbour any question. Neighbourhood means also that we respect our neighbour's right to an in-

timated experience of his faith. Also, neighbourhood means that our neighbour is not "our object" which we should seek to "enlighten", "culturally elevate", make him "like ourselves", or "clone him" in accordance with our model.

We must not try to see our neighbour as a transparent, "glass figurine", as a "naked person", without the "layer" of belief, tradition, and religion, specific only to him. That is why neighbourhood should be not only a neighbourhood of dignified conversation, but also of dignified silence. Moreover, neighbourhood also represents a meeting of two or more silences. For, we respect our neighbour in his right to remain for us, to some extent, a hidden secret. We must not dig forcefully through the depths of our neighbour's spirituality, privacy, his encounter with life and death.

Neighbourhood of different people and religions is an attainment of high and pious cultures, mainly of city life. The neighbourhood we describe above, between Jews, Christians and Muslims arose only in the comfort of large cities and these three monotheistic religions, interpreted universally. Besides, neighbourhood of various believers and worldviews is a moral and highly praised ethical institution of ancient religious traditions across the world.

Furthermore, neighbourhood is one of the most grateful offspring of Tradition, which truly deserves to be called Tradition.

What is Tradition if not that big corpus of man's religious, moral, literary, philosophical, architectural, etc, spirituality which for centuries keeps addressing us with its greatness from the past! The meaning of Tradition must not be understood colloquially; it should not be "confused with custom, habit, inherited patterns of thought, and the like."<sup>40</sup> Stated more clearly, "tradition can be considered to include the principles which bind man to Heaven, and therefore religion..."<sup>41</sup>

It is also possible to argue that neighbourhood is one of the most important institutions to have come down to us from the Tradition of ancient multicultural-

al and multilateral societies. As a spiritual and moral institution, neighbourhood was closer to people than the institution of state. Neighbourhood was called upon to safeguard the dignity of various people, of the Other and the Different, through morality and non-violence. Neighbourhood engages the other by opening it to us and us to it. Also, neighbourhood as a moral institution may be credited for preserving far more human lives in history than states. Classical Arabic language has many proverbs about neighbourhood and neighbours, such as: Al-jāru thumma d-dār (First acquire a neighbour, then a house!) Jāruka al-qarīb wa lā akhúka l-ba‘íd (Better to have a close neighbour, than a distant brother!), etc.<sup>42</sup>

That is why in the beginning we said that in today's world, which is inhabited by more souls than ever, it is best to collaborate with the other by way of a true, traditional neighbourhood.

#### IV. God – Source of Neighbourhood of Believers and Religions

When it comes to Tradition of Neighbourhood with a view to different religions and believers, one should keep in mind its following degrees about which we in the West should be taught from an early age:

**First**, whenever believers contemplate neighbourhood, they should always remember the fact promoted by every traditional religion, and that is: there is God. The neighbourhood of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in big caliphates was founded on the awareness of God, the Creator of us all. God, the Creator of us all, by the very fact of creating us, has accorded all an equal status of creatures. The Creator is one while creatures are many. Therefore, creatures achieve a pleasing atmosphere of neighbourhood through God, because God is the All-Encompassing.<sup>43</sup> There is no reason not to believe that God rejoices at the magnanimous neighbourhood of His creatures. Through institution of neighbourhood we invoke God to witness our neighbourhood, so that He, too, be the neighbour of all of us.

We also derive the obligation of our neighbourhood

with different believers (as well as with unbelievers) from the fact that all creatures have One, Only Creator, Dear God. Worship of God means, above all, love of God. "As worship of God, love has two objects – God and neighbour".<sup>44</sup>

**Second**, partaking of neighbourhood implies mutual elementary human recognition. It means recognition of the other and the different in that he or she, too, is a human being and that that other enjoys the right to life, freedom, property, honour, faith/conscience and children/offspring. Muslims can take pride in the fact that the classical summaries of Islamic doctrine insist on these six universal rights, which Muslims are obliged to vouch for themselves as well as for their neighbours: Jews, Christians, Sabeans and the people of other faiths and world-views.

**Third**, although tolerance is exceptionally important, only neighbourhood surpasses the institutions of tolerance, it goes beyond it and eclipses it with the institution of accepting the other and by respecting its rights to spiritual homelands which may be different from ours.

**Fourth**, neighbourhood of religions amounts to dignified sojourn, dwelling in **mutual respect** of human integrity. Mutual respect is based on the Golden Rule: "Do not do to others what you would not have done to you".<sup>45</sup>

**Fifth**, it is not only people who have right to our neighbourhood, but also minerals, plants and animals. Air, water and earth are also our neighbours. Even the sky is our neighbour, because its stellar arch reminds us of the moral laws in ourselves, as Immanuel Kant would say in a different context.

**Sixth**, mutual recognition means a simultaneous recognition of the right of freedom to the maintenance of spiritual and physical difference. It follows from there that neighbourhood is primarily a neighbourhood of differences, peaceful partaking of differences, peaceful permeation of differences. In the Qur'an differences are celebrated as a sign of God's creative power: "And among His Signs is ...the

difference of your languages and your colours".<sup>46</sup>

It is a great achievement of true neighbourhood when people have legal right to difference, when they have equal right to their differences. But it is even better when people are morally aware and responsible in respecting the other with his differences. Besides, people are different, but while it is recognized that they are different, it should also be proclaimed that they are equal. This is how Fazlur Rahman explains why the Qur'an stresses equality of people: "The reason the Qur'an emphasizes essential human equality is that the kind of vicious superiority which certain members of this species assert over others is unique among all animals. This is where human reason appears in its most perverted forms. It is also true that the distance between human potentialities and their actual realization displays a range exemplified by probably no other species of living being: barring natural defects, there is hardly any difference, for example, between one specimen of earwig and another. But as we ascend the scale of evolution, the distances between potentialities and their actualities proportionately increases..."<sup>47</sup>

**Seventh**, it is worth recalling once again: neighbourhood is not a matter of customs, local opinions, state laws, but of morality. Neighbourhood is based first of all on morals; neighbourhood is a moral duty, an unquestionable moral act, a moral consideration, it is to move and act morally. In this regard neighbourhood is similar to shame. Only a moral person can have a sense of shame. Having a neighbourly relationship with another can have only a moral person. Moral, and not some other norms, largely colour spirituality of a neighbourhood. Had the members of the German Parliament during Hitler's reign been guided by morality, then the racist, anti-Jewish laws would never have been passed. Jews and "non-Arians" were first banished from neighbourhood, then from law, and then from life. Why do we insist on moral norms? Because moral norms are the ones that should be permanent for most of the mankind; they issue out of God's authority. Ten Biblical and Ten Qur'anic commandments, are all largely moral commandments. In contrast to morality, however, laws are often a consequence of political and pow-

er-seeking interests. One group of parties pass a law in the parliament, another defeats it the very same day. But morality cannot be abolished, just as God cannot be abolished.

**Eighth**, neighbourhood is more of blessing consequence of moral tuition, and only secondarily of education.<sup>48</sup> That is why the religions of Abrahamic Tradition (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), and all traditional religions in general, by insisting on morality also give chance to neighbourhood. (Unfortunately, in today's schools children learn quantitative subjects such as physics, chemistry, etc. It would be so much better if they also learned subjects such as: moral neighbourhood, modesty, shame, courageous speaking, silence, human soul, etc. In Islamic tekkes and Christian monasteries during the Middle Ages students learned about shame, silence, modesty, contemplation, and such like. Had such subjects remained in schools, then the atomic, hydrogen and neutronic bombs might never have been invented. Those bombs potentially deny millions of living beings of elementary neighbourhood!).

**Ninth**, neighbourhood is not only the neighbourhood of various people, religions and worldviews, but also of various religious signs, symbols and houses of worship: synagogues, churches, mosques, pagodas, etc. In the Mediterranean basin (which is to large degree marked by the culture and traditions of Islam) there is quite a visible tradition of neighbourhood, not only of different believers, but also of neighbourhood of different holy buildings, holy places, and houses of worship. The skylines of Mediterranean cities, graced with minarets and church towers (Cairo, Alexandria, Damascus, Baghdad, Beirut, Rabat, Istanbul, etc), are a consequence of a longstanding Islamic and Muslim cultivation of the institution of neighbourhood. Muslim can be proud of such a tradition in the Mediterranean (It is ironic that Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, with its centuries-old mosques, churches and synagogues, was totally besieged city 1992-95, which, sadly, has become a bad omen for the future of the institution of neighbourhood in the 21st century)

Concluding Remarks

For Muslims who live in the West today it is quite hard to present spiritual resources of Islam, because many of them belong to the class of refugees, blue collar workers, and economically weaker sections of population in general. A Muslim elite in the West is still in the making and is yet to authentically assert itself.

Furthermore, Muslims in the West find it difficult to promote traditional neighbourhood of religions due to Western media's aggressive reporting against Islam, almost on daily basis. In spite of it all, it is necessary "...to calm the hysteria created by the media about the danger of an Islamic wave destroying the secular bastion of the West..."<sup>49</sup>

At the same time traditional Muslims despair at the longstanding political coalition between secular offshoots of Judaism and Christianity. Such a coalition is marginalizing Islam into the other, distant, unmodern, alien, extratemporal, and exotic.

Among Muslims one can see a resistance developing to such projects, even revolts and turbulent uprisings against being banished from the prevailing secular project of "Judaic-Christian civilization". That project is a sort of "this-worldly salvation". It is Islam that is banished from it today.

This is one side to the problem of dignified search for neighbourhood today.

The other side is brighter, more optimistic. Islam has much to offer the world from its spiritual treasures.

Mankind has always responded to the Qur'an's spiritual universe, because the Islam of the Qur'an is an inclusive religion.

The Qur'an reading Muslims always call on Jews and Christians to a common spiritual feast, because "Our God and Your God is One"<sup>50</sup>

Let us recall: the major part of religious and biblical tradition of Judaism and Christianity is, since long time, contained in the great Islamic synthesis:

"Judaism and Christianity themselves are in a sense 'contained' in Islam inasmuch as the latter is the final affirmation of the Abrahamic tradition of which Judaism and Christianity are the two earlier manifestations."<sup>51</sup>

This, then, is our concept of neighbourhood for the contemporary world in brief:

"We have to get used to see more than one West and more than one East on all sides of our globe. We have to promote such an awareness in dialogue for the sake of our better future. Because Islamic East means the negation neither of the Christian East nor of Judaic East, nor should the phrase Christian West imply the negation of an Islamic West, Judaic West. The religions that are universal and have a universal message should oppose a project which seeks to reserve any regions of the world, let alone a whole continent, as the exclusive homeland of just one religion."<sup>52</sup>

## NOTES

## المراجع

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7. Enes Karić, *Who is the 'Other' today?*, Occasional Papers, series No. 3, July 2011, The Cordoba Foundation, London, 2011., pp.9-14.
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10. See: Norman Cigar, *The Role of Serbian Orientalists in Justification og Genocide Against Muslims of The Balkans*, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, Sarajevo, 2000.

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17. See: Adam Mez, *The renaissance of Islam*, Islamic Book Service, Lahore, 1987.
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