The Qur'an, as the founding and defining Scripture of Islam, makes intriguing reference to 'two Easts and two Wests'. It is alluding to the two extreme points in the changing incidence of sunrise and sunset between winter and summer. Our current century might find a strange foresight in the phrase, the two hemispheres by so many factors tied into each other. The West is forcibly present everywhere by dint of its commerce, its media and its language. There is a significant Muslim presence in a diaspora far from its birth-territory. 'One East and one West' has become a very antiquated formula.

This single consideration should have given pause to the frequent 'Islam and the West' language in recent analysis of current affairs and the grim aftermath of September 11 2001. Foreign Affairs gave an odd twist to its title in publishing the forebodings of Samuel Huntington about an inevitable confrontation between two crudely cast identities. The versatile

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1 Surah 55.17. The context is about celebrating the sundry aspects of the natural order which should evoke responsive gratitude and wonder in the human soul. 'How can you deny them?' it is asking like any psalm. The translations vary, some with 'Lord of the two Easts/Wests', others 'the twofold East/West'. Here, is a worship alert to the horizon in careful observation. 'Lord of the sun's risings' comes in 37.5, with 70.40 noting 'the rising and setting places of the planets', while 50.39 bids Muhammad sing Allah's praise in face of hostile calumny 'before the rising and the setting of the sun'. The Arabian day gave ample occasion to know the drama of both and of Allah as 'Lord of all between'.

2 By one estimate no less than one quarter of all the world's Muslims are outside what their long tradition would call Dar al-Islam, i.e. where Islam holds political power. Their presence in the West requires them to devise ways of being 'a minority culture'—an entirely novel situation both for theory and practice.

3 It is sad that Rudyard Kipling's lines have been so long quite misquoted. 'O East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet ...' The next line tells of a kinship of courage that made nonsense of the alleged divide.

4 In that any such inevitable, and ominous, 'clash of civilisations' was far from being 'a foreign affair'. Its alleged menace had made it a crucial domestic issue on which would hinge that all engaging business—'the security of the American people'. The issue of Foreign Affairs was Vol. 73, No. 3, 1993, pp. 22-49.
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'and' in his formula will add or multiply, relate or confuse, at the whim of the reader. 'Life and death' is a different contrast from 'thought and idea'. T here are 'ands' that inter-penetrate as well as those that antagonise. Relationships destined to do the former are not well joined by willing the latter. It is part of the hope of being 'justified by faith' that one does not foreclose it by starting from antipathy. The psychic factor here would suggest the same attitude as any ripe theology. Enmities are never faced by assuming them fated or pregnant with doom.

'The Qur'an and the West' offers a better formulation of whatever odds there are and it is the purpose of these chapters to substitute it for the other, the Qur'an being the crucial text in which to encounter Islam in its own recognisances. Its contents, if duly consulted with a 'Western' mind, are apt for our education. Muslims can assess for themselves the fitness of the chosen passages, so that there is no exercise of vested interest or bias and all is subject to scrutiny. The vital ones are given in their native Arabic—not for any annoyance to non-Arabs but only because, for the Muslim, that Book and this language co-exist. The proposal is to explore their meaning as both elucidating the textual Islam and addressing what most pre-occupies the mind of the West, whether of suspicion, apprehension or the finer instincts of hope and goodwill. There is a case-making in the Qur'an (and therefore for it) well calculated to reward those instincts and to allay the apprehension, provided that it is patiently understood and realistically pursued.

Truly horrendous and catastrophic as the attack on the World Trade Center was, both for its audacity and its awesome media-relaying to the whole watching world, it was wrong to proclaim forthwith a 'war on terrorism'. The phrase adopted misread the situation. To speak of 'terrorism' is to concede that one can be 'terrorised'. To announce 'war' in answer is to take the adversary on his own showing—and to his advantage. The malignity in the perpetrator is faced on its intended terms of provocation and, to that extent, confirmed in its hostile stance.

It would have been saner to summon goodwill anywhere to a 'World Order against Criminal Conspiracy'. That would have been

5 That New Testament phrase, source of so much fervent debate during the middle centuries, belongs even in the realm of social and political things. 'The measure we offer is the measure we are likely to receive,' whether of answering anger or a foregoing of it. It is a sort of positive lex talionis, of like rewarded with like, where we can hope to abate conflict by not assuming we must keep it raging. This, between persons or nations, is much more than 'the soft answer'. It runs risks for the gains of deliberate hope.
naming the deed for what it was and with a descriptive that did not infer in the crime a strategy in which one conceded one could be trapped. Such implied concession invited a continuance of the strategy as having, that far, already succeeded in gaining recognition—by the other party—of its depraved intent. The language of pursuing a criminal would have avoided that pitfall. There was, to be sure, much talk of ‘bringing them to justice’, but that is done more aptly by a powered jurisprudence than by armed belligerence. The distinction is by no means artificial, least of all if there is any viable concept of international order as there has been for many decades. The ‘war’ alternative may well be proved non-winnable, given the nature of the scenario and the resources of current technology.

In the immediate trauma of bewildered anger and appal, a policy of ‘A World against International Crime’ would have needed the utmost control of leadership and a discipline of will perhaps impossible in an unwieldy and grief-torn democracy. Even so the soundness of its wisdom could have gained it hearing. With such an acumen, in the quieter days of the early 19th century, President John Quincy Adams had said:

America's heart ... goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. Once embroiled in foreign wars of interest and intrigue, the fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force. She might become the dictatress of the world: she would no longer be the ruler of her own spirit.6

In those terms—as President Adams saw them—‘of her own spirit’, response to September 11 2001, would have meant, not, ‘anti-terrorist war’ but ‘anti-criminal action’ on two fronts, the one political and the other spiritual, a common venture in crime-policing and an effort after human sanity which took up the promise as well as the menace of religion.

The former was, in part, meant in and by the ‘war’ policy. Truly no ‘anti-criminal action’ can be taken without power. Something forcible proves inseparable from the stability of peace, long after its attainment. This means a readiness on the part of those so equipped to bring their capacity to bear on the situation which requires its potential. Yet it must also mean its closest possible bonding into international auspices so that,

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in its vital availability for these, it does not appear, or intend, to supersede them. If doing so, it risks compromising the role it has toward crime, with designs it has toward a war of self-interest. Impatience with the international order, however galling to those who afford the sanctions it needs, has to be curbed by the constraints of genuine co-operation and of shared commitment to its necessity. The procedures may be cumbersome but they are less frustrating than what follows when unilaterism overrides them— as the Iraq War has proved.7

The lack of a convincingly inclusive internationalism in the ‘anti-crime action’ will generate suspicion of ulterior political and economic motives present. From such suspicion will develop, in turn, a sense of distrust which jeopardises the theme of crime-requital and may supply a propaganda incentive for the criminality. Or, negatively, it will not exonerate the other party from charges already against it. The United States has struggled with its problem, of ‘why do they hate us so?’ and set up advisory commissions to explore it. In measure, September 11 had already given the clue— that ‘World-Trade-Center’ with that ‘Pentagon’ the chosen targets. How disenchanted, how reprehensible, they seemed in angry and envious eyes. ‘Trade’ the engrossing sinew of a money-having ‘world’: that ‘world’ having its alleged ‘center’ there, on both counts a triumph of pretension fit to be struck down. Why should such concentrated vested interest be so proudly equipped with the resources of a global dominance? In the tensions of cultures one has to reckon with the psychic yearning of human collectives to have ‘something to hate’.8 The grounds may be fictive and the harbouring insane, but the menace and the malignity are no less real.

Hence the need for the response that, curbing the will for reproach or despair, takes up the spiritual struggle for a sanity of mind where envy might learn its own lunacy and disown its hate. That religions, by their own inner constraints, are prone to insanities is evident enough

7 In that Iraq’s borders have been made far more open to suiciding action, than they had ever been before the war, and that invasion of a Muslim territory served to stimulate a Muslim will to retaliate, thus reversing the antipathy earlier prevailing between such fighters and the ‘Islam’ of the Ba’ath regime. Far from countering Al-Qa’idah, the war only further confirmed its incentive and widened its occasions.

8 That was all too evident when the Russian ‘evil Empire’ and its ‘Communism’ filled the role in the Reagan era, when there was ‘trading’ of mutual anathemas in harshly political terms. There is something seductive both ways in the art of reciprocal demonisation.
down the centuries. Islam is no exception and by factors for which we need a discerning care is more prone than some.\(^9\) Fanaticism and obscurantism are not healed by being merely deplored or rebuked. The anxieties they shelter have to be patiently allayed. The factors that induce them need to be resolved. There are bigotries that stem from fear—fear of guilt under a taskmaster, of treachery to an only sanctioned truth, of what may be aspired to beyond death— or devoutly found retrieved from it, of loneliness in a non-vicarious world.\(^10\)

Such is the nature of these burdens of selfhood that they are best shouldered by the ministries that begin in and from the faith their bearers hold. On every ground both of psyche and of Scripture, this is so. What hallows and dignifies Islam is from its own sources, what weighs upon Muslims of religious stress must be relieved in their own context. Islam belongs to Muslims and Muslims to Islam whether in the joy of assets or the register of debits, if such are the terms we use. Muslims need and want to be Islamically secure and secured. The terms of their present inner crisis belong with their historic inter-possession of faith by faithful, of truth by troth. Wise relationship from outside must, therefore, learn to come within. It would be spiritual imperialism to think to serve Islam with Western wisdoms or alien prescripts.

Hence the purpose here to care about an aberrant Islam, from which the menace comes, by caring with the Islam that can and must disown the other. That there is high tension between them with the Qur'an as party to it, cannot be in doubt. There is a dimension of harsh belligerence in the Qur'an, a strong pugnacity on behalf of faith. Its being there can perhaps be explained by the situation in which Muhammad's mission was embroiled by the obduracy of his local audience. The legacy of that

\(^9\) Many factors in its origins, its Scripture and its story contribute to the characteristic self-assurance of Islam. They emerge in the chapters that follow, especially 6, 7, 8 and 11. What 'seals' all prophethood, enjoys 'final revelation', fits human nature and is 'religion as Allah would have it,' has scant reason for diffidence about its warrant to prevail.

\(^10\) 'Lonely' in that the Qur'an's portrayal of the Last Things lays such stress on the solitary individual, without all mediation, no plea about collective factors inseparable from private guilt, and one's own physical members witnessing to one's condemnation. The frequent refrain of the Qur'an as to 'no burden-bearing bearing other than their own burden' seems to exclude the whole dimension of the vicarious in human life. True as 'no burden-bearing' must ever be about guilt in wrong, it can never be true about the 'bundle of life' where the guilt of crime in one party means suffering and grief in another. See discussion more fully in my A Certain Sympathy of Scriptures, Brighton, 2004, Chapter 8.
militancy abides but can well be offset or abandoned by considerations no less explicit in the same Qur’an. These we are set to examine, in company with contemporary Muslims who know their crisis—the crisis between the two ‘minds’—for what it is.

It will be long and hard to resolve. For it bifurcates the Sirah as well as the Qur’an and has its symbol in the sequence of both from their Mecca to their Medina. The sense of legitimate belligerence came with the sinews that availed for it after the Hijrah. Yet that Hijrah supervened on thirteen years of powerless faith-care which might be likened to the first three centuries of New Testament Christian faith. Muhammad foreclosed these in forceful power, as if to be his own—and immediate—version as Islam’s ‘Constantine’, and thereby seeming to abrogate the Meccan ‘innocence’. Thus the pivotal decision had the sanction of his own doing and came to be embedded—as Constantine has never been—in the founding Scripture of the faith.

Conditioning all that the Hijrah validated, however, was the priority of the preached message in Mecca, for which sake alone the Medinan sequel was ventured.¹¹

The issue with which historic Islam is thus left can only be contained by Muslims as an ever present crisis of options about its very enterprise, the pith and marrow of its meaning in the human scene. The belligerence will always remain as a will to dominate and Islamise the world, to pursue that in which alone its fidelity consists. It will be pointless for observers to opine that such ‘is not Islam.’ A duty-bound ardour will negate the negation and think itself the only obedience a Muslim can bring. To think to counter this Islam in terms of ‘war’ will make the war interminable.

The global hope has to belong with the Islam of Muslims who, with no less ardour, no less Qur’anic warrant, will define—and be defined by—the other Islam, the peace-held Islam that first was, and ever remains, the raison d’être of the whole, the Islam to which, in the Qur’an, Muhammad was rigorously bound as only ‘a preached summons’ to submission to Allah. Since that preached religion has survived these

¹¹ The sequel soon proved that Mecca held its honour as the place of balagh by the turn around of the Qiblah from the Jerusalem it had initially obeyed to Mecca and its Ka’bah. The whole logic of the ensuing campaign lay in its recovery. The exit from it had been no mere adventurism but a strategy on behalf of its preached significance.
fifteen centuries into a day for global order, what was once a rationale for recourse to armed belligerence is quite superseded. Armed partnering of faith-conviction has become incongruous. The ongoing finality to which Islam lays steady claim must know it so. A faith that holds with entrusted creaturehood and guiding prophethood can, in the present world, have no place for ‘compulsions’ to belief, such as armed religions seek to bring. That Allah is ‘not overtaken’ is only proven by their repudiation in a world whose contemporary peace calls all religions to be satisfied only to persuade in their first, original, intent.

Such is the case to be drawn from the Qur’an as its axiom for the very presence of Islam now in the world. The situation of many Muslims in a diaspora where they lack explicit Islamic statehood confirms it. The chapters that follow are set to underscore it further—Chapter 5 stressing a right measure of ‘the secular’ and Chapter 11 arguing that this ‘solely religious sanctioning of religion’ means no desertion from the duties of the political order. Chapters 1 to 4 rehearse the founding themes, while 6 to 8 reflect the vital art of Scriptural exegesis and possession. No enterprise like the present with ‘the West’ and with the Qur’an could neglect the expressly Christian bearings of either in relation to the other. These, fraught with so much impeding and self-frustrating controversy, are compressed into two salient territories in the Qur’an, which bring them imaginatively as well as doctrinally into the necessary focus. The final Chapter 12, in sequel to our divinely liable politics, takes up ‘the human liability of God’, as being the central themes of both Scriptures. They invite us to the worship of One for whom all our human meaning reaches, as His creaturely trustees with whom He shares that trusteeship through the ministry of prophethood, the investment in our privilege. The question presses, in the light—or the dark—of accumulated human history, whether that ‘sharing’ goes beyond investment in privilege into a more costly relation still and be the more divinely known through the story and the imagery of ‘a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief’.

We may be sure that, of late years, the Qur’an has been more urgently consulted in the West than, outside academic circles, was the

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12 The phrase in Surahs 56.60 and 70.11—ma nahnu bi-masbuqin. Whatever the verses may mean in context, they certainly express the absolute finality of Allah and the ultimate revelation in the Qur’an. A never out-dated timeless is assured.

13 Isaiah 53.3 and the ‘Servant’ in the measure of the Messianic role, which to the mind of the Qur’an as Sunnis read it, is either incomprehensible or repugnant to a right theology.
case earlier. But has the access of new readers meant a readier comprehension? For the Qur'an has a way of disconcerting its beginners. There is the hurdle of its cherished Arabic and the problematic of due translation where the native feel is forfeit. The current flow of new English renderings can often confuse, though it may excite comparison. Then there is the problem of chronology and sequence. The identifying of surahs as Meccan and Medinan indicates a relevance for timing, but surahs may sometimes be composite astride that radical divide, while their actual order defies the chronological principle. The new reader, like any Arabist, does well to begin with what, in the West, would be the end of the book. For the earliest passages in Muhammad's mission, being highly poetic and ecstatic, now comprise the surahs with which the Qur'an closes. It is no bad plan to read inwards from Surah 114 and reach Surah 2, via a still non-chronological sequence, into the more protracted legal language of institutional formation. The narrative of his Sirah will be latent everywhere, as are the Qur'an's own perceptions of history, Biblical and pagan.

Aside from such areas of the cohesion of the Qur'an, there are the problematics of style, so that Muhammad's preaching, renewed as it had to be through long and tense years, entailed much re-iteration of its essential themes. Moreover the 'piecemeal' pattern (17.106) of its receiving 'on his heart' (see Chapter 7 within) made for a kind of 'spiral movement' forward quite unlike a Socratic 'dialogue' or the disquisitions of an Aquinas. The alert reader, however, can with patience, find this situation yielding its proper fascination. That may serve to check a sense of confused impatience to which frustrated readers have succumbed, either in haste or dismay.

In present context, as in no way academic but seriously relational in minding current history, the vital thing is to appreciate the decisive concern of Quranic theism with the stature of our humanity exercising 'a divine right of kings' (or queens) whereby we are only safely and sanely ourselves as 'dominion'-conscious both ways, neither self-preening.

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14 The 'dialogue' in the Qur'an— if seen to be compatible with the classic thesis about wahy or 'inspiration' in Muhammad— is with the hostile charges the Qurash made against him. These left no occasion for the tadabbur that was his hope and plea. The suqs of Mecca and the terrain around Yathrib were no Socratic garden. The Qur'an reader has to inhabit that original scene in the will to comprehend.
gods, nor hapless puppets, but accountable divinely for the time of our mortality and the cosmic ‘sacrament’ of our creaturely ‘privilege’. The Qur’an and the West rightly read each other in those terms—‘once—as a poet said in another context—you have walked the length of your mind.’

15 ‘Privilege’ in the strict sense of privilegium—a special advantage uniquely granted and enjoyed, a dispensation to possess a status and fulfil the role it bestows. We understand theism truly when we perceive the truth of our own humanism. See below Chapter 5. ‘While ‘sacrament’ is not a word congenial to Islam, its meaning as ‘minding all as holy’ is there in the concept of ‘signs’ enabling, the human ‘caliphate’.

16 Philip Larkin, Collected Poems, London, 2003, p. 177, ‘Continuing to Live’. His meaning seems to be life’s quest for ‘necessities’ proves ill-rewarding and deters further venturing. It seems possible to use the term here, away from his weary private sense, to see the need for ‘minding the length’ our thinking has to ‘walk’ with present world ‘necessities’ and ‘trace them home’.