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Arab-American Psychiatrist Wafa Sultan: There is No Clash of Civilizations but a Clash between the Mentality of the Middle Ages and That of the 21st Century

Following are excerpts from an interview with Arab-American psychiatrist Wafa Sultan. The interview was aired on Al-Jazeera TV on February 21, 2006

Wafa Sultan: The clash we are witnessing around the world is not a clash of religions, or a clash of civilizations. It is a clash between two opposites, between two eras. It is a clash between a mentality that belongs to the Middle Ages and another mentality that belongs to the 21st century. It is a clash between civilization and backwardness, between the civilized and the primitive, between barbarity and rationality. It is a clash between freedom and oppression, between democracy and dictatorship. It is a clash between human rights, on the one hand, and the violation of these rights, on other hand. It is a clash between those who treat women like beasts, and those who treat them like human beings. What we see today is not a clash of civilizations. Civilizations do not clash, but compete.

[...]

Host: I understand from your words that what is happening today is a clash between the culture of the West, and the backwardness and ignorance of the Muslims?

Wafa Sultan: Yes, that is what I mean.

[...]

Host: Who came up with the concept of a clash of civilizations? Was it not Samuel Huntington? It was not Bin Laden. I would like to discuss this issue, if you don't mind...

Wafa Sultan: The Muslims are the ones who began using this expression. The Muslims are the ones who began the clash of civilizations. The Prophet of Islam said: "I was ordered to fight the people until they believe in Allah and His Messenger." When the Muslims divided the people into Muslims and non-Muslims, and called to fight the others until they believe in what they themselves believe, they started this clash, and began this war. In order to stop this war, they must reexamine their Islamic books and curricula, which are full of calls for takfir and fighting the infidels.

My colleague has said that he never offends other people's beliefs. What civilization on the face of this earth allows him to call other people by names that they did not choose for themselves? Once, he calls them Ahl Al-Dhimma, another time he calls them the "People of the Book," and yet another time he compares them to apes and pigs, or he calls the Christians "those who incur Allah's wrath." Who told you that they are "People of the Book"? They are not the People of the Book, they are people of many books. All the useful scientific books that you have today are theirs, the fruit of their free and creative thinking. What gives you the right to call them "those who incur Allah's wrath," or "those who have gone astray," and then come here and say that your religion commands you to refrain from offending the beliefs of others?



I am not a Christian, a Muslim, or a Jew. I am a secular human being. I do not believe in the supernatural, but I respect others' right to believe in it.

Dr. Ibrahim Al-Khouli: Are you a heretic?

Wafa Sultan: You can say whatever you like. I am a secular human being who does not believe in the supernatural...

Dr. Ibrahim Al-Khouli: If you are a heretic, there is no point in rebuking you, since you have blasphemed against Islam, the Prophet, and the Koran...

Wafa Sultan: These are personal matters that do not concern you.

[...]

Wafa Sultan: Brother, you can believe in stones, as long as you don't throw them at me. You are free to worship whoever you want, but other people's beliefs are not your concern, whether they believe that the Messiah is God, son of Mary, or that Satan is God, son of Mary. Let people have their beliefs.

[...]

Wafa Sultan: The Jews have come from the tragedy (of the Holocaust), and forced the world to respect them, with their knowledge, not with their terror, with their work, not their crying and yelling. Humanity owes most of the discoveries and science of the 19th and 20th centuries to Jewish scientists. 15 million people, scattered throughout the world, united and won their rights through work and knowledge. We have not seen a single Jew blow himself up in a German restaurant. We have not seen a single Jew destroy a church. We have not seen a single Jew protest by killing people. The Muslims have turned three Buddha statues into rubble. We have not seen a single Buddhist burn down a Mosque, kill a Muslim, or burn down an embassy. Only the Muslims defend their beliefs by burning down churches, killing people, and destroying embassies. This path will not yield any results. The Muslims must ask themselves what they can do for humankind, before they demand that humankind respect them.

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