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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL ATTITUDES VIS-À-VIS ISLAM: THE EFFECT ON WEST-MUSLIM RELATIONS

by

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December 2002

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Since the end of the Cold War two debates have largely shaped Western views of Islam: Islam's relevance in statecraft and the potential "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West. Those joined in these debates argue that just as the West seeks to explain Islam's relevance and role in a potential "clash of civilizations," the West must also examine its own historical experience with religion and statecraft and find ways of looking at itself through the eyes of the Islamic world. This thesis achieves this examination of historical experience and self-reflection by contributing what has long been missing from the debates: an understanding of Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam and the effect of those attitudes on West-Muslim relations. The argument presented is that while religion is generally forgotten in the West it remains a driving force in the Muslim world, where nearly everything has religious overtones. This thesis explores Christian theological attitudes beginning with the development of historical Orthodox Christianity, Christian theological objections to Islam, the application of theology in the greater context of West-Muslim relations as well as the current impact of Christian theological attitudes on Christian-Muslim relations and their impact on West-Muslim relations.

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Since the end of the Cold War two debates have largely shaped Western views of Islam: Islam's relevance in statecraft and the potential "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West. Those joined in these debates argue that just as the West seeks to explain Islam's relevance and role in a potential "clash of civilizations," the West must also examine its own historical experience with religion and statecraft, and find ways of looking at itself through the eyes of the Islamic world. This thesis achieves this examination of historical experience and self-reflection by contributing what has long been missing from the debates: an understanding of Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam and the effect of those attitudes on West-Muslim relations. The argument presented is that while religion is generally forgotten in the West it remains a driving force in the Muslim world, where nearly everything has religious overtones. This thesis explores Christian theological attitudes beginning with the development of historical Orthodox Christianity, Christian theological objections to Islam, the application of theology in the greater context of West-Muslim relations as well as the current impact of Christian theological attitudes on Christian-Muslim relations and their impact on West-Muslim relations.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War two debates have largely shaped the Western view of the Muslim world: the relevance of religion in the conduct of statecraft and the "clash of civilizations" hypothesis that sets Western and Islamic civilizations against one another in a great apocalyptic clash. Neither debate is new in the relationship of the Western and Islamic worlds, but taken in the post-Cold War context of *Pax Americana* and the "war on terrorism" they address the West's self-expressed need to comprehend Islam and its effect on West-Muslim relations.

Within the framework of these post-Cold War debates, this thesis asks the question, "How do Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam affect West-Muslim relations?" Through an evaluation of several of Christianity's fundamental doctrines and a survey of Christian-Muslim relations, this thesis demonstrates the historical experience of Christianity on Western statecraft, specifically as it relates to West-Muslim relations, and provides the self-reflection Samuel P. Huntington says is necessary if the West is to avoid a "clash of civilizations." The conclusion drawn is that Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam have a far greater effect on West-Muslim relations than is normally assumed in the secular West. The thesis recommends that policy makers take steps to meet the challenges that come when theology and statecraft mix.

B. POST-COLD WAR DEBATES ON ISLAM

1. Religion in the Conduct of Statecraft

Introducing the first debate into the political arena of the West has been difficult. Since the Enlightenment, the West has understood religion and politics to exist, albeit sometimes reluctantly, in separate spheres. "In politics, the interests of the political community predominate, while in religion, the focus is on the spiritual and ethical life of the individual."[1] However, the success of the West's latest ideological antagonist – political Islam, or *Islamism*, in Muslim countries as diverse as Iran and Turkey, has prompted Western scholars and policy makers to re-examine the Enlightenment paradigm

[1] James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 1.

of "separate spheres." Such an utterly Western-concept now seems unsuitable in the present pursuit of Islam when placed alongside the Islamic conception of the "ideal Muslim community" which blends the religious and political realms. However, while the West debates how to best understand this new, mostly anti-Western, political Islamic resurgence, those joined in the debate argue that an examination of the Western "historical experience and normative traditions on the relation of religion to statecraft" must also occur.[2] In other words, even while seeking to understand Islam and the Islamic world, the West must seek to understand the effect of Christianity on Western statecraft, specifically as this relates to the Muslim world.

2. "Clash of Civilizations?"

Samuel P. Huntington's 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article, "The Clash of Civilizations?" is the catalyst for the second debate. Huntington's hypothesis that the fundamental source of future conflict will be primarily a cultural conflict between civilizations, specifically the Christian-West and Islamic-East,[3] was highly influential in the West following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Huntington's article, and follow-on book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, caused significant debate among western academics, receiving varying degrees of sympathy and opposition. Fouad Ajami, for instance, said he understood Huntington's frustration with "the strange mixture of attraction and repulsion that the West breeds, and [Huntington's] need to simplify matters, to mark out the borders of civilizations."[4] But argued, "Huntington is wrong…[Ours] is not a world where the writ of civilizations runs…civilizations do not control states, states control civilizations."[5] Robert D. Kaplan, on the other hand, argued that while Huntington's "brush is broad," his hypothesis is sound, noting that "flashpoint(s) of cultural and racial war" cover the world.[6] Huntington does not conclude, however, that this so-called "clash of civilizations" is unavoidable. Rather, he argues, the

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[2] Ibid., 18-20.

[3] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" in *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993), 22. See also *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

[4] Fouad Ajami, "The Summoning," in *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 1993), 4.

[5] Ibid., 9.

[6] Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," in *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1994), 62.

West can avoid a clash, but to do so must find ways of looking at itself through the eyes of other civilizations.

This thesis views Huntington's "clash of civilizations" hypothesis with a degree of skepticism because Christian and Islamic civilizations have existed side by side for nearly fourteen hundred years through the ebb and flood of war and peace without ever coming to an apocalyptic clash, and such a clash is unlikely now even in these troublesome times. However, this agrees with Huntington that self-reflection can help ease tensions between the two civilizations. An examination of Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam is a seldom considered element of West-Muslim relations.

C. ORGANIZATION

This thesis has four chapters. Chapter I: "Introduction," introduces the current debates concerning religion in statecraft and Islam's effect on West-Muslim relations to explain why a similar examination needs to be made concerning Christianity.

Chapter II: "Christian Doctrinal Development (60-600 C.E.)," discusses the development of Church doctrine which came as a result of the Church's need to communicate the Christian message to an audience threatened to be drawn away by unorthodox, heretical teachings. These doctrines and heresies are important because of the response they engendered from Christians at the appearance of Islam in middle of the seventh century. Likewise, Islam's objection to these doctrines as well as its resemblance led most Church leaders to see Islam as merely another deviant Christian heresy. Thus, recognition of Islam as a separate, distinct religion came much later than many today realize. However, recognition never meant equality with Christianity. Not only did Christian theology reserve for the Church exclusive rights to salvation, it labeled Islam a false religion and denied it the respect it so desired as the younger brother of Christianity and Judaism.

Chapter III: "Christian Theological Perspectives on Islam," provides an historical examination of Christianity's perception of Islam as a false religion and the subsequent relationship that has developed between the two faiths. The chapter pays special attention to the theological viewpoint of each of Christianity's three major branches: Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant vis-à-vis Islam and the application of those

views in the administration of statecraft. This examination of Christian theological perspectives demonstrates that although each Christian branch has had markedly different experiences with Islam, each has maintained its historic Christian theological perspective that claims Islam is a false religion.

Chapter IV: "Conclusion," asserts that even the most prolific analysts and writers have failed to recognize or understand the effect of Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam on West-Muslim relations. The thesis offers insight and recommendations to Western policy makers.

II. CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT (60 – 600 C.E.)

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a theological "self-reflection" of Christianity and its relationship with Islam. It argues that current Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam can only be understood in the context in which those attitudes were formed, and that understanding how those attitudes were formed explains Christianity's "exclusivist" attitude and refusal to give Islam the respect it desires. It examines the development of Christian orthodoxy, the major Christian doctrines and heretical movements to which they were a response, and the link which seventh century Christendom believed existed between these heresies and Islam.

B. SETTING THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT IS ORTHODOX

> I believe in God the Father almighty and in Jesus Christ his son, who was born of Mary the Virgin, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, on the third day rose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, sitteth on the right hand of the Father, from which he cometh to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection of the flesh.[7]

Creeds, like the Roman Symbol shown above, were developed during the first several centuries of the Christian era to distinguish orthodoxy from heresy – the latter of which the early Church had much to contend. Among the first, and the Church believed most dangerous, heresies were those attacking the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ. The Ebionites, for example, were a first century Jewish-Christian sect who taught that through complete obedience to the Jewish Law, and with the abiding presence of the spirit of Christ, the man Jesus became the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. Jesus was not however divine. In opposition to Jesus' complete humanity, scores of Hellenist philosophers and Gnostic teachers taught *dualism*: the belief that all matter was evil and only pure-spirit was good. These groups claimed secret knowledge concerning the mystery of Jesus and salvation of mankind – it was the emancipation of the spirit from the flesh that was important for salvation, which the pure-spirit of Christ accomplished in the man Jesus before he went to the cross. In Jesus' humanity, therefore, nothing was

[7] Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Vol. 1: Beginnings to A.D 1500* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1975), 135-136.

gainful. Against such claims the Church formulated "as clearly and briefly as possible the teachings of the apostles so that Christians, even ordinary unlettered ones among them, might know what the Christian faith is."[8] The effort to preserve and transmit apostolic truth thus became the early Church's passion and the establishment of orthodoxy the result.

1. Defining Orthodoxy

There no issue is of greater importance in the study of Christian-Muslim relations than the roots of Christian orthodoxy. The reason is simple: orthodox Christian theology maintains that salvation, one's inheritance of and positive experience in the after life, is the exclusive privilege of all who place their faith in Jesus Christ. The Christian understanding of this statement varies among the three major branches of Christianity: Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox, but the basic truth remains the same – salvation is exclusively Christian. This 'exclusivity' is viewed by Muslims as a serious impediment to fruitful Christian-Muslim dialogue and is rejected out of hand.[9] Muslim scholars question the value of such exclusivity: if Islam reveres Jesus Christ as a prophet from God, why must Christianity continually demonstrate only distain for Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, and his revelation, the Qur'an? Christianity's inability – or refusal – to go beyond the literal meaning of statements such as "I am the way, the truth, and the life," rather than accept them as metaphysical and esoteric truths, undermines Christian-Muslim relations.[10] Therefore, Christianity's dogmatic claim to exclusivity must be examined and that means going to the roots of Christian orthodoxy to discover not only what the early Christians believed, but why they insisted that these beliefs alone be considered orthodox.

Orthodoxy is most simply defined as "the majority opinion."[11] As this definition refers to the acceptance of and adherence to certain theological doctrines and Church organization, Christian orthodoxy began to take shape in the middle of the first century in

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[8] Ibid., 131.

[9] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islamic-Christian Dialogue – Problems and Obstacles to be Pondered and Overcome," *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 3-4 (July-October 1998), 221.

[10] Ibid., 220.

[11] Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), 47.

the form of requirements for Christian fellowship. Some of the requirements included repentance, the confession that Jesus is Lord, baptism, and the reception of the Holy Spirit.[12] By the beginning of the second century, the Church used the term *catholic* to denote orthodoxy. Kenneth Scott Latourette of Yale University Divinity School provides three motives for the development of the Catholic Church. "One was the desire to unite all Christians in conscious fellowship. A second was to preserve, transmit, and spread the Christian Gospel in its purity, that men may enter into the fullness of the life, which it reveals and makes possible. The third was to bring all Christians together into a visible "body of Christ."[13] Thus catholic Christianity is orthodox Christianity. It denotes the body of teachings and Church organization accepted by the majority of Christians, clergy and laity alike. By logical conclusion, therefore, anyone holding or teaching positions contrary to the majority is *unorthodox*.

2. Discussions of Doctrine

The establishment of orthodoxy included the development of doctrines that delineated, even further than creeds and required confessions, the principle beliefs of the Christian faith. These doctrines came not "in the quiet of an academic study," but evolved as "heresy had arisen that threatened to change the nature of Christianity and to destroy its central faith."[14] Between 60 and 600 CE,[15] Church dogma developed into specific doctrines: *Theology Proper*, the doctrine of God; *Paterology*, the doctrine of God the Father; *Christology*, the doctrine of God the Son; *Pnuematology*, the doctrine of God the Holy Spirit, *Anthropology*, the doctrine of man; *Hamartiology*, the doctrine of sin; *Ecclesiology*, the doctrine of the Church; *Eschatology*, the doctrine of future events; and *Soteriology*, the doctrine of salvation. These doctrines helped settle – or as was often the case, were themselves shaped by – major theological controversies prior to the advent of Islam in the seventh century.

It is important to note that the theological controversies that shaped Christianity had their origins within the Church. Therefore when the medieval Church confronted the

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[12] Latourette, 129.

[13] Ibid., 130.

[14] Shelley, 48.

[15] All dates are from the Common Era (CE). Symbols are not used.

challenge of Islam, which reintroduced many of the theological fires once extinguished by the teachers of Catholic Christianity, it seemed as though Islam was yet another internal attack against orthodoxy – only this time with the political and military zeal capable of challenging Byzantine power in Constantinople and Rome.[16] Islam's curious acceptance of Jesus Christ's virgin birth, messianic role to the Jewish people, miracles, and powerful role on the Day of Judgment, yet rejection of Jesus' crucifixion, title as "only begotten of the Father," redemptive purpose in the unfolding of God's plan for mankind, and his deity – God the Son – made Muhammad's religion strikingly similar to many of the excommunicated heretics living throughout Arabia.

Three doctrines are now discussed: Theology Proper, which includes the doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of God; the doctrine of God the Son, Christology; and the doctrine of Salvation, Soteriology. These are selected because they – more than any other Christian doctrines – receive the greatest opposition from Islamic theologians, the Qur'an, and Muslim traditions. Muslim scholar Shaikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani declared that "in the great debate between Christians and Muslims…there are areas of fundamental principles where no amount of logical discourse can bring the two sides nearer to each other…issues like the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ and the Crucifixion, so central to Christian beliefs, have no place in the Islamic faith, having been categorically refuted by the Qur'an"[17]

a. Theology Proper: the Doctrine of God

Theology Proper: the doctrine of God, is the Church's understanding of (1) the fact of God, (2) the revelation of God, (3) the nature of God, and (4) the decree of

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[16] "Byzantine" refers to the Roman Empire or sometimes, more specifically, the Eastern Roman Empire following the move of its capital from Rome to Constantinople, in 330. "Christendom" also refers to this empire. When Constantinople became the capital the Church split – geographically – into eastern and western halves. The Roman West was Latin-speaking and its theology was rooted in Roman law; the Byzantine East was mainly Greek-speaking and its theology was built around philosophy. The fall of the West in 476 led to an accentuation of cultural and theological differences, culminating in the Church's official split in 1054, the Great Schism. Important cities in Western Christendom included Rome, Alexandria, and Carthage; Eastern Christendom included Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem. (Alexandria's geographical location placed it within the East, however, it most often allied itself with the West.)

[17] Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 273. Quoting Ahmed Zaki Yamani, in W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today: A Contribution to Dialogue* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), ix, x.

God.[18] As understood in orthodoxy, God exists as He has revealed Himself to mankind, as three simultaneous Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Evidence of this existence rests upon God's special revelation, as recorded in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, and general revelation to mankind, discernible in and through His creation. Although the Scriptures do not attempt to prove the existence of God – it is assumed – theologians have long had to defend it. Theological arguments include cosmological, teleological, and anthropological defenses, which argue inductively that every effect must have a cause, order and useful arrangement in a system implies intelligence and purpose in the organizing cause, and philosophical and moral beings must have their origin in God. These arguments buttress the general revelation of God to man: His existence is certain, the universe (all of creation) demonstrates His handiwork, and His invisible attributes, eternal power and divine nature are made known so that the creation is accountable to the Creator, and mankind is therefore without excuse.[19]

God's special revelation to man, orthodox teaching maintains, has been given through dreams and in visions, and through *theophanies* – a visible manifestation of God, but has come primarily through the Bible, which communicates God's eternal purpose in the person of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures, writings made infallible by the directing of its authors by God the Holy Spirit, record that in Jesus Christ is the very image of God, and that Jesus:

> Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.[20]

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[18] Floyd H. Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1992), 39-136.

[19] *The Holy Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). See Book of the Psalms 19:1-6, a central passage to the Christian defense of God's general revelation and the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans 18:18-21.

[20] *The Holy Bible*, Philippians 2:6-11.

This passage from the Apostle Paul to the Philippians describes the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, i.e. it describes the *tri-une* nature of God, or the Trinity, a doctrine fundamental to the Christian faith and orthodox understanding of God. "Belief or disbelief in the Trinity marks orthodoxy from unorthodoxy," claims Paul Enns in the *Moody Handbook of Theology*.[21] The word *trinity* is nowhere found in the Bible, yet it is both implicitly and explicitly taught in the Bible.[22] Development of the doctrine came in response to heretical challenges to both the persons and relationships of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and was the early Church's elucidation of what the Scriptures manifestly taught but did not obviously explain. "The Trinity is composed of three united Persons without separate existence – so completely united as to form one God. The divine nature subsists in three distinctions – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[23] Tertullian of Carthage (160-220) was the most influential proponent of Trinitarian theology. Trained as a lawyer, he employed Roman legal terminology in writing *Against Praxeas* (210) to explain that while in *substantia*, or substance, God is one, in *personae*, or persons, He is three. These persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he explained, have their role in the administrative activity of God. Thus, there is "unity of *substantia*, but a unity distributed in a trinity, a unity of substance, but a trinity in form and in aspect."[24] Tertullian laid the groundwork for what were the accepted theological conclusions at the Councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381).

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[21] Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 198.

[22] According to theologians, the Trinity is taught implicitly in the Old Testament through the Bible's account of creation (Genesis 1:1-2); the plural use of the Hebrew term *Elohim* for God; the use of plural pronouns; and references to a coming Messiah, to whom greater than human-like qualities are ascribed (for instance, Isaiah 7:14 declares that One born of a virgin will also be named Immanuel, which means "God with us.") Other implicit passages include Isaiah 48:16 and 61:1, which demonstrate the existence of all three Persons in the Godhead, distinct from one another. The Old Testament also affirms God's oneness in passages like Deuteronomy 6:4 and Isaiah 46:22.On the other hand, the New Testament teaching of the Tri-une God is quite explicit. In First Corinthians 8:6 the *Father* is called God; in Hebrews 1:8-10 the *Son* is called God; and in Acts 5:3-4 the *Holy Spirit* is called God. In the Gospel of Matthew 28:18, Jesus commands the apostles to baptize new disciples "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." And in John 14:16, the Son asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit to indwell all believers forever. The Apostle Paul writes to the Churches in Galatia, however, "God is one." (Galatians 3:20) The orthodox explanation of God's three-in-oneness is the Trinity.

[23] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary, 1947), 1:276. Quoted by Enns, 199.

[24] Latourette, 145.

In addition to the Trinitarian nature of God, attributes also describe His nature. Attributes are defined as "those distinguishing characteristics of the divine nature which are inseparable from the idea of God and which constitute the basis and ground for his various manifestations to his creatures."[25] They are typically classified as absolute to God (incommunicable): spirituality, self-existence, immutability, unity, truth, love and holiness; and relative to God (communicable): eternity, immensity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, truth, mercy, grace and justice. "It is all the attributes of God taken together that provide an understanding of the nature and Person of God."[26]

The doctrine of God also includes the decree of God, the all-encompassing plan by which God's sovereign will is accomplished in the course of human history. The decree, as understood in orthodoxy, was formed in eternity past, manifested in time, and is characterized by the directive and permissive will of God. The directive will of God denotes those things of which God is the author and actively brings about. For instance, God exercises absolute control over the universe, establishes kings and governments, and elects people to salvation.[27] On the other hand, there are things occurring in history for which God is not the author, but nevertheless they occur. These are evidence of God's permissive will. For instance, God is not the author of sin or evil yet these persist, or are allowed by God, because even these have as their ultimate end the glory of God.[28] The doctrine of decrees brought about a number of debates within Christendom before the advent of Islam over original sin, predestination and election, free will, salvation and atonement, and the transcendence of God. Thus, this is the orthodox understanding of God as revealed in and through creation, as contained in the pages of the Bible and as developed by early Church leaders.

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[25] Enns, 188.

[26] Ibid., 188.

[27] Ibid., 205.

[28] Dr. H. C. Thiessen explains "the decrees are God's eternal purpose, based on his most wise and holy counsel. He is absolutely holy and so cannot purpose anything that is wrong…The only necessity laid upon him in this respect is the necessity that comes from his own attributes as a wise and holy God." This understanding is essential when considering the Christian and Islamic concepts of God.

b. Christology: the Doctrine of God the Son

Christology: the doctrine of God the Son, is the Church's understanding of the (1) deity, (2) humanity, and (3) Messianic work of Jesus Christ. The doctrine itself is inseparable from the triune understanding of God.

> If one accepts the biblical teaching about the deity of Christ, then he has already acknowledged that there is more than one person in the Godhead. Conversely, if the doctrine of the Trinity is received, then the deity of Christ is already part of it.[29]

The ancient Church's belief in the deity of Jesus Christ was based upon the testimony of the Apostles as found in the New Testament, as witnessed by their contemporaries and disciples as well as Old Testament teachings that "demonstrated that Messiah was greater than simply a descendant of David."[30] According to the New Testament revelation concerning the person and nature of Jesus Christ, Jesus' deity is expressed through the names, attributes, works and worship accorded Him. He is called God, Lord, and Son of God; names which are both given to him and affirmed by him.[31] His attributes include eternality (he claimed to be without beginning and without end), omnipresence (he said indwelt his followers), omniscience (he saw the heart of men, knew the mind of enquirers and the lives of strangers), omnipotence (he demonstrated the power to forgive sins) and immutability (he was said to be unchanging – the same yesterday, today, and forever). Supernatural works are also attributed to Christ, who is said to be the creator of all, sustainer of all, forgiver of sin, and worker of miracles. Finally, the apostles John and Paul record that Jesus received worship – an honor afforded to God alone in the Jewish Scriptures.[32]

The early Church Fathers upheld the apostolic teachings of the New Testament, they themselves writing letters in defence of the deity of Christ. Polycarp (d. 155), bishop of Smyrna (modern Izmir) and disciple of the Apostle John, affirmed "our

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[29] Geisler and Saleeb, 256.

[30] Enns, 225.

[31] *The Holy Bible*, John 20:26-29: the Apostle Thomas confesses Jesus as Lord and God after seeing the wounds of his resurrected body; John 5:19, 8:58: the Jews understand that Jesus is "making Himself equal with God" when He calls himself the Son of God and 'the I AM,' the eternal being.

[32] Enns, 225-226.

Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death,"[33] and wrote the *Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles*, the oldest surviving manual of Church discipline, to state the apostolic teachings concerning the purpose of Christ.[34] Ignatius (d. 117), bishop of Antioch and friend of Polycarp, wrote that Christ "really suffered and died, and rose again." Otherwise, said Ignatius, Christ's apostles died in vain.[35] Other important figures carrying on the apostles' teachings and proclaiming the deity of Christ include Justin Martyr (d. 165), Irenaeus (late-second century), and Tertullian. Discovering the meaning and significance of these claims, however, required the early Church to attach theological meaning. For instance, if Christ was divine, what was his relationship to God the Father and the Holy Spirit? Was he lesser than the Father but greater than the Holy Spirit? And if Christ's nature was divine, what about his human nature? Did Christ have one or two natures? The orthodox position, on questions related to the deity of Christ, was finally settled in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon. At Chalcedon, the Fourth Ecumenical Council to address the identity of Christ, a creed was issued which declared that Christ's two natures (human and divine) were unmixed, unchanged, undivided and inseparable.

The humanity of Jesus Christ was also subject to great debate by elements within the Church, especially in Eastern Christendom. Church leaders, bishops among them like Marcion, Apollinarius, Nestorius and Cyril were heavily influenced by the Gnostic teachings of the antithesis between spirit and flesh and held widely divergent positions on the relationship between 'the Christ' and the man Jesus. Some said that 'the Christ' was a phantom, a mere illusion, and not actually a man. Others held that Jesus' human nature had been replaced by the indwelling spirit of the Christ or absorbed by the

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[33] Polycarp, "The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians," ed., A. Cleveland Coxe, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 33. Quoted by Geisler and Saleeb, 231.

[34] Tony Lane, *Exploring Christian Thought*, A Nelson's Christian Cornerstone Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 13.

[35] Geisler and Saleeb, 231. Eleven of the twelve apostles "died martyrs' deaths on the basis of two things: the resurrection of Christ, and their belief in him as the Son of God…" According to Church tradition, Peter, Andrew, James, the son of Alphaeus, Philip, Simon and Bartholomew were crucified; Matthew and James, son of Zebedee, died by the sword; Thomas by the spear, Thaddaeus by arrows, and James, the half-brother of Jesus, was stoned to death. Only John died a natural death. See Josh McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1976), 61-62.

Logos (the "Word"). But as popular as these, and other, divergent views had become none was ever considered to be within the pale of orthodoxy. Orthodox teaching on the humanity of Jesus Christ insisted that he had, in fact, had a true body of flesh and blood. "It was like the bodies of other men except for the qualities which have resulted from human sin and failure."[36] He was born of a woman in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, which anticipated the Messiah's authentic humanity, but the woman was by necessity a virgin because the Christ was to be sinless. Jesus' growth and development was like that of other human beings; the New Testament record describes his childhood as being typical of that of other boys. He was raised by his parents in Nazareth and was known by the community as Jesus, son of Joseph, a carpenter. His emotional and physical existence was also no different from that of other human beings. The biblical text says that he was touched by the same infirmities and sickness as we, and he experienced the emotions of life: pain and joy, love and anger, fullness and hunger. The apostles and early Church leaders also believed that he had a human soul and spirit. The Apostle John commented that Jesus was troubled in his soul at the anticipation of the cross "but for this cause came I unto this hour," John quotes Jesus. To the Apostle Peter and two others in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus declares, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The self-consciousness that He was to bear the sins of the world so overwhelmed him that Luke, the Greek physician and companion of the Apostle Paul, stated, "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."[37]

> No one seems to have ever doubted that He possessed a true human body prior to His death, and even after His resurrection He went out of His way to demonstrate the genuineness of His human body.[38]

The Messianic work of Jesus Christ is equally important in the development of Christology. The apostles – all of them Jewish – saw in the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth the promised Messiah. Whereas the Bible was not written to prove or defend the existence of God, the gospels were written to demonstrate that in Jesus was

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[36] John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 110.

[37] *The Holy Bible*, Luke 22:39-46. See also John 12:27 & Matthew 26:36-46.

[38] Walvoord, 110.

the fulfillment of the Old Testament. For this reason the gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) place great emphasis on the words of Jesus.[39] According to the gospels, it was Jesus who claimed to be the long-awaited Messiah, not the apostles who after Jesus' death attributed him the title of Christ. It was Jesus who explained how the redemption and forgiveness of fallen man, as revealed in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms, must be fulfilled through the suffering, death and resurrection of the Christ, in accordance with the Scriptures. And, Jesus claimed, he was the Christ of whom he spoke.

> Isaiah prophesied that Messiah would give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and healing to the lame (Isa. 29:18; 32:3; 35:5-6; cf. also Zeph. 3:19). When John's disciples came to inquire of Jesus, He reminded them of these prophecies and applied them to Himself (Matt. 11: 4-5). The miracles that Jesus performed were attestations to His deity and Messiahship; He performed the works of God in their midst. When the miracles are studied this truth becomes evident.[40]

In all, the New Testament writers attribute to Jesus of Nazareth the fulfillment of more than sixty major messianic prophecies.[41] The prophecies that speak of the Messiah's resurrection and future glory – a heavenly kingdom, or "New Jerusalem," where the redeemed people of God worship and reign with the Messiah – tie the work of the Messiah to the development of Catholic orthodoxy involved in God's plan of salvation and the doctrine of decrees. Like the apostles, the early Church Fathers established as orthodox the belief that the Messiah died a substitutionary death, or *vicarious*, meaning "one in place of another," on behalf of sinners. And through this death man was redeemed, i.e. man was reconciled to God, and propitiation, the satisfactory payment for sin, was achieved and the righteous demands of the Holy God of Israel satisfied. The result of this work was the forgiveness of sin and justification of the sinner, i.e. "the bestowal of Christ's righteousness on all who believe."[42] The Messianic work of Christ has been the subject of significant debate and division over the Christian centuries, especially its application in the life of the Christian; however, the orthodox

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[39] Enns, 229. The words of Jesus make up more than half the gospels.

[40] Ibid., 230-231.

[41] McDowell, 102.

[42] Enns, 232-233.

position concerning that work, at the dawning of Islam in seventh century, is that seen above.

c. Soteriology: the Doctrine of Salvation

Soteriology is the final doctrine examined in this thesis. Soteriology: the doctrine of Salvation, is the Church's understanding of (1) the necessity of salvation, (2) the application of salvation, and (3) the divine goals of salvation. Salvation as taught by the apostolic Fathers was belief that Christ's substitutionary atonement completely satisfied the righteous requirements of God, bringing salvation to all who believed.[43] The concept of Christ's atonement for sins was never fully elaborated on by the apostolic Fathers, but they frequently wrote that salvation was through the blood of Jesus Christ. Clement of Rome (100) states: "Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ and understand how precious it is unto His Father, because being shed for our salvation it won for the whole world the grace of repentance." Ignatius likewise taught that faith in the shed blood of Christ procures salvation.[44] The early Church Fathers also believed in the necessity for salvation: that the true spiritual condition of all humans was by nature that of depravity and, apart from faith in Jesus Christ, man was without hope. They also taught the application of salvation as "sanctification by the Spirit and (man's) belief in the truth" and "obedience (man's belief in the gospel) and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus (the divine application of the atonement to the gospel believer)."[45] The Church saw the application of salvation as a two-way street: God's part and man's part. God's part in the application of salvation to the believer in Jesus, said the Church, took place in time past, when by decree God choose some for faith in Christ; in the present, when God actively called sinners to repentance; and in the future, when the Christian would be delivered from mortality to the future eternal state. Man's part in salvation was two-fold: faith and works. Like the apostles, the ancient Fathers taught that man was responsible for coming to faith in Christ (although, God in time past had freely chosen His elect). By 'coming to faith' the Church meant that a man would (1) assent to the facts of the gospel,

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[43] Ibid., 425.

[44] Ibid., 411.

[45] Barackman, 329.

(2) repent of sins, and (3) trust in Christ and His atoning work.[46] But man needed also to demonstrate his saving-faith through his works. In his late-first century letters to the Corinthians, Clement stressed obedience to the commands of God, to holiness and righteousness, baptism, doing the will of the Father, loving one another, and fleeing from evil. This emphasis on godly-living eventually gave way to soteriological heresies that became the focus of several Church councils including the Council of Arles (314) that concluded, "outside the Church there is no salvation."[47] By the seventh century, Christian orthodoxy explained salvation as faith in Jesus Christ, Church membership, and good works.

The divine goals of soteriology conclude this discussion of doctrine. According to orthodox theology the divine goals of salvation are the glorification of God "by some manifestation of Himself in creation" and "the creation of a new human race in Christ with elect members of the old race."[48] This belief underpins the Christian theological rejection of Islam, and all other religious faiths: salvation is exclusively Christian because only the elect members of the human race *in Christ* will live eternally to glorify God. The Christian's place *in Christ*, orthodoxy said, was garnered in the Church and based upon the belief in the deity and humanity of Christ, and the Messianic work of Christ in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scripture. And while the average Christian did not have personal access to the Bible in the centuries leading up to the rise of Islam, he did have significant exposure to its teachings through Church worship and the doctrinal creeds and statements of faith. As previously stated, the Church's initial, and long lasting, impression of Islam was that it was merely an off-shoot Eastern heresy whose power came not from the supernatural, but from military and political prowess. As such, no Church – Roman, Byzantine, or otherwise gave credence to Islam's religious claims. This same prejudice continues to this day.

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[46] Ibid., 329-334.

[47] Robert C. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History*, Chart 14 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986).

[48] Barackman, 345.

C. BATTLING HERESY

The "hammering out" of orthodox Christianity was the result of the Church's long battle against heretical theologies. A synopsis of several such heresies is presented below. To aid the contextual setting, where possible the heresies are presented in chronological order. Descriptions are limited to include only enough context to convey how the Church's battle against heresy conditioned its reaction to Islam. Finally, some mention is made of the theological similarities the Church believed to exist between Islam and each particular heresy.

1. Heresies Attacking the Doctrine of God

Three heresies attacking the doctrine of God: Gnosticism, Montanism, and Arianism are examined herein. Gnosticism began as a Christian heresy, but developed into its own very different religion. For its part, it denied the unique Oneness and Singularity of God by making him the supreme God among lesser gods. The Montanists were in most respects orthodox, but set out to change the decrees of God by claiming the arrival of a hitherto unforeseen age of prophecy and revelation. Arianism was a monotheistic movement posed to challenge the Trinitarian nature of God, which eventually forced the Church to better define Christ's relationship to the Father and Holy Spirit.

a. Gnosticism

Although its teachings were refuted as unorthodox by Irenaeus of Lyons and Tertullian and Hippolytus of Carthage in the second and third centuries Gnostic philosophy remained influential throughout the Roman Empire, especially in Egypt and Greater Syria, up till the fifth century. Gnosticism denied not only certain aspects of Christian orthodoxy; it denied the whole of orthodoxy. Regarding the doctrine of God, the Gnostics taught polytheism: the existence of a supreme God and lesser deities. The supreme God existed totally apart from this world and took no part in its creation, which "was the bungling work of a lesser deity" (often identified as the God of the Old Testament).[49] Between this evil world of matter and the supreme God was a spiritual world of divine beings, some which were good and some evil. Human souls belonged to this spiritual world, but were trapped in the physical world until death. Salvation, they

[49] Lane, 16.

said, was the freeing of the soul from the physical body of man and, to this end, the man Jesus paved humanity's way when the spirit of Christ came upon him at the cross. Belief in these teachings was based upon a "secret" collection of apostolic writings, the possession of which the Gnostics claimed gave them the right to be called the "true Church."

The Gnostic challenge resulted in several important theological developments. First, Gnostic polytheism caused the Church to more clearly define its doctrine of God including, for the first time, an explanation of Trinitarian theology. Second, Gnostic claims to secret apostolic traditions and *other* Scriptures forced the Church to formulate an authoritative canon of apostolic writings, an effort not completed until 393.[50] The Gnostic concept of the ultra-transcendence of God, its rejection of Trinitarian theology, its peculiar – declared unorthodox – representation of Christ's nature and the minimizing of Christ's humanity influenced many heresies, and as far as the Church was concerned ultimately influenced Islam. By way of comparison, Islam's view of God as the *unknowable* Divine Will "beyond which neither reason nor revelation go," was regarded as a serious deviation from orthodox teaching.[51] The Church held that God was in fact knowable, and *in the Christian* the love of God was perfected.[52] The strong Gnostic presence among heretical Christian and non-Christian groups in the

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[50] At the Council of Hippo (393) Augustine, bishop of Hippo, officially recognized the twenty-seven book New Testament canon. The Muratorian Canon (170) was the first officially recognized canon, and included twenty-three of the twenty-seven books currently contained in the New Testament (the remaining four books were in use but the authenticity of each was in dispute). Prior to Hippo, the Council of Laodicea (363) stated that only the Old Testament and *the* twenty-seven books of the New Testament (not yet officially recognized) could be read in the Churches. Following Hippo, the Council of Carthage (397) affirmed that only canonical books could be read in the Churches. The Council of Jamnia (90) recognized the canonicity of the Old Testament.

[51] Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 43. To say that Allah is *unknowable* is to say that He exists in a realm – the realm of His Will – completely separate from His creation, where he is intimately sovereign over all and in all things freely executes His Will as He pleases. In this sense, He can be as close as your juggler vein (50:16) and shape the baby in the womb (3:6) or purposely lead people astray (6:125) and allow unbelievers to live simply so they may grow in wickedness (3:178).

[52] *The Holy Bible*, I John 2:5. Muslim theologians reject suggestions that Allah's love, or other attributes, can be perfected in man – Muslim or non-Muslim. Claiming an experience with God, or relationship, one runs the risk of "encroaching upon the absolute transcendence of the God of Islam, of anthropomorphizing him." See Annemarie Schimmel and Abdoldjavad Falaturi, *We Believe in One God* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), 85. Quoted by Geisler and Saleeb, 28.

Persian Empire and Arabia between the second and seventh centuries also led to the belief that Gnosticism influenced Muhammad's teachings.

b. Montanism

The late-second century heresy Montanism, or the "New Prophecy" as its adherents called it, may have been the first Christian reaction to the infiltrating effects of modernity in the Church, i.e., fundamentalism. Its founder, Montanus of Phrygia, in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), argued against what he believed was excessive institutionalism and worldliness in the Church and sought to lead the Church back to an age of apostolic and prophetic revelation.[53] His call to holy living was welcomed by many leaders in the orthodox community including Tertullian and Irenaeus, who urged the Church "not to condemn it without due consideration."[54] However, his promotion of martyrdom as a means of attaining salvation, claims to receiving extra-biblical revelation, and pronouncement that he was the promised *Paraclete*, or Advocate, for a new post-Christian era of prophecy and outpouring of the Holy Spirit earned him the status of heretic and exile from the communion of Christian believers.

Ecclesiastical authorities responded to Montanus' claims by declaring that all biblical revelation and the use of special spiritual gifts, such as 'speaking in tongues,' had come to an end with the collection of the apostolic books of the New Testament, which books were then "set apart (the apostolic writings) as uniquely authorative."[55] Additionally, the Church rejected Montanus' claim to being the promised *Paraclete* stating that according to the Apostle John Jesus identified the *Paraclete* as the Holy Spirit.[56] Four hundred years later Muhammad made similar claims: the Qur'an was the eternally begotten Word of Allah and Muhammad, said the Qur'an, was the fulfillment of

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[53] Howard F. Vos, *Exploring Church History*, A Nelson's Christian Cornerstone Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), 32.

[54] Lane, 17.

[55] Shelley, 65. All twenty-seven books of the New Testament were in use during the Montanist controversy. See Note 51.

[56] *The Holy Bible*, John 14:16-26; 15:26; 16:7-15 for references to the *Paraclete*, or Holy Spirit. The Christian belief involves the permanent, abiding, and indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, in the Christian believer. The Spirit is said to comfort, guide in all truth, convict the world of sin and righteousness, bear witness of and glorify Christ.

the *Paraclete* promise.[57] The Church rejected Muhammad, his claims, and the Qur'an as antithetical to the biblical revelation of Christianity.

c. Arianism

Arius, a powerful pastor from Alexandria, presented his view of Christ at the Church's First Ecumenical Council at Nicea, in Asia Minor, in 325: "The Son of God was a created being, made from nothing; there was a time when he had no existence and he was capable of change and of alternating between good and evil."[58] Athanasius, archdeacon of Alexandria, argued against Arius, asserting, "if Christ were a mere creature, faith in Him could not bring salvation to all humanity."[59] Arius' position was clearly outside of mainstream orthodoxy, but he nevertheless had the support of several influential Churchmen including the Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea. On behalf of Arius, Eusebius offered the council a compromise, which was categorically rebuffed, and the Church instead drafted the Creed of Nicea. This creed was no compromise: it contained language that left no doubt to the Church's position regarding the deity of Christ and the Trinity. Arius' teachings, however, remained popular over the next fifty years, especially among the masses. "Arius made Christianity easier to understand. It seemed more reasonable to think of Christ as a kind of divine hero: greater than an ordinary human being, but of a lower rank than the eternal God."[60] Easier or not, Arius' teachings continued to divide the Church, and to head off any further division the Church convened the Second Ecumenical Council, at Constantinople in 381. There the Church adopted a final version of the Creed of Nicea, now called the Nicene Creed, and the Arianian controversy came to an end.

The Councils of Nicea and Constantinople became the blueprint by which Catholic Christianity would defend itself against attacks from unorthodoxy: Ecumenical Councils led by bishops, attended by clergy, and often mediated by the Emperor, would settle the affairs of the Church and decide the fate of those who preached heresy. In the

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[57] *The Holy Qur'an, English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, King Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, trans. (Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah, Saudi Arabia: King Faud Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, 1972), 61:6; 7:157.

[58] Shelley, 102.

[59] Vos, 40.

[60] Ibid., 100.

case of Arianism, the Council at Constantinople agreed that "begotten of the Father" did not mean "created by the Father *out of nothing*," as taught by Arius. It was also agreed that Jesus Christ "is true God from true God," as opposed to Arius' contention that the Father alone was "true God." And finally, it was agreed that Jesus Christ "is begotten, not made – he is the Son of God, not a creature."[61] These important statements further clarified the Church's doctrinal position on the Trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son, and on these positions the Church went headlong into theological confrontation with Islam.

The religion of Muhammad stood unequivocally opposed to Trinitarian theology, the notion of a 'Godhead,' and the association of anyone with God, the sin of *shirk* – Islam's unforgivable sin. From the Qur'an it was said:

> Allah forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him…Say not "Trinity": desist: It will be better for you: For Allah is One God: Glory be to Him: (Far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affair…Say, He is Allah, The One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten; And there is none Like unto Him.[62]

To the Church, it was obvious that the Arabs' new theology was Arian. John of Damascus (675-749), of whom more will be mentioned later, lived his life among the Muslims of Palestine (his grandfather handed the city over to the Muslims in 635). He was convinced that Islam was a Christian heresy built upon lies of an Arian monk Muhammad supposedly met on his caravan voyages to Syria.[63] The Arabs even made Jesus a kind of hero, although not '*kind of divine*' as Arius believed Jesus to be, but still greater than an ordinary human being: he was sinless (as are all prophets in Islamic theology), born of a virgin, performed miracles, was raised to Allah, and was the one who would slay the Antichrist in the Final Hour;[64] yet he was not God or deity.

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[61] Lane, 28.

[62] *The Holy Qur'an* 4:171; 112:1-4.

[63] Hugh Gooddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2001), 38-39.

[64] *The Holy Qur'an* 3:45-51; 19:16-21; 5:110-115; 3:55; 4:158. According to a tradition by al-Muslim (d. 875), Muslims would know the end was near when Jesus returned to slay the Antichrist and establish peace and righteousness. See Khouj, 42-43; Geisler and Saleeb, 113.

2. Heresies Attacking the Doctrine of the Son

The heresies attacking the doctrine of the Son: Nestorianism and Monophysitism, also had a significant impact on Christianity's reaction to Islam. Nestorianism denied the full deity of Christ, confusing the relationship between Jesus' two natures, while Monophysitism attacked the full humanity of Christ, teaching that Christ's human nature had been either absorbed or completely replaced by the divine nature (one nature vice two). After being declared heretical by the Church, both sects spread to parts of Arabia and the Persian Empire where each became quite influential.

a. Nestorianism

Nestorianism was as much a political controversy as doctrinal heresy. "The whole affair was disgustingly riddled with power politics," writes Bruce Shelley. "One of the most repulsive contests in Church history," Church historian Williston Walker called it.[65] Regardless, the Church ruled that Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, he had erred in his explanation of how the two natures of Christ were related in one person, teaching that God the Word only indwelt Jesus the man. "Neither nature shared in the properties of the other; so the divine did not have a part in the sufferings of the human nature of Christ."[66] Nestorius favored the formula "two natures of Christ after the union" to emphasize the separateness of the two natures, and he objected to the use of such phrases as "God dies," "God was born," and referring to Jesus' mother as the "Mother of God."[67] Cyril of Alexandria, Nestorius' most vocal opponent, saw this attack against Christ as a direct threat to the doctrines of salvation and incarnation. He challenged Nestorius' teachings, arguing that Nestorius' view placed the redemption of all mankind on the shoulders of a human, something for which, Cyril argued, there was no biblical justification. Cyril laid out the orthodox position: "Jesus Christ is not a man indwelt by or conjoined to God the Word – he *is* God the Word, made flesh (incarnate)."[68] To this Nestorius stated, "I could not call a baby two or three months old God."[69]

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[65] Shelley, 113.

[66] Vos, 41.

[67] John Joseph, *Muslim-Christian Relations and Inter-Christian Rivalries in the Middle East: The Case of the Jacobites in an Age of Transition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 4.

[68] Lane, 46.

[69] Socrates, *Church History* 7:34. Quoted by Lane, 46.

To settle the Nestorian controversy the Church convened the Third Ecumenical Council, at Ephesus in 431. The council, wrought with controversy from the very beginning, was split in its support for Cyril and Nestorius; the majority supporting Cyril but a powerful Eastern minority from Antioch siding with Nestorius. Both sides eventually accepted a compromise resolution, the *Formula of Reunion*, but the outcome clearly favored Cyril, who was satisfied that he had saved the Catholic doctrines of salvation and incarnation. Nestorius, meanwhile, was banished to a monastery in Egypt and his teachings anathematized.[70]

Although the Council at Ephesus clarified several doctrinal issues, it also widened differences between Eastern Christendom's two schools of thought, the Antiochene and Alexandrian. In short, the debate was one of Christology: the Antiochenes leaning towards Christ's humanity and the Alexandrians in the direction of Christ's divinity (the Nestorian heresy an example of the former; the Monophysite heresy [discussed later] an example of the latter). By the end of the fourth century, the differences between the two communities came down to those who accepted the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon and the Nestorians and Monophysites, who did not.[71]

Nestorius' teachings grew in popularity even after the decision against him at Ephesus. Within just a few years Nestorian Churches sprang up in Syria and across of the Persian Empire. By the time Islam arrived in these areas a number of Arab tribes held Nestorian beliefs, including the tribe of Lakhm in northeastern Arabia, an important ally of the Persians in their war against the Byzantines. Archeologists and Church historians have confirmed the existence of Nestorian Churches along the east coast of Arabia as well. Monophysitism likewise spread from Syria and Egypt to Arabia and Persia.[72] The spread of these bastard Churches into non-Christian lands added a political dimension to Christianity's battle against heresy and would prove very important in the Christian reaction to Islam.

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[70] Cyril's compromise with the followers of Nestorius is in the language of *Formula of Reunion*. The document leaves no doubt as to what the Catholic Church considers orthodox, however, it does not openly condemn Nestorius.

[71] Goddard, 14.

[72] Ibid., 15-17.

Theologically Muslims and Nestorians shared the view that Jesus was a great moral example to be followed, but was not "the word of God made flesh." They also had a common understanding that Jesus had only a human nature, which results in a shared view concerning the doctrine of incarnation, i.e., they both denied Christian orthodoxy. The Qur'an reads, "Christ, the son of Mary, was no more than a messenger…Yet see in what ways they [Christians] are deluded away from the truth! …Say: "O People of the Book! Exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper)."[73] Nestorians essentially said the same thing – calling Jesus divine (apart from the abiding presence of the Christ) was to exceed the bounds of the Christian faith. If this was the extent of commonality between Islam and Nestorianism it would be significant enough for the Church to draw the conclusion that Islam was a similar heretical sect, however, surprisingly, the two have at least one other doctrinal similarity worth mentioning: their views on Hell. Muhammad's "expressions, phrases, formulae and manner of words used" to describe hell share a striking resemblance to the homilies of Ephraim, a Nestorian preacher from the sixth century. "It may almost be said that fear of hell was the original basis of all the Prophet's teaching, and that he owed much of his language on the subject to Syrian Christianity. He believed the pious *should* be afraid."[74] Islam's references to eternal punishment in hell are many and are dreadfully descriptive. "They drink festering water and though death appears on all sides, they are not able to die…Boiling water will be poured over their heads, melting their insides as well as their skins, and hooks of iron will drag them back should they try to escape."[75]

b. Monophysitism

Monophysitism was extreme Alexandrian thought, the antithesis of Nestorianism. It elevated the divinity of Christ to the denial of the full humanity of Christ. Monophysitism, meaning 'sole nature,' was an argument for Christ having just one nature, a divine nature. Eutyches, an Alexandrian monk from Constantinople and early proponent of Monophysitism, taught that Christ's human nature had been absorbed by His divine nature. "(Just) as a drop of honey, which falls into the sea, dissolves in it,"

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[73] *The Holy Qur'an* 5:75, 77.

[74] Sir John Glubb, *The Life and Times of Muhammad.* (Oxford: Madison Books, 1998), 96.

[75] *The Holy Qur'an* 14:16-17; 22:19-21

so Christ's human nature was lost in the divine nature.[76] Later Monophysites were unwilling to accept Eutyches' teaching of an impersonal human nature absorbed into the divine. Instead, they held that Christ had only one nature.

Although the Church declared Monophysitism, in all its various forms, unorthodox and heretical at the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, it nevertheless saw the need to handle the controversy with the utmost care: it had to stop the spread of Monophysitism without forcing Alexandrian Christians out of the Church and causing a split in the East. As it was, the Alexandrians remained bitterly opposed to the conclusions reached at Ephesus and Chalcedon on the nature of Christ. Those conclusions had been too Antiochene, they claimed. In all actuality however the Church – and Emperor – had used these councils to broker a peaceful solution to the differences between the two schools. Another attempt at peace came at the Fifth Ecumenical Council, the Council of Constantinople in 553. There the Church adopted Alexandrian language to its conclusions concerning the nature of Christ and even wrote that "Chalcedon should be understood in an Alexandrian way" to calm fears that Chalcedon had opened the door to extreme Antiochenism (Nestorianism). In the end, however, the Alexandrians rejected the Council and split Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Monophysitism remained popular throughout Egypt, Ethiopia, and Syria, and eventually became the dominant form of Christianity in Persia and Arabia, claiming among others the Ghassanids and Najd as adherents.[77]

The Monophysites played the important role of predicting and affirming Muhammad's call to prophethood in Ibn Ishaq's biography of Muhammad. The cousin of Muhammad's wife Khadija, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who, it is said, translated the New Testament into Arabic and demonstrated that Muhammad was to be the next prophet, was most likely a Monophysite Christian. Another Monophysite, the king of Axum (Abyssinia), at one point gave refugee to Muslims fleeing Mecca and, after debating the merits of Islam with the Meccans, declared that the difference between his Christian belief in Jesus and that of the Muslims was no greater than the length of a stick.[78] The

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[76] Shelley, 113.

[77] Goddard, 15.

[78] Ibid., 20.

Church found no theological connection between the Monophysites and Islam. And, although, the Monophysites in eastern Christendom were a continuous thorn-in-side to the Church, they were a trusted ally against the Muslims in Syria and northern Arabia during the early battles between Byzantium and Arabia.

3. Heresies Attacking the Doctrine of Salvation

Although it is possible to include other heresies that came against the orthodox doctrine of salvation, Pelagianism is especially significant because its teachings on original sin, the nature of man, and God's grace (thus man's free-will) have much in common with the Islamic view of man and salvation. Pelagianism also earned the rebuke of Augustine, and provided medieval Christendom with much of its theological response to Islam.

a. Pelagianism

Objections to the doctrine of original sin were not new to the Catholic Church of the fourth century. What made Pelagianism different was that it gained the attention of Augustine. Pelagius was a British (or possibly Irish) monk who taught that Adam's sin affected only Adam. Sins committed since the time of Adam were the result of man's free will and the influence of the society around him. God's grace merely aided man in his pursuit of a sinless life, which life was entirely possible since man was born essentially good and capable of doing what was necessary for salvation.[79]

Augustine and Pelagius came to blows shortly after Pelagius' arrival in North Africa during the first decade of the fifth century. There was no doubt among Church leaders that Augustine spoke for orthodoxy, as Pelagius' teaching were damned by a Carthaginian synod in 412, by Pope Innocent I in 416, by a council of African Churches in 418, and finally by the Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431.[80] According to Augustine, bishop of Hippo and Father of Western Christianity: all men had sinned 'in Adam' and thus all were guilty of sin and inclined toward sin. "Fallen man is in the sad position of sinning inevitably, yet 'freely' or willingly."[81] Augustine explained that salvation was completely by God's grace and given only to the elect. First, God's

[79] Vos, 43.

[80] Ibid., 43.

[81] Lane, 44.

operating grace brought the sinner's will into conformity with God's will, and then *co-operating grace* enabled man's converted, but still weak, will to co-operate with God's grace for salvation.[82] Although Pelagianism was condemned at Ephesus, the Church only partially accepted Augustine's view of man. What it did finally accept came to be known as semi-Pelagianism, which stressed that both the grace of God and the free will of man were operative in salvation.[83] Several hundred years after Pelagianism, the Church saw these same heretical teachings reintroduced by Islam. The Qur'an denied original sin and man's inclination towards sin, and taught that he was essentially good. Man was misguided and prone to make mistakes, but not inclined toward sin.

> As turned out from the creative hand of Allah, man is innocent, pure, true, free, inclined to right and virtue, and endued with true understanding…That is his true nature, just as the nature of a lamb is to be gentle…but man is caught in the meshes of customs, superstitions, selfish desires, and false teaching…the problem before spiritual teachers is to cure this crookedness…Repentance does not mean sackcloth and ashes, or putting on a gloomy pessimism…It means giving up the disease for health…for the Straight Way.[84]

Because man was not naturally inclined toward sin, he was capable of doing what was necessary for salvation. "To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath Allah promised forgiveness and a great reward."[85] The seventh century Church theoretically agreed with Islam's faith plus works formula for salvation, but it found Islam, like Pelagianism, in error because it did not address man's problem with sin: man needed to be redeemed. And if Islam denied man's need for redemption, which was absolutely central to the mission of Jesus Christ to mankind – redemption at the Cross – then how was the Church to explain Islam? Abbot Peter the Venerable of Cluny provided this explanation:

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[82] Ibid., 44.

[83] This is Augustine's doctrine of the Church over his doctrine of grace. Conversely, B.B. Warfield, eminent professor of didactic and polemical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary (1887-1921) called the Reformation "the ultimate triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the Church." Lane, 192.

[84] *The Holy Qur'an* 30:30-31. Comments by Abdullah Yasuf Ali.

[85] *The Holy Qur'an* 5:9.

"I cannot clearly decide," he feels bound to admit, "whether the Mohammedan error must be called a heresy and its followers heretics, or whether they are to be called pagans. For I see them, now in the manner of heretics, take certain things from the Christian faith and reject other things; then – a thing which no heresy is described as ever having done – acting as well as teaching according to pagan custom…. For in company with certain heretics (Mohammed writes so in his wicked Koran), they preach that Christ was indeed born of a virgin, and they say that he is greater than every other man, not excluding Mohammed; they affirm that he lived a sinless life, preached truths, and worked miracles. They acknowledge that he was the Spirit of God, the Word – but not the Spirit of God or the Word as we either know or expound. They insanely hold that the passion and death of Christ were not mere fantasies (as the Manichaeans [had held]), but did not actually happen. They hold these and similar things, indeed, in company with heretics. With pagans, however, they reject baptism, do not accept the Christian sacrifice [of the Mass, and] deride penance and all the rest of the sacraments of the Church…Choose, therefore, whichever you prefer: either call [the Moslems] heretics…or call them pagans."[86]

Such was Christianity's madness and confusion over Islam.

[86] James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 143-144. Peter chose to call them heretics.

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III. CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ISLAM

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter demonstrates the historical experience of Christian-Muslim relations and examines the application of Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam through statecraft. It argues that although each major branch of the Christian Church has had distinctly different relationships with Islam each, nevertheless, has maintained its historic Christian theological perspective of Islam as a false religion. It explains early Christian perspectives on Islam, the change in perspective that occurred during the Protestant Reformation that led to Western dominance, and modern Christian perspectives on Islam, including: Christian-Muslim ecumenism, the challenge that Evangelical Protestantism and the events of 11 September 2001 bring to West-Muslim relations, and an assessment of current theological attitudes.

B. EARLY CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON ISLAM

From a purely theological point of view, the Church did not know what to think of Islam when it burst on to the world stage. One thing was certain though: the Church had no need for a competing worldview. And why should it? Over the Church's six hundred years of existence it had weathered persecution, won over barbarians, withstood heresy, and it was now attempting to influence the consolidation of power in the Germanic-controlled areas of the Roman West and preserve power in the Byzantine East. Islam's rise and spread was a noticeable threat, but for the Church in the West it was merely one *more* threat. Incessant tension between the Bishop of Rome and the Emperor in Constantinople, a struggle endangering Catholic and Orthodox unity, represented the most serious danger. This conflict between religious and secular authorities in Rome and Constantinople, respectively, had much to do with the perception and response of Christendom to Islam.

The West's first encounter with Islam was the Berber defense of Carthage in 647. By the time this longtime center of Christianity finally gave way to the Arabs in 698, Berber Muslims from Libya and Morocco were marching to Gibraltar en route to continental Europe, which they reached in 711. Two decades later a small force of Muslims met defeat at Tours. The battle became the rallying cry of medieval Europe, but

compared to events taking place throughout northern and central Europe, the Muslim presence was not the most immediate threat to Western security. The East's encounter with Islam was considerably different however. The Muslim invasions there were not simply minor skirmishes, they were large battles that resulted in the loss of chief cities, such as: Antioch, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. From the first encounters in Palestine and Syria in 633-634, Islam was a clear and present danger to both the Eastern Church and Byzantine state. Yet, for all of its losses at the hands of the Arab invaders, long borders and constant interaction, especially during times of peace, resulted in the development of a special relationship between the Byzantine and Islamic empires, one of "spoliation and emulation".[87]

1. Eastern Orthodox Church

Understanding the Muslims was easier for the state than the Church. To the governing authorities in Constantinople the fanatical, Islamized Arabs had simply taken the adversarial position recently forfeited by the Persians, who surrendered to the Byzantines in December 627. Emperor Heraclius, and the emperors who followed, fought the Arabs without pause from the winter of 633 until the summer of 678, when a fifth Arab attempt at penetrating the walls of Constantinople failed, and the two rivals finally agreed to a thirty-year peace.[88] On theological grounds however there was no treaty. By 678 the Eastern bishops, or *patriarchs*, were still confused by this latest of rivals. Within the Church's first one hundred years of interaction with Islam, three strains of interpretation developed: Islam as the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham and his son Ishmael, as judgment from God on those Christians who accepted the Christological definitions of the Council of Chalcedon, and the predominant view – Islam as a Christian heresy.[89]

a. God's Promise to Ishmael

> To Hagar the maid, concubine of Abram and mother of Ishmael, the Book of Genesis records that the angel of the LORD said, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they shall be too many to count." Thirteen years later, Sarah is given the Lord's blessing and promised a

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[87] Peter Partner, *God of Battles: Holy War in Christianity and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 48.

[88] John Freely, *Istanbul: The Imperial City* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 96-97.

[89] Goddard, 41.

> son. Abram, now called Abraham, questions the Lord concerning this second son, and cries out, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!" But the Lord says, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold I will bless him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac."[90]

The early Church's interpretation of these Biblical passages was understood allegorically to mean that the Church was Isaac's line and the Jewish people were of Ishmael's. It seemed appropriate enough. Israel consisted of twelve tribes and, although blessed, they had rejected Jesus, whose lineage could be traced to Isaac. This interpretation served the Church well in defense of its horrible treatment of the Jews and fit well into its teaching that the Church had replaced Israel as God's chosen people.[91] This allegorical interpretation, no matter how useful to the Church, was merely symbolic. It was known by Churchmen as well as Jews and Arabs, that Ishmael's literal descendants were the Arabs. Thus, when the Arabs pushed out of Arabia and towards Jerusalem, the Armenian bishop Sebeos, writing around 661, explained that Muhammad had been "very learned and well-versed in the Law of Moses, he taught them [the Arabs] to know the God of Abraham."[92] When it was clear to the Church, however, that the Arab-Muslims did not simply see themselves as the realization of Ishmael's blessings but also as a corrective, post-Christian community, the Church began to look at other explanations for Islam's presence.

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[90] *The Holy Bible*, Genesis 16:10; 17:18-20. Furthermore, Genesis 21:9-21 records the departure of Hagar and Ishmael from the house of Abraham following the birth of Isaac, when they are sent into the wilderness with nothing but a piece of bread, skin of water, and the promise of God's protection. They were protected and, somewhat surprisingly, the next mention of Ishmael is his coming together with Isaac to bury Abraham in Genesis 25: 9.

[91] Many of the early Church Fathers taught that the Church had taken the place of Israel, either literally involving the physical promises made to the nation in the Old Testament or spiritually concerning Israel's position as the 'chosen people' of God. This allegorizing is found first in the writings of Clement and Justin Martyr (100-163).

[92] J. Moorhead, "The Earliest Christian Theological Response to Islam," in *Religion*, 11 (1981), 265-66. Quoted by Goddard, 35.

b. God's Judgment for Chalcedon

Non-Chalcedonian Christian sects like the Nestorians and Monophysites saw the Muslims as an instrument in the hand of God to reprove the Romans, who had since the Council of Chalcedon in 451 caused great suffering among Christian groups not accepting the Christological conclusions of Chalcedon. "The Lord abandoned the Romans as a punishment for their corrupt faith, and because of the anathemas uttered against them by the ancient fathers, on account of the Council of Chalcedon," recorded one Monophysite bishop.[93] In another account the Monophysite patriarch of Alexandria, Benjiman I (622-661), wrote about a dream of Emperor Heraculius. In the dream, a circumcised nation takes possession of all the Emperor's lands. Believing the dreams to be about the Jews, the Emperor rules that all Jews living within Byzantine will be baptized as Christians. Shortly after the dream Arab armies stormed into Alexandria, and according to Benjamin, "brought back the worshippers of idols (Chalcedonian Christians, i.e., the Byzantines) to the knowledge of the One God, and bade them declare that Muhammad was his apostle; and his nation was circumcised in the flesh."[94] So to the Monophysites and Nestorians, Islam represented God's punishment against Orthodox Church and, in some cases, the latest revelation of the One God.

c. Islam as Christian Heresy

The Eastern Church's earliest source of information on Islamic theology was John of Damascus, who lived among and went to school with Muslims in late-seventh century Palestine, spoke Arabic, and hence his knowledge of Islam and the Qur'an was first-hand.[95] In his work, *De Haeresibus* (On Heresies), he lists 100 heresies and lists Islam as the one hundred and first. Islam was "a deceptive superstition of the Ishmaelites" conjured up by Muhammad under the influence of an Arian monk from Syria and was "the fore-runner of the Antichrist."[96] In *Disputatio Saraceni et Christiani*

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[93] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 353. Quoted by Goddard, 37.

[94] Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen Through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), 335.

[95] Latourette, 292. He was also a first-rate theologian and published several comprehensive books on theology, including *The Fountain of Knowledge*, which was translated into Latin and influenced Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas.

[96] Goddard, 39. John applied the term "Antichrist" to anyone who "does not confess that the Son of God came in flesh, is perfect God and He became perfect man while at the same time He was God." He

(The Disputation of a Muslim and a Christian), John points to several Islamic doctrines which Christians engaged in theological discussion with Muslims should contest to defeat the Islamic heresy: the relationship between divine omnipotence and human free will, and the identity of the 'word of God'.[97] John's works remained the most reliable sources on Islam, in Eastern or Western Christendom, until the twelfth century.

Whether viewed as the promise to Ishmael, God's judgment against Chalcedon, or Christian heresy the first official recognition of Islam as a separate, unique religion did not come until the early tenth-century in a letter from the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nicholas I Mysticus, to the Caliph of Baghdad.

> All earthly authority and rule depend from the rule and authority that are above: and there is no authority among men, nor any potentate who succeeds to his power on earth by his native ability, unless the Author and Ruler and only Potentate in the Highest shall approve his succession…What do I mean by this? I mean there are two lordships, that of the Saracens and that of the Romans, which stand above all lordship on earth and shine out like the two mighty beacons in the firmament. They ought, for this very reason alone, to be in contract and brotherhood and not, because we differ in our lives and habits and religion, remain alien in all ways to each other, and deprive themselves of correspondence carried on in writing.[98]

Thus it was approximately three hundred years before the Eastern Church recognized Islam as a distinct religious faith. This certainly does not mean that some, if not many Christians, Chalcedon and non-Chalcedon alike, did not already view Islam as a separate religion, but prior to the writing of Nicholas' letter there is no indication that anyone within the patriarchate officially recognized Islam. Yet, even after recognition the Church maintained the same theological outlook towards Islam: Since the followers of Islam did not confess the deity of Jesus Christ and they did not recognize the authority of

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traces the use of the term to the New Testament: "By this you know the Scripture of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard was coming, and now it is in the world already." (I John 4:2-3) See D.J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 69, who quotes John of Damascus' *De Fide Orthodoxa*. Quoted by Goddard, 40.

[97] John's two-point argument against Islam became very important in the early development of Islamic Theology. See M.S. Seale, *Muslim Theology* (London: Luzac, 1964), 121-122. Quoted by Goddard, 41.

[98] R Jenkins and L. Westrink, trans., "The Two Lordships Rule the World," in *Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople: Letters* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1973), 3. Quoted by Geanakoplos, 339.

the Church, they were non-Christians bound for eternal separation from God. It was considered "a false religion, to be sure, but a powerful one and major force to be reckoned with."[99] Nicholas' appeal to the Caliph in Baghdad is an early example of inter-faith cooperation between Christian-Muslim relations, but it did nothing to change the fact that theologically Islam was considered anathema.

2. Roman Catholic Church

Rome's response to the advance of Islam was much more subdued than that of Constantinople simply because there was no ruler in the Western Empire to coordinate action against Islam. Factually speaking, from the sack of Rome in 455 and the take over of Italy by the Ostrogoth king Theodoric in 493, "there was not again an Emperor in the West until Charlemagne [800]. The whole of the West was a mosaic of Barbarian kingdoms."[100] The Bishop of Rome, who by divine appointment was subject to the Emperor in Constantinople in state affairs, took advantage of this chaotic situation and used the power of his office to effectively make alliances with the Barbarian kings. The Pope's most reliable ally was Charles Martel, who at the time of the Muslim invasion of southern Gaul was busy consolidating his kingdom in the north. When Charles was finally strong enough to met the Islamic challenge he defeated what amounted to a raiding party but, nevertheless, in the eccentric spirit of the Middle Ages the Battle of Tours took on mythical proportions and came to characterize the West's perception of Islam up through the period of European colonialism. That perception was of the Western world engaged in a heroic battle of good versus evil against Islam, which was a threat of the very existence of Christendom and Western Civilization.

From a theological perspective, few in the West initially regarded Islam as a completely new religion. Instead, like in the East, it was viewed as an obscene parody of Christianity. "It was unlike anything else in their experience. There were times when it seemed plausible to write off the whole scheme as the fantastical product of an evil imagination."[101] What else could explain teachings which claimed to acknowledge the

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[99] Catholic Answers, "Eastern Orthodoxy." Retrieved from the Catholic Answers web site on 16 December 2001 at: http://www.catholic.com/library/Eastern_Orthodoxy.asp.

[100] Henri Pirenne, *Mohammad and Charlemagne* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2001), 32.

[101] R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 6.

God of the Christians yet denied the Trinity, incarnation, and divinity of Christ? To acknowledge the virgin birth of Christ yet denied the crucifixion? To accept a doctrine of future rewards and punishments, but suggest that sexual enjoyment would be the chief delight in Paradise? To acknowledge the Christian and Jewish Scriptures yet claim the sole source of authority to be a book that in the Christian minds was nothing more than a patchwork of unrelated Biblical passages and absurdities? And to uphold a divinely appointed Prophet held in the West to be a man of impure life and worldly lust? Many theologians also questioned Islam's ultimate purpose: Was Islam ushering in the Last Days or was it a stage of history through which Christianity must traverse?

Like their counterparts in the East, most papal theologians considered Islam a heresy. There were those who even suspected that it possibly constituted another schism between Rome and the Eastern Churches.[102] What made a Western consensus all the more difficult was the complete lack of information on Islam in the West. Before 1100, there is "only one mention of the name of 'Mahomet' in medieval literature outside Spain and southern Italy."[103] Yet, the theological position of Rome vis-à-vis Islam remained the same throughout the Middle Ages: Islam was a false religion whose goal was the destruction of Christendom.

C. CHANGING PERSPECTIVES: A SPIRIT OF DETACHMENT

> One thing we cannot expect to find in the Middle Ages is that spirit of detached and academic or humane inquiry, which has characterized much of the inquiry about Islam over the last hundred years [1800s], whether in the heroic journeys of Doughty or the impassioned prose of Carlyle. This spirit of detachment was a product of superiority and of the conviction that there was nothing to fear. Hence an easy sympathy and regard. For the medieval observer there was too much at stake to permit this indulgence.[104]

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[102] Ibid., 6. Theologians in Rome believed that Islam may have been another form of schism between East and West for several reasons. First, the Papacy believed many of the Eastern bishops were illegitimate because they were often handpicked by the Emperor. Second, there was the great debate over Rome's authority, "Did the Roman bishop have authority or oversight of the other bishops?" Third, most heresies had their origins with Eastern bishops (Arianism and Monophysitism in Alexandria and Nestorianism in Constantinople). Therefore, to view Islam in light of a schism between East and West was not without merit.

[103] John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 45.

[104] Southern, 3.

As Christianity moved out of the Middle Ages and into an era of European supremacy, its perspective on Islam began to change. There were no clear signs to indicate a favorable shift in the balance of power between Islam and Christendom. In fact, the spread of Islam in the Far East and Africa, and the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and siege of Vienna in 1529,[105] seemed to justify Christian fears that Islam would soon engulf Europe.[106] Yet, a flickering "spirit of detachment," a conviction that Christianity was about to turn the corner in its battle against Islam, was being felt in Spain. In January 1492, the Catholic Monarchs of Spain, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, completed their re-conquest of Spain, defeating the Muslim Nasrid kingdom in Granada.[107] The victory was a triumph for all of Christendom, Roman and Byzantine. Interestingly, one of those walking into Grenada with Ferdinand and Isabella to receive the Emir's surrender and keys to the city was Christopher Columbus.[108]

> I saw the Moorish king come forth to the gates of the city and kiss the Royal Hands of Your Highness and of the Prince my Lord…devoted to the Holy Christian Faith and the propagators thereof, and enemies of the sect of Mohamet and of all idolatries and heresies, resolved to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the said regions of India…and ordained that I should not go by land (the usual way) to the Orient, but by the route of the Occident, by which no one to this day knows for sure that anyone has gone….[109]

Columbus' mention of his commission to sail west "to the said regions of India" reveals the change occurring in Christian Europe. The days of tolerating Muslim control of the land and sea routes to the Orient were gone. European prosperity and Christian evangelism would triumph even if it meant traveling by routes "no one to this day knows

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[105] Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 242.

[106] Southern, 106.

[107] Lapidus, 389. Isabella and Ferdinand offered gracious terms of surrender: the Emir of Granada could leave Spain and take his army to Africa or he and his men could stay in Spain, where they would be guaranteed religious liberty on the condition that they acknowledge the authority of the Catholic monarchy. The Emir chose to cross Gibraltar for Africa, although many in his army stayed in Spain. Isabella and Ferdinand's guarantee of religious freedom lasted until 1501.

[108] John Eidsmoe, *Columbus & Cortez; Conquerors for Christ* (Green Forest, AK: New Leaf Press, 1992), 78.

[109] Ibid., 84.

for sure that anyone has gone."[110] In the years following Columbus' first voyage across the Atlantic Ocean a host of explorers sought trade routes to the Orient that were beyond Muslim control. Finally, in 1497, Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, outrunning the Arab fleets stationed along the African coast and Indian Ocean, and became the first European seafarer to reach the Asian subcontinent without Muslim interference.[111] Upon his arrival in Calicut, India, da Gama declared that he had come "in search of Christians and spices."[112] Like Columbus, he was interested as much in Christianizing the heathen as he was in opening trade routes for the Crown.

After nearly 800 years of naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, and along the Atlantic Coast from Africa to England, the Arab fleets watched as newer, larger European vessels easily outmaneuvered and outgunned their smaller dhows.[113] Arab fleets were no match for the early European explorers and new European fleets. One Ottoman geographer became so concerned by this that he wrote a book in 1580 warning the sultan of the Empire's sure demise without the construction of a modern fleet.

> Let a channel be cut from the Mediterranean to Suez, and let a great fleet be prepared in the port of Suez; then with the capture of the ports of India and Sind, it will be easy to chase away the infidels and bring the precious wares of these places to our capital.[114]

Regrettably, the Sultan refused the geographer's proposal. According to Hugh Goddard, Europe's sixteenth century ascendancy on the high seas and new world prospects brought about a profound psychological change in Christian-Islamic relations:

> Whereas previously Europe had felt itself to be surrounded by the Muslim world, increasingly, as European travelers voyaged further and further across the oceans, that situation was reversed, and the Muslim world began to feel increasingly surrounded by European influence.[115]

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[110] Mortimer Chambers and others, eds., *The Western Experience*, 4th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 455-463.

[111] Ibid., 456.

[112] Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 33.

[113] Chambers, 456-457.

[114] Lewis, 34.

[115] Goddard, 109.

Simultaneous to the discovery of a new world through exploration was the rediscovery of European "intellectual curiosity" and "scientific inquiry" through the Renaissance and the Reformation. Islam also experienced expansion and renaissance, however it was not simultaneous, neither was it accompanied by theological reform. According to Bernard Lewis, the simultaneous spark of these three major developments – exploration, renaissance, and reform – ultimately led to the West's dominance over the Islamic world.[116]

1. Protestant Reformation

Ascending as Catholic Christendom was launching Europe's Age of Exploration, and in the midst of Europe's cultural Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation developed theological perspectives vis-a-vis Islam considerably different then those of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.[117] Reformation theology reflected Protestant contempt toward the Roman Catholic Church and a sense of religious and cultural superiority in relation to Islam. Protestant leaders, like Martin Luther (1483-1556) and John Calvin (1509-1564), based their perceptions of Islam as much on medieval myth and stereotype as on contemporary facts.[118] Both surmised that Islam existed for the purpose of chastening God's Elect – the Church – and, however painfully, preparing it for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In his commentary on *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* Luther wrote, "Here now the Devil's final wrath gets to work. There, in the east – the second woe: Mohammed and the Saracens. Here, in the west – the Papacy and Empire: with the third woe! To these is added, for good measure, the Turk – Gog and Magog."[119] Calvin no less ardently expressed his disdain. "Look upon the Turks (alias the Moslems)! They have some reverence to their religion…So have the Papists also…Still, both of

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[116] Lewis, 34.

[117] Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam are spelled out at length in Chapter II: Christian Theological Development (60-600 C.E.). Therefore, additional space is given to explain Protestant theological attitudes considering its later development.

[118] Southern, 6.

[119] "Luther on Islam and the Papacy," by Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, Professor Systemic Theology and Caldwell-Morrow Lecturer in Church History at Queensland Presbyterian Theological College, Bisbane, Australia, 22 October 2000. Retrieved from Reverend Prof. Dr. Francis Nigel web site on 16 December 2001 at http://www.dr-fnlee.org/.

them are cut off from the Church of God – through their own fault," he proclaimed in his *Sermons on Deuteronomy*.[120]

The belief that God would use Islam to purge and prepare the Church for the Last Days was considerably different then the view held by Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologians. As previously discussed, beginning with Islam's rise and spread throughout Christendom in the seventh century, "it was not difficult for [Catholic and Orthodox theologians] to find in Islam and its founder the signs of a sinister conspiracy against Christianity. They thought they saw in all its details – and they knew very well few – that total negation of Christianity which would mark the contrivances of the Antichrist."[121] Pre-Reformation scholars believed they saw in Islam, albeit unclearly, the coming Antichrist.

The first change to this theological position came in the mid-fourteenth century when Englishman John Wyclif offered a new interpretation of Islam based primarily on his opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. According to Wyclif, Islam would be used to purge the Church of its worldliness but this purging would be Christendom's ultimate victory. "Just as worldliness in the Church produced the religion of worldliness in Islam, so Islam would wither away with the reversal of this tendency within the Church, and in no other way."[122] With Islam defeated – by Christian holiness and not the sword – the Church would then face off against the Antichrist, who would rise up out of Roman Catholicism. Luther squarely agreed. "Islam was too gross and irrational for this mighty role…thus it is clearly proved that the Papacy and its whole priesthood is the kingdom of the Devil and the rule of Antichrist."[123]

This change reflects the difference between the pre-and-post-Reformation concept of "religious superiority." Prior to the Reformation, when the Church alone stood for the Christian faith, religious superiority was defined by comparing the Christian message to

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[120] "Calvin on Islam," by Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, Professor Systemic Theology and Caldwell-Morrow Lecturer in Church History at Queensland Presbyterian Theological College, Bisbane, Australia, 13 August 2000. Retrieved from Reverend Prof. Dr. Francis Nigel web site on 16 December 2001 at http://www.dr-fnlee.org/.

[121] Southern, 24.

[122] Ibid., 77-86.

[123] Ibid., 111.

(what the Church understood to be) Muhammad's message. On this ground, the Church rejected Islam as "the product of an evil imagination" and considered it a religion "full of absurdities, (with) a divinely appointed Prophet, universally held in the West to be a man of impure life and worldly stratagem."[124] Thus, even as Islam was overrunning Christendom, the Church never regarded itself as anything but religiously superior to Islam because truth was defined by the message and not worldly territory gained or lost.[125] This sense of superiority vis-à-vis Islam did not diminish after the Reformation, but following the Reformation a new battle took center stage: the battle for religious superiority between Protestant and Catholic theologians. Hence, drawing as a foregone conclusion their religious superiority over Islam, the post-Reformation Protestants turned away from combating Islam and defined "religious superiority" as a doctrinal battle against Catholic Europe.

Luther and Calvin also held to the strong cultural superiority of Christian Europe over Islam. This, as previously stated, was a rekindled sense of cultural superiority; something Christendom once possessed, but lost as it fell into its Dark Age and gave way to several great Islamic empires between 650-1450. Specifically, Islam's conquest of the Mediterranean Sea, which forced Western Christianity off of the Mediterranean's shores and into northern Europe, was when Christendom lost its sense of cultural superiority. Consider the words of Dutch historian Henri Pirenne:

> The Western Mediterranean, having becoming a Musulman lake, was no longer the thoroughfare of commerce and of thought which it had always been. The West was blockaded and forced to live upon its own resources. For the first time in history the axis of life was shifted northwards from the Mediterranean.[126]

Exploration, Renaissance, and Reformation was combining by the mid-fifteenth century to rekindle the "spirit of detachment" found in Christendom before it had any

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[124]Southern, 3-6.

[125] The influence of Augustine's *City of God* is obvious. During the decades Augustine wrote *City of God* (413-427), barbarians were overrunning the Roman Empire. Many within the Empire blamed Christianity, but Augustine explained that Christianity "did not offer temporal worldly success, only inner peace and an eternal destiny." Likewise, the many of the Reformers viewed losses to Christendom in this same way. See Lane, 45.

[126] Pirenne, 284.

rivals in Europe or the Mediterranean. An example of this is Pius II's defense of Christendom expressed in a letter to Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror in 1460.

> The letter begins with a magnificent account of the strength of the kingdom of Western Christendom, which has no parallel that I can think of before Gibbon's great eulogy of the West in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*…. The situation was far different in 1460 with the Turk roaring into Europe. Yet in the face of all disaster Pius II managed to express the pride and confidence of superior civilization. "You are not" he says, "so ignorant of our affairs that you do not know the power of the Christian people – Spain so steadfast, Gaul so warlike, Germany so populous, Britain so strong, Poland so daring, Hungary so active, and Italy so rich, high-spirited, and experienced in the art of war."[127]

Pius "with very great skill" transitions from a political to religious argument, inviting Mehmed to be baptized, turn to the Christian sacraments and believe the gospel. Pius' letter demonstrates the religious and cultural superiority Christendom found itself in possession of at the beginning of Reformation period. These two themes: the religious and cultural superiority of Christianity, plus the theological position of the Reformers with respect to Islam, are the manifestation of what was earlier explained by Goddard as the psychological impact of the shifting balances of powers. Islam felt itself increasingly surrounded by European influence in the sixteenth century and Christendom felt increasingly dominant over the Muslim world.

2. Christian Dominance and Islamic Decline

> It is therefore strictly correct to say that without Mohammed Charlemagne would have been inconceivable.[128]

By 1700, Europe felt safe enough to examine Islam without the filter of the mythology that had defined Christianity's perception of Islam during the Middle Ages.[129] Soon the West began to acknowledge Islamic contributions in the fields of medicine and

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[127] Southern, 99-100.

[128] Pirenne, 234.

[129] Enlightenment thinkers tried to present Muhammad in a more tolerant light. "Islam was seen as a rational religion, quite remote from those Christian tenets that most opposed reason. Moreover, Islam seemed to espouse few mythical concepts and mystical traditions, only what was deemed necessary to assure the following of the people. Beyond that, Islam appeared to balance the demand for a moral life with an understandable respect for the needs of the flesh, the senses and social interaction. It was, all told, a religion that approximated the Deism of most Enlightenment philosophers." Goddard, 144.

mathematics, of science and civilization, of intellectual thought and, even, theology.[130] For Europe, the most important question became "whether or not Islam was a system of thought that deserved to be treated with respect."[131] The Church's answer to that question was greatly influenced by the state of eighteenth and nineteenth century world affairs, in which Islamic civilizations had succumbed to European colonial rule and fell into decline. In this environment, each of the three major branches of Christianity continued to view Islam as a false religion, undeserving of theological respect or equality. Instead of respect, Christendom sent missionaries to the Muslim world.

The modern model for Christian missions to Muslims was Francis of Assisi (1182-1226). Francis' approach to missions was very different then that of the crusaders of his day, who believed in conquering Islam rather than learning about it and debating Christian and Islamic theology. The zealous Assisi, called the Apostle of Love, tried to change Christian missions by denouncing the Crusades and requesting a personal meeting with Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil. Francis' attempt at personally converting the Sultan failed, but his goal of reaching Muslims through theological debate and reason did not. Another Roman Catholic missionary who greatly influence future missions was Francis Xavier, who arrived in India for the Roman Catholic Society of Jesus in 1541.[132] Xavier's "sensitivity to local culture and religion, [his] insistence on the importance of learning languages, and [his] flexibility in seeking to make Christian ideas comprehensible in the local idiom," was an invaluable contribution to Christian missions.[133]

The first organized Protestant mission to the Muslim world arrived in India in 1793. The Baptist Missionary Society originated in London, and was led by a self-educated teacher, shoemaker, and pastor named William Carey. It was Carey's goal to

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[130] Several important historical and literary works also helped change Christianity's perception of Islam. In 1705, Dutch scholar Adrian Reland wrote an account of Islam based entirely on Muslim sources; in 1718, Simon Oakley wrote *History of the Saracens*; between 1776-1788, Edward Gibbon wrote *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which included a chapter on Islam and, for the first time, attempted to view Muhammad in the context of his surroundings. Also, in 1704, Antoine Galland translated *The Arabian Nights* into French, followed later by translations into English and German. Goddard, 144.

[131] Southern, 3.

[132] Latourette, 928, 1033.

[133] Goddard, 120. Goddard provides an extensive listing of influential Christian missionaries.

work in support of "Evangelicals," regardless of denominational affiliation, who had a desire to reach India with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This monumental first-step in Protestant missions came more than two hundred and fifty years after Francis Xavier's arrival in India.

Why it took Protestants nearly three centuries after the Reformation to send missionaries to the Muslim world is of particular interest. Lyle Vander Werff, author of *Christian Mission to Muslims*, provides four reasons for the delay. Firstly, many Protestants believed that the "Great Commission," which was Jesus' command for his disciples to go into all the world with the gospel, had been fulfilled by the first generation Christians. Secondly, the doctrine of divine election precluded the need for missions. Thirdly, the task of missions belonged to civil rulers rather than to the Church on its own. And, fourthly, the general feeling among Protestants was that the time was not ripe because there were more urgent tasks at hand, such as the struggle against Roman Catholicism.[134]

Kenneth Scott Latourette provides three other explanations. Firstly, the initial period of European expansion was by Spain and Portugal, two Catholic states. Secondly, the Catholic Counter-Reformation occurred during this great expansion, thus prompting new Catholic missionaries to travel abroad. And, thirdly, the Catholic monastic orders had a tradition of mission whereas no such Protestant orders existed.[135]

The explanations provided by Vander Werff and Latourette reflect the legacy of the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant position that the Antichrist would come out of the Papacy led Protestants to abandon any 'frontal assault' approach to evangelizing Muslims. Instead, the Reformers focused their missionary efforts on converting the nominally-Roman Catholic European countryside to the ethos of Protestantism. As this effort erupted into all-out war across Europe, no other mission became more of a priority. When the religious wars in Europe appeared to come to a close with the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, attention was paid to correcting the heresies brought about by the 'Radical Reformers' – the Anabaptists, Independents, Baptists, and Quakers, to name a

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[134] Goddard, 122.

[135] Latourette, 928-929.

few.[136] As this persecuted element of Protestantism moved around Europe with missionary zeal, eventually, in search of religious freedom, many of them settled in England and, later, the Americas. It was from these fringe groups that the first Protestant missions to Muslims would emerge.

The Wars of Religion (1562-1594) and the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) that left Western Christendom in ruins explains the lack of any organized Protestant mission to Muslims before 1648, but it does little to explain Protestant lethargy for missions between 1648 and 1792. What explains that lethargy is the theological attitude vis-à-vis Islam of post-Reformation Protestants, i.e., that Islam was no longer the significant threat to Christianity and would be used by God to purge the Church of its abuses. It might be recalled that Luther wrote of looking forward to the day Islam engulfed Europe so that the Church might be made clean and the final judgment against the Antichrist made a reality. This theology – coupled with the Protestant focus on redefining superiority as the search for doctrinal supremacy – caused the Protestant lethargy to missions to Muslims prior 1792.

Missions to Muslims by all three major Christian branches intensified during the nineteenth century. Missionaries built schools and universities, houses and hospitals, clothed and fed the poor, and offered shelter to the displaced for a chance to share Christianity with local Muslims. Christian missionaries worked in conjunction with Western governments and had great success educating Muslim and Christian Arabs, but converting Muslims was for the most part a failure.[137] As a result of this, the missions effort turned toward the indigenous Christians, which were predominantly non-

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[136] Latourette, 729. Only seven years later the Wars of Religion broke out in France, and lasted until 1594. The Thirty Years' War would break out in Bohemia in 1618. So, while Protestants and Catholics attempted to stamp out the so-called heretics after 1555 they would continue to fight each other as well. See Latourette, 885.

[137] Muslim conversions to Christianity were few. However, by 1881, American Protestant missionaries alone had opened over thirty-three schools. The most successful of all Christian schools in the Ottoman Empire was the Syrian Protestant College (renamed the American University of Beirut in 1920), which opened in Beirut in 1866. The college's president, Dr. Daniel Bliss, stated the school's purpose in 1871. "This college is for all conditions and classes of men without regard to color, nationality, race or religion. A man, white, black, or yellow, Christian, Jew, Mohammedan or heathen, may enter and enjoy all the advantages of this institution for three, four, or eight years; and go out believing in one God, in many Gods, or in no God. But it will be impossible for anyone to continue with us long without knowing what we believe to be the truth and our reasons for that belief." See Faith M. Hanna, *An American Mission: The Role of The American University of Beirut* (Alphabet Press, 1979), 227.

Chalcedonian Christians, such as the Nestorians and Monophysites, but also included communities of Greek Orthodox, Catholic Maronites, Greek Catholics, Copts of Egypt, and Syrian Orthodox, or Jacobites.[138] The Church hoped that by converting and training these Christians they could use them to reach the Muslim population. The strategy produced mixed results: few Muslims were converted, but many Eastern Christians accepted the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions (Protestant conversions were fewer).

As European influence in the Ottoman Empire increased over the course of the nineteenth century, so did the resentment of indigenous Christians to their Ottoman rulers. Christians began to lead nationalist movements and call for independence from the Turks.[139] This dissent brought about a series of Ottoman reforms that were intended to help stabilize and modernize the Empire, allowing for the equal rights of Christian minorities and increased European investment.[140] However, these reforms failed to achieve the desired results, and instead caused greater division between the empire's Christians and Muslims, gave rise to Arab nationalism, which for a time brought Christians and Muslims together under pan-Arabism; and to reform movements that called for a return to the days of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.[141] Soon the Ottoman Empire, called the "sick man of Europe," began to fall into chronic decline. By the late nineteenth century, European investment in the Ottoman Empire amounted to imperial control and regional instability and the search for security for Christian minorities gave the British, French, and Russians even more reason to intervene in Ottoman affairs.

Although each of Christianity's major branches were in some way represented by one of Europe's great powers (Roman Catholic – France; Eastern Orthodox – Russia;

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[138] Joseph, 121. The term "Middle Eastern Christians," or Eastern Christians, refers to various Christian sects indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa.

[139] Ibid., 121.

[140] Lapidus, 598.

[141] Esposito, 58. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) and his protégé Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) called on Muslims to reassert their God-given position as his earthly vice-regent. Their message has been dubbed a "Protestant Islam" and was a message of "renewal and reform." "Islam was the religion of progress and change…reason, philosophy, and science were not foreign to Islam, were not simply products of the West…Muslim unity, like anti-imperialism, remained a prerequisite for political and cultural independence."

Protestant – Britain and, to a lesser extent, the United States) it was the Protestant missions effort which eventually became most associated with Western imperialism. This was due to several factors. Firstly, indigenous Eastern Christians and Muslims believed that the strong support these Protestant missionaries received from Protestant countries in the West was part of a larger imperial agenda.[142] Secondly, leaders in the United States, England, and continental Europe holding to the Protestant faith were among the most outspoken sponsors of the "White Man's Burden," and the conversion of the heathen to the Christian faith.[143] For example, the prime minister of the Netherlands, Abraham Kuyper, noted his country's divine call to convert the heathen when he said in 1901, "God has given us Indonesia."[144] During the war between the United States and Spain, President McKinley explained his motivation for occupying the Philippines.

> There was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ died.[145]

Protestants employed two methods of evangelizing Muslims: Anglican and Reformed. Both stressed the importance of learning Arabic and both sought to expand Christian influence by actively recruiting Europeans to the mission. And, unlike the earlier Roman Catholic approach, both worked from the bottom up and tried to reach the common Muslim, compared to the Jesuit method of working top down. They differed,

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[142] The British consul in Beirut strongly supported the Protestant missionary movement and offered protection to both British and American missionaries in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The American consul did likewise when it was established in 1836. See Hanna, 225.

[143] Rudyard Kipling wrote of the White Man's Burden, "Now, this is the road that the White Men tread; When they go to clean a land – Iron underfoot and the vine overhead; And the deep on either hand. We have trod that road – and a wet and windy road – Our chosen star for guide. Oh, well for the world when the White Men tread; Their highway side by side!" Edward Said explains this burden in *Orientalism* as the West's cultural, intellectual and religious raping of the Orient, specific to Said the Arab-Muslim Orient. However, Western leaders felt a moral responsibility to free the heathen from darkness. "We have assumed the responsibility of intervening in their [the Orientals] development, sometimes without consulting them, sometimes in answer to their request…We claim, rightly or wrongly, to represent a superior civilization…we must offer ourselves to these civilizations as we do our other products, that is, on the local exchange market." See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 226-254. In this same vein, Woodrow Wilson once told a group of businessmen that he very much favored the "righteous conquest of foreign markets." See Walter LaFeber, *The American Age* Vol. II – Since 1896 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 292.

[144] Goddard, 127.

[145] Ibid., 127.

however, in their interpretations of Islam. The Anglican was ecumenical in its approach and tried building relationships based on what was common between Christians and Muslims. The Reformed approach saw Islam as the antithesis of Christianity. The Reformed, it was said, "had much sympathy with Muslims, but no sympathy with Islam."[146] The Anglican approach would later influence mainline Protestant missions, while the Reformed approach influenced Evangelical Protestant missions.[147] It would be wrong though to characterize every Christian missionary as falling into one of these two approaches. Stephen Neill, himself a missionary, concluded in *A History of Christian Missions* that among missionaries there was a huge spectrum of opinion and methods.[148] Even so, no approach has been very successful and this fact has been linked to what Muslims perceive as the Protestant goal of spreading European and American influence, not just their faith.[149] Goddard tells of a Muslim man who offered to describe the difference between the Protestant and Catholic missionaries. "The Catholic missionaries are here because of their love for God. The Protestant missionaries are here because of their hate of Islam."[150]

D. MODERN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON ISLAM

When the British Army wrestled Jerusalem from Ottoman control in 1918, "The Times of London pointed out that what was taking place in the region in 1918 was reminiscent of past French and English participation in the historic Crusades. 'Sallah El Din entered Jerusalem in triumph as Allenby enters it today.' This 'deliverance of

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[146] Ibid., 124. According to Vander Werff, Anglican Church Missionary Temple Gairdner (1873-1928) and Reformed Church of America Samuel Zwemer represent these two missions methods. See L.L. Vander Werff, *Christian Mission to Muslims* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977). Quoted by Goddard, 124.

[147] The advancement of theological liberalism in the Christian Church during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries led to a split within Protestantism. Protestant denominations accepting liberalism became known as Mainline Churches, represented by the World Council of Churches; denominations opposed to liberalism were known as Evangelicals, or Fundamentalist Churches, and are represented by the National Association of Evangelicals.

[148] S. C. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin, 1964). Quoted by Goddard, 134-135.

[149] Goddard, 134. See also Mustafa Khalidi and Umar Farrukh, *Mission and Imperialism in the Arab World* (Beirut: 1953) and A. L. Tibawi, *British Interests in Palestine, 1800-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961) and *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966). Quoted by Goddard, 134.

[150] Ibid., 158.

Jerusalem' was looked upon as 'a most memorable event in the history of Christendom.' To General Allenby himself is attributed the boast that 'today ended the Crusades.'"[151]

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War meant that the "sick man" had finally died. In response, the British and French established a mandate system intended to organize the Middle East into countries with pro-European rulers capable of withstanding the internal pressures of Arab nationalism and anti-imperialism, both of which had intensified considerably since the beginning of colonialism.[152] Middle Eastern Christians, who had long outgrown the benefits of colonialism, saw no favor in the particular divisions drawn up by the British and French, however, believing that Arab nationalism had become a front for pan-Islamism – a suspicion not without merit – they accepted the mandates. It was not long though before tensions between Europe's Great Powers and the Arab world alienated the Eastern Christians. "As Arab nationalism evolved and the horrors of the world war receded into memory, Christian-Muslim cooperation increased in the nationalist effort."[153] Christian leaders began to feel that their long-term security "depended upon their ability to cooperate with the Muslim majority" and they once again began to play an increasingly important role in the Arab nationalist movement.[154] As they gained the trust of the Muslim majority, who had long held against the them their ties to the Europeans, the Eastern Christians took on a new identity: that of Middle Eastern citizens whose obligation it was to spread Eastern ideals to the West, not Western ideals in the East.[155]

1. Christian-Muslim Ecumenism

Modern Christian-Muslim ecumenism began with United Nations' creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Almost as a statement of identity, Middle Eastern Christians stood with Arab-Muslims in opposition to the Zionist-inspired Jewish state. Joining the Eastern

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[151] Joseph, 121.

[152] Esposito, 50.

[153] Joseph, 121.

[154] Ibid., 121. No amount of cooperation, however, gave the minority Eastern Christians a feeling of belonging among the majority Muslims. "The Eastern Christian is deeply convinced that no matter what the degree of tolerance, the ultimate Muslim objective is to Islamize all those who live within a Muslim community." Hassan Saab, "Communication Between Christianity and Islam," in *The Middle East Journal* (Winter, 1962), 58.

[155] Ibid., 122.

Christians and Muslims were Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and many mainline Protestant Christian denominations as well. These adopted an "inclusivist"[156] attitude toward Islam and argued against Jewish and Christian-Zionist claims that the Jewish people had a "right" to the land of Palestine because it was "God's promise to Abraham." "All the themes of the Old Testament, the land, the *Torah*, the Chosen People and the temple all point beyond themselves to a new reality – the person of flesh and blood through whom God was revealing himself and reconciling the world to himself," argued the anti-Zionists.[157] Theologically, most of the anti-Zionist Christians believed this reconciliation of God and the world was actively occurring through the Christian Church, which according to the eschatological, or the *end times* beliefs of the anti-Zionist Christians, had replaced the Jewish people as God's Chosen People. Giving Palestine to the Zionists would also mean the displacement of many Arab-Christians from the Holy Land, which "was not only unacceptable but also offensive to the Christian Arabs."[158] Father John Sansour, a Roman Catholic priest from Bethlehem, summarized the corresponding Muslim belief concerning the land.

> The theology of the Land, launched by the Jews to justify their presence by force in the Holy Land, created a new Muslim theology of the Land. It is, in general, identical to the Jewish one…those who hold this (Islamic) view maintain that God cannot fulfill his promises concerning the Land with such people (i.e. the Jews). He has fulfilled and is still fulfilling all his promises with Ishmael and his sons (i.e. the Muslims)…The Holy Land is entirely a Muslim *waqf* (possession) belonging to God. The rights of Palestinian Christians are preserved by orders of the Caliph Omar. Palestinian Christians with the Muslims of the whole world must unite and fight against the Jews. There will be no peace and Jihad, holy war, is declared until victory.[159]

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[156] Goddard describes modern Christian theological perspectives as "exclusive," "inclusive," and "pluralist." Exclusivism contends that "salvation is realized only through belief in Christ and membership in the Christian community." This is the predominant position taken by Evangelicals Protestantism and some of Eastern Orthodoxy. Inclusivism holds that "salvation is made available through Christ…other religious communities may be saved, but through Christ." This attitude is characteristic of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and some Mainline Protestantism. Pluralism suggests that there are a plurality of ways to salvation, so that members of other religious communities may be saved through their own religious traditions." This position is taken primarily by Mainline Protestantism. Goddard, 150.

[157] Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 281.

[158] Joseph, 125. See also Chapman, 39-41, for an informative comparison of Jewish and Arab interpretations of the historical claims to the land of Palestine.

[159] Father John Sansour, "Hearing the Different Voices: Issues Amongst Jews, Christians and

Following the creation of Israel, "inclusivist" and "pluralist" Christians made greater attempts to promote dialogue and religious reconciliation between Christians and Muslims. Approaching each other "through their spiritual ideals rather than through their temporal realities," Christian and Muslim scholars met at Princeton University and Washington D.C. in September 1953, in the Colloquium on Islamic Culture. The following year the World Christian-Muslim Fellowship was established in Bhamdoun in Lebanon, in April 1954.[160] Greek Catholic theologian and priest and French Islamicist Louis Massignon (1883-1962) stressed Islam as an Abrahamic religion, believed the Holy Spirit was active among Muslims, and said that clear evidence existed "that the grace of Christ was as real outside the Christian community as inside it."[161] Kenneth Cragg and W. Montgomery Watt provide examples of Protestant inclusiveness. Each presents a positive image of Islam to Christians, building upon the foundation laid by Temple Gairdner. "Particularly in his *The Call of Minaret*, [Cragg] has perhaps gone further than any other Christian writer in seeking to weigh the spiritual meaning and significance of the Qur'an for Christians."[162] Orthodox Christian Georges Khodr emphasized the need for Eastern and Western Christian reconciliation concerning differences in their understanding of the Holy Spirit. This reconciliation would facilitate Christian-Muslim relations, he told a meeting of the World Council of Churches in Addis Ababa in 1971.

> Contemporary theology must go beyond the notion of 'salvation history' in order to rediscover the meaning of the *oikonomia*. The economy of Christ cannot be reduced to its historical manifestation…The very notion of economy is a notion of mystery…Within the religions, its task is to reveal to the world of the religions the God who is hidden within it, in

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Muslims," in L. Loden, P. Walker and M. Wood, eds., *The Bible and the Land: An Encounter* (Jerusalem: Musalaha, 2000), 141-143. Quoted in Chapman, 270.

[160] Saab, 60.

[161] Goddard, 154. "Massignon never sought to blur the distinctions between Christianity and Islam. He did not believe that Islam was a 'close approximation' of Christianity…Nor did he have any doubts that Islam lacked something in comparison with Christianity. But he did see believing Muslims as men and women of the Spirit, and he did see the grace of God, which is the grace of Christ, at work in Islam. He, therefore, had no doubts that Islam bound men and women to God." B. Breiner, "Louis Massignon: an Interpretive Essay," in *Newsletter of the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* (Birmingham), No. 14 (May 1985), 25. Quoted by Goddard, 154-155.

[162] Ibid., 155.

> anticipation of the final concrete unfolding and manifestation of the Mystery.[163]

An important Christian "pluralist" was missionary, author, and academic Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000). Smith wrote extensively on Islam as an avenue for true communion and knowledge of God. "I personally do not see what it might mean to say that anyone, Christian or Muslim or whatever, has a complete knowledge of God…in any case, [I] would be quite content to leave the judgment to God. On one point I am not inclined to be tentative; that God, rather than you or I, is the one to pass that judgment."[164] Smith was also instrumental in bringing Muslim scholars to study and teach in the West. Ismail al-Faruqi (1921-1986) joined the Faculty of Divinity at McGill University in Montreal, at Smith's request. Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988), a student of H. A. R. Gibb at Oxford University, joined al-Faruqi and Smith on the faculty at McGill. Mahmoud Ayoub (b. 1935) did his doctoral dissertation on the subject of the concept of redemptive suffering in Shi'i Islam, under Smith. Each of these Western-educated Muslim scholars made significant contributions to Christian-Muslim relations.[165]

The Roman Catholic Church made the most significant theological contribution to Christian-Muslim cooperation at the Second Vatican Council in Rome in 1965 with the creation of the "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christians." In the declaration, Islam was given something it had waited many years for: special recognition as "holders of 'the faith of Abraham' and were now included in the plan of salvation."[166]

> The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly 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. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call

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[163] G. Khodr, "Christianity in a Pluralistic World: the Economy of the Holy Spirit," in *Sobornost*, 6 (1971), 170. Quoted by Goddard, 156.

[164] W. C. Smith, "Christian-Muslim Relations: the Theological Dimension," in *Studies in Inter-Religious Dialogue*, 1 (1991), 22-23. See also W. C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957. Quoted by Goddard, 156.

[165] Kate Zebiri, "Relations Between Muslims and Non-Muslims in the Thought of Western-Educated Muslim Intellectuals," in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1995.

[166] Joseph, 123.

> 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.[167]

According to author John Joseph, "This historic recognition of Islam has removed one of the major causes of estrangement between the two religions. Muslims have for centuries resented the fact that while they acknowledged Christianity as a divinely inspired religion, Christianity has persistently refused to acknowledge the divine origin of their faith."[168]

Prior to the release of the "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christians," the Vatican had established the Secretariat for non-Christians to handle all issues of non-Christian dialogue. Protestant and Orthodox Churches did the same in 1971 when they set up a Sub-Unit for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies.[169] Each office released sets of guidelines for Christian-Muslim dialogue based upon "lessons learned" from historical Christian-Muslim relations. The guidelines instruct Christians to prepare themselves both practically and spiritually for dialogue, inform themselves about Islam, and recognize the obstacles and bridges to mutual understanding. Cardinal Francis Arinze elaborated on these points in talk he gave at the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding in Georgetown University, Washington D.C., in June 1997:

> May I make five suggestions on the kind of Christian-Muslim relations to be hoped for and worked for. Knowledge of the other is the first requirement if one is to build up relationships that will be respectful and fruitful. Acceptance and respect for differences is second….Engaging in

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[167] Pope Paul VI, "Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," Nostra Aetate (October 28, 1965). Retrieved from Catholic Information Network web site on 16 December 2001 at: http://www.cin.org/v2non.html..

[168] Joseph, 123.

[169] The Vatican's Secretariat for non-Christians was renamed the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue in 1989 and the WCC replaced the Sub-Unit in 1990 with the Office on Inter-Religious Relations within the General Secretariat. Goddard, 177.

> actual substantive dialogue is third….Fourth, Christian and Muslims should not just co-exist….And, finally, both religions stress the pre-eminence of peace, therefore, they should make a joint commitment to the promotion of peace. [170]

Obstacles to increased dialogue and cooperation emphasized by the Roman Catholic include historical memories, lack of self-criticism, temptation for religions to allow themselves to be used by politicians, and the increase in religious fanaticism or extremism in both faiths. Different approaches to human rights and the freedom of religion also make closer Christian-Muslim relations difficult. "Religious freedom includes the right to practice a religion and the right to share that religion with others. On 21 June 1995, the first mosque was inaugurated in Rome, yet unfortunately the Pope had to point out that in some Islamic countries similar freedom is lacking," explained Cardinal Arinze.

Christians and Muslims held a number of interfaith councils between 1970-2000, achieving a degree of ecumenism not seen in modern times. A testament to this increased dialogue were the number of institutions and academic journals begun during the period. Several of the most important were: *Encounters: Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives* (Islamic Foundation in Leicester), *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* (University of Belamend in Lebanon), *Islamochristiana* (Pontifical Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies), *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* (Birmingham University and Center for Christian-Muslim Understanding, Georgetown University), and *The Muslim World* (Hartford Seminary and the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations). Each has had a significant part in building ecumenical trust between the two faiths.[171]

2. Evangelical Protestant-Muslim Relations

If the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 fueled Christian-Muslim ecumenism for some, it widened differences and reinforced old prejudices for others. Evangelical Protestant support for the creation of Israel was based upon the role Evangelicals

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[170] Cardinal Francis Arinze, "Christian-Muslim Relations in the 21st Century," at the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding in Georgetown University, Washington D.C., 5 June 1997. Retrieved from SEDO web site on 24 March 2002 at: http://www.sedos.org/english/arinze.htm.

[171] Goddard, 184-186.

believed the Bible ascribed to the Jewish people during the end times, and the Jewish possession of the Holy Land was an essential element of this belief. Several doctrinal developments within Protestantism during the nineteenth century helped develop the Evangelical understanding of the end times. They include, the adoption of premillennial (and in some cases dispensational) eschatology by the majority of Protestantism and the division of Protestant denominations with the rise of liberalism.

Premillenialism is a view of the end times that understands the return of Jesus Christ to earth as occurring before the millennial reign of Christ takes place. Thus, the term *pre*-millennial, as opposed to a *post*, after the millennial reign, or an *a*-millennial, no (literal) millennial reign. Timothy P. Weber provides a more comprehensive definition:

> Premillennialists reject popular notions of human progress and believe that history is a game that the righteous cannot win. For them, the historical process is a never ending battle between good and evil, whose course God has already conceded to the Devil. People may be redeemed in history but history itself is doomed. History's only hope lies in its own destruction…at the end of the present age; the forces of evil will be marshaled by Satan's emissary, the Antichrist, who will attempt to destroy God's purposes. After an intense period of tribulation, Christ will return to earth, resurrect the righteous dead, defeat Antichrist and his legions at Armageddon, bind Satan, and establish his millennial rule.[172]

For at least its first several centuries, the Church was predominantly premillennial, believing in the yet future return of Jesus Christ to personally establish His earthly kingdom.[173] This belief was not by any means uniform however, as some Church theologians considered the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 by the Romans to be the fulfillment Christ's words that this (first century) generation would "not pass, till all these things [prophecies] be fulfilled."[174] This belief in the present fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, or *preterism*, led to a theological battle between premillennial futurists and preterists that lasted until Augustine in the fourth century. Augustine's allegorical

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[172] Donald Wagner, "Reagan and Begin, Bibi and Jerry: The Theopolitical Alliance of the Likud Party with the American Christian "Right," in *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Fall 1998), 38. Quoting Timothy P. Weber in *The Variety of American Evangelicalsism*, Donald Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 6.

[173] The *Didache* (c. 100), Clement of Rome, the *Shepherd of Hermas* (140-150), Ignatius of Antioch, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian provide examples of premillennial writings. Enns, 389.

[174] The question raised is how to interpret the Olivet Discourse, in Matthew 24:34.

interpretation of the Biblical prophecy was at least a partial-preterist position, and was amillennial in terms of Church eschatology. From the time of Augustine until the Evangelical Bible and Prophecy Conference movement in the United States between 1870-1890, the predominant eschatological position of each of Christianity's major branches was amillennial.

Dispensational theology is a view of the Bible that understands that God's work among mankind occurs over distinct periods of time, or *economies*, during which man is responsible to God for the good stewardship of what God has entrusted him in that period. Dispensations begin with a distinct covenant between God and man, and end with God's judgment when mankind fails to abide in the covenant.[175] For example, the dispensation of the Mosaic Law was an economy consisting of 613 laws, which revealed God's will during that economy. The period covered the giving of the Law of Moses to the death of Christ. During this economy people were responsible for carrying out the Law of Moses, a covenant entered into with God. When they failed in this they faced God's judgment. The Jewish people experienced judgment at various times throughout the dispensation. At the close of the dispensation, God entered into another covenant with mankind – the dispensation of Grace.[176] Additionally, dispensational theology emphasizes the importance of the Bible's literal interpretation and the difference between God's Church and God's Chosen People, the Jews.

Dispensationalism is also a view of history, which like other historiographers developed during the nineteenth century, helped men make sense of a rapidly changing world under the stress of nationalism and total war, the Industrial Revolution, the rise of science, and the liberalism of the Enlightenment philosophies.[177] It would be incorrect,

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[175] Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 26.

[176] Ibid., 61-62. The dispensation of the Mosaic Law is one of seven dispensations held by Ryrie, who conforms to C. I. Scofield's seven dispensations. According to Ryrie, the number of dispensations is not necessarily important. For instance, Pierre Poiret held to six dispensations: Creation, Deluge, Moses, Prophets, Christ, Manhood and Old Age, and Renovation of All Things. J. N. Darby, who made premillennial dispensationalism popular in Britain and the United States, held to seven: Paradisiacal, Noah, Abraham, Israel, Gentiles, Spirit, and Millennium. See Chart of Representative Dispensational Schemes, Ryrie, 84.

[177] Apart from its theological purpose, dispensationalism is another method of historical interpretation. Written history is typically a reflection of its time. During the Enlightenment, Voltaire insisted that history have a practical purpose. His history was "that which deserves the attention of all time, which paints the spirit and customs of men." David Hume alienated history from politics, "wrecked romantic legends and

however, to say that the adoption of dispensationalist theology by Protestant Churches was a reaction to these specific events. More accurately stated, this method of Biblical interpretation, first developed by the French mystic and philosopher Pierre Poiret (1646-1719) and published a six volume series, *L'Oeconomic Divine*, in 1687,[178] was an attempt to interpret present day events by decoding "the signs of the times pointing to the 'end.'"[179] These so-called "signs of the times" had at their center the restoration of the Jewish nation in Palestine as a prelude to Jesus' Second Coming.

Dispensationalism began to spread throughout England, the United States, and Europe with the preaching of Reverend John Nelson Darby in the 1830s. Darby's insistence that "the restored Jewish nation would be a gift to the Jewish people and a project worthy of every Englishman,"[180] also caught the attention of the British Parliament. In 1839, Lord Shaftesbury published a thirty-one-page essay in the prestigious journal *Quarterly Review* titled, "State and Restoration of the Jews." Shaftesbury outlined several ways the British could facilitate a Jewish return to Palestine, and called upon Parliament to finance an Anglican Bishopric in Jerusalem. Shaftesbury anticipated God's blessing on King and Country if Britain were to act on behalf of the Jewish people. "I will bless those who bless you and through you will all the nations of the earth be blessed."[181]

Early nineteenth century American politicians were also enamored with the idea of Jewish resettlement in Palestine. President John Adams was the first American

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patriotic myths….Hume consequently found in history no particular sanction for any specific moral or legislative programs." In contrast to Enlightenment historians, Johann Gottfried Herder and Immanuel Kant wrote philosophical treatises on history. Herder saw history as an evolutionary process, "the realization of a hidden plan of nature." Kant disagreed, instead viewing history as "a process by which humankind became rational and hence fulfilled its fundamental nature." Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel saw history as methodological and metaphysical, "the manifestation of divine will in space and time." Leopold von Ranke believed historical events should be told "as they really were" and historians should remain "detached and unbiased." Finally, Karl Marx saw the function of history as "a way of comprehending the processes of historical change and establishing a basis for predictions into the future." See Mark T. Gilderhus, *History and Historians: A Historiographical Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 38-50.

[178] Ibid., 71.

[179] Wagner, 37.

[180] Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 19. Quoted by Wagner, 37.

[181] Wagner, 39.

President to advocate a Jewish return to Palestine. Responding to a letter from a Jewish citizen in 1819, he said:

> If I could let my imagination loose…I could find it in my heart to wish that you had been at the head of a hundred thousand Israelites…marching with them into Judea & making a conquest of that country & restoring your nation to the dominion of it. For I really wish the Jews again in Judea an independent nation. For I believe [that]…once restored to an independent government & no longer persecuted they would soon wear away some of the asperities and peculiarities of their character & possibly in time become liberal Unitarian Christians for your Jehovah is our Jehovah & your God…is our God.[182]

Unlike the English, however, early nineteenth century American politicians were not taken by premillenial dispensationalism. Most American Protestants actually held to an amillennial, covenant theology believing that the newly formed United States was symbolic of Israel of old.[183] Christendom was Israel and America was the New Jerusalem, the Promised Land; Americans had been delivered from England the way the Jews were delivered from Egypt. The reason early American leaders were compelled to support a Jewish return to Palestine was because they believed it was Biblical. It is accurate to say that this describes the majority of early Christian Zionists until the late nineteenth century.[184]

Following the Niagara Bible Conference of 1876, premillennial dispensationalism began to take hold in America, just as it had several decades earlier in England. At Niagara, scholars and theologians from nearly every Protestant denomination met and agreed upon a fundamental statement of Christian belief. While it may be true that Protestantism, as a whole, has never had any one spokesperson, the Niagara Bible Conference produced a multi-denominational, Evangelical creed meant to meet the challenge of theological liberalism in many Protestant denominations. The battle that

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[182] G Edward Bernard Glick, *The Triangular Connection: America, Israel, and American Jews* (London: George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd., 1982), 27.

[183] Covenant theology, as opposed to dispensational theology, maintains that God entered into a covenant of works with Adam and of grace with mankind following Adam's sin (redemption coming through Jesus Christ). In Covenant theology the Church replaces Israel in God's plan of salvation. This is the theology which came out of the Protestant Reformation.

[184] See Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory: Did God have a plan of America?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977) for an excellent examination of the amillennial, covenant perspective on the founding of the United States.

followed Niagara, between liberal and Evangelical Protestants, led to the splitting of numerous denominations and the distinctions of mainline and Evangelical Churches.[185] Of significant importance, too, the creed promulgated at Niagara specified the Evangelical acceptance of the premillennial dispensationalist doctrinal position.

The triumph of premillennial dispensationalist theology on an international stage came as the First World War was ending. Britain's Lord Arthur Balfour and Prime Minister David Lloyd George issued the famous Balfour Declaration, which expressed support for "a national homeland for the Jewish people."[186] Both Balfour and Lloyd had been raised in premillennial dispensational Churches and were dedicated to this interpretative view of the Bible and history. Balfour said in 1919:

> For in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country…the four great powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import that the desires and prejudices of 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.[187]

By 1948, premillennial dispensationalism had become the most dominant method of Biblical interpretation within Protestantism. This was due in large part to the 1909 publication of C. I. Scofield's Reference Bible, which offered a premillennial dispensationalist commentary on biblical passages. The 1937 publication of Forrest Loman Oilar's *Be Thou Prepared for Jesus is Coming* also presented this interpretative perspective to the West. Oilar said he wrote the novel as an evangelistic tool "to bring to the unbeliever, 'the Jew first, and also to the Gentile' a warning against false doctrines and to show the hope that is yet in store for him if he accepts the true gospel."[188] Another

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[185] See David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986).

[186] The Balfour Declaration was described by one British official as, "a document in which one nation solemnly promises to a second nation the country of a third nation." See Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfillment* (London: Macmillan, 1949), 4. Quoted by Chapman, 66.

[187] Christopher Sykes, *Two Studies in Virtue* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953). One English journalist wrote of David Lloyd George during the Peace Conference in Versailles in 1919: "We know from documents that he had it fixed in his mind that he was being given the chance to recreate the Holy Land of the scriptures, as he constantly put it, "from Dan to Beersheba." See Erskine Childers, *Jubilee Volume of the Netherlands – Arabia Association 1955-1966* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966). Quoted by Chapman, 68.

[188] Gary DeMar, *End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of the Left Behind Theology* (Nashville:

popular novel released just a few years after Israel's creation was Ernest Angley's *Raptured: A Novel*. Popular preachers like Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday, as well as newly established Evangelical colleges and universities also helped to bring premillennial dispensationalism to the public.

As might have been expected, the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 brought about expectations of eternal and earthly blessings among Evangelical Protestants, but not a corresponding spirit of ecumenism toward Islam. Having played a significant role in the establishment of Israel, Christian Zionists, along with others in the West, felt a great sense of responsibility for the security of the Jews of Israel. Firstly, there was the belief that the Jewish people returning to their home in Palestine would "eventually lead to the conversion the Jewish people to their Messiah and finally the Second Coming of Christ."[189] This was by far the most important reason for Evangelical support of Israel, and having this belief has led Christians not only to support the Jewish state, but also to support what it stands for and defend it against attack. Secondly, many western Christians felt significant guilt following the Jewish Holocaust of the Second World War.[190] Both of these reasons for supporting Israel came at the expense of the Palestinian Arabs and future Christian-Muslim relations. As President Truman explained to U.S. ambassadors to Arab countries in 1945:

> I am sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents.[191]

Just as President Truman did not have thousands of Arabs among his constituents, so, too, Evangelical Protestants have had little ecumenical involvement with Muslims. Several specific reasons explain this lack of inter-religious cooperation. Firstly, one-sided

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Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), xv. DeMar discusses the place of fiction in Christian literature in his critique of the popular premillennial dispensationalist end times series, *Left Behind*.

[189] Chapman, 257.

[190] "We feel, both as Arabs and Muslims, that the West has selected us as the people to pay the price for their own past wrongdoings against the Jews. No one should be if we find this palpably unjust." See Ezzeddin Ibrahim, "Erik R. Peterson: Interview with Ezzeddin Ibrahim," in *Middle East Policy*, Vol. VIII, No. 4 (December 2001), 40.

[191] William Eddy, *FDR Meets Ibn Saud* (New York: American Friends of the Middle East, 1954), 36. Quoted by Chapman, 70.

Evangelical support for Israel has caused Evangelicals to have a very negative view of Islam. Israel's victory against six much larger and more populous Arab nations in the 1948-1949 Israeli War for Independence reinforced the Evangelical belief that God's providence had preserved Israel and bolstered the image of Arab-Muslims as a "sinister and perhaps even Satanic force which seeks to annihilate God's Chosen People."[192] Events since 1949 have only strengthened this perception of Islam: terrorism as a means of achieving the destruction of Israel, war against Israel in 1967 and 1973, support for Palestinian intifadas and other militant Islamic groups, anti-Western assassinations and hostage taking, and provoking Israeli retaliation to increase regional instability.

These images of Islam have caused Evangelicals to fear Muslims in much the same way as Christendom feared Islam before it discovered that "spirit of detachment." Some contend that it is an irrational fear based upon assumptions, myths and stereotypes, rather than knowledge of Islam. Edward Said has said it is like trying to come to terms with a somewhat fictionalized Islam that "has always been marked by crisis and conflict, rather than by calm, mutual exchange."[193] And Colin Chapman, a lecturer in Islamic studies at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut argues dispensationalists lack an understanding of the nature of the Israeli-Muslim conflict, are politically one-sided, display a lack of concern for people of other faiths, and are not representative of the indigenous Christian population. They have forced "themselves into a strait-jacket which makes it impossible for them to understand the human and political problems in any terms other than their own particular set of biblical categories," says Chapman.[194]

Secondly, the premillennial dispensationalist view of history leaves little room for Christian-Muslim ecumenism. Dispensationalism envisions the return of the Jewish people to Palestine, followed by a series of events leading up to the salvation of the Jews by the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Christian Church, understood as all who receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, will inherit eternal life along with the Jews. All others –

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[192] Chapman, 262.

[193] Edward W. Said, "Impossible Histories: Why the many Islams cannot be simplified," in *Harper's* (July 2002), 71. See also Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

[194] Chapman, 262.

Muslims or otherwise, will fall in defeat at the Lord's coming.[195] Such an exclusivist understanding of end time events and salvation makes ecumenical compromise all but impossible, and places the Christian emphasis on "soul winning" rather than dialogue. Islamic theologian Seyyed Hossein Nasr called this "one of the most contentious issues in the dialogue between Islam and Christianity."[196] According to Nasr, because of the great disparity of power and wealth between Christianity and Islam, Christian missionary activity in the Muslim world amounts to "cultural imperialism."[197]

Adding to the charge of Christian ties to Western imperialism has been the election of several pro-premillennial dispensationalist, Evangelical presidents.[198] President Jimmy Carter was the first. Elected in 1977, the year *Time* magazine called, "the year of the Evangelical," President Carter was an Evangelical Christian, a Southern Baptist Sunday School teacher, who understood premillennial dispensationalist theology but did not make advancing it his policy. His support for peace between Israel and Egypt earned him the respect of moderate Christians and Muslims and the distain of Evangelical-Fundamentalist Christians and militant Islamists. Evangelical and Israeli lobbyists attempted to thwart Carter's peace initiatives by running newspaper ads like this:

> The time has come for Evangelical Christians to affirm their belief in biblical prophecy and Israel's divine right to the land…We affirm as Evangelicals our belief in the promised land to the Jewish people…We would view with grave concern any effort to carve out of the Jewish homeland another nation or political entity."[199]

Ayatollah Khomeini presented the Carter administration with yet another challenge. Khomeini spoke out against the Shah's relationship to the Christian West and

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[195] See Ryrie, for a comprehensive explanation of the premillennial dispensationalist view of salvation.

[196] Nasr, 230.

[197] Ibid., 231.

[198] Jimmy Carter espouses a liberal Evangelicals view, and is Southern Baptist; Ronald Reagan proclaims Evangelicals values, but is non-Churched; George H. W. Bush is a mainline Protestant Episcopalian, with pro-Evangelicals views; Bill Clinton is a Baptist, whose views are much like those of Jimmy Carter; George W. Bush is a mainline Protestant Methodist, with pro-Evangelicals views. See Fowler and Hertzke, *Congressional Weekly Report*, November 1994, 121.

[199] Wagner, 42. Advertisement: *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 November 1977.

Zionist Israel, even calling Iran an outpost of American imperialism.[200] The success of Khomeini's 1979 Islamic Revolution and the subsequent hostage crisis[201] contributed to Carter's defeat in 1980 to Ronald Reagan, but also brought Evangelical-Muslim relations to an all-time low. For the first time Evangelical America began to talk of radical Islam as not merely a threat to Israel but to America.

President Ronald Reagan was "a committed Christian Zionist," fascinated with Zionism and Israel's role in the end times. He told one Israeli lobbyist:

> You know, I turn back to your ancient prophets in the Old Testament and the signs foretelling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering if – if we're the generation that is going to see that come about. I don't know if you've noted any of these prophecies lately, but believe me, they certainly describe the times we're going through.[202]

The Reagan administration's first encounter with Islam was the Iranian hostage crisis. Interestingly, the administration limited its policy statements concerning the crisis, and subsequent U.S.-Iranian interaction, to Iran; it seldom, if ever, mentioned the religion of Islam. This was "in keeping with the time-honored and correct practice of U.S. officials saying little about matters of faith. After all, these were politicians and diplomats, not scholars of religion."[203] Nevertheless, images of Christianity verses Islam filled the Reagan presidency. The United States was "the Great Satan," while "for the

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[200] "Message to the Pilgrims," in *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1981), 195. "The sinister influence of imperialism is especially evident in Iran. Israel, the universally recognized enemy of Islam and the Muslims, at war with the Muslim peoples for years, has, with the assistance of the despicable government of Iran, penetrated all the economic, military, and political affairs of the country; it must be said that Iran has become a military base for Israel which means, by extension, for America." Quoted by Esposito, 109.

[201] President Carter's Secretary of State Cyrus Vance explained that the major reason the Carter administration hesitated to use military force in freeing the hostages was its fear of igniting a war between the Islamic world and the West. See Esposito, 182.

[202] Ibid., 44.

[203] Daniel Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 92. This practice changed when in June 1992 the Bush administration began discussing policies in relation to the religion of Islam. This practice was expanded during the Clinton years. Why? According to Pipes, "(1) Many Muslims crave Western respect for Islam and recognition of its virtues. (2) The U.S. government in turn yearns for acceptance by Muslims. (3) Therefore, Washington gives Muslims the acknowledgement they seek. (4) Grateful Muslims diminish their hostility to the United States. (5) Washington can realistically demand that those same Muslims come to the defense of the United States against the more radical Muslims who still oppose it. Pipes, 101.

Reagan administration, [Muammar] Qaddafi and Khomeini became symbols of world-wide terrorism, as menacing as the 'evil empire.'"[204]

The Reagan administration's reaching out to premillennial dispensationalist Evangelicals is also noteworthy. Providing spiritual advice to President Reagan was evangelist Billy Graham, the unofficial "pastor to presidents" since the first Eisenhower administration and, for all intents and purposes, the voice of Evangelical America. Televangelist Jerry Falwell, the founder of the "Moral Majority," organized millions of Evangelicals to fight anti-Christian agendas at the voting box. Televangelist Pat Robertson, the founder of the Christian Broadcast Network (CBN) and numerous missions outreach programs. And, influential Christian authors like Hal Lindsey, author of the *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and Tim LaHaye, author of the current *Left Behind* series. According to *Christianity Today*, these Evangelicals, "helped shaped popular opinion in America and, to some extent, U.S. foreign policy" during the Reagan years.

Evangelical-Muslim cooperation in the 1990s showed little difference from that during the 1980s. Much to the chagrin of Anglican ecumenists, the Church of England declared the '90s the "Decade of Evangelism" and circulated a document ("the Open Letter") that in a "slightly haughty tone" addressed the necessity of "the proclamation of the Christian message to those of other faiths…[and] opposing the use of Anglican Church buildings for any kind of inter-faith worship."[205] American Evangelicals used the Persian Gulf War in 1991 as an opportunity to share Christianity with Muslims in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. According to one observer of Evangelical-Muslim relations, the Christian outreach ministry *Samaritan's Purse* converted more Saudi Arabian Muslims to Christianity during the Gulf War than at any other time in history.[206] Evangelicals continued to provide support for Israel by opposing the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, which suggested several "land for peace" solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords, which called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and Jericho and gave recognition to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

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[204] Esposito, 87.

[205] Goddard, 190.

[206] In interview with Dr. Maghat Malek, Chairman of Arabic Language Department, Defense Language Institute, whose brother is a missionary to Muslims in France.

The 1996 election of Benjamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister strengthened Evangelical-Jewish relations, and Netanyahu considered Evangelical support critical to any success he might have with the Clinton administration.[207]

Evangelicals further widened the gap between Christians and Muslims when the Christian Coalition successfully lobbied Congress for the passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in 1994 and International Religious Freedom Act in 1998. The latter requires an annual report on religious persecution worldwide and allows the president to decide the punishment for violators. Large amounts of publicity surrounded the persecution of Christians in Muslim countries, and Muslim groups, like the American Muslim Council (AMC), called the measure anti-Islamic. "Legislation is now being considered in the United States to deal with 'Muslim persecution of Christians.' It is interesting to see who supports it…There is a great deal of hatred in the Christian Right toward Islam."[208]

While religious and social battles characterized Evangelical-Muslim relations during the 1990s, the U.S. government took unprecedented steps to reach out to Muslims, both at home and abroad. In 1990, President George H. W. Bush began the practice of congratulating American Muslims on Islamic holidays. In 1991, American Muslims opened sessions of Congress with passages from the Qur'an. President Bush, the first lady, and Secretary of State James Baker all hosted Muslim leaders in celebrating the breaking of the Ramadan fast. In 1992, the U.S. military flew seventy-five Muslim soldiers to Mecca. In 1993, the military commissioned its first Muslim chaplain. In 1996, Vice President Al Gore became the highest-ranking American official to visit a mosque. In 1997, the National Park Service installed a star and crescent near the White House, along with the National Christmas Tree and Hanukkah menorah. In 1999, the first Muslim ambassador was appointed to represent the United States to Fiji.[209]

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[207] Netanyahu routinely met with Jerry Falwell and other Evangelicals leaders before meeting with President Clinton to discuss Israeli-Palestinian relations. See Wagner, 1-2.

[208] Al-Hewar Center, "Dr. Yvonne Haddad Speaks at Al-Hewar Center About Christian-Muslim Relations," 19 December 1997. Retrieved from Al-Hewar web site on 24 June 2002 at: http://www.alhewar.com/Haddad.htm. See also William Martin, "The Christian Right and American Foreign Policy," in *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1999), 71-78.

[209] However, some Muslim groups continued to insist that government discrimination against was growing. Dr. Yvonne Haddad, professor at Georgetown University's Center for Muslim-Christian

3. Christian-Muslim Relations, Post-September 11, 2001

In many ways the unfortunate events on September 11, 2001 confirmed what each of the participants engaged in Christian-Muslim relations had believed all along. To Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Mainline Protestant leaders, September 11 confirmed the necessity of continuing the chore of bringing Christians and Muslims together. To Evangelical Protestant leaders, it demonstrated the violent nature of Islam, and how little Christianity and Islam really have in common. Western leaders, with the passive assurance of Islamic leaders, have tried to keep religion out of the discussion, dubbing the battle at hand a "war on terrorism" (never identifying just "who" the terrorists are). The result has been a war of words between all the sides and probably the greatest challenge to Christian-West-Muslim relations since the creation of Israel in 1948.

After the attacks in New York and Washington, Catholic bishops and Muslim leaders released a joint statement on 14 September to condemn terrorism and reaffirm their commitment to inter-religious cooperation. "We urge all American citizens to unify during this national tragedy and encourage cooperation among all ethnic, cultural, racial, and religious groups constituting the mosaic of our society."[210] The World Council of Churches General Secretary, Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, did the same on 20 September, "to express continued ecumenical support and sympathy in the wake of the attacks on New York and Washington, DC, and to urge discernment and encourage faithfulness in local, national and international responses."[211]

Ecumenically minded Christians and Muslims expressed deep concern that the United States' "war on terrorism" might lead to a cycle of retributive violence and the loss of more lives. Especially vulnerable, they believed, were Christian and Muslim minorities living in the Middle East, the United States, and Europe. "Minority Christian

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Understanding, said, "The hegemony of the United States is in a sense very publicly anti-Muslim even though official State Department statements recognize Islam as a religion (but, it is the only religion recognized by the American government, which, again, works to set it apart). In addition, the U.S. has a special policy toward Islam, distinguishing between "moderate" Muslims, "fundamentalists," and so on."

[210] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Catholic Bishops and Muslim Leaders Issue Joint Statement" Washington, D. C. 14 September 2001. Retrieved from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops web site at: http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2001/01-163.htm.

[211] Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, "WCC pastoral letter to US Churches urges discernment in response to attacks." 20 September 2001. Retrieved from the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland web site on 14 August 2002 at: http://www.ctbi.org.uk/010911/

communities and those majority communities with whom their lives are shared stand to suffer severely at the hands of religious extremists if the "Christian" West strikes out yet again."[212] Concerns like these were unfortunately realized in places like Pakistan, Indonesia, and Kenya, where extremists killed dozens of Christians in response to U.S. attacks against Islamic elements in Afghanistan.

Organizations, including the United Nations, European Union, and various Christian and Islamic groups, conducted research on the spread of *Islamophobia* since September 11. The Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, on behalf of the EU, reported, "anti-Muslim sentiment has emanated from a vast array of sources and taken on a range of manifestations building upon premises that were already pre-existent to the events of September 11 and may even have been strengthened by them."[213] The EU gave its members recommendations to curtail the spread of Islamophobia, with stress placed upon cultural inclusion, academic dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslims, and the continuation of inter-faith cooperation.

The Evangelical community presented a different response to the attacks against the United States. While the President tried to distance himself and his administration from calling the "war on terrorism" a war against Islam, Evangelical leaders were calling on him to face what they believed were the facts. The Reverend Pat Robertson:

> Ladies and gentlemen, our president said Islam is a peaceful religion, [but] I beg to differ with our distinguished leader. That just isn't the case... Maybe 100 million to 150 million Muslims who are fundamentalists... take the words of Muhammad that are in the Koran that basically say kill Jews and Christians… and launch a jihad against those who don't believe in Allah and submit to Islam.[214]

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[212] Raiser, "WCC pastoral letter to US Churches urges discernment in response to attacks," at http://www.ctbi.org.uk/010911/.

[213] European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), "Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001," prepared by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Vienna, May 2002. Retrieved from EUMC web site on 14 August 2002 at: http://www.eumc.at/publications/terror-report/Synthesis-report_en.pdf. For a comprehensive study of American responses to religion post-September 11, see: "Americans Struggle With Religion's Role at Home and Abroad," by The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, March 2002.

[214] Rev. Irene Monroe, "The Religious Thing: Targeting Islam, the New Bigotry." Retrieved from Inn News in July 2002 at: http://www.innews.weekly.com.

The Reverend Franklin Graham, whose Christian-outreach organization *Samaritan's Purse* provides food, clothing, and assistance to people throughout the Third World, including in many Muslim countries, said:

> I don't believe this is a wonderful, peaceful religion… you read verses from the Koran, it instructs the killing of the infidel, for those that are non-Muslim….It wasn't Methodists flying into those buildings, it wasn't Lutherans….It was an attack on this country by people of the Islamic faith.[215]

In an interview on the CBS program "60 Minutes," the Reverend Jerry Falwell said, "I think Muhammad was a terrorist."[216] CBS aired the interview as part of a segment about American conservative Christian' political support for Israel, which had the effect of putting salt on an open wound across the Muslim world. Not even an apology could stop the force of Falwell's comments, which caused riots in Pakistan and elicited a harsh response from Islamic clerics around the globe – some even calling on Muslims to kill him.[217] Ibrahim Hooper of the Council on Americn-Islamic Relations (CAIR) said Christian evangelists from the Christian Right, "have the same mentality as bin Laden...Given the right circumstance, these guys would do the same in the opposite direction."[218]

4. Christian Theological Attitudes vis-à-vis Islam

There is no misunderstanding the Evangelical Protestant theological attitude vis-à-vis Islam: Islam is a false religion, whose followers need to convert to Christianity or face eternal separation from God. This "exclusivist" perspective leaves little room for ecumenism. One pastor, frustrated by liberal Protestant ecumenism, described the Evangelicals view like this: "Across America pastors and Christian leaders are allowing

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[215] Beliefnet Staff, "Preacher's Anti-Islam Remarks Mobilize White House," 7 October 2002. Retrieved from Beliefnet.com web site on 7 October 2002 at: www.beliefnet.com/story/116/story_11687_1.html.

[216] Richard N. Osting (AP), "Falwell Calls Muhammad 'Terrorist,'"" 3 October 2002. Retrieved from Beliefnet.com on 3 October 2002 at: www.beliefnet.com/story/114/story_11456.html.

[217] *Washington Times* (combined dispatch), "Rage Meets Falwell's Comment," by 13 October 2002. Retrieved from the *Washington Times* web site on 13 October 2002 at: http://www.washtimes.com/world/20021013-30498908.htm.

[218] Larry Witham, "Muslim Activist Won't Apologize to Evangelists," in the *Washington Times*, 22 November 2002. Retrieved from the *Washington Times* web site on 22 November 2002 at: http://www.washtimes.com/national/20021122-92397576.htm

representatives of the Islamic faith to freely speak in their pulpits…If you want to "bridge the gap," invite Christians who have *converted* from Islam to speak to your congregation."[219] Evangelicals explain that their position toward other faiths, in this case Muslims, is justified – to act otherwise would be to place in jeopardy the soul of one who is lost. "There is no love in deceit. We are in danger of loving Muslims to hell. What will they say before Christ? Will they say, 'But we all served the same God. We even spoke in Your Churches…?' God forbid we trade salvation for 'safety.'"[220] Part and parcel to this is the Evangelical end times theology is premillennial dispensationalism, a theology that emphasizes the "signs of the time" and unwavering support for the State of Israel; all of which comes at the expense of Islam and Muslims.

Liberal, mainline Protestantism takes an "inclusive" approach toward Muslims. They follow two methods: the "middle way," modeled by Kenneth Cragg, which stresses the need for a strong Christian witness through mission and dialogue, or the latest and most accepted mainline approach to Muslims – dialogue without mission. "Abandoning superiority and prejudice, taking risks, unlearning and learning…opening up one's view of the world."[221] Being more receptive to Christian-Muslim cooperation, they make up the majority of Protestant Churches belonging to the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical organizations. They also represent the majority of internationally known Christian theologians, scholars, and thinkers; however, their audience is either academia or in the declining mainline Protestant Churches of the West. Thus, while their activities are noteworthy, their religious and political influence has sharply declined. Nevertheless, with the exception of some "pluralists," mainline Protestants remain within the pale of orthodoxy, holding to the accepted doctrine of Salvation. Without making value judgments regarding Islam, they reject the Prophet Muhammad and his revelations and, therefore, consider Islam less than equal to Christianity.

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[219] Dr. Tom White, "Have we shamed the face of Jesus? Muslims in our Pulpits," in *The Voice of the Martyrs* (March 2002), 2-3.

[220] Ibid., 3.

[221] Colin Chapman, "Christian perceptions of Islam: Threat, Challenge or Misunderstood Ally?" *Evangelicals Review of Theology*. Vol. 20 No. 2. 1996.

The position of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches is most interesting. With so many of their members living as minorities inside Muslim-dominated regions, they have had to make theological pronouncements very carefully. The 1965 Vatican II "Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," accepted also by the Orthodox Church, was a tremendous victory for all who sought Christian-Muslim cooperation. The monumental document received further support from the 1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church.

> 841. *The Church's relationship with Muslims*. The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day.[222]

Both of these documents clearly state, "Muslims are included in God's plan of salvation." However, controversy arose in September 2000 with the release of another document, "Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: 'Dominus Iesus.'"[223] This document appeared to back away from Vatican II and the 1992 Catechism. Ecumenical Catholics and Orthodox Christians, among others, became concerned that Rome had gone back to its old "exclusive" ways. Ecumenists complained that "Dominus Iesus" gave Jesus Christ and His Church in God's plan of salvation too narrow a place, and would mean an end to the ecumenical movement. Pope John Paul II responded that "Dominus Iesus" did not change Vatican II. That, in fact, Catholic theology recognized that God's plan of salvation included non-Christians as well as Roman Catholics. The role of non-Christians in God's plan was to help build the Kingdom of God. "The just of the Earth, even those who do not know Christ and His Church, but who under the influence of grace seek God in a sincere heart, are called to build the Kingdom of God…."[224]

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222 "Apostolic Constitution Fidei Depositum," on the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992.

223 "Dominus Iesus" reads, in part: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in (non-Christian religions)…The Church's proclamation of Jesus Christ, 'the way, the truth, and the life,' today also makes use of the practice of inter-religious dialogue. Such dialogue does not replace, but rather accompanies the *missio ad gentes*, directed toward that 'mystery of unity,' from which it follows that all men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ….Objectively speaking, (unbelievers) are in a grave deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the (Catholic) Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation."

224 Tom Bethell, "Righteous Non-Believers, Check Your Ticket Again." December 2001. Retrieved from Beliefnet.com web site in December 2001 at:

The Pope's explanation satisfied ecumenists, but the Catholic Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches a different theological truth: Catholic theology recognizes a difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, in that the former is the building up of this present earthly kingdom while the latter is the building up of the next.[225] In no Vatican or Orthodox document are non-Christians said to be participating in the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus, based on the Catechism and the Vatican II Declaration, which has been endorsed by the Orthodox Churches, the Catholic and Orthodox theological position vis-à-vis Islam is the same as it was in the eighth century: Islam is a false religion.

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http://www.beliefnet.com/frameset.asp?pageLoc=/story/61/story_6133_1.html&boardID=9447.

225 Tom Bethell writes, "The Kingdom of Heaven is in the next world, the Kingdom of God is in this. The Kingdom of God is 'the effective but mysterious action of God in the Universe and in the tangle of human events.' As to those who 'are called to build the Kingdom of God,' they include all "the righteous on Earth' who 'seek God with a sincere heart,' including those 'who do not know Christ and his Church.'" The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992) contains 32 specific references to the "kingdom of heaven," all in reference to Christians.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. THE NOTION OF "SEPARATE SPHERES"

Christendom felt no need for a competing worldview. Why should it? It possessed the truth – apostolic truth with a capital "T." In its fight against heresies, it made perfectly clear what was orthodox, and those who followed orthodoxy were Catholic. Those who did not – the unorthodox – were heretics and antichrists. The battle for Truth was long and arduous, and many were lost: The Nestorians and Monophysites, especially, took from Christendom those for whom the Lord died to save. Proof of the falseness of their teachings was the ready acceptance they received from other infidels, like the Persians and idolatrous Arabs. Alas, when the nomadic, barbarous Arabs rose up, surprised, and overran the exhausted Roman and Persian empires, it was easy for the Church to believe the Arabs' zeal was merely another form or fashion of heresy once defeated. Heresies committed to the emasculation of the full humanity, deity, and purpose of Jesus Christ, committed to a view of the Triune God that left Him no room to be Father, Son, and Spirit, and committed to a Prophet so obsessed with worldly lust he promised his followers the company of virgins in heaven.

Is the above paragraph a portrayal of seventh century Christendom or twenty-first? The answer is both. The majority of Christian and Muslim leaders acknowledge this fact, but leaders in the West – still clinging to the Enlightenment notion of "separate spheres" – have been slow to recognize, or in some cases have flatly rejected the notion that in the twenty-first century theological polemics effect the exercise of statecraft. It is true that since the end of the Cold War the West has given some precedence to understanding the relevance of religion, specifically Islam, in statecraft. However, seeking to understand Islam's relevance merely to find ways to manage it or marginalize its impact does nothing to further West-Muslim relations. The same is true of Christianity.

B. HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AS SELF-RELECTION

There is no denying Christianity's close association with the State – Roman or otherwise. Furthermore, it is impossible to overlook the effect Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam have had on West-Muslim relations. The history of West-Muslim

interaction demonstrates this much, and not only before the Enlightenment. Even after the Enlightenment – the beginning of the nineteenth century – Christian theological attitudes combined with medieval stereotypes and myths permeated Western attitudes and action vis-à-vis Islam. The impact of Western imperialism, the cult of Orientalism, and the White Man's Burden are all examples of Christianity's marriage to the State at a time when the State's only partner was to have been the community.[226] Christian Zionism is another, yet entirely separate phenomenon. Built primarily on the theological premise of premillennial dispensationalism, it predicted blessings for those nations that supported the Jewish return to Palestine and judgment on those that did not. Disagreement over Israel split the Church between pro-and-anti-Israeli factions. In addition, if a comparison of the influence each side has on statecraft proves anything, it is that pro-Israeli premillennial dispensationalists control a disproportionate share of influence over Western leaders and policies. This is at the expense of Christian-Muslim ecumenism and West-Muslim relations.

C. GOD IS ON-LINE

What many Westerners fail to grasp is the importance Muslims place on the equal recognition of their religion by Christians and Jews and the extent to which they view the West in religious terms. Consider, for example, an argument made by Thomas Friedman in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. Responding to the charge from an Israeli religious philosopher that the danger of globalization is the unifying of mankind in cyberspace without God, Friedman argues that people *need* to keep God off-line. God belongs "in the olive groves of their parents' home or their community, Church, synagogue, temple or mosque," but not in the public square (emphasis added).[227] What Friedman fails to recognize (or admit) is that most people do not want to keep God off-line. Religion is an identifier of cultures and individuals and thus the notion of "separate spheres" falls short

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[226] Martin Van Creveld, *The Rise and Decline of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 191. Such a statement is not only true concerning France and the United States, but the rest of Europe, too. The influence of eighteenth century Enlightenment *philosophies* on the nineteenth century nation-state was supposed to have so marginalized the Church that the State reigned supreme. This however was not the case.

[227] Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2000), 470.

when examined under a microscope. Religion as an identifier makes equal recognition as an Abrahamic faith all the more important to the Muslim.

It should come as no surprise then the extent to which Muslims view the West in religious terms. Consider Mamoun Fandy's description of Saudi cleric and Islamic scholar Skeikh Safar al-Hawali's view of the West. Al-Hawali sees American culture as "extremely hostile to Islam. Thus, one of Hawali's targets is the American Christian Right (the "Harmagediyoon" preachers, including Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson)…(which) is not a peripheral movement in American politics but a central movement that plays a major role in the future of any conflict in or with the Middle East."[228] So central are the Evangelicals that their support for Israel is widely viewed in the Muslim world as a plot to eliminate Islam while elevating the Jews and Christians.[229]

D. CONSIDERATIONS FOR WESTERN LEADERSHIP

Western leadership should consider several points. Firstly, self-reflection of Christianity's historical experience can help to prevent a "clash of civilizations," as suggested by Huntington, only if the West embraces a "lessons learned" mentality that acknowledges past failures and accepts today's realities. In some cases, the past is embedded in today's realities, as is the case with Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam. It is impossible to dismiss the fact that every major branch of Christianity holds the theological position that Islam is a false religion. Likewise, surveys and reports indicate that Americans view Islam more negatively than ever before and *Islamophobia* is on the rise in Europe. Many fear that Europe is regressing back to the days of far-right wing fascism.

Secondly, statesmen must recognize the relevance of Christianity in statecraft. The Evangelical community, which claims nearly 130 million followers,[230] is by far the most influential Christian community in the arena of Christian-Muslim and West-Muslim relations. Although known primarily for their support of Israel, Evangelical leaders are

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[228] Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), 61-87.

[229] "The Revolt of Islam," by Bernard Lewis in *The New Yorker* (November 19, 2001), 56.

[230] Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (Ballatine Books, 2001), 266-7.

venturing into uncharted waters in their war of words against Islam, in some cases causing inter-state instability and danger to minority religious populations.

Finally, statesmen must recognize the importance of religion in public life. It is inescapable. Friedman's suggestion that God be kept off-line contradicts what many others are writing: religion is more important today as a cultural identifier than ever before. The United States is no different in that respect from Afghanistan. Acknowledge what Muslims already concede about the West: that it is Judeo-Christian in worldview. That worldview is worth preserving.

Christian theological attitudes vis-à-vis Islam present many challenges to West-Muslim relations. Western leaders must recognize that they do not stand apart from these challenges, which is to say: the West is regarded as Christian and its policies, whether intentional or not, tend to reflect its Christian theological attitude vis-à-vis Islam.

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