Mustafa CERİĆ

VRIJEME
DIJALEKTIČKOG SPIRITUALIZMA
Od Medinske do Mekkanske povelje

THE TIME
OF DIALECTIC SPIRITUALISM
From Medina to Mecca Charter

ILUSTRACIJA - Okrugli voštani pečati na poveljama

ILLUSTRATION - Round wax stamps on charters

Dr. Mustafa Cerić važi za jednog od najuticajnijih muslimanskih ličnosti današnjice. Završio je *Gazi Husrev-begovu medresu* u Sarajevu, a diplomirao na *Univerzitetu Al-Azhar* u Kairu, Egipt. Doktorirao je na *Čikaškom univerzitetu* pred uglednim muslimanskim učenjakom Fazlur Rahmanom. Predavao je na *Međunarodnom institutu islamske misli i civilizacije* u Kuala Lumpuru u Maleziji pod vođstvom prof. Naquib Al-Attasa, te kao gostujući profesor na *Svjetskom univerzitetu za islamske nauke i obrazovanje*, Amman, Jordan. Vodio je Islamsku zajednicu u Bosni i Hercegovini kao reisu-l-ulema i vrhovni muftija (1993 - 2012) u ratu i miru; njegovo vođstvo je imalo veliki utjecaj na domaća i međunarodna pitanja koja se tiču istine, pravde, mira i pomirenja. Dr. Cerić je zagovornik međukulturalnog angažmana, kao i mirovni aktivist; dobitnik je *UNESCO-ove nagrade za mir*, nagrade *Theodor-Heuss-Stiftung*, *Sternbergove nagrade*, nagrade zaklade *Eugen Biser*, nagrade za životno djelo asocijacije *UK Muslim Social Scientist*, nagrade *Fondacije Ducci*... Napisao je *Deklaraciju evropskih muslimana*; predvodio muslimansku delegaciju inicijative *Zajednička riječ* u Vatikanu; član je *Odbora savjesti* koji se bori protiv poricanja Holokausta; član je Upravnog odbora *Muslimanskog mirovnog foruma*, Abu Dabi; specijalni savjetnik šejha Abdallaha bin Bejje; počasni predsjednik *Svjetske konferencije 'Religija za mir'*; uvršten je među 50 najuticajnijih muslimana u svijetu... Redovni je član Kraljevske akademije *Al al-Bajr* (Jordan), a jedan je od osnivača i redovni član *BANU-a* (Bosna).

Dr. Mustafa Cerić is considered one of the most influential Muslim figures of today. He completed the *Gazi Husrevbeg Madrasa* in Sarajevo and earned a scholarship to *Al-Azhar University* in Cairo, Egypt. He received his doctorate from the *University of Chicago* by the mentorship of the eminent Muslim scholar Fazlur Rahman. He lectured at the *International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization* in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, under the leadership of Prof. Naquib Al-Attas; was a Visiting Professor at the *World University of Islamic Sciences and Education*, Amman, Jordan. He led the Islamic Community as the Grand Mufti (Raisu-l-ulama) of Bosnia (1993-2012) in war and peace; his leadership had a major impact on domestic and international issues concerning truth, justice, peace and reconciliation. Dr. Cerić is an advocate of intercultural engagement as well as a peace activist; he won the *UNESCO Peace Prize*, the *Theodor-Heuss-Stiftung Prize*, the *Sternberg Prize*, the *Eugen Biser Foundation Prize*, the *UK Muslim Social Scientist Association Life Achievement Prize*, *Ducci Foundation Prize*... He wrote *Declaration of European Muslims*; led the Muslim delegation of the *Common Word initiative to the Vatican*; he is a member of the *Committee of Conscience* against Holocaust denial; he is a member of the *Board of Trustees of Muslim Peace Forum*, Abu Dhabi; he is a special adviser to Sheikh Abdallah bin Bayyah; he is Honorary President of *World Conference Religions for Peace*; he is listed among the 50 most influential Muslims in the world ... He is a full member of the Royal Academy *Al al-Bayt* (Jordan), and is one of the founders and full member of *BANU* (Bosnia).

Abstract

A crisis is a call for change and creative thinking that initiates a dialectics of thought and action. Also, the challenge for nations as well as individuals in crisis is to figure out which parts of their identities are already functioning well and do not need changing, and which parts are no longer working and do need changing. Indeed, Muslim thought today needs the courage to recognize what must be changed in order to deal with the new circumstances. But, at the same time, Muslim scholars need to draw a line and stress the elements that are so fundamental to the faith and culture of Islam that they refuse to be changed. This state of affairs we call *dialectical spiritualism*, as opposed to Marxist „dialectical materialism“. It is time for humanity to meet the *Zeitgeist*, „Spirit of the Age“, which is „the Spirit of Peace“ among religions and nations across the globe. History, past and present, is not void of good examples of accords, charters, declarations and commitments to peaceful coexistence between religions and nations from the **Medina Charter** (622), the **Magna Carta Libertatum** (1215), the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948), the **Nostra Aetate** (1965), the **Declaration of European Muslims** (2005), the **Common Word Between Us and You** (2007), the **Marrakesh Declaration** (2016), the **Alliance of Virtue for the Common Good** (2018), the **Declaration of Human Fraternity** (2019) to the **Mecca Charter** (2019). All these initiatives, past and present, promote the idea of „the Spirit of Peace“ of all times, but this current time has the biggest need of all times for the *Zeitgeist*, „Spirit of the Age“, which is the „Spirit of Peace and Tolerance“. This paper attempts to explain this need from a Muslim perspective with a comparison with other initiatives.¹

Key words: *Islam, Peace, Dialectical Spiritualism, the Spirit of the Age, Medina Charter, Magna Carta Libertatum, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Nostra Aetate, Declaration of European Muslims, Common Word Between Us and You, Marrakesh Declaration, Alliance of Virtue for the Common Good, Declaration of Human Fraternity, Mecca Charter.*

¹ Some ideas in this paper were presented in a lecture at the Faculty of Islamic Studies of the University of Sarajevo in March 2019.

*You shall call people to the way of your Lord wisely with good advice and
you shall make a 'dialectical dialogue' with them in the best way possible.
And you shall know that your Lord is the best aware of those who fail His way and
He is the best aware of those who are rightly guided as well.²*

Although Karl Marx did not coin the term „dialectical materialism“³, this term is typically attributed to him. That is because dialectical materialism is an aspect of the broader subject of materialism, which was central to Marx's philosophical view of the world. Indeed, materialism gives priority to the material world: in brief, matter precedes thought. Thus, the world is material and all phenomena in the universe involve „matter in motion“⁴.

Although he admitted to being a follower of Hegel, Marx criticized Hegelian dialectics, claiming that the latter had been sidetracked because he dealt with ideas, (i.e. the human mind). Marx believed that dialectics should not deal with the mental or spiritual world of ideas, but rather with the „material world“, the world of production and economy.

As opposed to materialist monism, according to which matter is the basis of the world, spiritual monism is founded on the idea that the mind or spirit is the basis of the world. Religion has always been the most loyal guardian of the idea of spirituality, although the same is also true of philosophy, at least in George Berkeley's thinking, which says *esse est percipi* („to be is to be perceived“). Berkeley used to say: „We eat and drink ideas, and are clothed with ideas“.⁵ For to perceive, man needs both spirit and mind, since a human being is not a human being without the two. There is no pure mind without pure spirit, nor is there active spirit without active mind. Marx's matter may be in motion, but it is dead compared to the spirit, which is alive in its motion, and to the mind, which is conscious when thinking of itself and the world around.

If ever, this is the time to claim with certainty that matter alone has not made man completely happy. If ever, today we are close to the idea of the philosopher-theologian Paul Tillich, who labeled the topic of separation-and-return as the basic characteristic of Hegelian dialectics⁶. Yes, Marx did his best to alienate man from the spirit and mind of religion. One cannot say that he did not succeed in it to a degree, though neither can one say that

² *Qur'an*, 16:125

³ The term „dialectical materialism“ was coined, in 1887, by Joseph Dietzgen, a socialist who corresponded with Karl Marx during and after the failed German revolution of 1848. As a philosopher, Dietzgen developed a theory of dialectical materialism independently of Marx and Engels. Charbonnat, Pascal: *Histoire des philosophies matérialistes*. Syllepse, 2007, p. 477.

⁴ Feuerbach's historical materialism was an inspiration to Marxists and dialectical materialists. At the time of socialist ideas in the 19th century, socialists were predominantly attached to the philosophy of materialism. However, none of them explained the concept of matter. Karl Marx himself avoided the definition of materialism, although he often used the term.

⁵ Berkeley, George: *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues*. Penguin Books, 2004, sections 38.

Marx's idea about matter as the primary substance of the world prevailed. On the contrary, if Marx were to return today to see that his idea of dialectical materialism was a thing of the past, while the idea of dialectical spiritualism, which he tried to send to the past, is very much alive and agile in the present – he would be astounded and rush to return to where he belonged – perhaps to Hell (and perhaps to Heaven). Who knows?

However, at this point it is necessary to make a distinction between „spiritism“ and „spiritualism“. „Spiritism“ refers to the ability to communicate with the spirits of the dead, who are expected to convey wise messages to the living, while „spiritualism“ is a philosophical view of the world opposed to „materialism“. Besides, spiritualism may imply both that the whole world is only a spiritual substance, and that the world consists of material substance among other things and that, therefore, the world is both spirit and matter. Thus, dialectical spiritualism should take us out of alienation, i.e. out of the purely material, and take us back to the purely spiritual world. Ultimately, it means that dialectical spiritualism should revive, within us, the bond or synthesis of the spiritual and material, as the only road that leads mankind to a world of peaceful coexistence.

I am aware that I have not nearly touched upon all the essential aspects of dialectical spiritualism; however, I hope that I have at least broached this subject, which I believe to be important in terms of a dialectical-dialogical-religious spirit, as instructed by the Holy Qur'an.

What I wish to say is that Karl Marx did not invent the idea of the dialectics of history namely, "dialectical materialism". He could have read it in the Holy Qur'an: – *If it were not for people's encounter against each other as well as in favor of each other, the earth would have collapsed*⁷. Not only this, but also – *were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which the name of God is much mentioned would have been demolished*⁸.

The occasion for this Qur'anic dialectical thought was the encounter between David and Goliath. David defeated his far more powerful opponent Goliath⁹, but history has not been spared from the struggle, (i.e., dialectics), ever since, where victories and defeats of the strong against the weak and the weak against the strong have taken turns. Each and every historical crisis¹⁰ of relationships between people and nations that resulted from an encounter or „dialectics“ of different opinions and actions has been painful, but at the same time intellectually creative and historically fruitful. For, in its final analysis, the idea of dialectics is a discourse between two or more people holding different opinions about a subject, but willing to establish a good relationship based on truth through rational arguments.

⁶ Paul Tillich (1886-1965) was a German-American theologian and philosopher, one of the most influential Protestant theologians of the 20th century with distinct liberal ideas. See link available at: Encyclopædia Britannica (online ed.): *Paul Tillich*. 2008. Availabale at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Paul-Tillich>. Checked May 3, 2020.

⁷ *Qur'an*, 2: 251.

⁸ *Qur'an*, 22:40.

⁹ See: Gladwell, Malcolm: *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*. Little, Brown and Company, 2013.

¹⁰ The word *crisis*, which is derived from the root of the Greek noun *krisis* and the verb *krino*, means: 'to separate', 'to decide', 'to draw a difference',

In his book *Phenomenology of Spirit*¹¹ Hegel speaks about *Zeitgeist*, „the spirit of the age“¹². Indeed, each era and each generation in time is entitled to have its embeddable spirit in history as part and parcel of an absolute spirit. So, what is the embeddable spirit of our time? Some would argue, however, that our time is the time of anti-spirit rather than the time of spirit. It is as if this generation does not care about its spirit at all. It seems as if it has lost its touch with the spiritual world as such. What matters is the material world and the joy of today without consideration for tomorrow's consequences. It used to be that when two people departed, they would say to each other: „May God be with you“, but now when they depart, they say: „Have a good time“ or „Enjoy“. This shift of human attention says it all about the shift of the human spirit of this time. It is a shift to instantaneous human joy. But which joy? The mystics of all faiths have considered three kinds of human joy or pleasure: bodily joy (*al-ladha al-jasadiyya*); intellectual joy (*al-ladha al-fikriyyah*); and spiritual joy (*al-ladhah al-rūhiyyah*). Today, men and women have more access to bodily and intellectual joy than ever before in human history. It is sometimes even more than the human body and the human intellect can bear. This unbearable joy makes it opposite to its purpose; it makes it painful rather than joyful because of its overuse. Obviously, this overuse of bodily and intellectual joy denigrates the spiritual joy, which is the joy of all joys. Men and women perceive that only when they feel emptiness inside themselves. The list of suicides of rich and famous people is long, not because of their material poverty, but because of their spiritual emptiness or because of their lack of peace of mind. And peace of mind does not come from the mind itself, but from the spirit of God Himself who breathes it into the human mind. When men and women lose this divine spirit in themselves in favor of overwhelming bodily and intellectual joy without a noble purpose, they lose their peace of mind. Therefore, it is obvious that the human mind alone cannot lead humanity. The mind needs the divinely inspired human spirit, and the spirit needs the human soul, and the human soul needs the human heart. Only in a synergic unity of

'decisive or pivotal moment'. In Arabic the term crisis is derived from the root *azmun*, which means: 'to gather', 'to compress', 'to shrink' in other words, the crisis (*azmatun*) in Arabic refers to 'merging', while in Greek it refers to 'separating'. Isn't a crisis or trouble primarily in the very understanding of the concept of crisis in the sense of whether something is 'separated' from something or something is 'merged' with something in order for us to control the crisis, i.e. a decisive or pivotal moment in which old rules are replaced by new rules of conduct. Is not the crisis such a point or a moment when we have no choice, but to face the truth, i.e. the moment of decision, and that moment is when the conditions before and after that moment are different from all other moments in the past, but also in the future.

¹¹ Hegel had the ambition to show how human cognition rises from immediate sensory consciousness through various forms of spirit, which becomes pure cognition or absolute spirit. Hegel believed that his philosophy or philosophy in general could be understood only if one reads his book on the phenomenology of spirit and if one understood this thesis of his about the "absolute spirit." See: Hegel, G.W.F.: *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A.V. Miller, Delhi, 1998.

¹² *Zeitgeist* or 'spirit of the times' is one of several names Hegel gives to Geist, translated variously as Spirit, Mind, World Mind, Absolute Idea or God and expressing the concept of the sense or rationality in the order of things and the succession of one state of affairs after another according to some kind of lawful process. Hegel *did* see this rationality as a spirit, which animated people, not as a creation of human labor. Hegel: *Special Theory of Relativity*. Available at: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=8&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwj0n-X68ZTpAhXvsYsKHT3TCb8QFjAHegQIAxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.marxists.org%2Fglossary%2Fterms%2Fs%2Fp.htm&usq=AOvVaw3wFLmVCnGfRscFEgnWgLC>. Checked on May 3, 2020. Hegel, G. W. F.: *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*. Oxford University Press, London, 2008, §344, p. 317.

spirit, soul, mind and heart can humanity survive the challenges of the 21st century. Indeed, the 21st century must be a spiritual revolution in the same way as the 18th century was the rational revolution, the 19th century was the industrial revolution, and the 20th century was the scientific revolution, which has changed the way of life of the whole of humanity in the world.

It is also obvious that the human mind, with all its power, has become confused by its own products because of its incapability to give them adequate meanings. Only the human spirit, as it comes from divine origin, is capable of guiding the human mind to find meaning for its own products and to keep it safe from the harm of these products. The human mind, no less than spirit, is in need of the human heart, which is nowadays in a crisis more than ever before, because its love for humanity has been replaced by Lucifer's hatred against human beings, and because its necessary sense of the human heart towards the human soul is being denied. I believe, though, that a spiritual revolution in the 21st century is not only possible, but necessary for the survival of humanity. Men and women are what their spirit is, what their soul, their mind and their heart are, not what their bodies are, of whatever shape and color.

I already see a big sign of this 21st century spiritual revolution for peace and security in the world. I see it in a new thinking as an *Illuminatio/Svjetionik/Al-Manar* of Islam, a thinking that could lead us to Peace (*Salām*) in ourselves and around ourselves as a sign of Zeitgeist „the spirit of the age“, i.e., the spirit in history as a part of the Absolute (Spirit). If the last two centuries of Muslim history were marked by a Muslim withdrawal approach because of a fear of the other taking advantage of Muslim faith and culture, this 21st century must be the opposite – it must be predicated on an open Muslim approach to reach out to the other in dialectical spiritualism rather than in the Marxist dialectical materialism.

Today, it is the task of Muslims, if they recognize rightly the Spirit of Islam¹³, to show to the world through a meaningful dialectical dialogue that Muslims are not afraid of Peace. Such Peace is possible only by a genuine human spirit, by a decent human soul, by an open human mind and by an honest human heart. Indeed, these were the moral and human characteristics of the spirit, soul, mind and heart of God's last Messenger Muhammad, a.s. (peace be upon him), who never said that the prophetic mission had begun with him, but who always emphasized that his prophetic mission was just a continuation of genuine divine guidance and human memory as the identity of the whole of humanity. And the core of this divine guidance and human memory has been expressed in the faith of *i-s-l-ā-m*, the verbal meaning of which is in the Arabic roots of the word *sa-la-ma*, which means Peace, not only as a verbal expression, but also as a conceptual declaration of *i-s-l-ā-m*, (i.e., peaceful devotion to God).

¹³ In the midst of the historical transition of Islamic civilization in search for new ideas, especially after the First World War, the Indian Muslim educator Sayyid Amīr Alī (1849–1928) was the first to use the phrase *Spirit of Islam*. In his book *The Spirit of Islam: A History of the Evolution and Ideals of Islam*, Amīr Alī presented the best way of life in the biography of the Prophet Muhammad, a.s., and the history of Islam. The idea of the spirit of Islam, which Amīr Alī wanted to develop first and foremost with Muslims, but also to present this idea to others, was to save the spirit and soul of Islam from a rigid and literal interpretation, in which the original 'spirit of Islam' was lost. It seems to me that the situation is no different today. That is why we need to look again for the originality of the spirit and soul of Islam, an originality that can animate peace and good in the spirit and soul of the people.

This faith of *i-s-l-ā-m* is a complete divine revelation of mercy (*r-a-ḥ-m-a-h*) and peace (*s-a-l-ā-m*) to mankind. Thus, if the word *i-s-l-ā-m* means the concept of peaceful faith, then the word *m-u-s-l-i-m* means the concept of peaceful man and woman. This *m-u-s-l-i-m*, this peaceful man and woman as it were, are both bearers and brokers of peace among religions and nations in the world. It is not by chance that the word *i-m-ā-n*, i.e., faith in *i-s-l-ā-m*, has, in its roots, the meaning of security. This is because without an inner security of the human mind and heart, men and women cannot have security in an outside world. Therefore, only an inner *i-m-ā-n*, (i.e., the security of the faith of the human mind and heart), leads humanity to peace and security in the world. Hence, the idea of promoting peace, of initiating alliances with peace loving people and nations, of writing an encyclopedia of peace¹⁴ as a legacy of the spirit of this time, as well as of state institutionalization of the idea of tolerance¹⁵, is a noble idea that is strengthened by Abrahamic dialectical spiritualism, which was legitimized by the spirit of the faith of *i-s-l-ā-m* 1398 years ago in the city of Medina, within the Medina Charter. Let us not forget, this noble document was read out and signed by the Prophet Muhammad, a.s., himself.

Of course, the common good must be an expression of the general will of a mixed society and a single state, a will defined by a general social agreement or contract, as was the Medina Charter. This historical document was written during the *Milād*¹⁶ of 622, as a result of the crisis in relations between the early Muslim and Jewish community in Medina. Namely, upon his arrival in Medina, the Messenger of Allah Muhammad, a.s., found a Jewish community, which, unlike the Arab Bedouins, was not unfamiliar with what the Prophet was talking about, because they had recourse to the *Tawrāt*/Torah of Moses, a.s.. The revelation of the Qur'an strengthened the Jewish folks in Medina in their faith, but at the same time annoyed them because it contained different in nuances from the Hebrew/Torah revelation. Out of caution that these some differences in nuances in the understanding of the Torah and Qur'anic revelation of monotheism (*tawḥīd*) should cause disharmony in the pluralistic society, Muhammad, a.s, had the document *Medina Charter* written. This we can say is one of the earliest, if not the first document of all, of that kind in history¹⁷. It is not possible to enumerate all the documents concerning peace, tolerance and coexistence in pluralistic societies, but it is possible to point out ten important, if not essential, documents of which the *Medina Charter* occupies the first cognitive and symbolic place.

¹⁴ We are talking about the Encyclopedia of Peace project, organized at the initiative of Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah by the Abu Dhabi-based Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies. I was honored to have been an active part of this project

¹⁵ It is interesting to mention that the Government of the United Arab Emirates has appointed a Minister for Tolerance, which, as far as we know, is the first case of this kind of ministry in the world.

¹⁶ The term *Milād* refers to the birthday of Isa, a.s., since the historical time or new era in relation to the old era, that is, the time before „*Milād*,” has been calculated. For the birthday of Muhammad, a.s., the term *Mawlūd* is used.

¹⁷ See: Hamidullah, Muhammad: *The First Written Constitution of the World*. USA. Kazi Publications Inc, 1941.

Full text of Medina Charter in Arabic is available at: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=13&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2a hUKEwj10o3KkpXpAhVJtIsKHdWZBQUQFjAMegQIBhAB &url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.alraimedia.com%2FHome%2FDetails%3FId%3Dde3d3b7d-4566-4493-bf87-4aa9c3ed1824&usg=AOvWaw0aFm5BhYjHVMVJ9lH4TZrw>. Checked on May 4, 2020.

Full text in English is available at: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ah UKewiuqujUgZXPahXVDmMBHa4fDk4QFjABegQIARAB &url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.constitution.org%2Fcons%2Fmedina%2Fmcharter.htm&usg=AOvWaw0Btw1TNBQE6frPj2UqAivU>. Checked on May 4, 2020.

The **Medina Charter** appeared when nobody was speaking of human rights, or minorities' rights in multi-religious and multicultural societies. There was no high awareness of equal rights and obligations of members of a pluralist society in a united country. Therefore, the **Medina Charter**, observed in this context of low civilizational, cultural, political and religious awareness of human rights, is a true miracle (**mu'jizah**): one that was made possible through the inspiration of Divine Revelation contained in the Holy Qur'an, as the last divine covenant in a series of God's covenants of the **Tawrāt**, „Old Testament“, and

the **Injil**, „New Testament“. Thus, the Medina Charter (622) is a historic document of Abrahamic dialectical spiritualism. It is a unique testimony of the spirit of the peaceful faith of **i-s-l-ā-m** as well as of an early peaceful Muslim Community. It was initiated as a result of the relationship crisis between the early Muslim and Jewish Communities in Medina. It is considered to be an exemplary, advanced document for the idea of „Social Contract“ that was forged by Jean Jack Rousseau, John Locke and Thomas Hobbes as the main socio-political idea in Europe.¹⁸

ILLUSTRATION ~ The Medina Charter (left) and the Charter of the Prophet Muhammad, a.s., to the Assyrian Christians (right).

The second important historic document that changed human thinking was the document of the **Magna Carta Libertatum**, as the first step in history for establishing constitutional law. This document of 1215 did not emerge accidentally either, but rather as a result of a crisis in the relations between the Roman Pope and the English king, John Lackland (1167 – 1216). Essentially, the *Magna Carta Libertatum* deprived the king of the right to divine mandate¹⁹, restricted royal power and ensured basic rights to both feudal lords and freemen. By sealing it, the English king was bound to adhere to legal process and accept the fact that royal will can be restricted by law. Even after eight centuries, two of the sixty-three clauses of the

Magna Carta of freedom still resonate as the voice of freedom for man. *'To no one will we sell, to no one will we deny, or delay right or justice'; 'no freeman shall be taken or [and] imprisoned or disseized or exiled or in any way destroyed, nor will we go upon him nor send upon him, except by the lawful judgment of his peers or [and] by the law of the land'*²⁰. Many people still believe this document is fundamental in the defense of human freedoms from arbitrary and unjust power. Thus, the **Magna Carta Libertatum**²¹ is a historic document that resulted from a crisis between the king's divine rights against human rights²². It is still the cornerstone of constitutionalism in the world.

¹⁸ Much analysis has been written about the *Medina Charter*, especially in times of crisis like the era immediately following the demolition of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. Muslims found themselves in a very difficult situation because of those who attributed this act of terrorism to Islam. Both as a religion and as a culture, Islam has been accused of not favouring the spirit of peace. Unfortunately, the idea of the *Medina Charter*, which contains a healthy germ of civil society in a pluralistic environment, has not developed sufficiently into a solid tree in Muslim-majority states and societies, such as the social contract tree, which has developed in Europe. Instead, the *Medina Charter* has remained only as a shining example to which Muslims refer when they are thrown by a crisis of their own or by the mistake of other historical circumstances. See link: *Ibid*. It is to be hoped that the *Medina Charter* will, indeed, inspire the present and future generation of Muslims to build a pluralistic society based on it in a spirit of freedom and democracy in a way that is full of awareness of their own rights as well as of the rights of others in a Muslim majority society.

¹⁹ Although the idea of a divine royal mandate may seem absurd to us today, this idea was for many a natural matter and a noble-royal-divine right, which the subjects did not challenge until the enactment of the *Magna Carta Libertatum*, which deprived the king of such allegedly divine given rights. See: Figgis, John Neville: *The Theory of the Divine Rights of Kings*. Cambridge University Press, 1896.

²⁰ *Magna Carta Libertatum*. Translation by Professor Nicholas Vincent. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington. Available at: <https://www.archives.gov/files/press/press-kits/magna-carta/magna-carta-translation.pdf>. Accessed 3rd May 2020.

²¹ See: Danziger, Danny & Gillingham, John: *The Year of Magna Carta*. Hodder & Stoughton, 2003.

²² It is interesting to note here that in Europe, the *Magna Carata Libertatum* was adopted after 593 years of the *Medina Charter*. This does not mean that the *Medina Charter* contains everything we know today about human rights, especially with regard to individual human rights, but we can certainly say that the *Medina Charter* represents one of the greatest historical steps towards the protection of human rights, especially the rights of minority community in a plural society. The Holy Qur'an, as well as the practice of the Messenger of God, laid the groundwork for the abolition of the slave system in such a way that one of the eight zakat allocation funds (*zakat*, a type of Islamic moral tax) was and remained a fund for the release of slaves or prisoners (*fī al-riqāb*) (Qur'an, 9:60). This was and remains a good sign that Islam is against the slave system as such, and thus it is for the inviolable and inalienable individual human rights of liberty and honor. Of course, it is only by comparing the *Medina Charter* with other documents of this kind in the historical context that we can understand today its historical, moral as well as social importance not only for Muslims, but for the whole world.

ILLUSTRATION – Original copy and copy of Magna Carta Libertatum

It is not certain if the United Nations **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948) would ever have been drawn up if there had not been the Second World War and the Holocaust of Jews and other nations that did not accept Hitler's Nazi regime. It should be noted that in 2018 the world marked the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the UN's Declaration. Of all people, we, victims of the Serb nationalism and genocide in Bosnia, should have paid particular attention to this and should have made efforts to spread the idea of sovereign human rights. Unfortunately, as far as I know, we did not do that either at the level of politics or at the level of state or at the level of nation, culture and religion. We should have done that, since regardless of all the imperfections in the implementation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in the world, this document remains the best hope for minority nations and states to live and survive in our convoluted and hazy world where, in many of its parts, basic human rights are constantly infringed. However, these rights would be infringed even more if the *UN's Universal Declaration* did not exist²³. Unfortunately, in our country, politics

is not yet up to this task, the state has not risen to the challenge, the nation has not reached the full depth of its roots, its culture has not yet matured to that point, and religion has not yet become sufficiently aware of its mission. However, unless we, regarding our politics, state, nation, culture and religion, understand both the importance and risks of our geographic position and our spiritual environment, and therefore the importance of the idea of human rights, we cannot say that we have successfully come through the right of passage to spiritual, national and state maturity.

Not because of the threat of any danger, but rather due to our negligence and ignorance of our own human rights and the human rights of others. I hope that the Hague Tribunal's latest life sentence, given to Radovan Karadžić²⁴ for the genocide of our people, will spur us to understand our position more seriously and gain better knowledge of the legal mechanisms and moral advantages that can protect us from future genocide, which is not impossible if we succumb to negligence.

²³ It is important to mention here the fact that the Muslim theorist of Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) Shaykh Imam Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (1320 – 1388) established five necessary principles for the sublime meaning of Islamic law, and these are the principles of the right of every individual to life (*naḥs*), faith (*dīn*), freedom (*ʿaql*), property (*māl*) and honor (*ʿirḍ*). In essence, the content of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* consists of these rights of minority communities in a pluralistic society. See: Al-Shāṭibī, Abū Ishāq: *The Reconciliation of Islamic Law Fundamentals. Translated by Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee*. Volume I, Garnet, 2011.

²⁴ Radovan Karadžić (1945 –), the leader of the Serbian irredentist policy in Bosnia, was convicted in March 2019, at the International Court of Justice in the Hague to life in prison for crimes against humanity and genocide committed in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995. See: *Judgement Summary – Trial Judgement Summary for Radovan Karadžić*. The Hague, 24 March 2016. Available at: https://www.icty.org/x/cases/karadzic/tjug/en/160324_judgement_summary.pdf. Accessed 4th May 2020; *Karadžić, Radovan (MICT-13-55)*. International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. Available at: <https://www.irmct.org/en/cases/mict-13-55>. Checked on May 4, 2020.

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

The Catholic church document **Nostra Aetate** (1965), passed at the Second Vatican Council, was also produced as an expression of the need of the Roman Catholic Church to undertake an epoch-making which, though it did not completely eliminate, at least it largely alleviated the centuries-old crisis in relations with non-Christian, i.e. non-Catholic religions. Indeed, after historical confrontations, the Catholic Church opted for a new approach to non-Christian religions which was to be founded on respect and dialogue. Although the Vatican did not have direct support for such a change in perception of non-Christian religions in the views of the Doctors of the Church of the past, on 28 October 1965, the Second Vatican Council managed to pass *Nostra Aetate* by a vote of 2.221 to 88 of the assembled Catholic bishops. It is interesting to read the declaration on Islam and Muslims in this document, which says: [...] *The Church regards with esteem also Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth; they take pains to submit whole-heartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet* (messenger, author's

note). *They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother, at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting. Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom [...]*²⁵

This declaration on Islam and Muslims became a sound basis for the dialogue between Muslims and Christians, a dialogue that keeps the dialectics of spirit in motion, the dialectics described in the Holy Qur'an and characterized as the activity of the Holy Spirit by Catholics. Thus, **Nostra Aetate** is a historic document of the Second Vatican Council. Although no foundation could be found for it in documents of the past, the Vatican used the help of the Holy Spirit, as they said, to draw up this document, which is of utmost significance for a reorientation toward tolerance and dialogue with non-Christian religions, particularly Judaism and Islam in the dialectical spiritualism of the Abrahamic tradition.²⁶

²⁵ See: *Declaratio de Ecclesiae Habitudine Ad Religiones Non-Christianas in Drugi vatikanski koncil – Documents*. IV edition, Christian Present, Zagreb, 1986., Paragraph 3, p. 384-387.

²⁶ On an universal importance of the document of *Nostra Aetate* see: Cohen, Charles L., Knitter, Paul E. i Rosenhagen, Ulrich ed.: *The Future of Inter-religious Dialogue – A Multi-religious Conversation on Nostra Aetate*. Orbis Books, 2017.

VATICAN COUNCIL II

Nostra Aetate

Declaratio de Ecclesiae Habitudine
Ad Religiones Non-Christianas

NEW REVISED EDITION

General Editor
AUSTIN FLANNERY, OP

ILLUSTRATION – Nostra Aetate – Second Vatican Council – Declaratio de Ecclesiae Habitudine Ad Religiones Non-Christianas.

However, the impetus of the Muslim-Christian dialogue was suddenly interrupted by Pope Benedict XVI's lecture on Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, a.s., at the University of Regensburg in 2006. This crisis was creatively dealt with by the Jordanian Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad²⁷ with the 2007 initiative entitled **A Common Word Between Us and You – Love for God and Love for Neighbor**, which was signed by 138 Muslim theologians and thinkers as an invitation to Muslim-Christian dialogue after the Pope's controversial lecture in Regensburg. The document *A Common Word* would probably not have been produced had it not been for a crisis in the relationship between Islam and Christianity, a crisis that was, consciously or not, caused by Pope Benedict XVI, who later apologized to Muslims by saying that he was sorry if he had hurt anyone with his statement. He said that it was a reference to a 1391 dialogue, in the winter barracks near Ankara, between Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos and an „educated Persian“ on the subject of Christianity and Islam, where the Byzantine Emperor tells the Persian: „Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only bad and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he

preached.“ Thus, **A Common Word Between Us and You** (2007) is a historic dialectical document between Christians and Muslims following Pope Benedict XVI's address in Regensburg, on 13 September 2006. Initially, 38 Islamic authorities and scholars from around the world, representing all denominations and schools of thought, joined together to deliver an answer to the Pope in the spirit of open intellectual exchange and mutual understanding. In their *Open Letter*²⁸ to the Pope, for the first time in recent history, Muslim scholars from every branch of Islam spoke with one voice about the true teachings of Islam. Exactly one year after that letter, on 13 October 2007, Muslims expanded their *Message*. In *A Common Word Between Us and You*, Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals unanimously came together, for the first time since the days of the Prophet, a.s., to declare the common ground between Christianity and Islam. Like the Open Letter, the signatories of this Message came from every denomination and school of thought in Islam. Every major Islamic country or region is represented in this *Message*, which is addressed to the leaders of all the world's churches, and to all Christians everywhere.

²⁷ Ghazi bin Muhammad (1966 -) is a Jordanian prince and professor of philosophy. In the midst of crises burdening the relationship of Islam and Muslims with the world, Prince Gazi is on the front line with the ideas of tolerance and coexistence promoted by Islam. Hence, the *Amman Message* (2004) toured the world and eased the anti-Islamic charge that had befallen Muslims since 9/11. However, the most comprehensive intervention in calming the tensions between Islam and the West was the Prince Ghazi's initiative of *The Common Word Between Us and You – the Love of God and the Love of Neighbor* (2007). I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to actively participate in this project with Prince Gazi from Rome to Washington. I am also happy that Azra Mulović translated the book *A Common Word Between Us and You* from English into Bosnian language.

See: Mulović, Azra: *Zajednička riječ za nas i vas*. El-Kalem i CNS – Centar za napredne studije, Sarajevo, 2010.

See also: *The Amman Message – Summary*. Available at: <http://ammanmessage.com>. Checked on May 3, 2020.

²⁸ See: *An Open Letter to his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI*. Available at: https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/news/openletter-8238DA.pdf. Checked on May 4, 2020.

ILUSTRACIJA – Zajednička riječ između nas i vas – ljubav prema Bogu i ljubav prema komšiji.

ILLUSTRATION ~ *A Common Word Between Us and You* – Love for God and Love for Neighbor.

The statement by Pope Benedict XVI was strongly and widely condemned both among Muslims and among Christians, primarily Catholics. However, one should bear in mind that it appeared in the atmosphere following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001, in Madrid on 11 March 2004, and in London on 7 July 2005. The organization Al-Qā'idah²⁹ claimed responsibility for all these attacks, referring to Islam and Muslims, as well as to the fight against the West. All these attacks led us to write the **Declaration of European Muslims**, which particularly emphasized that Europe is neither a „*dāru-l-ḥarb*“ (*house of war*) nor „*dāru-l-islām*“ (*house of Islam*) but that it is a „*dāru-l-'aqd*“ (*house of social contract*) based on the principle of democracy and human rights. Therefore, Muslims who live in Europe must understand this as their primary

religious and patriotic duty, either as indigenous or as settled or converted European Muslims. Thus, the **Declaration of European Muslims** (2005) is a historic document because of its significant message to European Muslims that Europe is not a home of war or a home of Islam but it is a home of agreement or social contract (*al-'aqd al-ijtimā'i*)³⁰. This document was adopted at the 14th regular session on 30. November, 2005. as an official document of the Riyasat document of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The *Declaration* was published in the Bosnian, Arabic, English, German and French languages. Religious, academic and political authorities in Europe appreciate this *Declaration* as a significant contribution to religious tolerance and coexistence in Europe³¹.

²⁹ Al-Qā'idah is a paramilitary organization made up of volunteers who traveled to Afghanistan in the 1980s to fight Soviet forces. The most famous leaders of the venture are 'Usāma bin Ladin and Ayman Al-Zawāhirī. Al-Qā'idah is responsible for many violent actions in the world, including September 11, 2001 terrorist attack in New York, after which the USA launched their *War against Terrorism*.

³⁰ On the idea of a possible Muslim social contract in Europe, see: Cerić, Mustafa, *Toward a Muslim Social Contract in Europe*. Zaki Badawi Memorial Lecture Series, AMSS UK, London, 2008. See also Novak, David, *The Jewish Social Contract – an Essay in Political Theology*. Princeton University Press, 2005.

³¹ Head of the *Department of Religious and Humanistic Studies* at Rosemont College, Pennsylvania, USA, co-editor of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* and editor of the *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Dr. Mojzes, Paul made a valuable review of the *Declaration of European Muslims*. See: Mojzes, Paul, *Review of Akšamija's 'Letter, Pismo, Brief, List, Risālah'* in *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Volume 37, Issue 5, Article 8, George Fox University, 9-2017. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2046&context=ree>. Checked on May 4, 2020.

The *Declaration* was published in Bosnian, English, German, French and Arabic in a documentary monograph by Academician Mehmed Akšamija.

See: Akšamija, Mehmed, *Letter, Pismo, Brief, List, Risālah*. Al-Wasatiyya Center for Dialogue, Sarajevo, 2017, p. 92-109.

Unfortunately, misunderstanding and open conflict between East and West – where Islam and Muslims became the main target, both for protagonists of their defense as well as for antagonists for attacks on Islam and Muslims – did not abate, but rather flared up. Armed conflicts in the Middle East grew into bloody conflicts and persecution of traditional non-Muslim communities, particularly in Iraq and Syria by ISIL³², while frequent terrorist attacks in European capitals from London to Brussels threatened the peace and safety of Muslim communities across the world. In such circumstances of crisis in the relations between East and West, particularly between traditional minority non-Muslim communities in societies with a Muslim majority in the East, and between minority Muslim communities in societies with a Christian majority, a dialectical spiritualism in motion inevitably emerged. This time it was Muslim consciousness that spoke up. It had the footing for doing so in the past in the form of the *Medina Charter*, as the model for Muslims for their attitude toward minority communities in their majority environment. Under the patronage of Moroccan King Muhammad VI, a conference on the topic of *The rights of religious minorities in predominantly Muslim majority communities* was organized in Marrakesh. The conference was attended by 300 Muslim delegates from 120 countries, as well as by 50 non-Muslim religious officials. The two-day discussion resulted in the adoption of the **Marrakesh Declaration** on the rights of non-Muslims in countries with a Muslim majority, after the model of the *Medina Charter* of 1.400 years before. Certainly, the 2016 *Marrakesh Declaration* is comparable to the 1965 Vatican *Nostre Aetate*, since both documents include

messages of religious tolerance and coexistence in the plurality and diversity of religious and cultural reality. However, as opposed to the Vatican document *Nostra Aetate*, which was produced, as some like to say, as a momentary activity of the „Holy Spirit“, the Muslim *Marrakesh Declaration* is a document that was produced as an inherited memory, and consequently reflects the moral awareness of the responsibility for minority religions and other communities in societies with a Muslim majority. Still, it should be noted that the *Marrakesh Declaration* would not have appeared had it not been for the prominent crisis in the relations between East and West, a crisis that spurred Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah³³, President of the *Abu Dhabi-based Forum for Peace*, and Dr. Ahmed Toufiq, the Moroccan Minister of Islamic Affairs, to initiate this conference as a response to the persecution of the non-Muslim minority communities of Iraq and Syria, and thus revive memories of the *Medina Charter* as the cornerstone of the protection of the human rights of minority communities living in predominantly Muslim countries. Thus, the **Marrakesh Declaration** is a historical document of Muslims, made as a result of the crisis of relations of Muslim majority communities with non-Muslim minorities in Iraq and Syria, due to militant and intolerant groups like ISIL abusing non-Muslim minorities contrary to both the spirit of Islam and the letter and spirit of the *Medina Charter*. The *Marrakesh Declaration* has had, and still is, a significant influence on improving the image of Islam and Muslims in a world that is distorted by the irresponsible behavior of some radical political groups who have abducted Islam as their private property³⁴.

ILLUSTRATION ~ Marrakesh Declaration

³² ISIL is short for „Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant “. This title was made up in 2004 after the American invasion of Iraq. This movement was rejected by the Muslim world.

³³ Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah is one of the most knowledgeable living Muslim scholars in the field of Islamic jurisprudence and one of the most influential scholars of today in terms of interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Born in Mauritania in 1953, Sheikh Bin Bey had a rich scholarly, political and diplomatic career. His father, Maḥfūz bin Bayyah, was a well-known and recognized scholar, from whom Shaykh Abdullah learned the most. In 1978, there was a coup in Mauritania, where he was imprisoned for several months as a minister of the overthrown government. After his release from prison, he left politics and devoted himself to Islamic science. He accepted an offer to teach at *King Abdulaziz* University in Riyadh, where he was given the opportunity to articulate his theological and legal views. After 25 years of training students, some of whom have become important figures in Africa, Asia and Europe, Sheikh Bin Bayyah is turning his attention to global issues of Islam and Muslims, especially after the emergence of extremist groups such as Al-Qā'idah and ISIL. In 2010, as the founder and president of the *Global Center for Renewal & Guidance*, based in London, Sheikh bin Bayyah organized a *Conference in Mardin*, Turkey, on the famous Mardin Fatwa, issued by Sheikh I-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, which was abused by extremist groups for their radical goals, such as "regicide", killing Muslim statesmen who, in their view, were not sufficiently Muslims, and the like. Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah is today at the head of the Abu Dhabi-based movement for communication and coexistence of Muslims with the world, especially with the West, on the basis of the *Medina Charter*, as a basis for tolerance and coexistence of minority communities in Muslim-majority societies and the *Alliance of Virtues* („*Hill al-fuḍūl*"), as a basis for tolerance and coexistence of minority Muslim communities in the majority non-Muslim societies in the world.

³⁴ On the meaning and significance of the *Marrakesh Declaration*, see the link available at: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=2ahUKEwi60pSw95npAhVxosKHRu-BHMQFjADegQIBBAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.usip.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2FSR392-Understanding-and-Extending-the-Marrakesh-Declaration-in-Policy-and-Practice.pdf&usg=AOVaw3nRBkeq7f24ZIESoQ0OQF>. Checked on May 4, 2020.

In the meantime, in 2018, the initiative by Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, the *Alliance of Virtues* („*Hilf al-fuḍul*“)³⁵ was established after the model of pre-Islamic Arabic tradition, which in turn engendered the *Washington Declaration* intended „to explore the ways in which the three great Abrahamic faiths can

offer their shared values in the service of peace.“ The *Washington Declaration* is only the continuation of the *Marrakesh Declaration*, which is the extension of the *Medina Charter* as the traditional basis for Muslims to practice peace and tolerance toward non-Muslims in their respective societies.

ILLUSTRATION – Alliance of Virtues (ar. *Hilf al-fuḍul*) - *Washington Declaration*, *Charter of the New Alliance of Virtues for Global Peace*.

³⁵ The *Alliance of Virtues* (ar. *Hilf al-fuḍul*) is a seventh-century alliance in Makkah, in which Muhammad, a.s., personally participated before Islam with the aim of establishing justice for all through collective action, and also for those were not close to the Meccan power. Since the Prophet's role in forming the "Hilf al-fuḍul" was of great importance, which the Prophet said he would do the same again if offered, making alliances of this kind is desirable in Islam.

As the crown of Muslim efforts to stop anti-Muslim rhetoric in the world, no longer only in media but also in political and academic circles, historical and practical „dialectical spiritualism“ began in Abu Dhabi early last year (3 – 5 February 2019). Indeed, the adoption and signing of the **Declaration of Human Fraternity** by Pope Francis and Shaykh of Al-Azhar was the crowning event in a long series of previous interreligious dialogues and inter-spiritual dialectics between Muslims and Christians as religious communities, as well as between East and West, as recognizable civilizational and cultural spheres. The meeting between the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyib and Pope Francis was a historic event, which will certainly make a significant difference in the 21st century, in the method of establishing relations between Muslim and Christian religious communities, particularly between Catholic and Muslim communities across the world. It will also mark significant progress between East and West in terms of civilizational and cultural exchange. The document embraced Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah's idea that Muslim societies have to change their attitudes toward withdrawing from the mainstream of current affairs and open their minds to become active participants in global historical development in all areas of life. Indeed, Muslim societies must move away from a marginal position in current world events and become active and productive contributors to

world history, with the mission of peace and security as their own goal of reviving the spirit of the Muslim nation of the age. For they deserve, with their famous spirit and noble mission, to be among the best in known history. Thus, the Papal visit to Abu Dhabi on 3 – 5 February 2019 was historic not only due to the fact that it was the first visit in history by a Pope to the Arabian Peninsula, but also because it was the first transcendental visit in history in terms of its global spiritual message to the Universal Community of Muslims – *Ummah*. The state and people of the United Arab Emirates were the formal hosts to the Bishop of Rome and supreme head of Catholic Church, but his religious host was his spiritual partner, Shaykh of Al-Azhar, who is presently the supreme authority of the global Sunni *Muslim Ummah*. Therefore, the meeting of two top leaders of the Catholic and Muslim communities in the world, in the city of Abu Dhabi on the Arabian Peninsula, had unprecedented historic significance. For the first time, the global Muslim community could feel that they have a true spiritual and cultural voice that speaks to the whole world on its behalf. We cannot miss this opportunity to point out that after the Papal visit to Abu Dhabi and the constructive dialogue between him and the Shaykh of Al-Azhar, as two reliable religious symbols of peace and trust, Muslims, particularly those in the West, expect the organization of similar visits by Shaykh of Al-Azhar to crucial Christian countries.

These visits can begin with a visit to Rome, where Shaykh of Al-Ahzar Dr. Ahmed Tayyib would meet European Muslims in a large stadium, and deliver to Christians and Muslims messages of peace similar to those Pope Francis delivered at Mass to Muslims and Christians in majority Muslim countries, such as the mass in Abu Dhabi, in a stadium that holds around 40,000 people. It is in this possibility that I see the most important aspect of the Pope's historic visit to the Arabian Peninsula, as well as of the adoption of the **Declaration of Human Fraternity**.

It is worthwhile to relate this event with the coincidental historic event with the historic meeting between the Christian Saint Francis of Assisi³⁶ and the Muslim sultan al-Mālik al-Kamāl³⁷ of Cairo at Damietta in Egypt eight hundred years ago (1219-2019). Who could have imagined at the time that their meeting would have such a great significance for our times? Well, it seems that the Christian Saint Francis of Assisi and the Muslim sultan al-Mālik al-Kamāl of Cairo had such an inkling. It seems, they had conceptualized the necessity of a Muslim-Christian dialectical spiritualism before Karl Marx came up with his idea of dialectical materialism. Precisely, we, as humanity, are today in the midst of the competition (not the conflict, pace to Marx) of

spiritual forces, whereby the Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) stand at the front of a challenging global dialectical spiritualism caused not by material, but rather by spiritual needs of humankind.

Indeed, the more we meet and talk with each other, the more we realize that neither one of us possess the whole truth, but each of us possess enough truth to hold fast to his/her faith and to strive for his/her success Here and his/her salvation in the Hereafter. More importantly, the more we articulate and exchange our faith experiences the more we realize how much we are in need of a spiritual enlightenment from each other. Indeed, with such a cognition we can see the reason why God Almighty has made us not to be only ONE FAITH, but He, Almighty, made us to be of many faiths or religions so that we may test each other, correct each other, support each other and compete with each other in good morals and good deeds. – *For had Allah willed, He would have made you ONE FAITH, but He wants to test each one of you so you should compete in good deeds*³⁸. This may be called a dialectical spiritualism and, if you wish, a „spiritual revolution“ of the 21st century.

Thus, when Nedda Alberghini, the president of

³⁶ St. Francis of Assisi was born in early 1182 in Assisi, a city in the Italian province of Perugia, as the son of the merchant Pietro di Bernardone and Ivana. His mother gave him the name Ivan, and his father later added Francis to that name, with whom he made history. In his childhood and early youth he was prone to fun, but also to feeling towards poor people. In time, he completely turned to caring for the poor. After he founded another Franciscan order – klarise – „Poor Ladies of St. Damyan“, St. Francis traveled to Palestine, then to Spain and Morocco. In 1219 he managed to come to Egypt, where he met with the prudent Sultan al-Mālik al-Kamāl. See: **Francis Model for the Spiritual Renewal of the Church**. In: Tolan, John: *Saint Francis and the Sultan: the Curious History of a Christian – Muslim Encounter*. Oxford University Press, London, 2009, pp. 19-39.

³⁷ Sultan al-Mālik al-Kamāl (1177 – 1238) was the fourth Ayyubid Sultan of Egypt. It is known that the Ayyubis defeated the Fifth Crusade during his reign. Among the Frankish crusaders he was known as Meledin, a name still referred to in some old Western sources. Sultan al-Mālik al-Kamāl is also known for his meeting with St. Francis of Assisi. See: *Ibid*, pp. 40-53.

³⁸ *Qur'an*, 5:48.

„Case degli Angeli Association“ mailed me to write a preface her theatrical opera: *A Man Called Francis*, I was not hesitant to reply, but rather moved by this historic meeting between St. Francis and the Sultan of Egypt³⁹. However, I felt somewhat embarrassed by the current situation of the Muslim-Christian relations in some part of the world. I have no intention to advise the Christians. But, I have the duty to advise the Muslims that they should be the avant-garde interfaith interlocutors – indeed, the avant-garde intercultural communicators. The Muslims do not find the stimulus for such a task at this time only in the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah, the Prophetic practice, but also they can find that in many historical experiences such as this one of the Sultan of Egypt and St. Francis. In the Holy Qur’an we read this noble statement: – *Certainly among the people of the Book* [Christians and Jews, author’s note] *are those who believe in God and in what has been revealed to you and what had been revealed to them* [Old Testament and New Testament, author’s note]. *They bow in humility before God as well! And they do not trade for paltry gain the word of God. Their reward is verily with their Lord! And swift is the reckoning of God*⁴⁰!

Among many positive historical examples of

the Muslim-Christian constructive dialogue and civilizational cooperation, I would like to highlight here the hospitality of the ancient Ethiopian Negus, the King, Arabic Al-Najāshi⁴¹, who had offered in the seventh century a safe haven to the first Muslim refugees, who had to flee from the persecution of the Mekkan heathens. The Muslims never forget this noble gesture of Negus on behalf of Christianity. In fact, the above quoted verse of the Qur’an was revealed as a reminder of the goodness of the Christian Negus after some Muslims mistreated some Christians in Medina. Similarly, the conscious Christians always remember the noble gesture of the Muslim Noble Prince Abdalqadir Al-Jazāirī⁴², who made his home a safe haven for the Christians in Damascus in 1860, when some disgruntled local Muslims attacked the Christian quarter, killing over 3.000 innocent civilians. Emir Abdalqadir Al-Jazāirī sheltered large numbers of Christians, including the heads of several foreign consulates as well as religious groups such as the Sisters of Mercy in the safety of his house. His eldest sons were sent into the streets to offer any Christian under threat shelter under his protection, and Emir Abdalqadir personally was said by many survivors to have

³⁹ See: Mustafa Ceric: *A Dialectical Spiritualism of Assisi & Cairo – Past & Present*. In: Nedda Alberghrini: *Un uomo chiamato Francesco*. Editore Youcanprint, 2019, pp. 122-124.

⁴⁰ *Qur’an*, 3:199.

⁴¹ Negus (*nigūs*, king) is the title for the Ethiopian king. King Armah (614 – 631), known in Muslim sources as Al-Najāšī, was the ruler of the Aksum Kingdom, which began to use the name Ethiopia as early as the 4th century. He or his father is said to have hosted the first Muslim refugees, the Muhājirin, from Makkah 615/616 in Aksum. Because of his goodwill towards Muslims, it is reported that Prophet Muhammad, a.s., prayed *Janāzah* in absentia for his soul.

⁴² Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn Mustafā al-Ḥasanī al-Jazā’irī, (1808 – 1883) Emir Mascara (from 1832), was military and religious leader, who founded the Algerian state and led the Algerians in the nineteenth century against French domination (1840 – 46) in the wake of the Ottoman power seceding at the High Port (ar. *Bāb-i ‘ālī*). See: Bouyerdene, Ahmed: *Emir Abd el-Kader – Hero and Saint of Islam*. World Wisdom. Inc., 2012; Marston, Elsa: *The Compassionate Warrior Abd El-Kader of Algeria*. Wisdom Tales, 2013.

It is interesting to note that almost at the same time Husain-Captain Gradašćević (1802 – 1834), better known as the Dragon of Bosnia, led the fight for the Bosniak-national and Bosnian state autonomy in Bosnia, which, unfortunately, ended in failure.

played an instrumental part in saving them.

What motivated the noble Christian Negus of Ethiopia to spare the first Muslims from persecutions and what moved the noble Muslim Prince Abdalqadir to take care of Christians among the Muslim majority in Damascus? The Negus had not read the book of Thomas À Kempis⁴³ *The Imitation of Christ*, but he, for sure, had had in his mind and his heart the Kempis' idea of imitating Christ and despising all vanities on earth: *He who follows Me, walks not in*

*darkness*⁴⁴. I am sure as well that the Muslim Prince Abdalqadir was aware of the spirit of the message of Islam that moved him to take care of Christians in Damascus: *If you love God, imitate me* [the Prophet, author's note]... *God will love you*⁴⁵.

ILLUSTRATION – Sheikh-Al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib, the grand imam (al-imamu-l-akbar) greets Pope Francis, after signing the documents during their 'Human Fraternity' Meeting in Abu Dhabi.

⁴³ Thomas À Kempis, real name Thomas Hemerken (1379 – 1471) was a Christian theologian originally from the Netherlands, author of *The Imitation of Christ*, a pious book, which, in addition to the Bible, was the most influential work in Christian literature. See: Thomas À Kempis: *The Imitation of Christ*. Vintage, 1998.

⁴⁴ See: *New Testament – The Gospel of John* 8, 12.

⁴⁵ *Qur'an*, 3: 31.

In the same way as it was said in the past that *all roads lead to Rome*, we can say today that *all roads lead to Mecca*. Also, as the *Medina Charter* in the past was said to have been an initial drive for tolerance and peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society, we can say today that the **Mecca Charter** (2019) was a great summary of all previous historic documents and charters that confirm the basic idea of the *Medina Charter* of the necessary foundation stone of peace and security for the construction, maintenance and promotion of a multi-religious and multicultural global world. The idea of clash of civilizations is dismissed on the grounds that God Almighty did not create this world for an annihilation (*al-fanā'*),

but it was created for a continuation (*al-baqā'*) by God's everlasting grace. Hence, the act of issuing the *Mecca Charter* in Mecca in May 2019 in the presence of a great number of Muftis from all over the world headed by the Secretary General of the Muslim World League Dr. Muḥammad b. Abdulkarīm Al-'Isa represents a historic event of a great importance not only in regard to the inter-Muslim relationship, but also in regard to the relationship with the whole world. In this **Mecca Charter** it has been expressed a great level of tolerance and understanding toward different religious teaching, national belonging and cultural traditions⁴⁶.

ILLUSTRATION ~ 'Meccan Charter' to establish values of co-existence and reject hatred. Dr. Muḥammad b. Abdu-l-karīm Al-'Isā together with Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah hands over the **Meccan Charter** to King Saud.

⁴⁶ Tee Arabic text of **Mecca Charter** available at this link: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=5&ved=2ahUKEwikpyjIJrpAhVDxIsKHdnRAqAQFjAEegQIBBAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.docdroid.net%2FdUZRvUj%2Fothyk-mk-almkrm.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1Wz-p97atC_Zh0zhGsCBo. Checked on May 4, 2020;

See English text available at this link:

<https://www.saudiembassy.net/sites/default/files/Charter%20of%20Makkah-%20Unofficial%20Translation.pdf>. Checked on May 4, 2020.

Conclusion

Today, humanity as a whole is in a great crisis. Therefore, it needs to act wisely and in a timely way to avoid a large conflict such as the two epochal world wars of the 20th century. In order to do so, humanity needs to meet its *Zeitgeist*, its *Spirit of the Age*, that is, the *Spirit of Peace* that can be found in the letter and tone of historic charters and declarations in the past and in the present. Global peace and security are axiomatic to the very existence of humanity. There is no alternative. Therefore, all people and nations must come together for the sake of sharing their common talents, especially the common talents of the people and nations of faith. Because without peace among the world religions, there cannot be peace among nations.

je prepoznat kao moralni temelj u judaizmu, kršanstvu i islamu.
e su samo u načinu interpretacije i štovanja Jednog Boga.

recognised as a moral foundation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
ences are in the way of interpreting and worshiping the One God.

(Tevrat) – *Knjiga izlaska* – prva Božja zapovijed glasi: – *Ja sam Gospodin, Bog tvoj, nemoj imati drugih bogova uz mene!*
In the Old Testament (Tawrat) – the *Book of Exodus* – the first commandment of God reads:
– *I am the Lord your God, have no other gods beside me!*

(Kur'an) u poglavlju 6:151 prva Božja zapovijed glasi: – *Dodite da vam kažem da vam je zabranjeno imati drugih bogova uz mene!*
In the Last Testament (Qur'an) in chapter 6:151 the first commandment of God reads:
– *Come let me tell you that it is forbidden for you to have other gods beside me!*

ILLUSTRATION – Monotheism – moral foundationd.

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